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# Image and poetry in selected early works of William Blake: producing a third text

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Masters by Dissertation

# Image and Poetry

## in Selected Early Works of

# William Blake:

## Producing a Third Text

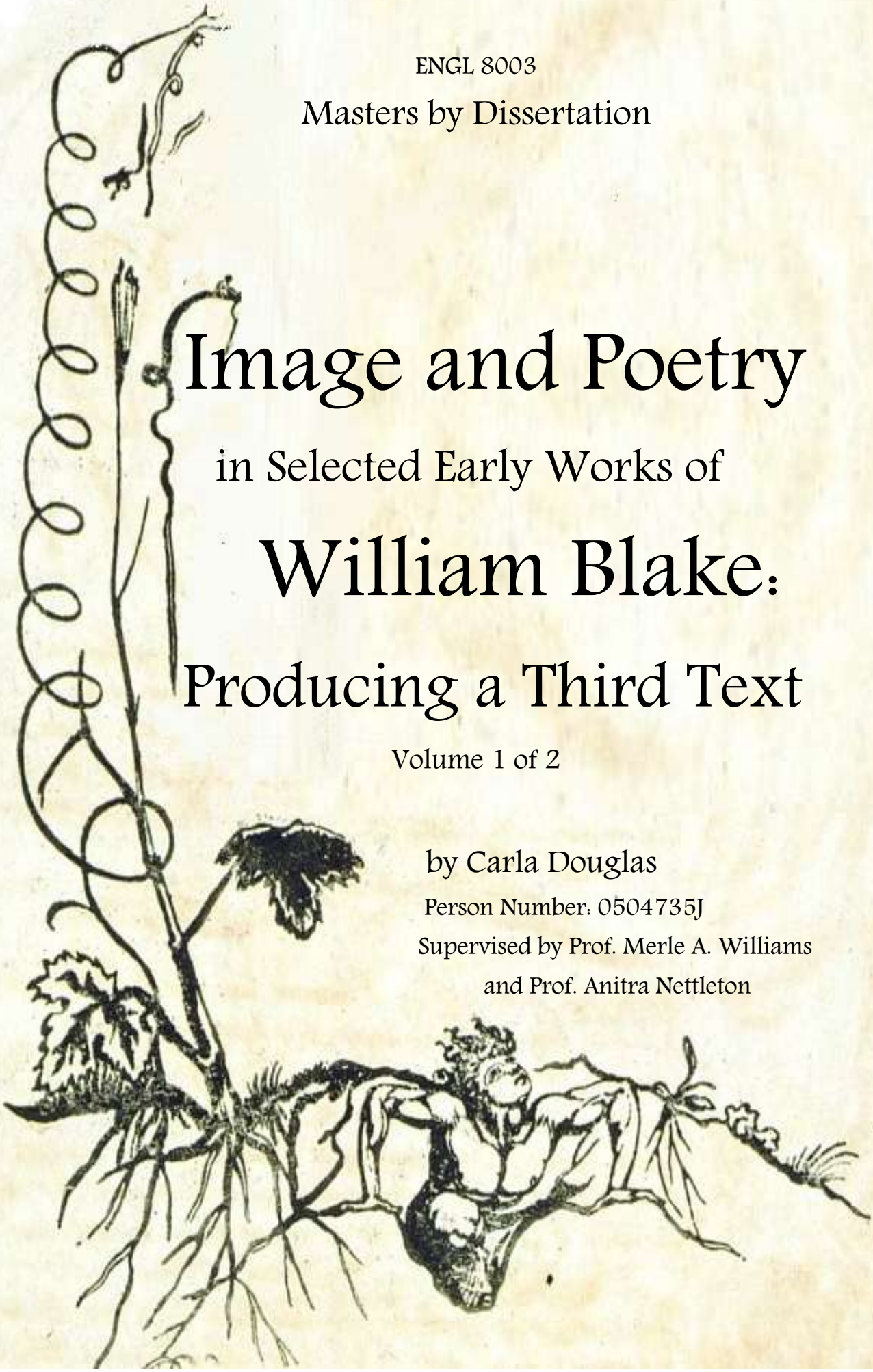
Volume 1 of 2

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This dissertation consists of two volumes (one volume of text and one volume of illustrations).

Cover page adapted from Plate 2 of *America a Prophecy*, copy E. 1793. Object 4. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress (*The William Blake Archive*).

# Declaration

I declare that this dissertation, *Image and Poetry in Selected Early Works of William Blake: Producing a Third Text* is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not previously been submitted for a degree or examination at any other university.

_____

Carla Douglas

_____ day of _____ 2012

# Abstract

This study is concerned with the relationship between images and poetry in the early illuminated books of William Blake. It seeks to explore the generative production of meaning which arises from the interaction of these different aesthetic modalities. Such meanings are investigated through the notion of a "Third Text", which has been adapted from the thought of Stephen Behrendt ("'Something in my Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts"). The Third Text arises from the interaction of images and texts, but is identical to neither alone, nor is it constituted by the sum of the contributing parts. The interactions of image and text are further elucidated through the application of selected poststructuralist theories, drawn from the writing of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. Notions of the Text, *différance*, the supplement and spectrality are central to the argument. An interaction is established between Blake's illuminated books and the chosen poststructuralist constructs in order to recognise the singularity of the verbal and visual material considered.

An interrelated component of this study is a reflection on the ways in which Blake breaks the conceptual frames of image and text in his illuminated books, thus challenging a range of established models. Particular attention is paid to the early illuminated books, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and *America a Prophecy.* Key concerns of this study include the ways in which *Songs* challenges the boundaries between innocence and experience and the exploration of prophetic vision in *America*. The dissertation concludes by emphasising the importance of preserving an infinite relation of image to text, both in Blake studies and more broadly in the analysis of image-text relations.



# Key Words

Image; text; image-text relations; Third Text; William Blake; Blake's early work; illuminated books; *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*; *America a Prophecy*; Roland Barthes; Jacques Derrida; textuality; supplement; spectre.

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# The Numbering of Plates

Blake's practice of printing multiple, differing copies of his individual illuminated books means that many of them have no stable order of plates. For the sake of clarity, I have thus made use of David V. Erdman's numbering of lines and plates in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*.[1] Page numbers from Erdman are taken from the 1988 Newly Revised Edition, and are prefaced with an "E". Erdman's plate numbers are not necessarily reflective of the *order* of plates in a particular illuminated book. Hence each specific copy will be assigned both "plate" numbers (reflecting Erdman) and "object" numbers, referring to a plate's placement within a specific copy (see Fig. A). I have followed the copy designations (eg. "copy H") used by *The William Blake Archive* (*Blake Archive*).



**Figure A. Plate 5.** *The Book of Thel*, copy H. c. 1789. Object 7, E6. © Library of Congress. Electronic (*Blake Archive*). Mixed Media.

References to poetry or prose from all of Blake's illuminated books, with the exception of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, will include Erdman's plate number(s), Erdman's line number(s), and the relevant page number(s) from *Complete Poetry and Prose*. For example, *America a Prophecy*, plate 12, line 11 will be referenced as (12.11, E56). Images will be referenced in-text as follows: *America*, plate 12, copy K. A figure number (Fig.) indicates that a reproduction of a plate or image is available in Volume 2.

In the case of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which has a widely variant order of objects, the presence of multiple, short and separately titled poems allows for slightly different referencing, which is easier to follow; each plate will be referenced using the title of the poem. Poems will be referenced using line numbers and page numbers from Erdman,

[1] The numbering of plates in *Complete Poetry and Prose* does not always correspond to that in Erdman's *The Illuminated Blake*. I follow the *Blake Archive* in making use of the former. It must also be noted that in the 1988 edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose*, Erdman's numbering of plates without text (eg. plate 6 and 7 of *Europe a Prophecy*) is unclear. In these instances, I have followed the Erdman references on *The William Blake Archive*.

(eg. “The Tyger” l.1, E24) and images will be referenced using the title of the poem and the copy (eg. “The Tyger”, copy A).

## Blake’s Early Illuminated Books

I have referred in my title to the “early” works of William Blake. My study is concerned specifically with Blake’s illuminated books, which he began producing in c. 1788. Blake’s oeuvre includes poems and paintings dated as early as the 1770s; he continued to produce works into the 1820s, until his death in 1827. I count “early” illuminated books as those composed and printed before 1800. This period, ending with Blake’s move to Felpham in 1800, also includes the four years between 1796 and 1800. While Blake produced no completed illuminated books during this time, he remained active, beginning to write *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, sections of which were later to be transferred into his final, epic illuminated book, *Jerusalem*. In most cases, the illuminated books to which I refer were also “finished” before 1800, as all the existent pen work and hand colouring had been added before this point. In my analysis of *Songs*, I have occasionally described as “early” works copies printed before 1800, but with alterations made after this date. In these cases, I have drawn attention to the periodization of the copy.

## Eighteenth Century Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation

Much of Blake’s spelling, grammar and punctuation is irregular, following the non-standardized practices of the eighteenth century. Where a particularly disjunctive or idiosyncratic use of language appears, I have marked it with “[sic.]”. Quotations from Erdman’s *Complete Poetry and Prose* have been meticulously checked for accuracy.

# Chapter One

# Introduction

I know myself both Poet & Painter

– William Blake, Letter [To Thomas Butts], 1803 (E730-1)

This statement, appearing midway through Blake's career, is a bold affirmation of his artistic ability, a response to those who showed "[c]ontempt" for his poetry and designs (E730). Blake was trained as an engraver, a profession which in his time was associated with craft and mechanical reproduction, rather than with imagination or "original" composition.[1] In this context, he seems to be claiming not only that he practised the arts of painting and poetry, but also that he was worthy of the titles of "Poet & Painter" with at least some of the connotations of professional artistry that were associated with them at the end of the eighteenth century.

However, Blake's assertion does more than flag his perceived position within eighteenth-century artistic culture. It refers to the co-existence of poetry and painting in his work. If it does not make an explicit statement about their bearing on each other, it signals that within Blake's discourse the two enter into relationship. Familiarity with Blake's two arts – indeed, his many arts, for painting cannot be taken as an inclusive term for his varied modes of pictorial production and he did not always write poetry – reveals considerable interaction between Blake's images and written texts not only within his critical and reflective discourse, but also within the material objects that he produced. While Blake's separate poems, paintings, drawings and engravings can be made to interact within the framework of his oeuvre, he also produced illuminated books in which images and written texts co-exist both within the structure of a book and on the space of the page.[2] It is these illuminated books which are the focus of this dissertation.

[1] See Glossary, "Imagination" for a description of Blake's conception of the imagination, and pp. 96-98 below for a discussion of the poststructuralist critique of the notion of originality.
[2] See Glossary, "Illuminated Books".

Early analyses of Blake's illuminated books tended to treat his images as secondary illustrations of his poetry; his institutionalization was as one of the major Romantic poets, rather than as a poet *and* an artist.[3] However, beginning with the studies of Jean Hagstrum ("Blake and the Sister Arts Tradition", *William Blake: Poet and Painter*) and W. J. T. Mitchell (*Blake's Composite Art*), among others, the extraordinarily rich and diverse interactions of these images and written texts have been increasingly recognized as a key field of Blake studies.[4] This dissertation takes as its subject these interactions between Blake's images and texts, his readers, viewers, production processes and the different contexts in which his works have been read and viewed.

Staging a study of image-text relations is fraught with taxonomic uncertainty and attendant methodological strain.[5] Reaching a stable definition of what constitutes an aesthetic object or text, or arriving at what is claimed to be a comprehensive and unified understanding of the relationship between the pictorial and literary almost inevitably leads back to some form of contestation. This may be remedied to some extent by formulating a theory of image-text relations which concentrates on a specific mode of interaction, such as the illuminated book, or on a certain body of work. However, one need only consider the strong differences within Blake scholarship devoted to his illuminated books to suggest that specificities do not necessarily stabilize the interfaces of image and text. For example, in their seminal works, Hagstrum and Mitchell participate in a fierce debate regarding the nature of Blake's image-text relations. Hagstrum links Blake's illuminated books to the sister arts tradition, arguing that Blake's primary goal was to reduce image and text to a perfect unity through using words in a painterly fashion, and promoting other such commonalities. According to Hagstrum this would bring about access to ideal reality, which Blake called the "Intellectual" and "Mental" ("Blake" 83-5, 90). Mitchell refutes this claim, arguing that

[3] Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* and S. Forster Damon's *A Blake Dictionary* are but two examples of seminal studies which tend largely to ignore Blake's images.

[4] See also *Visionary Forms Dramatic* edited by David Erdman, in which Hagstrum and Mitchell stage their debate. Robert N. Essick's *The Visionary Hand* and David Bindman's *Blake as an Artist* also contributed to the re-emergence of Blake as "both poet and painter" by devoting attention to his artworks, which had been largely marginalised in the early twentieth century. The study of Blake's image-text relations has recently been revitalised by the availability of high-quality scans of his illuminated books (as well as certain of his commercial book illustrations, separate prints and print series, drawings, and manuscripts) through the *Blake Archive*, a hypermedia archive edited by Morris Eaves, Robert Essick and Joseph Viscomi.

[5] See Glossary, "Image" and "Image-Text".

Blake's images and texts form a "composite art" which is not concerned with commonality, but rather "transforms … dualism into a dialectic, to create unity out of contrariety" (*Composite Art* 33). More recently, Peter Otto has criticised the unitary emphasis of Mitchell's early theory, suggesting that Blake's composite art should be understood to be primarily unresolved, *maintaining* the difference between word and image, rather than trying to settle it ("Blake's Composite Art" 56). Importantly, each of these responses to Blake's image-text relations is rooted both in his illuminated books and in what is professed to be known of his thought on the visual and verbal arts, or of eighteenth century thought more generally. These debates are not only fuelled by shifts in scholarly focus, but by the complexities to be found within Blake's oeuvre.

Blake's illuminated pages tend to be characterised by complex indeterminacy, which presents a variety of challenges to the construction of any theory of image-text relations. Among other things, Blake printed multiple and *differing* copies of each of his illuminated books. He occasionally changed the etching on a plate, but even when no such alterations were made, Blake finished each individual copy differently, and these differences were still more sharply marked by the "accidental" differences in his prints resulting from blurring, blotting, the wearing of his plates and other such factors. This variation generates significant differences between the visual appearance of various copies of his illuminated books, which in turn destabilizes the relationships between images and texts, as well as the interactions among images and between texts.

Individual plates are often also marked by instability in their image-text relations. Figure 1 shows "The Tyger" from copy C of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (E24-5). The poem is one of the most powerfully evocative in *Songs*; the speaker engages with the mystery of a violent, created energy, which is both beautiful and terrible. The very structure of the poem is enigmatic, beginning with the question "What immortal hand or eye,/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?" (ll.3-4, E24), and ending by restating this question with a single alteration; it is no longer asked who "[c]ould" frame the Tyger's "fearful symmetry", but who would "[d]are" to do so (l.23, E25). By contrast, the pictorial image is almost childish. The tiger depicted here is without movement, its expression bewildered and dominated by a perfectly round eye. In copy L (Fig. 2) this looks much like a button sewn onto a stuffed

animal, and the tiger's right hind leg is rounded, the sinew and jut of bone visible in copy C concealed.

This plate thus introduces a number of questions regarding the nature of Blake's image-text relations. Morris Eaves has suggested that "The Tyger" may be the most anthologized poem in the English language (*Cambridge Companion to William Blake* 2). How does one value the clumsily rendered pictorial tiger in comparison with such a poem, particularly in the context of the institutional privileging of Blake as a poet? The idea that Blake was simply an unskilled artist is deceptive in light of other images which he produced during this period (see Fig. 3).[6] Nor can one argue that the discrepancy *must* lie in the fact that Blake had little or no practice engraving tigers. To do so would have an effect similar to suggestions that the picture ought not to accompany the text, and should be dismissed in analysis: it would as John E. Grant notes, "[deny] the artist's questions … in favour of the critic's answer" ("This Is Not Blake's 'The Tyger' (With Apologies to René Magritte)" 136).

Rather than dismissing the image in a move which would place it in a hierarchy below the text, one might make use of these image-text relations to open a number of differing readings. The image might be an ironic statement regarding the folly of attempting to depict "fearful symmetry". It also disturbs the complacency of the reader, perhaps driving him or her to look more closely at the page. It certainly points to the existence of different ways of representing and perceiving the tyger/tiger's creative energies, and it foregrounds both the differences and similarities between image and text; the two represent the same subject matter, but they do so very differently. This may make the operation of comparing image and text problematic, for to some degree they might be understood to be incommensurable. Thus, while "The Tyger" cannot be taken as a template for the widely varied interactions of image and text found throughout Blake's illuminated books, it points to the significance of the relationship between image and text. Blake's images are more than mere illustrations, and his texts and images may have reciprocal relationships.

[6] Blake has been subject to a number of accusations that he was mad, unskilled and a producer of disjointed material. For maligning references to Blake's visual and verbal art by his contemporaries, see particularly Robert Hunt's response to his 1809 Exhibition and Coleridge's less than encouraging remarks on Blake's poems (in Johnson and Grant *Blake's Poetry and Designs,* 497-500). It is interesting that some of the greatest supporters of Blake's coherence and systematic writing (most particularly Northrop Frye) have studied his poetry whilst marginalizing his images.

The production process of Blake's illuminated books enforces this point. In the eighteenth century, the publication of books was characterised by division of labour. The author's text was bought by a publisher who employed different individuals to typeset, to design illustrations, and to engrave these illustrations. Economic imperatives to cut high costs, as well as the association of reproductive engraving with trade, meant that those who engraved the image often did so in an assembly line, with many journeymen working on a single engraving (J. H. Jones, "Blake's production methods" 26-7). Blake disapproved of the mechanisation of printing, and found its economic and productive limitations to be frustrating. In the increasingly censored environment of London in the 1790s, his political and religious dissidence also limited the number of publishers who might consider printing his books. Blake responded to these limitations by inventing his own alternative and cheaper method of production: relief etching. In his *Prospectus*, "TO THE PUBLIC *October* 10, 1793", he wrote that he had overcome the great barrier faced by "Artist, Poet and Musician", all of whom suffered from a "neglect of means to propagate such works as have wholly absorbed the Man of Genius" (E692). He claimed to have overcome the cost of printing by "invent[ing] a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produce[ed] works at less than one fourth of the expense" (E692).

The relief etched plate literally reverses the process of intaglio engraving, which was the dominant mode of printmaking in the mid- to late-1700s. In intaglio engraving, different tools are used to scratch lines onto the surface of a plate. When the plate is inked and pulled through a printing press, the paper is forced into the ink-filled grooves. Thus, the original surface of the plate forms the white spaces of the intaglio print, and the engraved lines form the inked marks on the page. Relief etching is a fundamentally different process. Rather than engraving lines on the plate, Blake would paint his text and designs onto a copper plate in stop-out varnish or some equivalent protective substance. Alternatively, he would paint a whole section of the plate in stop-out, before scraping clean areas of the design that he did not want to print.[7] He would then repeatedly immerse the plate in an

[7] See Glossary, "Design".

acid bath, intermittently re-applying varnish, and allowing surfaces that were not protected by the varnish to be eaten away.[8] Once the plate was etched, Blake would ink and wipe it so that the top-most surfaces (those on a level with the original surface of the plate) would print, much as in the case of a woodblock.

The lack of detailed preliminary drawings for any of Blake's illuminated pages suggests that Blake must have composed (at least to some extent) *directly* onto the copper plate.[9] This is not to say that he would have begun work on his plates with no preparation whatsoever. Drafts of his poems and sketches of his images appear in his *Notebook*, and his draft manuscript for *The Four Zoas* (an uncompleted work, portions of which re-appear in *Jerusalem*) contains both the poem and loose sketches.[10] To some extent, Blake's images and texts would have been pre-designated. However, at least some of his images, as well as the visual appearance of his text, and much of the inter-linear design and "decoration" common to his illuminated plates would have been composed directly on the plate. Both sources contemporary to Blake, and analysis of his handwriting, also suggest that he would have written all of his text backwards by hand, directly onto each plate (Essick William Blake, Printmaker 89-90). Morris Eaves has gone so far as to argue "the possibility that Blake composed spontaneously in his head, stored lines in memory, and wrote them onto copper later" ("On Blakes We Want and Blakes We Don't" 427). While the idea of a unification of process is problematic (writing and composing images require the author/artist to perform different actions), this suggests that Blake's images and texts were executed through a more open or reciprocal process than other "illustrated" books of the period. Blake himself also undertook every stage of the production of his illuminated books from composition, to engraving, printing, colouring and binding (although he sometimes shared these latter jobs

[8] Only one remaining fragment of a plate in relief etching is known, and this is from a rejected plate, plate a of *America a Prophecy*. Figure 4 shows a restrike of this plate. The light areas inside the dark lines mark where raised relief-surfaces appear on the copperplate. Figure 5 shows one of Blake's prints of plate a, where only the raised surfaces have printed. Due to the lack of surviving plates, scholarship on Blake's production processes relies largely upon careful re-construction of Blake's printing methods and evidence drawn from the writings of Blake and those who knew him or studied his plates while the originals, or copies of them, were still existent. See Robert N. Essick's *William Blake, Printmaker* and Joseph Viscomi's *Blake and the Idea of the Book*.

[9] See Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker*, p.89 and Morris Eaves "On Blakes We Want and Blakes We Don't", p.427.

[10] See also Cettina Magno and David Erdman's *The Four Zoas*.

with his wife, Catherine). This indicates that Blake's visual and verbal arts operate through mutual association, if not necessarily through commensurability or affinity.

In this context, my study of image-text relations in the early illuminated books of William Blake does not seek to determine a homogenous, pure or unified theory of image-text relations. Rather, I engage with Blake's image-text relations in a consistently dialogical and self-reflexive process, rooted in both particular illuminated books and in appropriate scholarly texts. In doing so, I draw out the theoretical implications of certain facets of Blake's image-text relations, remaining open to the multiple levels on which his images and texts may interact. I focus especially on the manner in which Blake's images and texts form unstable dialectics which become dynamically interstitial, operating in a generative "in-between" space-time. These theoretical implications are further explored through poststructuralist theory. This is used as a lens through which to consider the interplay of the varied modes of reading and fields of relations which constitute Blake's illuminated books. Blake's image-texts are, in turn, used to expose and re-engage with certain, salient aspects of poststructuralism.

While this approach may have implications for Romantic studies more generally, and while this project remains sensitive to historical and cultural context, it should be noted that this is not an attempt to re-position Blake in relation to Romanticism.[11] My approach is archival, but in the sense that my interpretations grow from Blake's archived images and texts and the particular interactions arising from these material objects.[12] My primary focus in the later parts of this dissertation falls on the manner in which Blake's image-text relations may

[11] See Glossary, "Blake and Romanticism". In "The sister arts in British Romanticism", Morris Eaves points to the complexities of studying image-text relations of the Romantic period. He suggests that the field of study is characterised by questionable procedures, such as the uninhibited reaching across significant geographical, linguistic, cultural, and chronological borders in search of comparisons (238). Eaves argues that this is rooted in a lack of adequate histories which would allow one to ascertain the complexities of the cultural situation of the period, and that "for the foreseeable future, the best work [on the sister arts] will continue to be about problems not solutions" (238). In this context, he points to Blake's illuminated books as one of the few sites of British Romantic visual-verbal interaction which has *not* been neglected. He suggests that while there are "significant issues that cannot be raised through Blake …. [i]n major respects … Blake would seem to be the Romantic literature-and-visual-arts subject *par excellence* [both in terms of] … the viability of these interdisciplinary approaches, [and of] the array of obstacles that frustrate the literature-and-visual-arts project" (238-9).

[12] See pp. 59-60 below. This archival approach should not be confused with a literary-historical approach involving the categorization and periodization of cultural patterns and movement.

be understood to be productive of emerging meanings, as image and text are invigorated by their interaction with each other, and come to create what Stephen Behrendt has called a "Third Text" ("'Something in My Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts"). Before entering into this discussion it is, however, necessary to lay substantial theoretical foundations, and to tease out both the historical tradition surrounding image-text relations, and the nuances of exploring poststructuralist theory in and through the field of Blake studies.

## Interaction

This shifting terrain might best be investigated by first acknowledging certain points regarding the interaction of Blake's images and texts as aesthetic objects produced by an author/artist, and engaged with by readers and viewers. The study of image-text relations is concerned with the *interactions* between two differing modes or media of production and representation. My use of the term "interaction" refers to a movement through which two or more objects act reciprocally on one another.[13] The notion that images and texts interact should not be regarded either as reifying or personifying them. Rather, it should be understood that images and texts interact through the agency of the author/artist, as well as the reader/viewer, who may forge their interaction on a number of levels.[14]

## Intention

While this dissertation is concerned primarily with the ways in which image and text interact with and through the reader and viewer, framing this as a study of Blake's illuminated books opens up for scrutiny a range of assumptions about the function of the author and artist as the facilitator of interactions between image and text. As this dissertation also considers the manner in which poststructuralist theory might be applied to the study of Blake's image-text

[13] See Chapter Two pp. 76-80 for further discussion of this in relation to contemporary contexts of "interactive" electronic databases.

[14] There may, of course, be some sense in which image and text can interact without the engagement of acting subjects. For example, in some instances the pigments of Blake's illuminated pages have soaked through the paper over time, altering the colours of other images and sections of text and leaving ghostly repetitions on the verso sides of pages (see Figs. 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). On one level, this is only a physical interpenetration, a palimpsestic layering of pigment which serves to obscure Blake's images and texts, rather than to complicate one's readings of them by making them interact. However, on another level, this physical process may be said to produce a new, composite image-text, which must be read or viewed in new ways.

relations, this issue is of particular interest. The historical and conventional attribution of certain poems and pictures to William Blake implies a holding together of these different kinds of work under his name. As Michel Foucault notes in "What is an Author?" within certain, traditional modes of thought, the proper name of an author has a classificatory function, establishing a relationship among his or her texts, permitting one to group them together. He writes:

> the fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization. The author's name serves to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse[,] …. a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status.
>
> (107)

While Foucault's statement refers to written texts, I would suggest that in the case of Blake's oeuvre, the relationship of filiation, reciprocal explication and concomitant utilization would extend beyond his discourse, and into the realm of his images.[15] This is particularly appropriate to the illuminated book. In this artistic coincidence, there is a sense that Blake's words and images must have some form of intentional relationship; he must have had some reason for producing them together. Assumptions such as this bring to the fore questions regarding the intentional fallacy. As Keith Moxey notes in "The History of Art after the Death of the 'Death of the Subject'", in the mid- to late-twentieth century Foucault and other poststructuralists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida brought into question the existence of "the autonomous subject of the humanist tradition, a subject capable of knowing both the world and itself" (n. pag.). He suggests that "in a period that recognized the existence of an unconscious mind, the opacity of language, and the role of discursive practices in the dissemination of social power", this view of human subjectivity had to be abandoned and was shown to be a utopian dream of the European Enlightenment (n. pag.).

In "What is an Author", Foucault writes "What does it matter who is speaking" (101). These words, quoted from Beckett, are not phrased as a question but as a statement of indifference which is linked to certain fundamental principles concerning the notion of writing (*écriture*), as formulated at the time of Foucault's publishing his essay (101).

[15] In *The Order of Things* Foucault recognizes this in relation to Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (3-16, 307-8).

Foucault refers to the conception of writing which refers only to itself, but "without being restricted to the confines of its interiority"; here, writing is "identified with its own unfolded exteriority" (102):

> This means that it is an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds like a game *(jeu)* that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears.
>
> (102)

In this passage, Foucault engages with the poststructuralist development and critique of the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure argues that language and sign systems more generally are constituted by differential relationships with no positive terms; a sign is thus constituted by a signifier (such as the word "dog") and a signified (the concept "dog" for which the word functions as a "sound image"), while the connection between signifier and signified is arbitrary and un-motivated (*A Course in General Linguistics* 66-8). However, Saussure's model (somewhat self-contradictorily) leaves room for a transcendental signified,[16] and hence for the sort of authorial authority that would arise from a signified in no way dependent on or affected by difference. Foucault's model of an interplay of signs arranged according to the signifier effectively undoes these assumptions. Rather than understanding the work and author to be "solid and fundamental unit[s]", with the author outside of and antecedent to the work, determining its meaning, Foucault suggests that words are not contained by the intended meaning of their authors (they would not "pin a subject within language"). Rather, language opens a space in which the author cannot but disappear and in which the play of the signifier creates a multiplicity of meanings.

This sense of disappearance, this indifference, is closely interconnected with what Foucault deems the second important theme of *écriture*: that is, a sense that writing is no longer the space in which the author is understood to become immortal, but the space in which the

[16] In *Positions,* Jacques Derrida describes this as "the possibility of thinking a *concept signified in and of itself*, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is of a relationship to a system of signifiers" (19-20; *Positions* is a series of interviews with Derrida conducted by Henri Ronse ("Implications" 1-14), Julia Kristeva ("Semiology and Grammatology" 15-36), and Jean-Louis Houdebine and Guy Scarpetta ("Positions" 37-96). Unless otherwise indicated, all references to *Positions* are to Derrida's portions of the interviews).

author is put to death (102). This notion was expounded earlier in the work of Roland Barthes. In the 1960s, Barthes developed the notion of the Text. The Barthesian Text does not refer to written and printed words or linguistic structures, but to a methodological field in which the proliferation of language (made possible because of its system of differences) comes to form a woven "fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture" ("The Death of the Author" 53).[17] The Text comes into being as soon as the reader or scriptor plays with the signifier.[18] Barthes' theory of the Text suggests that if there is any holding together or maintaining together of a written text or manufactured image, then this must take as its site the *reader*, rather than the author and his or her particular history ("The Death of the Author" 54).

While these contentions might be criticised as unrealistically a-historical and anachronistic, the theory which Barthes sets out in "The Death of the Author" is more extreme than his practice, which commonly involves reference to the author and historical periods but avoids presumed access to the intentions of these authors, as construed in the Enlightenment sense. As I will discuss below, Barthes was writing against a certain perception of history through which the author (or perhaps even a certain set of circumstances) comes first, and "feeds" or acts as the transcendental parent of the Text ("Author" 52). If applied to a study of image-text relations, Barthes' theory would suggest that even when image and written text by the same author/artist occupy the same page or canvas the reader, not the author/artist, negotiates differing reading processes to facilitate the interaction of image

[17] In this study, I refer both to the text in its more traditional form and to the Barthesian Text. This is a necessary arrangement. On one hand, "text" is a more useful term than "word", "poetry" or "language" because of its capacity to refer simultaneously to words, the linguistic structures which they form, and the rules of grammar, syntax, etc. which constitute these structures. On the other hand, I will suggest that (slightly modified) poststructuralist notions of textuality (which is not limited to language, but can refer to the image) are of significant theoretical value. In order to differentiate between my two uses of "text", Barthes' "Text" – and poststructuralist reference to the Text more generally – will be capitalised throughout this study, whilst more conventional references to the verbal or written "text" will remain uncapitalised. I take this technique from Barthes, who uses capitalization to differentiate between written "text" and "Text" as a methodological field in "From Work to Text" (although the use of capitalisation is not always consistent in this paper). Where ambiguity arises, I will refer to the "Barthesian Text", "Derridean Text", "written text" and so on. Terms related to the Barthesian Text such as "textuality", "meta-text" and "intertext" (see. pp. 57-8 below) will remain uncapitalised, and should be taken to refer to the field of the Text. The exception is the term "Textual", which may, like "T/text" carry some ambiguity.

[18] See Glossary, "Scriptor". See also pp. 52-8 below for a discussion of the ways in which an image can and cannot be considered a Text in the Barthesian sense.

and text. This would be the case not only in Blake's illuminated books, but in illuminated manuscripts, titled artworks, illustrated books, graphic novels, films and even *ekphrases*.[19]

This poststructuralist formation of authorship may be deemed problematic when linked to Blake's complex Romantic conceptions of his own role in determining the "meaning" and interactions of his visual and verbal productions.[20] Blake's oeuvre is filled with statements regarding his artistic and poetic sovereignty. One of these appears in the *Notebook*, in the form of a poem:

The Caverns of the Grave Ive seen
And these I shewd to Englands Queen
But now the Caves of Hell I view
Who shall I dare to shew them to
What mighty Soul in Beautys form
Shall dauntless View the Infernal Storm
Egremonts Countess can controll
The flames of Hell that round me roll
If she refuse I still go on
Till the Heavens & Earth are gone
Still admird by Noble minds
Followd by Envy on the winds
Reengravd Time after Time
Ever in their Youthful prime
My Designs unchangd remain
Time may rage but rage in vain
For above Times troubled Fountains
On the Great Atlantic Mountains
In my Golden House on high
There they Shine Eternally

(E480-81)

This poem, while composed in the early 1800s, is nevertheless useful for contextualizing a certain strand of thought evident within Blake's oeuvre. It is strongly connected to a painting by Blake. According to Erdman, it was intended as a dedication for *Satan Calling up his Legions* (Fig. 7), which was painted for the Countess of Egremont (E858, and Butlin cat. 662).[21] The poem introduces interesting concerns related to patronage, sovereignty and audience, and because it is a *dedication* – addressed by Blake to the Countess and "signed" in a similar manner to a letter – the speaker might be understood to be Blake himself.

[19] See Glossary, "*Ekphrasis*".
[20] Although Blake had read many prominent Enlightenment thinkers, his stance on authorship should not be conflated with Enlightenment notions of selfhood. See Glossary, "Blake and Romanticism", for a note on Blake's critical stance on Enlightenment thinkers.
[21] This painting is based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This suggests that it is closely connected with Blake's late, epic poem and illuminated book *Milton*, which he began in about 1804.

Blake's declaration that he has "seen" the "Caverns of the Grave" and now "view[s]" the "Caves of Hell" highlights his capacity as a visionary; he is able to see beyond a purely rationalist realm, into scenes usually seen by the soul after death.[22] His preoccupation with "shew[ing]" (l.4) his artworks suggests an involvement with his audience, which includes his patron, the Countess. The poem expresses some concern regarding patronage. The Countess can "control" the flames that surround Blake, and may protect him or damn him to suffering akin to that of Satan and his hordes, many of whom are depicted as wreathed in the flames of hell in Blake's painting.

This concern with patronage shifts at line 9, with the affirmation that if the Countess "refuse[s]" Blake, he will "still go on". From this point onward, Blake claims to supersede the power of his patron, appropriating artistic sovereignty by conflating his continuing production with the endurance of his "Designs" which he claims will "unchanged remain", immune to both the whims of his patrons and to the roughness of time (l.15).[23] The final lines of the poem proclaim that the designs will "Shine Eternally" in a "Golden House on high" which belongs to Blake (ll.19-20), suggesting that the site of artistic production belongs to the artist. This is echoed by the poem's implicit instruction of the reader, which places Blake in a position of authority. He suggests that a "dauntless" process of reading and viewing must be adopted (l.6). This is also demanded by the painting, in which the forward-facing position of both Satan and several of the human figures below him draws viewers into the image by directly confronting them. Satan's gaze, focused to the right of the viewer, is likely eventually to swing around in alignment with his torso, bringing the viewer into a direct confrontation with the devil.

Blake did not always affect such confidence. Chapter Three discusses in depth the ways in which the potential for visionary failure haunted his discourse. For the moment, this perspective might most interestingly be illustrated by W. J. T. Mitchell's analysis of plate 10

[22] See Glossary, "Vision". Blake's also is making reference to specific works here: the "Caverns of the Grave" refers to Blake's illustration of Blair's *Grave* (dedicated to "England's Queen", Charlotte), while the "Caves of Hell" are depicted in his painting for Egremont.

[23] One might meditate on the veracity of Blake's passage concerning his "unchanged" designs, particularly in light of his practice of making alterations to his images and even to his texts (plate 3 of copy E of *Jerusalem* shows where words have literally been scratched out). See Chapter Two for a discussion of Blake's practice of variation in his illuminated books (esp. pp. 68-76).

of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in "Visible Language: Blake's Art of Writing" (*Picture Theory* 138-40).[24] This plate depicts a devil with a scroll across his lap, seated between two figures, one of whom is busily transcribing into a book, the other having apparently finished this process (see Fig. 8). Several facets of this image point to a de-centring of authorial authority. For example, when viewed in the context of Michelangelo's prophetic and sibylline scribes in the Sistine Chapel, the image appears to be a blasphemous joke; not only is the figure of inspiration seated below rather than above the scribes, but the textual transmission of knowledge comes from a devil. Significantly, the devil holds a scroll, which Mitchell argues is associated with prophecy and ancient wisdom throughout Blake's oeuvre. The scribes, on the other hand, hold books, the emblem of the modern, rationalist writing of which Blake was highly critical (*Picture Theory* 132, 138-9). This suggests that the knowledge that comes to the reader is always transformed in some way, sometimes problematically. This in itself does not de-centre authorial authority so much as suggest a source different from that which might conventionally be expected. However, the image is also coupled with written "proverbs", which do not have an identified and specific author, instead taking their authority from repetition. If the devil is reciting *proverbs* to the scribes, then his presence does not guarantee a stable "origin" or authorial presence; on the contrary, he too is simply transmitting received knowledge. In this context, Mitchell suggests that "[a]ll writings are best described by Blake's oxymoron, 'original derivations'" (*Picture Theory* 140). Moreover, he argues that "[t]he attempt to settle the question of origin and authority, to stabilize it in the Voice of the Devil, the writing of the Blakean scroll, or the voice of the historical individual William Blake" would result only in the reification of prophecy (which is associated with vision) into law (which is associated with rationalist suppression of vision), thus transforming "the [positive] bounding lines of the scroll into the [negatively limiting] closed gate of the book" (*Picture Theory* 140).

This idea of "original derivation" is, in some ways, very close to Jacques Derrida's notion that it is impossible to find a pure, simple origin uncontaminated by what follows it and is thus purportedly derived from it.[25] While Blake's relation to poststructuralist notions of

[24] I engage with this essay at length below (pp. 38-40).

[25] One of the ways in which Derrida describes this movement is in terms of the supplement. The supplement adds something to the original. However, in so doing it simultaneously points to a deficiency in the original. It

language is extremely complex, and his views should not be naively conflated with such accounts, the phrase "original derivation" marks a similar contamination of origin. The phrase appears in the "Argument" of *All Religions are One*, a series of statements which leads in a quasi-logical fashion towards the premise stated in the title. The final three statements are as follows:

> PRINCIPLE. 5. The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nations different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy.
> PRINCIPLE 6 The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius. this is necessary from the confined nature of bodily sensation
> PRINCIPLE 7th As all men are alike (tho' infinitely various) So all Religions & as all similars have one source The true Man is the source he being the Poetic Genius
>
> (9-10, E1)

Here the universality of the Poetic Genius, which is manifest in the physical human form or body, facilitates the incorporation of the Poetic Genius in multiple instances as embodied ideas. However, these moments of embodiment transform the universality of the Poetic Genius, so that it becomes at once singular and multiple. From this perspective, it is difficult to determine a priority of creative capacity, hence the inter-implication of origin and derivation.

Relating Blake's Romantic account of aesthetic production and his knotty notion of the Poetic Genius to poststructuralist perspectives is thus not as difficult as it might otherwise seem, although great care must be taken as to avoid anachronism and to explore the many differences which accompany identifiable similarities such as this. I would suggest that such issues might further be addressed through two simultaneous strategies. The first of these is to modify Barthes' formulation of the Text by drawing on a different formulation found in the thought of Derrida.[26]

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thus becomes engaged in a movement of replacement, through which it becomes implicit in the original, despite being posterior to it. See Chapter Two pp. 95-107 for a full engagement with this notion in relation to Blake's illuminated books. Derrida also frames the non-purity of the origin in terms of *différance* (see pp. 41-3 below).

[26] Although Derrida's formulation of the Text is somewhat different to Barthes', the two share a variety of key concerns. In *Jacques Derrida*, Nicholas Royle quotes at length from a Derrida's *Living On*. Derrida writes, "a 'text' is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of trace referring endlessly to something other than itself... Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging them or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines)" (Royle 64, *Living On* 84; see p. 43 below for a discussion of "trace"). This is close to Barthes' theorization of the Text as a methodological field.

In his earlier writing, Derrida engages with the idea that when a reader encounters the Text, the process of reading also becomes a process of writing. While Barthes also cites the "(productive) equivalence of writing and reading" ("Theory of the Text" 42), Derrida approaches this idea from a slightly different angle. In "Plato's Pharmacy", he comments that the reader cannot "look at the text without touching it … without risking the addition of some new thread" (63). The Text is like a woven substance or *text*ile (the two words share the same root); when one reads a Text (or views an image) one must "follow the given thread", which has been laid down by the author/artist ("Plato's Pharmacy" 63). As one reads, one also inevitably adds to the Text; unless one's reading is entirely false, one would inevitably supplement the Text/textile by embroidering it with new meanings ("Plato's Pharmacy" 63). Once one has embroidered the Text, this embroidery becomes inseparable from it; the Text's weave is more of a web than a laying down of straight lines by warp and woof. Even if one can see where the embroidered thread lies, it cannot be disentangled. From this perspective, then, reading is also an act of writing, of formulating a Text, both in the sense that it leaves its marks or traces and in the sense that it composes. However, this is not a movement in a single direction. To write is also to read: when one writes one is simultaneously reading what appears on the page (this requires a certain meta-awareness of the process of writing) and (crucially) anticipating the potential readings of others. In this way, the writing and reading of the Text are profoundly inter-implicated (although their relationship is not symmetrical). Reader and writer cannot be simply or artificially separated. Thus, "[o]ne must … in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write" (64).

As Nicholas Royle suggests in *Jacques Derrida*, Derrida does not think that "'authorial intention' is something that can or should be brushed to one side" (18). Rather, he maintains that "an author can always be understood to be saying 'more, less, or something other than what he [or she] *would mean*'"; contexts are always open and non-saturable and no author can ever control the way in which his or her work might be read (Royle 18, *Of Grammatology* 158). Hence, the point is not to discount the possibilities of meaning offered by Blake's poems and images, but to "read" them both with and against the weave, opening out fresh possibilities for signification. Naïve interpretations, based on the illusory self-transparency of Enlightenment subjectivity must be avoided. The point is not to derive some original meaning arising from the conviction that Blake "knew what he meant", for there is

always something "other" informing literary production. The same might be said of his artistic production, albeit in a far more complex sense.

Secondly, thinking about subjectivity has not come to an end with the "death of the author" (which is a special case of the death of the subject) and reservations about humanist notions of subjectivity. Keith Moxey argues there is a "death of the death of the subject". He quotes from Ernesto Laclau:

> [O]nce objectivism disappeared as an 'epistemological obstacle,' it became possible to develop the full implications of the 'death of the subject.' At this point, the latter showed the secret poison that inhabited it, the possibility of a second death, 'the death of the death of the subject,' the re[-]emergence of the subject as a result of its own death; … the realization that there can be 'subjects' because the gap that 'the subject' was supposed to bridge is actually unbridgeable.
>
> (From Laclau, "Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity" 94, in Moxey n. pag.)

Laclau's point is that the death of the old, humanist conception of the subject or author is replaced by a differing concept of subjectivity, which operates precisely *because* the subject is no longer thought to be unitary and transcendent (existing outside of and independent to Text or context). Moxey quotes Laclau in the context of a discussion of scholarly articles which, rather than falling back on the illusion of objectivity, foreground the position, politics, and biases of their author(s), thereby reintroducing the subject, but in a different manner. This view acknowledges that the subject is neither perfectly in command of nor accessible to himself or herself. Rather, subjectivity is manifest in and through language.

While Moxey is referring to a contemporary phenomenon (rooted in the need for self-reflexivity in history writing), his account is extremely useful in theorising the relationship between the figure "William Blake", and the Texts which he produced. Following Judith Butler, Moxey proposes that subjectivity should be understood as a *process* rather than as a fixed state: "in this new guise, reference to subjectivity as agency serves also, and at the same time, as a reference to its status as the product of those unconscious and ideological forces that haunt the production of meaning" (n. pag.). In this sense, reference to Blake, or more particularly to the evidence left regarding his opinions, ideologies, politics and biases, need not imply uncomplicated access to his consciousness or the limitation of his Texts to a narrow range of "what Blake meant". Rather, Blake's Texts come into process and play precisely *because* he produced them, yet there can be no definitive access to Blake's so-called intentions because these will always be in process and to some extent unknown. It is

in this manner that I will approach Blake's artistic and literary production, following his encouragement to read "dauntlessly", but moving beyond Blake and into the shifting realm of textuality. Here, the dissymmetrical equation of reading and writing (or of viewing and producing) places reader and viewer in a position of vital importance in the production of meaning.[27]

## Image and Word

Understanding the interactions between the reader, viewer and Blake's multifarious uses of images and written texts in his illuminated works is one of the central concerns of this study. Readers and viewers become a site for the interaction of these Texts, bringing their own processes to bear on the relationship between image and text and playing an essential role in the reciprocity that characterises their interaction. Their understanding of, and role in, the interaction of image and text is strongly affected by the striking similarities and differences between image and text as socio-cultural objects.

On one level, images and texts share a variety of similarities. For example, both were *made* or produced. Both have referential capabilities in the sense that they can refer to both abstract and literal concepts,[28] as well as to objects and subjects outside of themselves; in this respect, their ontological status is connected to *meaning*, rather than to *being*.[29] Within Blake's oeuvre both images and written texts have aesthetic and narrative functions.[30] They are both used to document historical events, and to respond to the work of other authors and artists. Both media also have the potential to be self-reflexive (or to express self-reflexivity).

However, image and written text display many differences, and cannot be understood to be the same kind of object. For example, they are attributed different values as socio-cultural

[27] See Zachary Leader's *Reading Blake's Songs* and the first parts of Stephen Behrendt's *Reading William Blake* for two particularly useful studies regarding Blake's encouragement of dynamic reading.
[28] See Glossary "Concept".
[29] This section has been influenced by discussions which took place during the workshop, "Researching Art and Literature: Questions of Theory and Method in 'Post-Disciplinary' Times", held by Susan Van Zyl ( Graduate Centre for the Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, October 2011).
[30] I follow M. H. Abrams in his definition of aesthetics as "the systematic study of all of the *fine arts*, as well as of the nature of beauty in any object, whether natural or artificial" (*A Glossary of Literary Terms* 4).

and aesthetic objects. Artworks such as Blake's are strongly entrenched in specific material objects and their value and significance are rooted in their facture or the appearance of the surface of the image-object.[31] Words, apart from their written form, may be spoken by a subject but not visually represented in any way. When words *are* written, appearing as visual entities, their material appearance (a facture in its own right) is generally regarded as irrelevant. Outside of circles of rare-book collectors and certain genres of poetry, it is the sequence and patterning of words, rather than their differing visual appearances, which is considered important, so that the text can be visually mutated without changing its essential meaning (as, for example, when a book's fonts and pagination are changed, but it is still treated as the same "text"). Thus, on an object level, the image-text relationship is characterised by a gap or fissure; in this sense, the verbal text and the visual work of art are also different kinds of ontological objects.

This gap is further entrenched by the differing ways in which image and text are read. When one views a picture, one can usually see the whole of its surface simultaneously. This is not to say that one can derive an instantaneous, unified understanding of an image at a glance. However, within the first few seconds of viewing a picture, one gains a general impression of its field or space. As Michael Baxandall writes in *Patterns of Intention*, what follows this initial moment of perception is "sharpening of detail, noting of relations, perception of orders, and so on, the sequence of optical scanning being influenced both by general scanning habits and by particular cues in the picture acting on our attention" (4). Words, on the other hand, do not offer an initial moment of simultaneity. Language, which consists of verbal signs, is read or heard as a sequential accumulation of significations. Making sense of the written word thus generally depends on a linear sequence, although this can be disrupted in certain poetic forms. One still experiences sharpening of detail and the perception of relations and orders, but the eye moves differently across the page.

[31] Facture can mean not only "the quality of the execution of a picture, especially of its surface", but also "the manner or style of making (a thing); construction, make; workmanship" (*Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) Online "Facture, n."). The significance of facture described here is, of course, a contingent aspect in other areas of art; Duchamp's Readymades, for example, have a very different sense of facture from a work by Turner. Similarly, the rise of the digital age, and the technology of photography, film and even the transparencies which preceded this technology represent a different kind of investment in material objects.

One may "read" an image, but one also views it; the same might be said of text, which can be read, but which also has pictorial elements and can be looked at. The person engaging with the illuminated page is not only a reader and viewer, but a reader/viewer, with the two roles intertwining. However, they never become equivalent; one simply cannot view an image and read a text in the same way.[32] The relationship between images and words, both as objects and in their interface with the reader/viewer, consists of a network of differences and cross-references, which result in gaps, fissures, and fluctuations in their interaction, but which simultaneously facilitates an open-ended reciprocity in terms of which readings are not as easily "closed" as when one deals with words or images alone.

## Historical Perspectives on Image–Text Relations

The interaction between image and written text has been the subject of enquiry from Classical Greek scholarship through to the present day. The heterogeneous theories which have arisen from these studies have often sought to understand the nature and significance of image-text relations. They have also been used both to foster and to close certain forms of image-text interaction; these studies are sites of interaction, in that they bring together conceptually varied images and texts and propose platforms and grounds on which images and texts might interact. In certain instances, for example, they have acted as part of the impetus for groups of artists and authors or readers and viewers to bring images and texts together in particular ways.[33] Understanding the ways in which these theories have constructed the image, the text and the limits of their interaction is important in establishing a method through which to approach Blake's illuminated books. Such a method needs to grow from its objects (Blake's illuminated books), but must also consider the ways

[32] See pp. 35-6 below for a discussion of the sequence of reading and viewing which provides a slight modification to this understanding.

[33] An example of such an attempt to combine texts and images is Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, which was devoted to the pictorial representation of Shakespeare's texts, and points to a belief in the translatability of literature into painting. This kind of practice was influenced by the general theories of the time, including *ut pictura poesis* (*Blake's Composite Art* 17-18). As Morris Eaves notes in "The sister arts in British Romanticism", Boydell's project was inherently commercial. At the time, British art was widely felt to be characterised by "obstructed aspirations, chronic neglect, unsympathetic criticism from the Continent, etc."; thus, Boydell aimed to stand it "on the strong shoulders of British literature" (256-7). Boydell's undertaking effectively points to the prevalence of notions of the sister arts in the period, but also underscores the importance of market forces in encouraging such pursuits.

in which Blake's illuminated books may reciprocally work on and be affected by broader theories of image-text relations.

The multiple sites of interaction and the fluctuations and fissures in representation which characterise image-text relations have led many theories to seek to stabilize their interplay. Two such theories, which are roughly contemporaneous with Blake, are the theory of *ut pictura poesis* (originating from classical scholarship, particularly Horace's *Ars Poetica*) and Lessing's *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting*. The degree to which these theories may directly have influenced Blake in his use of visual and verbal media is uncertain.[34] However, the implicit assumptions made by each regarding the nature of image, text and their relationship introduce a range of concerns which have a significant impact on the study of Blake's images and texts.

*Ut pictura poesis* translates (roughly) to "as in a painting, so also in a poem". By the eighteenth century, Horace's phrase had become synonymous with a developed theory of image-text relations. According to Cecily Davies, the theory of *ut pictura poesis* maintains a division between image and text, but proposes that they are bonded by mutual roots in "the unity and harmony of nature" ("*Ut Pictura Poesis*" 159). It thus posits that that the literary and pictorial are sister arts; the suggestion is that the two arts can be added to one another fully to imitate reality (Hagstrum "Sister Arts" 90, Mitchell, *Composite Art* 31, 33). In Blake's period, *ut pictura poesis* resulted in the attempt to "generalise" the principles of poetry to those of painting, and vice versa.[35] It is for these generalising principles that *ut pictura poesis* has been most strongly criticised. The insistence that image and text must emulate each other also means that certain differences between them might be seen as flaws or deficiencies. Radical incompatibility or incommensurability in subject or representation would be largely invalidated, while comparison and metaphor would become the outer limit of what is, as I will attempt to show below, a far more complex relationship.

[34] As noted above, Jean Hagstrum has argued that Blake's illuminated books were modelled in the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* ("Sister Arts"). However, Mitchell's rebuttal of Hagstrum's argument is convincing; he argues that the features of Blake's production which Hagstrum isolates as pointing to his literary pictorialism are *not* used in a visual or pictorialist manner as the eighteenth century understood it (*Blake's Composite Art* 22-30).
[35] For the history of this idea see Allen, Haskell and Muecke's "Commentary" to Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*. Dufersony's text was instrumental in the inception of the theory of *ut pictura poesis*.

The most frequently cited contemporary response to *ut pictura poesis* came in the form of Lessing's *Laocoon*. In this treatise, Lessing disregarded those generalising principles that underpinned the notion of the sister arts, replacing them with his own structure of interaction. Lessing wrote, "notwithstanding the perfect similarity of their effects, the arts themselves [painting and poetry] differ both in the objects and the methods of their imitation" (ix). Using this as his starting point, he argued for the acknowledgement of strong generic boundaries between the arts. According to Lessing, image and text were powerfully divided, particularly in terms of their respective relationships with time and space. He proclaimed that poetry was an art of time and painting an art of space. He then extended this division to include a number of other concepts. For example, text and time were associated with the masculine, the mind, speech and action; the image and space were associated with the feminine, the body, silence and passivity.

While Lessing's *Laocoon* problematizes a certain type of generalizing principle, the alternative generic division along the lines of time and space is equally problematic. As Derrida has shown, both written and spoken words have a spatial aspect; it is through the inaudible spacing or "becoming-space" of spoken language, and the visible spacing of written language, that the elements of language are related to one another and understood (*Positions* 27). Similarly, while a picture may exist in space, it takes time for the eye to travel (or to be led) across its surface. Pictorial arts may also offer narratives, and they can represent action in such a way as to introduce a very powerful temporal dynamic; this is particularly applicable to some of Blake's prints, which often represent a series of images which form their own alternate narrative alongside his poetry.[36]

Moreover, as W. J. T. Mitchell shows in "The Politics of Genre", Lessing's generic definitions are not purely "factual" – they are ideological. When Lessing differentiated painting and poetry in terms of time and space, he also set up a hierarchy in which poetry was superior to painting. This bias can already be seen in the preface to *Laocoon*, where Lessing compares the "narrower limits of painting" to the "whole wide sphere of poetry" (ix). As Mitchell argues, for Lessing,

[36] An example of such an alternate narrative is plate 4 of *America* (see Chapter Three pp. 135-7 below and Fig. 59).

> [p]aintings, like women, are ideally silent, beautiful creatures designed for gratification of the eye, in contrast to the sublime eloquence proper to the manly art of poetry. Paintings are confined to the narrow sphere of external display of their bodies and of the space which they ornament, while poems are free to range over an infinite realm of potential action and expression, the domain of time, discourse and history.
>
> ("Politics" 109)

Through close examination of Lessing's language and the structure of his argument, Mitchell shows that Lessing's hierarchy of images and text is rooted in an ideology which associates his grouped terms (image, space, femininity and conversely text, time, masculinity) with political groupings. Lessing was writing in support of Protestant English and German politics and against perceived French, Catholic idolatry; in order to do so he associated the former with the literary and the later with the pictorial (105-111). Mitchell notes that Lessing did not set out to dupe the reader, and he is explicit about his intentions. The acceptance of Lessing's misleading and unsatisfactory generic boundaries as objective fact is rooted in a lack of critical awareness and what Mitchell (somewhat contentiously) describes as the iconoclastic rhetoric which pervades western discourse (110-12).

Mitchell's argument is of greatest value as a reminder that terms such as image and text can be associated with dialectical struggles in which opposed terms take on different ideological roles and relationships at different moments in history ("Politics" 100). This is important, because it suggests that the hierarchies of image and text which have been established over the years are not implicit in images and written texts themselves, but are constructed and ideologically driven. Blake's use of image and text was not neutral, and his literary or pictorial forms are as much the object of ideology as their subject matter. The constructedness of Lessing's generic boundaries also serves as a reminder for the necessity of self-reflexivity; tropes for differentiating image and text or verbal and visual representation are not necessarily stable foundations for the study of image-text relations.

Mitchell suggests that comparative studies of image and text are particularly dependent on establishing stable tropes of image and text in order to regulate themselves (*Picture Theory* 88). Comparison is an important methodological tool in the study of image-text relations. An awareness of different forms of analogy, contrast and association may allow for classifications of image and text and hence for a clearer understanding of the way in which they interact with each other. However, the underlying focus on "stabilizing" image-text

relations requires a heightened degree of awareness when embarking on comparative studies.

Mitchell argues that historically, comparative studies between image and text have tended to produce master-narratives as a matter of course, because they *depend* on these narratives to entrench commonalities between literary and pictorial disciplines (85).[37] The very establishment of comparative (or even differentiating) positions requires one to presume that some "unifying, homogenous concept (verisimilitude, the sign, the work of art, semiosis, meaning, representation, etc.) and its associated 'science'" is in play (87). Inter-artistic comparison also perpetuates the confirmation of dominant, received versions of cultural history and of the positions of the arts within that history. It simultaneously fosters the rejection of forms of image-text relations such as metonymic juxtapositions, incommensurability, and "unmediated, non-negotiable forms of alterity" which do not adhere to the dominant status quo (87).

## Without End: Re-describing the Image-Text Problematic

Mitchell's point is a significant one. Although there is a long history of comparative studies of the arts, comparison itself is not a necessary procedure in the study of image-text relations. The relations between images and written texts appear in a variety of forms and permutations which need not be comparative. Mitchell may appear to be arguing against common-sense evidence when he criticises the use of comparison or the focus on the mutual links (or differences) which image and text have to concepts such as meaning, representation and the sign. He is not, however, claiming that these approaches have absolutely no utility. Rather, he is taking the standpoint that the study of image-text relations needs to be kept open to a variety of possible permutations. While some images

[37] Mitchell discusses this point in relation to Wendy Steiner's *The Colours of Rhetoric*. Steiner frames the study of image-text relations in terms of comparison, and argues that the primary value and significance of such "inter-artistic" study is in pursuit of historical periodization. Although Steiner's study is sensitive to different types of analogies and a range of problems associated with the periodization of historical differences, it is problematic in its suggestion that there exists an historical master-narrative, established through "aesthetic norms" (*Colours of Rhetoric* 4, 15-17).

and texts may have a common standard (both may represent in the tradition of mimesis, for example), others may show radical incommensurability that may even go so far as to bring image and text into the realm of non-relationship. As Mitchell writes, "The key thing … is not to foreclose the inquiry into the image/text problem with presumptions that it is one kind of thing, appearing in a certain fixed repertoire of situations, and admitting of uniform descriptions or interpretive protocols" (90).

The need to re-define the relationship between image and text has led Mitchell to consider a form of image-text relation which is without end. This is based partially on Foucault's formulation of image-text relations in *The Order of Things*. Foucault describes the interaction between language and pictorial images as an "infinite relation". He comments that

> [n]either [image nor text] can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying; the space where they achieve their splendor is not that deployed by our eyes but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax.
>
> (*Order* 9)

As Mitchell notes, Foucault is here suggesting that there can be no meta-language of image and text, and thus no perfect transmission, transference or combination of the two (*Picture Theory* 83-4). Importantly, Foucault acknowledges that this absence of a meta-language does not make language, or the image, "insufficient" (*Order* 8). Sufficiency is not the point. Rather, room must always be left for play and movement when dealing with the interaction of image and text. Neither image nor text is a closed one-dimensional field.

The opening up of the field of image-text relations informs the nature of the gap or fissure between image and text mentioned above. This gap is not a simple, immovable chasm between two fixed points, but a shifting time/space which is traversed by the reader and which may occasionally be sewn together, but which cannot be closed or woven into a single piece of cloth. As Mitchell notes, if the relation of the visible to the readable (both written and the spoken) is infinite, then "word and image" become un-satisfactory names for an unstable dialectic which shifts location in representational practices, breaking pictorial and discursive frames (*Picture Theory* 83).

Importantly, these fissures and broken frames appear not only between image and text, but *within* them (*Picture Theory* 94). There are no "pure" images or texts. The pictorial field is situated in institutions, histories and discourses, which allows language entry into the image (98). The word (or discourse) might, similarly, contain implicit traces of the image beyond the potentially pictorial nature of writing. Mitchell speaks of images which are already immanent in words and the fabric of description, narrative vision, represented spaces, metaphor, or "formal arrangements and distinctions of textual functions" (98-9). This is not to deny that image and text are different, nor is it to say that their relationship is symmetrical. As Mitchell notes, their different forms of object relations mean that the image might directly and literally incorporate a text, while it is more difficult or impossible for the text directly to represent the image (99).[38]

I would suggest that this opening of the relationship between image and text problematizes the trend of attributing primacy to image or text, as has often been the practice in studying Blake's illuminated books.[39] One cannot read an image and a text simultaneously, so even in an image-text such as one of Blake's illuminated pages, the image and the poem must be processed in some sequence. Thus, two of the fundamental questions asked by scholars of image-text relations are: "Which of the two comes first?" and "Does one take precedence over the other?" This situation is complicated by the fact that, as Baxandall argues, any *analysis* of the image is already entangled with language. When we analyse pictures, we do not explain the pictures themselves, but a complex and partially interpretive network of descriptions about them (10).[40] Kibédi Varga argues that even on the level of object

[38] For examples of direct representations of written texts in images, see the work of Hogarth, as well as that of various caricature artists of Blake's time (see Fig. 9).

[39] See David Erdman's contentious (if dated) "working assumption" that "every graphic image in Blake's illuminations has its seed or root in the poetry" (*Illuminated Blake* 16). This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Two, with regard to Jacques Derrida's notion of the supplement (p. 103). It is also interesting to note Joseph Viscomi's claim that "Late copies [of Blake's illuminated works] cost far more than early ones. The dramatic increase in price reflects a change in Blake's idea of the book – from books of poems to series of hand-colored prints, from prints as pages to prints as paintings" ("Illuminated Printing" 61). Works composed in the 1790s, but printed in the 1820s, would have been subject to these shifts. This suggests that for Blake, neither image nor text was inherently primary, but that the two were engaged in a shifting relationship.

[40] Baxandall notes that in current art criticism, descriptions of paintings are not informative because the writer, readers and viewers are (usually) assured of the presence of the object that is being commented on, generally through the availability of photographic reproductions of the work. Descriptions, then, become acts of demonstrating (*Patterns of Intention* 9-10). This is similar to, but not identical with, interpretation, which David Carrier defines as the expanding cycle of comments about a painting, which "[do] more than tell the

relations, there is a tendency to respond to the image in terms of language; this may come to restrict the possibilities and fix the meaning of the image ("Word and Image Relations" 42). Of course, as words can never "fully" describe a picture (or indeed, a text), words themselves are restricted in their function. However, once the stable, unmoving frame of "the image as concept" vs. "the text as concept" comes to be broken, once "sufficiency" is no longer the point, the "limitations" of image and text can be re-described.[41] To begin with, the "sequence" of reading is already flowing between image and text before the eye even makes the leap from one medium to the other. The text, which can be viewed in this context as a medium rather than a system, is sent into differential play by its relationship with the image.[42] The image might similarly come to traverse the word.

Within this context, Blake's statement "I know myself both Poet & Painter" takes on a different function. It requires the reader/viewer to take into account not only the heterogeneity of these two media, but to consider the ways in which the "both/and" signifies a relationship which is inclusive but fissured, malleable but rooted in a physical object, and which traverses the image-text without end.

## Blake and Poststructuralism

One of the primary aspects of this study will be a consideration of the ways in which this breaking of the frame of "image as concept" and "text as concept" might be explored through the application of poststructuralist theory to Blake's image-text relations. Blake has been deconstructed or engaged with via poststructuralist theory a number of times, although such studies seldom focus on his image-text relations.[43] This dissertation is not a

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story" (*Principles of Art History* 103). Both descriptions and interpretations are metonymic; interpretations in particular assign priority to parts of the painting in order to ascribe meaning to the whole (Carrier 103).

[41] In his treatment of the "concept", Mitchell is quite close to Derrida, who states that "[d]oubtless it is more necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations" (*Positions* 24). See also Glossary, "Concept".

[42] See *Picture Theory* (97) for Mitchell's discussion of the text as a medium.

[43] Poststructuralist studies of Blake's poetry include Molly Anne Rothenberg's *Rethinking Blake's Textuality*, John B. Pierce's *The Wond'rous Art – William Blake and Writing* and Peter Otto's *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction*. In addition, Nelson Hilton and Thomas Volger's *Unnam'd Forms* and Dan Miller, Mark Bracher, and Donald Ault's *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* present anthologies of essays about Blake, many of which engage with poststructuralism. While many of these studies make

deconstruction *per se*, but involves consistent use of poststructuralist notions to explore Blake's image-text relations. While poststructuralist theory is varied and divergent, a strong strand of it – associated particularly with Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and their circle(s) – is entangled with notions of that which plays, marks, moves, defers, disperses, produces and traverses without centre or simple origin, and "without end". The words "without end" appear fairly commonly in English translations of poststructuralist theory; for example, writing of the opposition between philosophical-logical discourse and empirical-logical discourse, Derrida states that "the concept of *play* keeps itself beyond this opposition, announcing … the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end" ("Différance" 7). The emphasis here is on unending (or, perhaps, non-teleological) processes and on challenging binaries. It is also concerned with concepts and methods rooted in the spaces *beyond* conventional, received knowledge and opposition, opening out into the important space of play.[44]

In this dissertation I will use certain poststructuralist theories as a lens through which to consider the ways in which the relationships between Blake's images and texts are characterised by a complex interplay of varied modes of reading and viewing, coming to be constituted as a *field* which generates multiple, differing relations. I will focus on the thought of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, engaging with their encounters with textuality and with Derrida's writing on supplementarity and spectrality.[45] The theories that I will deploy have not been crudely appropriated as a tool to prize open Blake's aesthetic

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reference both to Blake's images and his poetry, few of them use poststructuralism as an access point to Blake's *image-text relation*s, or they do so in a marginalized or fragmentary manner. There are certain exceptions to this, such as Stephen Leo Carr's "Illuminated Printing: Towards a Logic of Difference" (see Chapter Two pp. 70-6), and Stephen C. Behrendt's "'Something in My Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts", referred to extensively throughout chapters Two and Three.

[44] Hélène Cixous, has also engaged with the notion of "without end" in an essay titled "Without End, no, State of drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner's taking off". This is a complex engagement with notions of the production of writing and drawing, which places emphasis on process, on grasping that which occupies the in-between, and on that which escapes and returns.

[45] While Foucault produces a number of startlingly apt statements regarding image-text relations, his specific preoccupation with power, knowledge and discourse would take this study of image-text relations on a somewhat different, though equally valid, course to that which it has followed. Engagement with the poetic philosophy of Hélène Cixous would also provide potentially interesting readings. Her encounters with the generative, in-between time-space of the *entredeux*, and with wounding encounters with the other, might form the basis of a study of certain facets of Blake's illuminated books, most particularly with his engagement with acts of rape, and with depicting the sexes (see Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Helene Cixous, Rootprints*).

production, nor have they become a conceptual master-narrative that will force analysis of Blake's illuminated books into a preconceived structure. Instead, the theories, literary texts and artworks deployed in this study will be treated as interactive and mutually informing in a manner analogous to my treatment of images and texts.

However, before any analysis of Blake's illuminated books can progress, two concerns relating to the interactions between Blake's literary-artistic production and particular poststructuralist theories must be addressed. The first of these involves the fundamental differences between certain poststructuralist tenets of language and claims regarding Blake's understanding of the theory of language and of signs in art. The second concerns the degree to which poststructuralist theory and practices, which are strongly rooted in language, can be applied to the image.

Usefully, both of these issues are opened up by Mitchell's "Visible Language" (111-150). At the outset of this essay, Mitchell notes that he is embarking on what may be construed as a "parody" of (Derridean) deconstructive strategies (113). As Dan Miller remarks in "Blake and the Deconstructive Interlude", "Derrida's deconstructive method overturns … hierarchies and then subjects the whole system to displacement which reveals unacknowledged principles that organize the text" (143). This movement is evident in the discussion of Derrida's formulation of the Text offered above; Derrida undoes the hierarchy in which the author presides over the written text by showing that to read is also to write. However, he does not merely reverse the metaphysical binary between writer and reader in order to re-establish one in which reading or the reader is primary; one of his central claims is that such oppositions are conflictual, with one term (reader, signifier, absence) violently subordinated to another (author, signified, presence) (*Positions* 41). Derrida thus displaces the entire division between reading and writing, arguing that they are a single movement, but doubled, which operates (and is prescribed) "by the necessities of a *game*, by the logic of *play*" ("Plato's Pharmacy" 64). As Royle suggests, deconstruction may be summarized as the notion that "[e]ven the most apparently simple statement is subject to fission or fissure" (*Jacques Derrida* 26). It describes particular viewpoints regarding philosophy or literature, or even preconceptions about the way in which the world works, and then transforms them by exposing them to its single but doubled movement (*Jacques Derrida* 21, 26).

Mitchell's essay is proto-deconstructive because it approaches writing from the standpoint of what it seems to exclude or displace – the image and iconology (114). It is a "parody" because he is criticizing the text-centric focus of Derridean grammatology, which, he claims, excludes iconology and the image. It is also a parody in that it focuses on elements of Blake's work which suggest that he held opinions that contradict and clash with a number of poststructuralist theories. As suggested by my discussion of "original derivation", there are moments in which Blake's thought seems to draw close to poststructuralist theories; however, he also commonly heads in radically different directions from later thinkers such as Derrida or Barthes. One such direction, which is taken in "Visible Language", explores the idea that Blake's language seeks out the "full presence" of *logos* and the transcendental signified.

Mitchell adduces evidence from both Blake's early and late works. Perhaps the most accessible excerpt to work from is the introductory passage to *Jerusalem*, in which Blake writes:

> Reader! [lover] of books! [lover] of heaven,
> And of that God from whom [all books are given,]
> Who in mysterious Sinais awful cave
> To Man the wond'rous art of writing gave,
> Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!
> Thunder of Thought, & flames of fierce desire:
> Even from the depths of Hell his voice I hear,
> Within the unfathomd caverns of my Ear.
> Therefore I print; nor vain my types shall be:
> Heaven, Earth & Hell, henceforth shall live in harmony
>
> (3, E145)[46]

In this extract, writing is presented as a divine gift. Mitchell suggests that at its heart is the assumption that "God (the human imagination) speaks to Blake, and in that speaking gives him symbolic or poetic 'types' that will transform the invisible voice and message in a visible language of graphic and typographic signifiers" (127). Mitchell's broader point is that Blake came to see himself as making use of a language which heals the breach between speech (which has, within a Western metaphysical tradition, been understood to be self-present)

[46] These are Erdman's parentheses. It is fairly common for Erdman to use such square brackets to mark words or letters which were deleted or over-written, etc. (Exxiv).

and writing (which in the same tradition is informed by absence).[47] He suggests that Blake also wanted to undo certain oppositions within the world of textuality, including the gap between pictorial and linguistic signifiers; hence his reference to "visible language" (127).[48] Significantly, within the context of Blake's philosophy, such a divinely gifted language would be given *not* by a sky-god, but by the human imagination, which unites man and God.[49] It would, moreover, undo the split between signifier and signified, in that their relationship would no longer be arbitrary, but motivated.

It is in this context that Mitchell suggests that his essay is "written about and 'for' Blake and 'against' Derrida, as long as one understands its 'Blake' as a complexly de-centred authority figure and its 'Derrida' as a friendly dialectical contrary rather than an antagonistic negation" (114).[50] Mitchell's essay is not a rigid rejection of Derridean (and, more generally, poststructuralist) theory in the analysis of Blake, but a searching query with regard to the nature of their relationship.

## Blake and Motivated Language

As noted above, Barthes, Derrida and those who work with their theories take as one of their points of departure the structuralist, Saussurean notion that language is a system of

[47] The conventional, metaphysical association between speech and presence, and writing and absence, has been repeatedly challenged by Derrida. "Plato's Pharmacy" is particularly interesting in this regard. Derrida argues that Plato associates speech with truth, and with positive repetition, or *mnēmē* (the recollection and instantiation of the ideal forms). On the other hand Plato associates writing with *hypomnēsis* (the corrupt, negative repetition and recall facilitated by writing, which destroys living memory by undermining its evocation of the living *logos*). However, Derrida argues that "there is no repetition possible without the graphics of supplementarity, which supplies, for the lack of full unity, another unit that comes to relieve it, being enough the same and enough other so that it can replace by addition" (168). One cannot repeat without difference, deferral (*différance*) and adding (supplementation), which is alike to writing as Plato is deemed to have understood it. *Mnēmē* is intertwined with *hypomnēsis*. There is thus no "good" repetition or truth without absence, and this comes to affect speech through the contamination of "corrupt repetition".

[48] Blake's treatment of writing was complex, and may have interesting intersections with Derridean theory. See David Simpson's "Reading Blake and Derrida".

[49] Blake was highly critical of the notion of a God divided from man, residing in the heavens and ready to mete out punishment for inappropriate actions. This strand of thought is particularly explicit in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and can be related to Blake's Antinomian roots (see Glossary, "Antinomian"). He understood the *imagination* to be the site where God and man were united. (See pp. 110-11 below, as well as the Glossary, "Imagination").

[50] Mitchell uses "contrary" in Blake's sense of a "progressive, interactive opposition" and "negation" in the sense of a "static binarism" (114fn8; also see E34 and E142).

differences, arbitrarily established and without positive terms.[51] The basis of Saussure's discussion of language is his formulation of the sign as a "two-sided psychological entity" consisting of a signifier (the word or phonic construct) and a signified (the ideal concept referred to by the signifier) (*A Course* 66-8). It is rooted in the understanding that signifier and signified are separate, though mutually dependent. The Saussurean model of language thus contains within it the element of semiotic division that Mitchell suggests Blake was attempting to overcome.

However, Saussure's model also contains powerful contradictions, which draw it closer to the motivated model of language. Most significantly, he privileges speaking and "everything that links the sign to *phonē*" over writing and other forms of signification (*Positions* 21). Derrida writes that for Saussure the

> *[p]honē,* in effect, is the signifying substance *given to consciousness* as that which is most intimately tied to the thought of the signified concept. From this point of view, the voice is consciousness itself. When I speak, not only am I conscious of being present for what I think, but I am conscious also of keeping as close as possible to my thought, or to the 'concept,' a signifier that does not fall into the world, a signifier that I hear as soon as I emit it, that seems to depend upon my pure and free spontaneity, requiring the use of no instrument, no accessory, no force taken from the world.
>
> (*Positions* 22)

In this instance, the signifier and signified seem to unite, and moreover, "the signifier seems to erase itself or to become transparent, in order to allow the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its presence" (*Positions* 22). To quote from "Différance", this structure "presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only on the *basis* of presence" (9).

Both Derrida and Barthes criticise this aspect of Saussure's linguistics, albeit in different ways. Barthes, initially a structuralist, came to reject the idea of the sign established on the basis of presence and the transcendental signified in favour of the polysemy of the Text. He describes the Text as that which

> fulfils the very plurality of meaning: an *irreducible* (and not just acceptable) plurality. The Text is not coexistent of meaning, but passage, traversal; hence, it depends not on an interpretation … but on an explosion, on dissemination.
>
> ("From Work to Text 59)

[51] Within the constricted space of this study, my focus on Derrida's interaction with Structuralism is confined to some of his more important comments on Saussure, although his reflections on Structuralism are significantly broader.

Derrida's deconstruction of Saussure's model plays with slightly different ideas, and is more explicitly engaged with Saussure's theory. Derrida argues that Saussure's division of the sign into signifier and signified fails to acknowledge that every signified is also a signifier, as the signified is originarily subject to the movement of *différance* and the trace (*Of Grammatology* 73; see also *Positions* 24-9).

The movement of *différance* implies a powerful critique of classical ontology, including the ideas that plenitude of external presence (or "full" presence) either underwrites language and the play of *différance* or facilitates a motivated relationship between words and things. *Différance* exploits the two meanings of the French verb "*différer*" (to differ), which refers both to the spatializing movement of difference and the temporal movement of deferral ("Différance" 7-8). Derrida writes:

> [W]hat is written as *différance* … will be the playing of movement that 'produces' – by means of something that is not simply an activity – these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the *différance* that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple, unmodified – in-different – present. *Différance* is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus, the name 'origin' no longer suits it.
>
> ("Différance" 11)

Derrida critiques Saussure's linguistic system to illustrate this contention. Saussure writes, "[w]hether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system" (*Course* 118 and "Différance" 11). Derrida points out that if this were the case, then the deferral of presence which characterises language (as a system of differences) would be originary; the idea that no transcendental guarantor pre-exists the differences of the linguistic system means that the signified concept is "never present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself" ("Différance" 11). As Gayatri Spivak suggests in her "Translator's Preface" to *Of Grammatology*,

> … the sign is the place where 'the completely other is announced as such—without any simplicity, any identity, any resemblance or continuity—in that which is not it'([*Of Grammatology*] … 47). Word and thing or thought never in fact become one. … The sign marks a place of difference.
>
> (xvi)

This movement of *différance* has extremely important implications for everything thought of on the basis of presence. If each "'present' element" of signification, as well as the present itself, must be related to something other than itself through the movement of *différance*,

all that is thought on the basis of the present comes to keep within itself the mark of a past element. Everything thought on the basis of the present is

> already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of the very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present.
>
> ("Différance" 13)

Another way of saying this would be that both the present and the sign are marked by the trace. The trace is the mark of *absolute anteriority*. As Derrida writes in *Of Grammatology*, "[t]he trace is not only the disappearance of origin, ... it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin" (61). Derrida argues that just as language, as a system of differences, can be constituted only in relation to what it is not, the present cannot be constituted without differentiating it from what it is not – the past or the future ("Différance" 13). The present moment is permeated with past and future through a complex inter-implication that can never be disentangled.

> An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming time of space (*temporization*).
>
> ("Différance" 13)

The present, as well as any notion of the sign which is thought on the basis of the present, is divided dynamically by the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space. The present comes to be a "non-originary" (nonprimordial) "synthesis of marks, or traces", characterized by absence ("Différance" 13).[52]

The suggestion that through the play of *différance*, "the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called 'present' element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself" ("Différance" 13) is not alien to Blake's artistic production. In *Blake and the Language of Adam*, Robert N. Essick argues that Blake was aware of the possibilities of a variety of different sign systems, including one in which signifier and signified are divided from each other, thus being potentially associated with

[52] Once again, it must be emphasised that in Derrida's model absence does not become the primary pole of a metaphysical binary opposition.

absence rather than transcendental concepts and presence. However, he suggests that for Blake the arbitrary, absent and differential production of signs would fundamentally be fallen: it is a mark of the ability to call to mind what is not present, as well as a mark of man's distance from the human imagination or God/Divine Humanity. Essick thus suggests that Derridean theory, which pushes for the validity of just such a division, and undermines the notion of "full" presence external to language (including the "full" presence of man at one with God), is not an ideal perspective from which to approach Blake's images and texts.

In his initial discussion of Blake's understanding of Adamic language, Essick uses a series of four, interconnected paintings by Blake – *Adam Naming the Beasts* (Fig. 10), *Eve Naming* [or listening to] *the Birds* (Fig. 11), *The Virgin and the Child in Egypt* (Fig. 12), and *Christ Blessing* (Fig. 13) in order to frame Blake's notions of ideal and fallen language.[53] He begins by considering *Adam Naming the Beasts*, suggesting that the gesture which Adam makes with his right hand is a conventional indication that Adam is speaking. He emphasises that Adam is giving to each beast "*the* name", and that in so doing, he is using a language which is constitutive and motivated, characterised by a material bond between words and things (9).[54] God moves from the mind to things through his word (*logos*), and Adam becomes his proxy, using words to return these things to human consciousness, making them accessible to the mind of man (10-11).

Conversely, *Adam Naming the Beasts* also has several sinister elements, the most significant of which is the appearance of a serpent, whose head Adam touches with his left hand. This, in combination with Adam's act of naming, reminds the viewer that language, and specifically the ability to lie, played a key role in the fall of man. According to Essick, it is the lie's capacity to call to mind that which is not present (to use a signifier to call to mind a signified that will always be subject to the movement of *différance* and that can never *be* fully present) which (for Blake) brought about the fall of man. He suggests that painting is implicated in the fall of man in the same manner, as it is used to produce signs that are

[53] In this analysis I do not broach the topic of Blake's *Eve Naming the Birds*, which Essick argues has complex connections to natural language (*Blake and the Language of Adam* 18-21). The volume of illustrations provides a reproduction of *Eve Naming the Birds* so that the reader/viewer can gain a sense of the composition of the polyptych.

[54] Blake's painting seems to be derived from Genesis 2:19. It also broadly follows the episode in Milton's *Paradise Lost* in which Adam recalls his naming of the animals (book VIII 342-56).

radically different in matter and form from the things to which they refer (14-15). He makes direct reference to Derrida at this point, stating: "We have now carried Blake's painting into the company of Nietzsche, Sartre, and Derrida, the philosophers of absence and difference, of language as their trace, of the 'origin of the sign' as 'the breaking of immediacy'" (16).[55]

Essick, however, suggests that there is more to Blake's conception of language than this opposition between Adamic and fallen language. He argues that even as Blake acknowledges the "fallen" aspect of language, he is in search of a way in which to transcend this fallen paradigm. For example, in *Adam Naming the Beasts*, Blake foregrounds the act of naming the serpent *as such*; this initiates a structure which promotes life by defining its enemies (17). In the face of fallen language and the corruptibility of Adamic language, Essick proposes that the two final paintings in the polyptych beginning with *Adam Naming the Beasts* gesture towards the return of language to an ideal unity between signifier and signified. Christ is the word made flesh (John 1:14), and as such the infant Christ in *The Virgin and Child in Egypt* need not make gestures to show that he is speaking (as Adam must in *Adam Naming the Beast*). "There is no need for external reference … [t]he idea of the Son's incarnation in Jesus finds it semiotic equivalent in the incarnational sign – that is, a sign which is at one with its referent" (24). *Christ Blessing* takes this incarnational sign a stage further: Christ raises his hand in a performative gesture which does what it signifies, and thus the representation of his blessing *becomes* a blessing in fact (24-5).[56] Essick suggests that this introduces a triadic structure of the sign; signifier and signified interact with a recipient, whose condition is changed by inclusion in the signifying process, so that the sign's motivation need not lie in the relationship of the signifier to the signified, being anchored instead in the casual connection binding it to the recipient (26).[57]

[55] At this point in his study, Essick is writing in a highly compressed way. However, this bald statement oversimplifies – and to a degree misrepresents – Nietzsche, Sartre and Derrida.

[56] This is an analysis which might be applied well beyond Blake's particular paintings. The iconographic tradition of representing Christ – whether as child or man – almost always shows him raising his right hand in blessing. (This is evident in a variety of images by Michelangelo, who was a powerful influence on Blake, though Blake never travelled to continental Europe). The sign is thus easily read as a sign for blessing. So long as the image is understood in terms of its embedding in a particular religious tradition, the iconographic convention of Christ's gesture is thus always to some extent performative.

[57] Essick notes the similarity to Charles Sanders Pierce's triadic semiotic model of linguistics, but comments that the interpretant is significantly different from the recipient because it is a sign, while the recipient is a person (26fn52).

Essick then considers the various ways in which Blake may have approached this performative and eighteenth-century phenomenological model of language.[58] For example, he argues that the unity of conception and execution was central to Blake's epistemological and aesthetic doctrine (161). This unity is found throughout Blake's entire production process. Essick points to Blake's embrace of the accidental and uncontrolled features in his artistic production, visually, through blots, blurs and other such features. A similar emphasis appears linguistically through Blake's use of "oral writing", which "brings to a printed text something of the same increased presence of the accidental productions of spoken language" (191). He argues that this might constitute a "sharing of creative responsibility between artist and medium" (190). This unity of conception and execution could thus be understood to be "a phenomenal equivalent to the unity of the signified idea and material signifier defining the motivated sign" (161, 194). Moreover, as James C. McKusick highlights in his review of *Blake and the Language of Adam*, it may be argued that embracing this part of Textual production allowed Blake access to the dynamic evolution of language, enabling him to "surmount the taxonomic conception of language as a static system … [and to rediscover] his own role as an active participant in the making of 'English, the rough basement' (*Jerusalem,* plate 36)" (360-1).

Working from this rootedness in the generative nature of Blake's language, Essick embarks on an exploration of Blake's late works. His conclusion is radical; he suggests that particularly in *Jerusalem*, Blake proposes a model of language which surpasses even the motivated Adamic sign and delivers (or returns) man to the *logos* and oneness with God. According to Essick, Blake projects a phenomenological linguistics into an ontology by proposing that that through participation in articulation (which is linked to generative language), conversation and a (Christian linguistic) community, man can unify that which is separated by the internal and external, and by the sign and signified. This is not merely transcendence of division, but *incarnation*. Such a linguistic phenomenological ontology becomes a vehicle for the humanization of all language (235). All things in our world take on human forms. Essick writes:

[58] In his discussion of linguistic phenomenology, Essick works primarily from eighteenth-century phenomenology, focusing particularly on the work of Wilhelm Von Humbolt, whose theory embraced the "quasi-divine potency of language" (12).

> [These human forms] are the names we give them, the words by which they can be identified and made part of human subjectivity. In Blake's imagined world the linguistic consciousness grounded in these words becomes the ground of being for the things they name. The generative power of language, available to Blake and to us through our ability to create propositions never before heard, has become the generation of ontological out of verbal identities.
>
> (235)

If Blake's approach to language was indeed phenomenological and performative, and if – as Essick's analyses of *Christ Blessing* and Blake's production methods suggest – his phenomenological ontology radiates into the world of the image as a part of the humanized community of "things" and signs, then a poststructuralist analysis of Blake's images and texts might, indeed, be understood as an "oppositional" force. Poststructuralism and phenomenology are not mutually exclusive, yet it is important to recognize a variety of theoretical divergences. As Essick notes, the eighteenth century phenomenological model of Von Humboldt falls back on the sense of the "quasi-divine potency of the language of man" (12). Essick argues that central to Von Humbolt's treatment of the sign was the idea that its binary structure was supplemented by the field of interchange between two parties, speaker and auditor. This was necessary for language to function as a medium of communication. However, "[t]o the ideal union of word and world, represented by the Adamic or motivated sign, [Von] Humboldt adds a vision of humanity's original unity granted by the very act of exchanging words no matter their referents" (84).[59] In this context, language becomes a "grand synthesis of subjective and objective", and grants even the simplest conversation the status of motivated language (85). The motivated and quasi-divine nature of Von Humboldt's theory of language, as well as the notion of "original unity" would, for Derrida, always be contaminated by absence, arbitrariness and dissemination.

Performativity and the way in which language may become generative of practical consequences are also contentious issues within the framework of poststructuralism. In "Signature Event Context", Derrida criticises certain aspects of L. J. Austin's theory of performative language. Such an account suggests that language "affects" the world. Here, to say "I promise", for example, is to make that promise effective in an extra-linguistic context and to commit the speaker to undertaking any action which might be necessary to

[59] This is clearly different from the twentieth-century transcendental and/or existential phenomenology of such figures as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

implement the promise ("Signature Event Context" 322-3). However, according to Austin the performative utterance cannot be cited ("hollowly" repeated by an actor on stage, for example); if this *were* to happen, it would represent an instance of abnormal and parasitical usage (324). Derrida challenges this, questioning the purity of a performative utterance. He argues that citation and iterability (the capacity of writing and language to repeat themselves in a complex, mathematically structured manner which must be distinguished from mere repetition) in fact constitute the very *possibility* of performative language (325).

Thus, for Derrida, it is the differential play of language that facilitates performative utterances, rather than a special quality of performativity that allows language to bring about events in the world provided that a given set of conditions is met. He writes that "the intention which animates utterance will never be completely present in itself and its content" ("Signature Event Context" 326). As Royle notes, there is always the possibility that a promise will not be fulfilled, and for Derrida it is *necessary* that a so-called performative be non-fulfilable for it to be possible (*Jacques Derrida* 27-8). He gives the iterability of language priority over its performativity. In a not dissimilar fashion, Barthes' erotics of writing also resists the pretensions to full presence which underwrite performative and (certain) phenomenological approaches. The Barthesian construction of the Text leaves room for the ecstatic loss of a subject in a "textasy", a moment of orgasmic bliss in which this subject, as the *product* rather than the agent of language is undone, or deconstructed, by language because he or she has no secure identity as receiver of a set message ("Theory of the Text" 32).[60]

Essick admits that, at times, he is "more than a little guilty of adopting Blake's own beliefs as a self-justifying way of judging his art", although he tempers this qualification by rooting his

[60] Both Derrida and Barthes' theories of language are inevitably controversial. They have both been interpreted as stating that (while there is no possibility of a pure performative utterance) the world or subject is *constituted by* language. For example, according to Barthes the subject is never external to language ("Theory of the Text" 44). However, at times such statements are read too simplistically. Writing on Derrida's statement that "there is nothing outside the text" (*Of Grammatology* 163), Warren Montag reminds the reader that: "[u]nfortunately, the phrase '*iln'y pas de hors-texte*' which stresses the materiality of texts, their irreducibility to something 'more real' than themselves, … was rendered 'there is nothing outside the text' – a phrase which, even with the French placed next to it in brackets, suggests an idealism foreign to *Of Grammatology*. Thus 'there is nothing outside the text' became the flash-point for a misunderstanding of Derrida's work that continues to proliferate today." ("Spirits Armed and Unarmed" 81fn1).

analysis in the "uncompromising physicality" of Blake's publications (4). It should also be noted that neither Essick nor Mitchell maintains that all linguistic theory applied to Blake's works must fall in line with the radical understanding of language traced in *Jerusalem*. They claim only that Blake himself came to perceive language in a certain manner. Much of the most potent evidence for this understanding is to be found in Blake's production *after* 1804. In the early works which are the concern of this dissertation, there are traces of such thought both in content and in Blake's production methods.[61] However, these early works also contain traces of "fallenness" which are not easily counterbalanced by assurances of access to motivated language in *Jerusalem*.[62] They cannot be read as perfectly in line with the later works, or with some system or intention to which all of Blake's works are uniformly subject. As I have proposed above, Blake's texts need not, indeed must not, be approached through the intentional fallacy; rather the discourses adopted by Blake will leave marks and traces in his image-text relations, even as they escape from the reader/viewer.

I would like to return now to the notion of "contraries" as positive, productive (but not necessarily Hegelian) oppositions, as well as to the continued incidence of "fallen" language (and signs) within Blake's early work. On this basis, I will propose a way in which Blake's works might "hold together" in a manner quite different from that presumed by Essick's "self-justifying" processes. In "Spectral Imposition and Visionary Imposition: Printing and Repetition in Blake", Edward Larrissy has argued that Blake's printing process has links with the tension between "ideal" and "fallen" forms of representation. He suggests that repetition and plurality, both of which characterised Blake's printing process, might for Blake be related to the arbitrariness of the sign and hence to struggles with and in the fallen world (63).

Larrissy comes to this conclusion by considering the notion of "imposition". Imposition is the act of putting, placing or laying on, and fulfils an important function in the history of printing, where it refers to the "imposing or arranging of pages of type in the forme" (*OED*

[61] See particularly the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*, which is analysed at length in Chapter Two.

[62] Here, it must be emphasised that Essick's phenomenological reading of Blake retains an awareness of Blake's constant struggles with competing ideologies of language; his analysis of Blake's earlier works (*Urizen* and *Songs of Experience* in particular) also recognises the constant occurrence in Blake's work of differential language, as well as fallen forms of natural language (which is implicit in his painting of *Eve Naming* [or Listening to] *the Birds*). See, for example, *Blake and the Language of Adam* 19-21 and 150-51.

online “Imposition, n.”). The word also figures in semiotic debates about the arbitrariness of language. Locke (whom Blake consistently identified as an intellectual enemy), uses it in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

> [W]ords … came to be made use of by men as the signs of their ideas; not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas … but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea.
>
> (III.ii.1; see also Larrissy 63)

Larrissy suggests that Blake was aware of both of these meanings of the word. Blake’s use of the term “imposition” reflects this. On the one hand, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the word “imposition” is connected with the assertion of vision by “firm perswasion” (12, E38). On the other, in Blake’s late work *Milton* “self-imposition” is understood to be a feature of the fallen world (7.21, E100; Larrissy 61).[63] Larrissy argues that this juxtaposition is concomitant with the very unfolding of vision over a plurality of plates, where there is potential not only for the rise to vision, but also for the emergence of empty repetition, repetition being the necessary hallmark of the printing process (62-3). He concludes that imposition might, in this context refer to Blake’s sense that “through his ‘infernal method’ he is, with a hint of paradox, asserting a ‘firm perswasion’ in a medium characterised by succession, difference and juxtaposition” (63).[64]

The “hint of paradox” that Larrisy detects in Blake’s work is significant. In *Blake’s Poetry: Spectral Visions*, Steven Vine stresses that Blake’s poetry is constantly haunted by a spectral presence. The Spectre is a common figure in Blake’s oeuvre, an “elusive demon”, haunting and parodying the imagination with “its own negative self-image” (xii-xiii). Vine is concerned with the ways in which Blake not only promoted the power of imagination and his own visionary sovereignty, but also feared prophetic inadequacy. Blake’s poetry, Vine argues, is riddled with double vision – struggles with terror and anxiety which sometimes collapse into comedy and sometimes into catastrophe, making and unmaking, buoying and then eroding Blake’s visionary and prophetic sovereignty. Particularly in Blake’s early works, there is often

[63] See Chapter Three p. 139 for further discussion of this passage, and of the notion of “imposition”.

[64] Blake’s “infernal method” is discussed in *The Marriage*. It involves the melting away of apparent surfaces to reveal “the infinite which was hid” (14, E39). This process refers both to a mental/intellectual and imaginative revelation, and to the literal process by which Blake’s relief etched plates were immersed in a bath of acid to produce the relief plateaus. See Chapter Three, pp. 122-3 for further discussion.

a gap between what he may (or may not) have considered an ideal and his actual production.

I will suggest that sustained acknowledgement of these lacunae and paradoxes in Blake's poetry and printmaking process is fundamental to the study of image-text relations in his work and in his production as a whole. Essick and Mitchell present two similar views of Blake, but as Mitchell notes, Blake is also a "complexly de-centred authority figure" (*Picture Theory* 114). The existence of gaps and fissures in Blake's illuminated books points to plurality and dispersal, and not to transcendence or completion. If Blake returns to his reader through his illuminated books, then he does so as a spectre. Not necessarily as "*the* Spectre" (which appears in texts from *The Four Zoas* onwards and finds its prototype in *The Book of Urizen*), but as an elusive and *multiple* figure. Spectres, as Derrida has argued in a context well removed from an analysis of Blake, are always plural; they are always "coming back", returning from the grave but simultaneously retaining the singularity that marks each "event" (*Specters of Marx* 4, 10).[65] Whether these spectres are plural because they are the more-than-one of a crowd or community or because they are the less-than-one of dispersion without any possible gathering together, Derrida does not say (3-4). However, he does suggest that every attempt to *maintain* together these plural spectres in the present is influenced by the disjointed nature of the present itself (3).

It is interesting to note that one of the few references that Derrida ever made to Blake in his writings was on the subject of Blake's spectres. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida frames one of his essays with the "Blakean vocative", "Thy Friendship oft has made my heart to ake/ Do be my Enemy for Friendships sake" (E506; *Politics* 26).[66] In a later essay, "This Mad 'Truth': The Just Name of Friendship",[67] Derrida returns to Blake, writing:

[65] *Specters of Marx* uses the American spelling "specter", whilst Blake used the form "spectre". I will retain the British spelling except in quotations from *Specters of Marx*.

[66] See Matthew Green's "'He Who has Suffered You to Impose on Him': Blake, Derrida and the Question of Theory".

[67] This is an encounter with Nietzsche's meditations on friendship, enmity, truth and madness. It revolves around the notion that friendship is preserved by *silence*, by what is not said. In this respect the truth of friendship, or the idea that it is a way of wisdom, knowledge and political justice, is actually a madness of truth (*Politics* 52-3). According to Derrida the two concepts – friend/enemy – intersect and ceaselessly change places. It is for this reason that Blake's statement is so appealing to Derrida; he suggests that implicit in Blake's vocative is the sense that "[a] living enemy, the friend would remain today more present, and more faithful in

> In order to hear and understand this Blakeian vocative (*Do be my enemy for Friendships sake*), one would have to do justice one day to the incessant return of his ghosts – of which there are so many in Blake – as well as to the infinite partition of all his divided spectres. Respect for the spectre, as Mary Shelley would say.
>
> (*Politics* 73)

Importantly, this coming together of Blake and Derrida at the site of the spectre points, once again, to a particular, complex affinity between them, or between certain of their spectres. Matthew Green's "'He Who has Suffered You to Impose on Him': Blake, Derrida and the Question of Theory" proposes a "certain affinity" across the work of Derrida and Blake, pointing to their "shared religious heritage, including readings of orthodox and occult texts, a common grounding in European literature and shared interest in philosophy" (150, 152). While conflating Derrida's perspective with that of Blake would be mistaken, he argues that Blake "can be seen as a participant in the philosophical trajectory which is retrospectively applied to his work in the guise of subsequent literary theory" (154).

Chapter Three devotes some time to the spectres of Blake, of image and of text, and to the commerce between them. For now, however, it is sufficient to note that the (probably impossible) task of "maintaining together" the *many* spectres of Blake leaves room for both phenomenological readings of his work and for readings based on the politics of difference.[68] There are, after all, many spaces and cracks into which Blake's spectres may have disappeared altogether, or into which they may never have ventured; such awareness comes to inform his images and texts through the reader/viewer.

## Textual Structure

This spectrality and multiplicity is in many ways central to the method which I will adopt in approaching Blake's image-text relations. As I will argue, the vocabulary of Barthes and

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sum than under his misleading features, in the figure of the simulacrum of the unfaithful friend. There would be more attentive friendship, singular attention and consideration in a tension full of hatred" (*Politics* 72).

[68] This multiplicity should not be understood as pluralism. Keith Moxey describes pluralism as "an ideology of the status quo, [where] representatives of established methodologies … characterize themselves as part of what they regard as a range of incompatible and incommensurable forms of interpretation that clamor for the discipline's attention" (n. pag.). Moxey notes that pluralism can mask "the fact that different forms of interpretation exist in necessary tension to one another". He argues that these forms of interpretation cannot be viewed as incommensurable with one another. Rather, they are "part of a process of change and transformation" ("The History of Art after the Death of the 'Death of the Subject'" n. pag.).

Derrida, which is often directed towards the interstitial, is extremely useful in theorising both the generative, in-between spaces which Blake's image-text relations seem to produce and in approaching the many spectres of Blake. However, as the preceding section and my initial discussion of textuality suggest, both the later Barthes and the earlier Derrida show a far stronger concern with language, and systems derived from linguistic structures, than with the image. While both engage with the image (Barthes, for instance, in *Image-Music-Text* and Derrida in later collections such as *The Truth in Painting*), there is a legitimate concern that, owing to their derivation from encounters with language, Barthes' theory of the Text and Derrida's grammatology may exclude the image.

In "Visible Language", Mitchell reminds the reader that the image is, in part, "picture, likeness, simulacrum" and that in this regard "similitude" might be taken to be the central notion of icononlogy, which he argues is the pictorial science equivalent to grammatology (114). In this context, to declare all images Texts risks introducing dominant and hegemonic ideas, which, for the sake of analytical stability, exclude the similitude of the image. However, Mitchell's suggestion that grammatology dismisses similitude is an extreme oversimplification. Within poststructuralist discourse, the two are (as with any metaphysical binary) integrally interlinked; no similitude is possible without difference, and no difference without similitude. There is an implicit seepage of one binary "opposite" into the other. Moreover, it is arguable that the image is just as strongly subject to differential movement as the written text. The succession, difference and juxtaposition which characterise Blake's printing practice suggest that his printed images are subject to the movement of *différance* (which, it must be stressed, is a movement of differences which produces signification, rather than a movement derived from language).

It is in this context that I am particularly interested in considering the degree to which the image may be considered a Text, in the complex sense implied by various poststructuralist uses of the term. As noted above, the Barthesian Text is defined not as an object, but as a methodological field consisting of "quotations" (snippets of language which have a particular history and context) taken from innumerable sources of culture. These writings enter into dialogue, contestation and parody with one another, and are woven or collected together (without any strand's ever being lost) in a "fabric" which takes as its site the reader

("Death of the Author" 53-4). This field or weave undermines notions of both metalanguage (*logos* and the language of the transcendental signified) and the author as guarantor of truth; the "unity" of a Text comes to reside not in its so-called origin, but in its destination, the reader ("Death of the Author" 54). To make use of Nelson Hilton's terminology, textuality is concerned with the "latent energy or binding force" ("Blake & the play of 'textuality'" 85) which is generated by the wandering of signification (itself brought about by the differential nature of language) as it is traversed by the reader.

Nevertheless, Barthes contends that the Text can never be *pierced* by the reader who traverses it. A similar line of thought is followed by Derrida in his introduction to "Plato's Pharmacy", where he writes:

> A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game. A text remains, moreover, forever imperceptible. Its law and its rules are not, however, harbored in the inaccessibility of the secret; it is simply that they can never be booked, in the *present*, into anything that could rigorously be called a perception.
>
> And hence, perceptually and essentially, they run the risk of being definitively lost.
>
> (63)

The Text is subject to the play of *différance*. It is never wholly present, some element of the Text is always differing and deferred, constituted by the absolute anteriority of the trace. This means that its "rules" and "law" are never available. As Dan Miller writes in an analysis of the passage quoted, "[a] discourse is a 'text' to the degree that the factors organizing it cannot be immediately seen, cannot be presented conceptually in the way that the discourse presents itself … the text is an arena in which the function of some elements is exactly *not* to appear" (145-6). This is why the "law" and the "rules" of a Text are never apparent to the first comer, always hiding, and yet not secret. Importantly, the "rules" of the text would not be apparent to the "last comer" either; what is at stake is not a process of progressive disclosure.

As Derrida and Barthes make clear, the Text is rooted in language. Barthes writes that "the text is held in language: it exists only when caught up in discourse (or rather it is Text for the very reason that it knows itself to be so)" ("From Work to Text" 57). The Text exists only in language because, as Nelson Hilton states, it literally holds together in language "by the fictional resistance at each of its myriad intersections" (85-6). It is for this reason that Barthes states that it is a Text only because "it knows itself to be so"; the Text must be

available for purposive elucidation, interpretation, even re-constitution, but this unfolds in a fundamentally fictional, rather than empirically shaped, space.

If the Text is maintained in language and holds together through a self-reflexive discourse, then problems arise when it comes to reading the image as a Text. Barthes himself has practised the Textual analysis of images (as well as of films and music).[69] As Derrida notes in "The Spatial Arts" (an interview conducted by Peter Brunette and David Wills), all visual artworks, like literary works, are caught in a network of differences *and* references which give them Textual structure and open them to the play of the Text (14). Derrida's choice of terms implies a differential field which facilitates an intertextual play of signification. The "references" of which he speaks may also affirm that images carry the cultural and historical dimension which is associated with Barthes's Text as a "woven fabric of quotations". The notion of references also implicitly carries an awareness of similitude, suggesting that the image (and even the written text) does not fall solely within the realm of difference.

The image, then, has Textual structure to some extent. The Text is not necessarily contained within language, and might be "held" by other systems of meaning. However, this movement must be treated with some care. Both structuralists and poststructuralists have tended to explain the structure of the image in a manner which privileges language. For example, in "Is Painting a Language?" Barthes suggests that a picture exists only as its own plural description (150). Here, Barthes is not only making a point akin to those of Michael Baxandall and Kibédi Varga, who suggest that we tend to respond to pictures in words. He is also positing something more extreme; he seems to suggest that the very existence of the image is necessarily linked to language (if description is understood as linguistic) and that it is "inevitable" that we will use language to read it.

This places the analysis at risk of losing what Nigel Whiteley refers to as "critical reading". Whiteley argues that language is *not* the only medium through which we can access art. The loss of critical reading is characterised by the tendency to ignore the specificities of medium and practice in an artwork in favour of viewing the artwork as a mere visual signifier, a Text

[69] See Keith Moxey's *The Practice of Theory* and Mike Bal and Norman Bryson's "Semiotics and Art History" for lengthy discussions of the use of semiotics in the visual arts.

which is "to be read and interpreted rather than (also) aesthetically or visually experienced or responded to" ("Readers of the Lost Art" 108). The importance of the viewer's aesthetic experience of an art object is distinctively different from negotiating a written text and may be underestimated in a Textual analysis owing to the Text's strong connection to language.

Whiteley's view is supported by the strong ambiguities which arise when one explores the ramifications of reading the image through the lens of language. In "Is Painting a Language?" Barthes argues that despite the inevitable intertwining of images and language, a painting (or the pictorial) is *not* a "language", as we have yet to systematise rules concerning a picture's signifiers, signifieds and their substitutes and combinations (149).[70] Instead, Barthes argues that the picture becomes a field in which language is set to play. It participates in a *leakage* of language, where what is represented is infinitely deferred; the signified is always displaced and analysis becomes endless. The picture is thus traversed and constituted by the Text, it is the generator of systems, rather than a repository for them. Barthes' argument comes to imply that if the picture exists in a surfeit of or over language, it does so in consequence of its material differences from language. This suggests that the Text comes into existence at the moment when the art object's status as a material object is made most explicit.

This intersection is highly pertinent, as Barthes dismisses the object and the "Work" in his formulation of textuality. For Barthes, the "Work" is the opposite of the Text; it has tendencies towards restriction and limitation against which the Text can be defined. The first (and for the purpose of this argument, the most significant) difference that Barthes notes between Work and Text concerns their relationships to objects. Barthes writes:

> The [T]ext must not be understood as a computable object. … [T]he work is a fragment of substance, it occupies a portion of the spaces of books (for example, in a library). The [T]ext is a methodological field. … The work is seen … the [T]ext is demonstrated … the work is held in the hand, the [T]ext is held in language …
>
> ("From Work to Text" 57-8)

As a methodological field, the Text can incorporate *traces* of a material object; these traces focus and even facilitate the reader's exploration and/or generation of the Text. However,

[70] This is as much the case in 2012 as it was over forty years ago, when Barthes' essay was written. The linguistic systematizing of the image is, in any case, not tenable; images cannot be made to operate by the "rules" of language without the emergence of serious problems.

the Text is *virtual* – it cannot remain still or be held together materially, for it is *not* a material object.

This is the great ambiguity of Textual analysis. One must engage critically with the complex intersection between, on the one hand, the virtual field of the Text (inscribed in the space of the reader, traversing surfaces, incorporating significations without permanence), and on the other hand, the physical, spatio-temporal field of the image as object and, indeed, of the written text as object. As I have already indicated in my discussion of breaking the conceptual frames of image and text, there will be a blurring across these two fields in any reading. My critical practice will remain sensitive and receptive to this. It is also vital that the art object and written object are not dismissed owing to Barthes' somewhat pejorative definition of the Work. The Text is, in many ways, a limited term – it is *not* all-encompassing.

It may be helpful here to remember Derrida's suggestion in "Différance" that his own terminology must one day be eclipsed; just as no transcendent truth present outside of the field of writing can "govern theologically the totality of the field", so *différance* itself must one day be superseded "lending itself if not to its own replacement, at least to enmeshing itself in a chain that in truth it will never have governed" (7). It may also be helpful to remember that the Text is not hemmed in by "discoverable filiation" ("Theory of the Text" 39). The theory of the Text must itself be allowed some play, some room for movement beyond the theoretical bounds with which it was initially affiliated. This dissertation is not the site at which the Text will be eclipsed. Yet it consistently acknowledges that while Blake's images and poems are Texts, alternative ways of seeing and understanding them as objects as well as Texts must be formulated. This is, at its core, the practice of studying the Text; its law is hidden and it "plays" (often reciprocally) with the reader, culture, history and the object in such a way that it can never be resolved into a stable entity.

## The Intertext

The notion of the Text may thus be applied in a study of Blake's image-text relations, so long as it this done with sensitivity to the prevailing theoretical complexities. In ways, this is the most consistently useful term in formulating a study of such relations, because the Text

does not exist in isolation, but is part of the intertext. The latter is a productive interface where language and visual systems, both anterior and contemporary, come to the Text, "not following the path of a discoverable filiation or a willed imitation, but that of dissemination" ("Theory of the Text" 39). In other words, the intertext consists of a series of connections made between a Text, such as *Songs of Innocence*, and those Texts which have preceded it or are contemporaneous with it or its reader. These connections have not necessarily been determined by the author, nor are they, strictly speaking, appropriate merely because they are affiliated with the Text. As Barthes suggests, they follow the path of dissemination, with its connotations of broadcasting and distribution, but also of diffusion along lines down which the reader is sent by the movement of surplus and lack in language (and also in the image), and which spread out over a time-space that is not determinate, singular, unified or controlled by the will of the author.[71]

In the following chapters, I will show that the multiple, differing copies of Blake's illuminated books operate as one another's intertexts, though not in any simple or immovable sense. Within a single illuminated page, image and text come to interact in a complex process which is productive of a plurality of meanings. These relationships, and the Texts stemming from them, are made more complex by the gaps and fissures between image and text and by the blurring or breaking of their conceptual and even physical boundaries. The Textual and intertextual structures of Blake's illuminated books operate on numerous levels. Such operations are implicit not only in the material processes which produce illuminated prints (i.e. in their multiplicity, and in their process of production), but in the elusive structure of the image-text itself.

[71] See Glossary, "Dissemination".

# Chapter Two
# Breaking the Frame in
# *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

> There is always a surprise in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it had mastered the game, surveyed all the threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without touching it, without laying a hand on the 'object', without risking – which is the only chance of entering into the game, by getting a few fingers caught – the addition of some new thread.
>
> – Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" (63)

In "On Blakes We Want and Blakes We Don't", Morris Eaves argues that in the past, and even now, "Blake" is often the sign of something new about to happen in scholarship (414). His particular brand of obscurity ("situated right between portentous sense and arrant nonsense"), and his illuminated books which are difficult to read, see and exhaust because of both their obscurity and their multimedia character, open Blake to multiple interpretations. Eaves writes, "We are still at it, altering 'Blake' as our desires, for him and for ourselves, alter" (414). This points to a certain resistance towards mastery in Blake's image-texts, for their difficulty – most particularly that of their image-text relations – *invites* alternate readings; to use Derrida's terminology, it asks the reader/viewer to risk the addition of new threads.

Despite this, Blake's illuminated books are haunted by attempts to master them. In the face of a practice which constantly substitutes "wanted" Blakes for "unwanted" versions, Eaves suggests that Blake scholarship stands to gain most from a "focused, archival approach" (439).[1] In this study, I follow such an approach, in the sense that I make careful and focused use of Blake's archived images and texts. However, rather than concentrating on Blake's periodization or designation, my study centres on the specific dynamics arising from the

[1] Eaves makes use of the term "archival" in a broad sense. By "archival approach", he seems to suggest a rigorous attention to detail which *begins in* the archive (that is, begins with Blake's texts and images and the records we have of his time, as well as of various critical treatments of him). Eaves does not seem to be referring to Freudian or Derridean notions of psychological archives, such as those explored in Derrida's *Archive Fever*.

combination of image and text in his illuminated books, both as formal, aesthetic objects and in terms of their content. This approach has led me to understand Blake and his texts as complexly fragmented, a sense which has been buoyed by the sheer diversity of criticism responding to his archive. As I state in Chapter One, I treat "Blake" as a figure, both historical and aesthetic, who is constantly in process. My arguments emerge through and abut his multiplicity.[2]

My adoption of a poststructuralist approach is *not* archival, although it engages *with* the archive, sometimes reciprocally. Nor, as I note in Chapter One, is the application of poststructuralist theory to Blake in and of itself a sign of something "new". However, the modes of enquiry which I adopt – including my treatment of Blake with respect to his multiplicity, my challenge to and modification of selected studies of Blake, and the dialogical, frame-breaking approach which I adopt with regards to image-text relations – turn towards alternative and even "new" readings. They open differing ways of approaching Blake's image-text relations, and take the risk of entering the game, and of "altering" Blake in the sense that reading and viewing may be productive of meaning, even as they follow the "given thread".

There are many potential threads to follow in a study such as this, even when it is limited to certain of Blake's early illuminated books. These books have differing structures, both visually and verbally, as well as sharing complex, intertextual relations. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is unusual even in this context. Firstly, where the images and texts of most of Blake's illuminated books form extended, if not linear, stable or "matching", structures and narratives, *Songs* is a *collection* of songs or dramatic lyrics, with each separate poem interacting with images that share the page with it.[3] Most plates echo "The

[2] This should not, of course, imply that *all* "Blakes" emerging from twentieth and twenty-first century scholarship are "right", whether "right" signifies correctness, justice or coherence. My very reference to multiplicity implies that the notion that Blake was a wholly stable and unchanging systematiser is misleading. Approaching Blake from the opposite extreme of complete fragmentation and mad incoherence is, however, equally problematic.

[3] See Glossary, "Narrative".

Tyger" in structure: a short, titled poem shares the page with images.[4] This abbreviated structure allows the image-text relations of *Songs* to be dissected with some conciseness.

*Songs* also has an unusual internal structure, which is linked both to its complex compositional and printing history and to its explorations of the states of innocence and experience. Blake composed *Songs of Innocence* (*Innocence*) as an independent illuminated book, the first versions of which were printed in 1789. *Songs of Experience* (*Experience*) was first printed in 1794, while it was still a work in progress. Blake later joined certain copies of *Innocence* and *Experience* under a new, general title page, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience – Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* (E7).[5] The two parts of *Songs* are connected not only by their inclusion under the same title, but by a number of "paired" poems, whose content and/or form link them, usually fairly explicitly. For example, both *Innocence* and *Experience* contain a poem titled "Holy Thursday"; "The Tyger", which is found in *Experience* has a companion poem in *Innocence* called "The Lamb"; and the frontispieces to *Innocence* and *Experience* seem to depict the same figures at different periods in time. There are also multiple copies of *Songs* in existence, many of which differ significantly from one another.

These internal and external structures – the interactions between both the formal elements and the content of *Innocence* and *Experience*, as well as between the different copies – offer considerable opportunities to explore Blake's image-text relations. *Songs* not only confirms the Textual and often differential structure of these relations, but also draws attention to their generative character, particularly in relation to their audience. These image-text relations foreground the function of the reader/viewer and promote the breaking of the frame of image and text as concept, deferring the possibility of mastery and undoing

[4] In consequence of the abbreviated structure of these poems, the title of the poem essentially titles the page, and hence to some extent it also titles the images. However, as I will illustrate below, interactions between Blake's images and texts are not involved in a one-way, firmly hierarchical movement. As John Berger notes in *Ways of Seeing*, the relation between what we see and what we know through words is never settled (7).

[5] There are only four remaining copies of *Experience* which are not combined with a copy of *Innocence*, whereas there are over twenty copies of *Innocence* which are not combined. It is important to note that *Innocence* and the combined *Songs* have been labelled and organised separately. Thus copy B of *Innocence* and copy B of *Songs* are two completely different works (i.e. *Innocence* copy B was *not* incorporated into *Songs* copy B) (*Blake Archive*). Non-combined copies of *Innocence* are conventionally indicated by prefacing the copy's label with "*SI*" (eg. copy *SI* B). On the other hand, the four remaining non-combined copies of *Experience* all fall into the labelling of *Songs*.

hierarchies. They open up an interstitial realm in which image and text come to produce what Stephen Behrendt has called a "third [T]ext", a meta-text constructed from the image and text, but never quite reducible to either alone or to the sum of their parts ("'Something in My Eye": Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts" 81).[6] Acknowledging this meta-text is, I would argue, a crucial factor in coming to gesture towards an understanding of Blake's illuminated books. Such considerations affect the way in which one comprehends the relationship between innocence and experience, and facilitate a reappraisal of the way in which one evaluates or interprets Blake's image-text relations.

## Innocence and Experience

The general title page of *Songs* (Fig. 14), added to *Innocence* in the same period as *Experience*, introduces not only the "Contrary States" of innocence and experience but also the importance of image-text relations within the book. While pictures were not uncommon on the title pages of books in the eighteenth century, these would conventionally be produced by an artist and engraver(s), usually not the author of the text; such images would be engaged in a hierarchical relationship in which the text was primary. In contrast to this, Blake's general title page indicates a dynamic interrelation and interpenetration of image and text. It does so not only because Blake produced both image and text, but also because of the way in which image and text *share* the page and are integrated on a material level. The words of the title form part of the image, interacting with it: the flames depicted rising from the base of the page appear to be licking the subtitle, and the swirls and flourishes extending from the word "Songs" curl downwards to touch or connect with the flames. The "S" of "Songs" is occupied by two small human figures. They stand and sit under a branch-like protrusion which bursts from the tip of the "S", repeating in the space of the letter an iconographic feature prevalent in the images throughout the rest of the book. These features emphasise the materiality of the text, whilst drawing one to consider the legibility of the images.

[6] See Glossary, "Meta-text"

However, one is also directed to make the connection between image and text because their content is related. The title introduces the notions of innocence and experience as "contrary" states. To some extent, this contrariety is implied by their definitions. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, which was contemporary with Blake, describes innocence as purity from injurious action and untainted integrity ("I'nnocence. n. ſ."). The *OED* online adds that it is "the state of being untainted by evil". However, it may also refer to guilelessness, simplicity, and hence to "want of knowledge or sense, ignorance [and] silliness" ("innocence, n."). On the other hand, Johnson's *Dictionary* defines experience as "[k]owledge gained by trial/ and practice" ("EXPERIENCE. n. ſ."). In addition, the *OED* suggests that it is the fact or instance of being "consciously the subject of a state or condition, or of being consciously affected by an event" ("experience, n.").

As Stephen Behrendt notes in *Reading William Blake,* Blake's use of the word "of" in the title suggests not only that the book to follow is *about* innocence and experience, but also that its texts may come "from" these states. It indicates that the poems' speakers reside *within* and speak "out of" the states of innocence and experience (36). In other words, the *Songs* have a proto-dramatic dimension, with each poem spoken by a particular persona. The images of the title page may also refer to the states of innocence and experience. The two figures at the base of the page, wreathed in flame, seem to be representations of Adam and Eve after the fall; their "aprons" of "fig leaves" (*King James*, Genesis 3:7) are clearly represented. If this is the case, then the image depicts those who have fallen from a state of innocence or freedom from sin into experience, for the fall was constituted in part by Adam and Eve's realisation that both good and evil exist in the world (Genesis 3:3), and hence by the conscious recognition that these forces and the events they caused could affect human beings.

The title of the book also suggests the *type* of relationship that might pertain between innocence and experience. The second "of" in the title further points to a division or distinction between the states. This "of" is not grammatically necessary, and Behrendt argues that the repeated use of the genitive functions to separate the states of innocence

and experience, both semantically and intellectually (36).[7] This is, of course, reflected by the internal separation of the books of *Innocence* and *Experience*. However, this separation should not be understood to constitute a static binary. As noted in Chapter One, Blake's specific treatment of the term "contraries" entailed that "Without Contraries is no progression" (*The Marriage* 3, E34). This suggests that as the "Contrary States of the Human Soul", innocence and experience are engaged in an interactive opposition, which is necessary to progression.

However, Blake's reference to Adam and Eve in the image complicates this account. The flames which dominate this image suggest that its reference is to Adam and Eve after they have left Eden. Whereas conventional Renaissance and eighteenth-century visions of the same subject tend to depict Adam and Eve as upright and enabled, here Eve is lying on the ground, Adam arched over her like a shield.[8] In copy B, they their faces are hidden, with Adam's hands raised protectively over his head (Fig. 15). To their right, flames sweep across the page, echoing the lines of their bodies, and thus emphasising the defensive postures of both figures. Here, Adam and Eve's fall into experience is accompanied not by a movement into time (usually signified by the physical movement away from Eden, or by a figure gesturing that they will have to leave), but by a lack of forward movement in the face of a physical threat.[9] If the states of innocence and experience are understood to be contraries related to progression, then the reader/viewer might wonder whether the image of the title page represents the cessation of progression under the pressure of worldly experience and divine wrath.

[7] Behrendt's reference to the title's intellectual separation of innocence from experience requires qualification. One of the many historical hierarchies between image and text associates language with intellect and art with emotion, or sensibility. Behrendt's attribution of intellectual separation to the written text should also take into account the fact that the process of viewing an image (of "reading" it) is just as difficult as that of reading a text, and that it requires acts of thinking or making sense. Similarly, the affective dimension of a literary text is important.

[8] An upright Adam and Eve can be seen in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel (see Robert Coughlan, *The World of Michelangelo*). Blake was familiar with Michelangelo, whose influence on his depictions of the body, as well as on members of his circle such as Henri Fuseli, is noteworthy. Although he never travelled to Italy, Blake was familiar with Michelangelo through his trade as a reproductive engraver and friends such as Fuseli, among others. See Christopher Heppner's *Reading Blake's Designs* for further discussion.

[9] Of course, movement into a certain perception of time – one defined by the fact that death lies at its end – *is* suggested by Adam and Eve's awareness of the danger they face.

This stasis could be read as the culmination of experience as a state of sin and entropy. However, this reference to Adam and Eve must also be carefully framed by Blake's critical engagement with the notion of a punishing God who rules from above by reason and cruelty. Blake's censure of this view is most explicitly represented in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. As the title suggests, this involves the progressive coming together of the contraries of the infernal (which Blake associates with "Energy") and the heavenly (associated with "Reason").[10] Here devils are the salutary speakers of truth and wisdom, encouraging the liberation of desire. Angels are the propagators of reason, and they seek to bind the imagination and the five senses. Blake associated the imagination with man's oneness with God; in his annotations to Berkley he calls it "the Divine Body in Every Man" (204, E663). He also proposed that man's imaginative perceptions of the world were capable of forging his reality.[11] In one of his letters to Rev. Trustler, he writes,

> And I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike… As a man is So he Sees. … To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination
>
> (E702)

In this context, the fiery wrath with which Adam and Eve are surrounded may most appropriately be associated with a "fallen" perception of God, where Adam and Eve are disconnected from their imaginations and from their Divine Humanity. This strand of commentary is evident in several places in *Experience*, such as in "The Chimney Sweeper" (E23) and "The Garden of Love" (E26). In the latter poem, the gates of the Chapel where one might worship God are shut (l.5). The self-sufficient joining of man and God of which Blake was a proponent is replaced with "Priests" who "[bind] with briars … joys & desires" (ll.11-12, E26).

These texts suggest that experience is not necessarily a state of entropy and evil. Rather, the negative aspects of experience are entrenched in a certain way of perceiving the world and one's relationship with God. This focus on perception points to the sense that the spectator or "looker" whose gaze is implied by the image might be looking from "out of" the state of

[10] See Glossary, "Energy and Reason".
[11] See also Glossary, "Imagination" and "Perception".

experience just as the *personae* of the poems speak from one or the other of the states.[12] In addition, it suggests that there may be a place for positive experience. This potential is inherent in certain elements of the image. In copy L (Fig. 14) for example, Eve does not have her face turned inwards (as in copy B, Fig. 15), but outwards. She could be gazing at Adam or at the bird flying upwards into a blue sky, or returning the gaze of the "looker"/spectator or even the reader/viewer.[13] By having Eve facing outwards, Blake points to an awareness of her fellows. This is significant as, in his images in particular, Blake seems to have associated an imaginative awareness of other beings with innocence, but also with *positive* manifestations of experience. Figures who express the negative aspects of experience tend to remain isolated, looking away from one another.[14] This depiction of Adam and Eve hints that the two states may share characteristics.

The coming together of innocence and experience is also evident to some degree in both copy L and copy B, where the flames of experience eventually meet and touch the swirls extending from the words "Songs" and "Innocence" without consuming them. These swirls are more benign than the flames. In copy L, this impression is created by the blue sky in which the swirls reside, which contrasts with the fiery colouring at the base of the page. Copy B's flames are less fierce, the pigment more transparent; however, their shapes and heavy black low-lights nevertheless contrast with the more banner-like swirls, which are reminiscent of the vegetation found adorning many of the images of *Innocence.* Such a coming together of the states might be related to the inevitable movement from innocence to experience pre-figured in Genesis.

The image and text of the title page are drawn to interact in convoluted ways, not only because they share a page and physically enter into each other's space, but also because their subject matter is at once closely connected and disparate. Thus, image and text invite active engagement from the reader/viewer. That Blake expected and perhaps demanded

[12] The "looker" is usually male, and is associated with the artist but not identical to him. See John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, 54.

[13] This bird might be understood to signify innocence, as soaring birds form a motif of sorts across the first pages of the book: they appear on the title page and in the "Introduction", as well as on plates such as "The Shepherd" and "The Lamb". Similar birds do, however, appear in *Experience*.

[14] See Zachary Leader *Reading Blake's Songs* for a discussion of this feature of *Songs* (153). For an example, see p. 82 below.

this responsiveness is implicit in the *Songs*' sub-title, *Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*. Blake's use of the word "shew" carries the connotations of viewing and beholding, but also of inspecting, reviewing and examining (*OED* online "shew in show, v."); to "shew" is not only to instruct, but to expect engagement from one's readers and viewers.

The relationship between Blake's images and texts signals that the connection between the states of innocence and experience is intricate and mutable. Even the act of making sense of visual and linguistic material can bring these two states into complex relation, for both viewing and reading are processes of accrual of knowledge in time – processes of experience – whether they occur from a position of innocence or of previous knowledge and experience. The active engagement which *Songs* requires of the reader/viewer points towards Blake's visionary politics; readers and viewers must engage imaginatively with the world around them.

Such a focus is also evident in the format of *Songs*, which shares several similarities with a child's book.[15] As Heather Glen argues in *Vision and Disenchantment*, in choosing the child's book as a medium, Blake was choosing a genre in which real imaginative life (of an ephemeral, sensationalistic kind) was consistently subordinated to "instructive" purposes (14-17). Blake, though praised for the "simplicity" of his poems, does not offer neat criticism and straightforward instruction as might have been expected from the children's genre; instead he works through inconclusiveness and ambiguity (110). While I will not focus on this particular aspect of *Songs*, I would suggest that much of this inconclusiveness and ambiguity resides in, and is exacerbated by, the image-text relations.[16] Image and text set one another into play, allowing for the emergence of a Text which is both more dynamic and indeterminate than that of either image or text alone.[17] The interrelation between

[15] Several of Blake's poems actually echo, and even share lines with, works such as Isaac Watts' *Songs Divine and Moral for the Use of Children*.

[16] It must be noted here that Glenn manages an extremely complex analysis of these ambiguities by focusing primarily on the poetry.

[17] It should be noted here, that it is never easy to isolate Blake's images from his texts or vice versa. As noted in Chapter One, usually alterations to the visual appearance of the text are taken not to alter its meaning, and there are a number of anthologies of Blake's poems which make no reference whatsoever to the images. In the case of Blake's *Songs* though, words and lines of text may take on an almost pictorial quality through Blake's use of hand-written letters and inter-linear design. This is lost when they are extracted from the illuminated book and re-printed in type. In the case of the image, this effect is even more substantial. The

image and text encourages the generation of a virtual field of signification which wanders and plays, and which is constituted by both image and text.

## Variation and Difference

Within the context of the relationship between image and text, variation between copies becomes one of the most significant features of *Songs*. As my reference to both copy B and copy L of the general title page illustrates, the dissimilarity between copies can manifest itself in iconographically significant variants, such as Eve's face or the different intensities of flames in the images. However, it can also appear in subtler differences in colouration, figures' appearances, and visual relationships internal to the picture. Variation also occasionally occurs through the addition or obscuring of a passage of the poem. This variation facilitates the reader/viewer's active engagement with Blake's image-text relations and constantly invigorates it. While these features are evident throughout Blake's oeuvre, in *Songs* they are emphasised by the shifting order of plates, which can change radically between copies. Many copies also exclude certain pages.[18]

Variants can introduce a great deal of tension into readings. Take, for example, "Nurse's Song" of *Innocence* (E15-6). On the surface at least, the poem seems to be about exuberant children, caught up in their play. Their nurse sees the sun going down (l.4) as a cue to return home, whilst the children see only that "it is yet day", and plead with her to allow them to continue their games. Rather than insisting that they be bound by her reasoning, the nurse allows the children to continue playing freely "till the light fades away" (l.13). The image may, superficially, seem similarly carefree. All copies depict playing children, and a woman

removal of the text from one of Blake's images would require manipulation of the image-as-object. Hence, the pictorial material from Blake's illuminated books has not been anthologised in the same manner as Blake's poetry. Blake *did* print some of the images from his illuminated books separately (see "A Small Book of Designs", Butlin Cat. 260), and Butlin notes that Blake seems to have issued at least one set of such designs before 1797. Very few such books exist though. Blake wrote that printing images without poems meant "the Loss of some of the best things" (Letter to Dawson Turner, 9 June 1818, E 771).

[18] The only other book as varied is *The* [First] *Book of Urizen*, which contains a number of full-plate designs with no text included, whose order Blake shifted extensively.

seated beneath a tree, reading a book, who might be identified with nurse (see copy E, Fig. 16).[19]

Christine Gallant rejects such a reading, making use of the image-text relations of copy W (1825; Fig.17) to connect the plate to Blake's anti-slavery stance ("Blake's Anti-Slavery Designs in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*"). She supports her argument with several features of the image and text. For example, she argues that the small weeping willow beside the third stanza is an allusion to Psalm 137, "the lament of the Hebrews who have been taken into slavery for the first time since they left Egypt" (126), and to Blake's "The Little Black Boy", which is sometimes interpreted as an anti-slavery poem (Fig. 18; E9).[20] She suggests that the nurse is, in fact, a slave whose apathy and hostility is manifest in her agreement to let the children continue despite the "dews of night" (l.6), which were believed to carry pestilence in Blake's period. She writes that in the image:

> [t]he nurse wears a cap and long-sleeved full gown and only her profiled face shows, half-shaded in Lincoln's edition [copy W] and *all variant copies*. It is hard to determine from the text if she is white or black, but the design points to her reality as the domestic slave forced to take care of others' children in place of her own[.]
>
> (126; my italics)

Gallant's analysis is plausible in the context of copy W, in which the nurse's skin has been washed with warm brown ink. Her reading is less plausible in relation to copy E. Here, the nurse's skin is brown, but this is because the plate – and thus the shadowing of her face – is printed in brown ink. It may also be less likely that one would understand the nurse to be black in copy L (Fig. 19). Here, in plate two of "The Little Black Boy" Blake has exaggerated the blackness of the left-most boy to the extent that his skin reflects no light. On the other hand, the nurse's neck is left white (Figs. 18 and 19). This is not to say that any figure not explicitly marked as black must inevitably be white.[21] However, even in copy W, one cannot

[19] Copy E consists of pages printed in 1789 and 1794, but compiled and coloured only in 1806. Its status as an "early" work is thus far more complex than that of copies B and L, to which I have already referred. The printing on this copy is extremely light, and thus required Blake to outline many of the printed images, and even the text, by hand. The copy's colouring is not noticeably more refined than one might find in a copy of 1795, but it lacks the luminosity which is indicative of much (though certainly not all) of Blake's later work (see, for example, copy Z of *Songs* (1826)).

[20] See Debbie Lee's *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* for a discussion of the "knot of contradictions" which characterises the depiction of slavery in "The Little Black Boy" (118-19).

[21] Awareness that not all figures and characters are necessarily white is important, particularly in light of Blake's apparent politicization regarding race and the enslavement of people from Africa. (In 1796 he engraved a number of designs for Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes*

confirm the race of the nurse with any certainty. Above all else, her image is extremely small, and only a fraction of her skin is shown. The race of the nurse is *ambiguous* across all the copies that I have examined. Gallant, however, implies that this ambiguity must point to the same thing "across all variant copies".

Gallant makes this claim in order to try to stabilize the reading of "Nurse's Song", which might *shift* as details and visual relationships internal to the picture change. In copy L, the nurse might simply be understood to be liberal and relaxed, recognizing that no substantial danger is posed to the children. She could also be too innocent or ignorant to recognize the threat of the dews of night. It is even possible that the nurse might be enslaved but not black: the sort of indentured servitude represented in "The Chimney Sweeper" poems is a significant feature of Blake's socio-political commentary in *Songs*. Gallant's reading is more readily applicable to some copies than to others, and she is mistaken in imposing the same reading across all copies.

This introduces an extremely important question regarding assumptions about the authoritative structures of Blake's illuminated books. As Stephen Leo Carr points out in "Illuminated Printing: Toward a Logic of Difference", scholars wishing to stabilize the meaning of Blake's illuminated books have attempted to "overcome" their variants by organizing them into subordinate relationships, privileging copies with a certain place in the order of production (first or last), or those which are more highly wrought.[22] This establishes a hierarchy of meaning and value that allows for analysis "unhindered" by visual variation (180-2).[23] Such privileging implies that there is some "original" design, which essentially acts as a transcendental signified, with all copies acting as signifiers of it, and all differences

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*of Surinam*.) However, it must be noted that the majority of the figures that Blake coloured – including those linked to his "personal mythology" – are white. This suggests that Blake's sensitivity towards racial politics did not necessarily extend towards a twentieth-century postcolonial discourse. It's highly unlikely that Blake would have held contemporary postcolonial views, which themselves constitute multiple and shifting modes of discourse. To impose such a reading on "Nurse's Song" is anachronistic (much as arguing that Blake personally held to poststructuralist theory would involve anachronism). It would be yet another case of finding a "desired" Blake rather than engaging with the play of poems and images in his production.

[22] Blake's hand coloured and colour printed works usually contain more substantial variations and changes in the form of images than his monochrome works. (See Glossary, "Colour Printing".)

[23] Scholars compiling anthologies of Blake's poetry have encountered similar problems when dealing with the order of plates in *Songs*. The standard practice is to privilege the order of poems which Blake seems to have settled on towards the end of his life, and which is repeated in several late copies of *Songs* (see Erdman, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, as well as Keynes, *Blake: Complete Writings*).

identified as inferior to the assumed original. Sometimes, there is simply a denial or suppression of difference, as in Gallant's analysis.

In Chapter One I have already challenged the notion that Blake himself provides a stable structure and "origin" for his illuminated books. I have also, in my discussion of Derridean theory, explored the suggestion that origin itself is never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin (*Of Grammatology* 61). Blake's illuminated books, and most particularly their production processes and variation, *lend* themselves to similar explorations, undermining attempts at "stabilization" through reference to an ur-text. In "Illuminated Printing", Carr places Blake's relief printing process in opposition to other printing methods and practices of his time. He argues that in mechanical reproduction more generally, each plate refers back to a primary text or master copy, variation from which is considered to be undesirable (182). According to Carr, this means that such printing – which would include many of Blake's works as a reproductive engraver – operates according to a logic of identity. Carr argues that, in contrast to this, the production process of Blake's illuminated books emphasises the production of difference. He proposes that in this respect it differs in kind (rather than in degree) from other eighteenth-century printing practices. The material differences introduced in reproduction "themselves produce alternative construals or performances of a page", and disrupt the very possibility of simply repeating some authoritative or "original" version of a design over and over again (183fn5, 184). In other words, Blake's illuminated books work according to a logic of difference.

Carr uses two, interlinked features of Blake's production process to support his claim. The first of these is the tendency of Blake's relief printing method to produce accidental or uncontrollable features and details. As Carr suggests, Blake's relief printing was far more prone to foul inking, smudging, blurring, uneven inking and "slight uncertainties in the marriage of paper and ink" than conventional printing from intaglio etching (185). One might add that Blake's plates were also subject to deterioration over time from the wear of multiple printings (although intaglio etching is also vulnerable to this wear).[24] In any case,

[24] In "How Blake's Body Means", Robert Essick emphasises the relative stability of the relief etched plate, which is more resistant to accidental or purposeful change than intaglio engraving (204). Relief etched plates are, however, more prone to causing accidental changes to the printed page.

the very process of relief etching produces a significant number of accidental and uncontrolled variations, which Blake treated not as mistakes, but as important parts of his design.

Such accidental features can be seen in copy L of "The Human Abstract" (Fig. 20). In this copy, there is an explicit tree on the right border of the page, and an "implicit" tree on the left. The two trees suggest a sense of sinister enclosure akin to the mental state depicted in the poem. The "implicit" tree is printed, rather than drawn-in by hand; it may thus have formed an element of the design on the copper plate. However, this cannot be taken as the "correct" form of the design, because in a number of early copies the "implicit" tree is missing, even though the explicit one remains. In copies A (Fig. 21) and E (Fig. 22), traces of the implicit image remain; in A they serve as a border, while in E the mark is light and has been partially concealed by the addition of a vine or branch. It is impossible to determine whether or not the appearance of the tree on the left in copy L is accidental. Part of the reason for its signifying as a tree is that both the flourish adorning the "The" of the title and the thick ink at the head of the plate look like branches. Neither of these features is necessarily the result of intentional actions. The flourish-branch may touch the trunk because of heavy-handed inking, whilst the "branch" at the top of the page could merely be the mark of the thick, inked border common in copy L. There is no way of knowing the extent to which the appearance of these "branches" was an element of planned design or an accident which Blake embraced and emphasised by using hand colouring to broaden the base of the tree.

That Blake was accepting of these variations is suggested both by their incorporation into different copies, and by certain of his statements. He wrote that "<as Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant so Painting admits not a Grain of Sand or a Blade of Grass <Insignificant> much less an Insignificant Blur or Mark>" (*Notebook* 82-3, E560). Carr argues that variation is a necessary condition for the production of a work in illuminated printing.

> It supplements the network of signification in each individual 'copy,' re-marking each mark, not simply in an accidental, ad hoc manner that can be cleanly isolated from the initial inscription but through the requisite global re-vision of re-making set into play by each act of making.
>
> (185)

In this context, the practical difficulty of recuperating some "original" design from which all prints are derived is strong. Blake's illuminated prints might even be described as "monoprints", each print singular, a "once off". In this context, even the stereotyped images on Blake's (now lost) copper plates cannot be said to constitute master designs. As Carr notes, they are nothing more than "idealized abstraction[s]" (185).

The second tier of Carr's argument extends beyond the fact of accidental variation, and is less convincing. Each version of one of Blake's pages has been inscribed multiple times: it is the mark of that which was etched onto a plate, then printed onto paper, and then often re-worked by hand. According to Carr, this points to the fact that each sign on an illuminated page has a "double 'origin' … both in time (at the etching of a plate and at the production of a page) and in its material inscription (as a printed character that is subsequently altered by illumination)" (186).[25] He contends that this "double determination" generates a logic of difference where

> each stage of the printmaking process is displaced by the articulations of other stages. The final product is the result of different artistic imperatives, each of which is never fully able to realize itself because it must always interact with other construals of the design.
>
> (186)

This argument is somewhat over-determined. When one engages in the making of an image or artwork, there is almost always a process of building up and removing layers to the point at which the artist decides that it is finished. In this sense, there is no art-making that is not inscribed multiple times. In most cases, meaning can be read only from the final image and not by dissecting its layers (which would require their abstract reconstruction). It is true that in certain of Blake's illuminated books, the "layers" of production are clearly visible in the final product. This can be seen on the title page of *Innocence* copy A (Fig. 23). This might be contrasted with Richard Earlom's mezzotint print *A flower piece* (1778) which has multiple layers of inscription, since it was engraved and etched in stages, using a variety of techniques (see Figs. 24.1 and 24.2). In Earlom's finished print (Fig. 24.2), all the underlying stages have been masked, integrated into a "painterly" image. Blake's image, on the other hand, is far "rougher" in its finish. However, Carr's claim that each process is constituted by

[25] Carr uses the term "illumination" to refer to colouring; however, as noted in the Glossary, Blake's "illuminated books" are both coloured *and* monochrome. It should also be noted that Blake seldom printed in black ink – greys, blues, browns and greens are far more prevalent.

a different "artistic imperative" or "intention" (which, his critical account implies, would be independent if not for the fact that it was constantly forced to interact with "other construals of the design") enforces an artificial separation between processes which are actually malleable and mutable.[26] Such reasoning would imply that almost *every* print or artwork is constituted by a series of disconnected, potentially "pure" practices, when Carr is actually attempting to illustrate the interconnectedness of stages of production in Blake's unusual process.

Carr's point can, nevertheless, be made without reference to separate "artistic imperatives". Variation between copies, both accidental and purposive, is implicit in *every* stage of production: from the wear on copper plates, to differing inking of the plates, to the blotting and blurring of the inked designs, to the slight or major changes made by pen additions and colouring. I would argue that in light of this there is no way of recovering an original, some prior stage which would allow one to identify all variations after that point as dismissible. Blake's illuminated pages are never derivative of some master-design which, owing to the presence of the author, refers only to itself and forms an ur-text. This modification verifies and demonstrates Carr's point that there is no simple determination of the meaning or aesthetic value of an illuminated page, no single authoritative point of reference, whether this is claimed to be extratextual or an idealized authorial intention. In fact, the variation between plates involves what is essentially the movement of *différance*; the differences between copies infinitely defer the emergence of any "original" design. As Carr notes, the logic of difference which characterises Blake's prints "exemplifies the 'non[-]full, non[-]simple "origin"' of *différance*" (187; "Différance" 11).[27]

That this movement of *différance* is rooted in Blake's material objects and processes is significant. For example, Carr suggests that Blake's very process of printing comes to recapitulate iterability "materially" (187). As noted in Chapter One, iterability is a

[26] The notion of "artistic imperatives" is itself problematic. Carr does not define what he means by this phrase. It may refer to a specific technical process demanded by a medium. However, it also seems to imply a reification of such processes, suggesting that they have a will or presence, an "imperative". His reference to the "other construals of *the* design" with which these "artistic imperatives" must interact is similarly problematic, as his formulation implies that there is a master design from which others are derived.

[27] Carr refers to David Allison's translation of "Différance" in *Speech and Phenomena* (141). The slight changes, in square brackets, are reflective of the Bass translation which is used elsewhere in this study.

mechanical, mathematical repeatability, and it has complex connections to notions of sameness and difference, as well as to singularity. Any word or sign must be able to be repeated. My signature, which points to my presence in a singular time and context, has meaning only because it can be repeated and imitated, because it is iterable. If this repetition were to occur, it would be characterised by sameness (it would be the same as my signature) but it would also be shot through by difference, because my signature must be different from all other signatures to belong to me, and because multiple versions of my own signature can be compared (see Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context" 328). This repetition would also function to show that nothing, no origin or presence or action, can be pure in its singularity.

Carr's argument regarding iterability refers primarily to the power of signs to function in the absence of the author, thus distancing them from a putative "origin" and allowing them to differ from themselves (187). This is certainly the case with Blake's varying copies. Carr notes that this would usually be manifest only in the "dislocations and absences *différance* produces", but that this play of differences enters into Blake's printmaking processes in "relatively accessible ways, leaving moments of structural indeterminacy available for artistic revision" (188). Implicated in this is the inseparability between singularity and repetition. Leonard Lawlor notes that

> no one is able to separate irreplaceable singularity and machine-like repeatability (or 'iterability', as Derrida frequently says) into two substances that stand outside of one another … Machine-like repeatability and irreplaceable singularity, for Derrida, are like two forces that attract one another across a limit that is indeterminate and divisible.
>
> (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, n. pag.)

This is also illustrated materially by Blake's plates, for through the differences arising from the very act of repeating a "page", copies take on singularity.

This material recapitulation of iterability also points to complexities which qualify the notion of a logic of difference. Carr establishes a strong binary opposition between the logic of difference involved in Blake's illuminated books and the logic of identity which he claims to characterise other forms of printing of Blake's time. However, the sameness-in-difference of iterability reveals that this opposition is neither static nor complete. As Essick notes in "How Blake's Body Means", Blake's "graphics must embody a residual desire for identity for the

perception of difference to avoid chaos" (198). Hence, two copies of "Nurse's Song" have more in common than any impression of "Nurse's Song" has with one of "The Human Abstract" (198). This identity (particularly when informed by iterability, and hence understood as something which is modified by the lack of stable, authoritative origin) is as important as difference to the generation of multiple meanings across copies.

I would suggest that taken together, the difference and identity, singularity and iterability, of Blake's illuminated books open up their Textual aspect, also encouraging one to think of different copies as intertexts. The variation which is a feature of the materiality of Blake's prints comes to facilitate a wandering of signification which extends through and beyond the material object. Carr points out that the differential movement between copies reveals "the ultimate impossibility of determining some underlying authoritative structure that stabilizes the field of verbal-visual exchanges" (186). This state of affairs is further amplified when one also acknowledges the identity which presupposes difference. In this context, image-text relations come to be characterised by dynamic division, deferral and synthesis; they operate in an in-between time-space, generating multiple provisional and singular meanings.

It is important to note that the feature of variation, and the verbal-visual terrain in which multiple ambiguities prevail, is strongly exaggerated for the twenty-first century reader and viewer of Blake's works. While many copies of Blake's illuminated manuscripts lack specific dates or are otherwise of uncertain provenance, it has been established that he sold or gifted numerous copies of *Songs* to different individuals. Through resources such as the *Blake Archive*, the twenty-first century reader and viewer has access to a collection of these illuminated books which Blake himself may never have seen laid side-by-side in their "finished" form.

These electronic reproductions introduce a number of problems. For example, even the highest quality electronic reproductions cannot replicate certain features of the facture of an artwork. The textures lost in electronic reproductions of Blake's pages are a part of the aesthetic, intellectual and affective experience of viewing them, and also reveal more clearly which surfaces are printed or added by hand, how the page has worn, and so on. The

construction of a book is also not obvious when viewing pages in a web browser. The *Blake Archive*, for example, displays each page separately, so that that the notions of recto-verso and facing pages become primarily intellectual, rather than experiential. In certain ways, the *Blake Archive* sets up an alternative way of seeing Blake's illuminated books. The "compare" function offered by the archive allows one to view all of the available copies of a particular illuminated page side-by-side (see Fig. 25). One can also digitally compare and contrast images, or virtually annotate an illuminated page. One no longer needs to travel to a variety of locations and to put on gloves to handle Blake's books; nor does one need to collect expensive facsimiles, although one requires access to the internet.

This brings about questions of a different sort regarding hierarchical relationships with "origin". In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin writes of the shift that takes place in a work of art when it is mechanically reproduced. The work of art, before mechanical reproduction, is unique and singular. It has what Benjamin refers to as an "aura", which is the abstract idea of its genuineness constituted by its "here and now" (5). In other words, the "original" work of art can be only in one place at one time; it is made unique by its circumstance.[28] Benjamin argues that this "aura" shrinks when the work of art is reproduced by technological means, particularly photography. Reproductions and copies of reproductions substitute for the "unique incidence" of the thing reproduced "a multiplicity of incidences. And in allowing the reproduction to come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in, it actualizes what is reproduced" (7). In other words, photographic reproduction points to the iterability of its "original", undermining the purity of its singularity. As Benjamin notes, this leads to the loss of the "authority" of the original. The value of a "genuine" work of art was once (Benjamin claims) rooted in ritual, whether that of religious worship or of the worship of "beauty as a secularized rite" (11). Reproduction transfers its meaning away from one determined by such ritual, to one arising from politics. Here, the work of art may be made use of as a political tool, and its meaning shifted accordingly (12).

[28] Benjamin's emphasis clearly falls on visual artworks, whose ontological status is different from literary works, musical scores, etc., which were reproduced by hand-copying or printing before the late nineteenth century. It thus points to the implicit tension between materiality and textuality. Of course, these are manifest differently in Blake's illuminated books, which undermine the distinction between the material and the textual.

Writing several decades later, John Berger draws out the implications of Benjamin's argument. He suggests that once works began to be reproduced, the notion of uniqueness did not disappear but merely began to shift. The uniqueness of the original came to reside (and to some extent, still does reside) in its being the original of a reproduction: "it is no longer what the image shows that strikes one as unique; its first meaning is no longer to be found in what it says, but in what it is" (21). In other words, the "actualization" through which one can have a picture of an artwork in one's home is still understood to be of far less value than the original. Berger argues that the re-emergence of the "aura" of a work of art as the "original" of a reproduction (a mysterious object in an art museum, with tremendous market value) is actually "the final empty claim for the continuing values of an oligarchic, undemocratic culture" (23).

While Blake's varying illuminated pages inhibit the abstract idealization of the "aura" of the work of art, they are not immune to it.[29] The problem re-emerges when dealing with electronic reproductions of Blake's illuminated books. As my comments on the changes wrought to the "original" by electronic reproduction suggest, there is no such thing as a "perfect" reproduction, even when it is scanned at 300 dpi.[30] Berger, however, argues that this is not the point. Through pictorial reproduction, the meaning of painting becomes transmittable. It becomes information of a sort. Like all information, it carries no special authority in itself and can be put to use in a multiplicity of ways, with its meaning being modified or even completely changed (24). He writes:

> [i]t is not a question of reproduction failing to reproduce certain aspects of an image faithfully; it is a question of reproduction making it possible, even inevitable, that an image will be used for many different purposes and that the reproduced image, unlike an original work, can lend itself to them all. (24-5)

This is not to say that the original does not have value, does not remain significant. This study addresses the ways in which the "original" illuminated books can be read and viewed;

[29] Although Blake's profession as a reproductive engraver might suggest some affinity with Benjamin and Berger's arguments, reproductive engravings (which, it must be re-stated, do not include the illuminated books) do not have the same qualities as the reproductions about which Benjamin and Berger write**.** As Carr argues, rather than challenge the uniqueness of the "original", most engraved reproductions of Blake's period served to bolster it. They were done by hand and inevitably imperfect, but they were still treated as truthful reproductions. This only emphasised that one was looking "through" them to a distant "original" (189).

[30] "Dpi" refers to "dots per inch". This is the resolution at which *Blake Archive* images are available. While this resolution is very high, it should be noted that it is now possible to scan images at much higher resolutions.

it does not, for example, consider their manipulation by contemporary artists or authors. Nonetheless, Berger rightly criticises the "nostalgic" approach to such conceptions of art through museum catalogues, hired recordings, and the like (30).

If, as Berger implies, reproduction has removed and freed art from its elite preserve, and has caused the loss of the authority of its "aura" (32), this has important ramifications for viewing electronic reproductions. My own experience in doing this research has consisted primarily of viewing electronic and (to a far more limited extent) print reproductions. I have also studied four "original" copies of *Songs*, the early copies A and B of combined *Songs* at the British Museum, and the early copy R and late copy AA at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. This has affected my comments on these objects, and hence must act as one of the frames for my argument. Exposure to the "originals" brings some clarity regarding the effects of electronic reproduction on Blake's illuminated manuscripts. This does not mean that in my comments on the general title page, what I have to say about copy B is intrinsically more valid than my comments on copy L. What I am dealing with is another aspect of the incalculable inter-implication of iterability and singularity, once again materially manifest in Blake's production, albeit on a different level.

For twenty-first century readers and viewers, the enlivening of image-text relations through the differentiation of detail opens out and invigorates Blake's exploration of the states of innocence and experience, turning them towards extremely complex, even interstitial, contemplations of *Songs*. This can be illustrated by returning to the willow detail in "Nurse's Song". While Gallant reads the small image beside stanza three as a willow, this feature does not always signify as such. In copy E (Fig. 16), the willow and foliage around the title may, before close examination, look like part of the tree beneath which the nurse sits. The edges of the larger tree are outlined in narrow black lines, and on the right hand side of the tree one of these lines has been left open at the top. It is angled in the same direction as the willow tree, and is in line with the willow's trunk, encouraging the viewer to see the willow as the tip of a branch. This sense is further encouraged by the similar colouration of the foliage of the larger tree, the willow, and the leafy detail around the title. The impression given is of one tree with most of its mass obscured by the poem's text. This sense is exacerbated by the curling marks and flourishes which appear between lines of text, as if

the reader/viewer is catching peeks of the tree between the words. Even the sky has been temporarily blocked out by the bulk of the poem, though the last stanza is partially washed by pale pink and some streaks of blue.

In copy C (Fig. 26), this is not the case. While the willow and larger tree are shadowed on the same side, Blake has washed the trunk of the large tree with greyish ink, differentiating the two. He has also omitted to colour the sky, except where a few pink stripes hang low to the horizon. The absence of a colourful break between the top of the tree and the letters (evident in other copies, such as A (Fig. 27)), as well as the similar colouring of the words and all of the foliage, suggests that the letters may be the "leaves" of the tree beneath which the nurse sits. The letters take on a more strongly pictorial character than in copy E. In a sense, they become the tree, and it is possible that the willow detail, as well as the foliage surrounding the title, will also be read in this manner. In copy C, then, the poem is integrated with the landscape.

This affects the way in which one interprets the nurse's decision to allow the children to continue their play despite the fall of the "dews of night" (l.6). The text belongs to the nurse; it is given to her by the possessive apostrophe of the title, and by her reference to her feelings in the first stanza ("My heart is at rest within my breast", l.3). Thus, the appearance of the text affects the reader/viewer's understanding of the nurse. On one hand, if the text is actually *part* of the tree as in copy C, this suggests that the nurse is open and receptive to nature. This is significant because it is their connection with nature which fuels the children's "innocent" desire to remain outside. Robert Essick has suggested that their reasoning is derived from observing nature, the "birds" and "sheep" (ll.11-12); the children are able to tell that the setting sun is not a fixed cue which demands a specific behaviour (*Songs of Innocence and of Experience* 73-4). If the nurse is open and sympathetic to this imaginative engagement with nature, then her acceptance of the children's plea – despite the admonition that they must go to bed "when the light fades away" (ll.13-14) – is an acknowledgement of a more flexible notion of time. Whether she is an innocent adult or an experienced figure whose perspective on the world is enlightened, she seems to be open to positive, imaginative experience. Her vision of the world is unrestricted and incorporative.

The integration of the nurse's voice into nature as represented by the visual incorporation of her words into the tree in copy C may also clarify the significance of the final line of the poem. The final stanza runs:

> Well well go & play till the light fades away
> And then go home to bed
> The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh'd
> And all the hills echoed (ll.13-16)

This final line is a half rhyme with the second line of the stanza; echoed could be pronounced "echoéd". It simultaneously upholds and disrupts the prevailing scheme of rhyming the second and fourth lines of each stanza. That the final line at once does and does not quite "echo" is telling. It may suggest that the hills are not just mindlessly reproducing the *sound* of the children, but rather echo their sentiment. Essick suggests that the hills may, in fact, be a third speaker in the poem, and that like the children, they rejoice in continued play (*Songs* 74). The open-endedness of line 16 – which is not closed off graphically, but ends with a curving embellishment – implies the open continuation of the intertwining of the voices of the nurse, the children and the hills.

On the other hand, if the text – the nurse's speech – obscures the tree as in copy E, this may imply a certain constriction of nature on the part of the nurse. If the nurse is closed to nature, it would imply her deliberate neglect in allowing the children to stay outside: although her poem documents the children's logic, which sees no threat in the dews of night, an unsympathetic nurse is unlikely to have been swayed by such reasoning. This reading might draw close to Gallant's willow-tree analysis, particularly if the willow detail is viewed as having multiple significations, *both* willow (differentiated by its unique foliage) *and* as a branch of the larger tree. In this context, the placement of "Nurse's Song" in *Innocence* would be a qualification of the state of innocence: the innocent (and ignorant) children are subject to the will of an experienced adult who has little or no sympathy or pity for them.

In this context, the innocence and experience of the nurse becomes subject to the movement of *différance*. Through the varied verbal-visual relations of "Nurse's Song", each of the differing characterizations of the nurse (hostile, wise, innocent, experienced) is

displaced and deferred by others; each representation's singularity is informed by its iterability.[31] This lack of fixity is further developed by another (very different) form of variation and intertextuality: Blake's use of "sets" of poems, which share significant features but which vary in terms of their content. There are two versions of "Nurse's Song", one appearing in *Innocence*, the other ("Nurses Song") appearing in *Experience* (E23, Fig. 28). This plate complicates the already-varied process of reading and viewing "Nurse's Song" in a number of ways. For example, even if the nurse of *Innocence* is understood to be jaded, it seems that she literally has a more expansive view of the world than the nurse of *Experience*. In the "Nurses Song" image we see no hills and vales, only a doorway or portico, heavily embellished by grapevines, ripe with fruit that no one picks. This nurse is fussing over a boy, while a girl sits neglected in the background.

This limited view might be connected to a second complication. The *Experience* plate seems to comment on the jaundicing of one's perspective through societal regulations. Early in the poem the nurse states that when she sees the children "The days of [her] youth rise fresh in [her] mind,/ [Her] face turns green and pale" (ll.3-4). She may be jealous of youth, or made sick by nostalgia for it. When she addresses the children in the final lines, the nurse states: "Your spring & your day, are wasted in play/And your winter and night in disguise" (ll.7-8). The "play" of spring might refer to fun and frolicking. However, Johnson's *Dictionary* also defines play as being "[t]o do anything … deceitful" or "[t]o act in any certain character" ("To PLAY v.n."). In both instances, the notion of play is connected to that of "disguise". The nurse's grooming of the boy in the image may suggest that "disguise" refers to the (deceptive) cultivation of a certain, socially acceptable appearance or "character".[32]

[31] There always the possibility of providing a reading of *Songs* which makes reference only to one copy, or as in the case of this chapter, only to selected copies. So long as such readings are contextualised as being based on one or more copies amongst many, and it is noted that there is no authoritative structure which can proclaim a certain copy is privileged above all others, the problems that I have highlighted above can be avoided. It is also impossible to take *every* variant into account; not all copies of Blake's books are accessible for viewing. Even if one were to gather together all copies, bibliographic survey of all differences would need to be avoided. As Carr notes, these tend to "obscure the aesthetic or hermeneutic implications of variation through … simple enumerations that elide questions of how variations interrelate, of how they participate in larger verbal-visual interactions" (179).

[32] Certain eighteenth-century schools of thought understood children to be innately duplicitous, requiring harsh moral lessons. Blake was not a proponent of this view. In a letter to Revd Dr Trusler, he wrote: "But I am happy to find a Great Majority of Fellow Mortals who can Elucidate My Visions & Particularly they have been Elucidated by Children who have taken a greater delight in contemplating my Pictures than I even hoped" (E703). For further discussion, see Glen, *Vision and Disenchantment* and Leader, *Reading Blake's Songs*.

If the reference to seasons, day and night is taken literally, the nurse's lines would imply that the children dedicate all of their time to deceitful "play" or "disguise". They would never experience the joys of youth unmediated by societal convention, so that youth would therefore be "wasted" on them. Here, the play of the children is a sort of play acting, the unavoidable social role-playing of impending adulthood. Even if play is not understood to be linked to deceit, the nurse is unable to see its potential in the state of innocence. Nor is she open to the positive potentiality of experience, as suggested both by the bitter treatment of youth to be found in her poem, and by the notion that the children's winters (possibly their old age) are also "wasted". The nurse herself is representative of one of the "contrary states of the human soul", but is unable to perceive these contraries. In other words, she cannot propose an alternative vision to the socially acceptable one imposed upon her; she seems to have fully internalized this vision. This is in contrast to positive readings of the nurse of *Innocence*. In certain instances, this nurse may be understood to have developed a critical consciousness which allows her to compensate for the loss of innocence by incorporating the youthful enthusiasm and different reasoning of her charges into her own way of viewing the world.

It is precisely the establishment of alternative vision which Blake seems to be encouraging through his use of variation, and through what I have framed as intertextuality. When reading "Nurse[s/'s] Song" across both *Innocence* and *Experience*, the reader/viewer constructs a Text consisting of multiple meanings which relate to the figure of the nurse. The nurse of *Experience* is framed by the nurse of *Innocence* and vice versa. Their *personae* are embedded in a form, both pictorial and literary, which constantly encourages the generation of differing meanings. In this context, Blake's claim to "shew" the contrary states of innocence and experience comes to signal a situation in which the reader/viewer is drawn to interact actively with image, text and their context in order to generate an expanding field of particulars which do not close or generalise meaning.[33]

[33] It should be noted that Blake was preoccupied with concreteness and the particular as opposed to generalized abstraction. In his annotations to Reynolds, Blake wrote "[t]o Generalize is to be an Idiot To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit – General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess" (xcvi, E641).

There is a strand of Blake scholarship which sees this engagement with his audience as the central feature motivating the image-text relations of Blake's illuminated books. One of the most prominent proponents of this approach is Stephen Behrendt, who claims that "Blake means to bring his readers into the process of creating, performing and realizing the illuminated poems with their own visionary consciousness" (*Reading William Blake* 40). Blake was, at times, quite explicit in stating his expectations of and hopes for his audience. One of the most interesting statements of this kind appears in *A Vision of the Last Judgement* of 1808. Alluding to the vision described in this text, Blake writes:

> If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought[;] if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know[;] then would he arise from his Grave[,] then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy.
>
> (*Notebook* 81, E560)

In "'Something in my Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts", Behrendt contends that this is a "guide" to the "obligations that rest on the cooperating (and thus collaborating) viewer" (85). The passage urges the Spectator – the viewer and the recipient of information – to engage contemplatively with Blake's texts and vision through imaginative perception, thereby entering *into* vision. He or she is asked to make "Friend[s] & Companion[s]" of those images arising from the imagination. The spectator must both communicate with vision and collaborate in generating it. This places the artist in a mediatory role, the materials and nuances of his art providing a platform for the audience's rise into vision, but neither limiting nor controlling it (85).

Through such acts of perception and communication, the Spectator transcends the "Grave" of physical limitations. As Behrendt notes, the communication that occurs here approaches "a sort of telepathic communication that transpires 'in the air' where the viewer … enters directly into the world of pure vision, pure Idea" (85). I would add that while Blake's statement regarding the Spectator is concerned with his vision in the form of images, rather than with images and poetry together, on the next page of *A Vision of the Last Judgement* he compares the process of reading an image to that of reading a poem. In this section he

states that neither poetry nor painting admits anything to be "insignificant", claiming that each separate detail or aspect of an image is necessary in order to make that image comprehensible, just as every letter and word is necessary to make his poetry comprehensible (83, E560).[34] This expresses the expectation that a process of close reading will be followed for both image and text.

In "Irritants", Behrendt links this underlying emphasis on interactions with an audience to the poststructuralist construction of the Text as that which takes as its site the embodied reader, and which is to some extent produced by the reader. Behrendt opens his argument by challenging the often implicit assumption that Blake's visual art is "at best the weak, subservient sister art, whose function is not *textually* significant and whose nature *as art* is only minimally or marginally important in the generation of meaning" (79). Having asserted that both Blake's images and his texts have Textual structure, and that Blake's images are *not* mere illustrations to the text, he moves on to consider the significant implications.

Behrendt argues that when one reads one of Blake's illuminated pages, one has to negotiate between "different varieties of aesthetic, intellectual and affective responses" which arise from the differing disciplinary natures of image and text, and between their differing traditions and "vocabular[ies] (or reference systems)" (81). He claims that when the responding mind is asked to negotiate these "deliberately interdisciplinary physical representations … [it] put[s] us in touch with a body of meaning, or signification, of which each Text [visual and verbal] – taken both separately and in tandem – is at best merely an approximation, an analogue" (85). In themselves, "Blake's illuminated poems generate what is essentially a 'third [T]ext', a meta-text that partakes of both the verbal and the visual texts, but that is neither the sum of, nor identical with either of, those two texts" (81).

This, Behrendt argues, is the product of Blake's essentially sacramental way of reading. He contends that for Blake, reading and viewing his image-texts should act as "a prelude to individual insight and to social – or community – prophecy and redemption" (79). According to Behrendt, the realm of vision that Blake asks his reader to enter is accessed directly

[34] See also p. 72 above.

through the formal, Third Text aspects of his image-text relations. This departs from poststructuralist notions of the Text deployed in this dissertation on at least two levels: neither Barthes nor Derrida suggests a visionary or sacramental relationship between the reader/viewer and the Text, nor does either propose that the author of a Text has the sort of underlying mastery offered here.

Behrendt's argument essentially implies that while Blake's Texts might be characterised by an uncontrollable malleability and excess of meaning – what I have thus far described as their escape into indeterminacy, incommensurability and *différance* – the *effect* of the reader/viewer's Textual encounter is predictable and intended by Blake. The interstitial realm into which the Third Text propels the reader and viewer is, for Behrendt, representative of the stripping away of determinate and "conditioned" answers linked to the various institutional, controlling establishments of Blake's times. He writes that Blake's Texts foster independence of mind and vision *because* they deny the reader/viewer intellectual leisure fostered by determinacy (93). In other words, Blake's art has a "subversive, oppositional intent [in which] … generally lies much of the aesthetic and intellectual 'agenda' that is tangibly represented in the meta-text that emerges from [his] illuminated pages" (93-4).

Behrendt's notion of the Third Text is fruitful and even ingenious. It draws on both the threads presented by the formal dynamics of Blake's production and on a number of the ideas and ideological strands which appear in Blake's "archive", as much in his early works as in his later ones. The primary challenge and modification which I will make to Behrendt's argument addresses his assured references to Blake's intentions, together with the inference that Blake was generally successful in his attempts to bring his audience into contact with the realm of vision. As I will explore in Chapter Three, Blake's image-text relations are fraught with uncertainties and moments of blindness which extend well beyond destabilising controlling institutional discourses, both visual and verbal; these uncertainties come to haunt his illuminated books with spectres of visionary failure.

One can approach the notion of a Third Text from within each illuminated book, rather than from the long-perspective of a model of Blake's (shifting) thought, emerging from his oeuvre

as a whole. Together, Blake's images and texts generate a Text. This Text is *virtual*; it hovers in an interstitial space and time somewhere *between* the visual and verbal representations on a given page, within a book or between copies. However, it also exceeds each of these media and objects. This, Text is produced by the reader, and is infinitely more complex than a simple equation where the image and text, added together, produce a sum with a pre-determinable outcome. It is more complex even than W. J. T. Mitchell's idea that Blake's images and texts are multiplied by one another to create a composite art. While this "multiplication" carries connotations of excess, it also implies a stable movement with a product which is (when the terms are positive) always *more than* its constituent elements (*Composite Art* 30-33). Mitchell's approach does not take into account the fraying or whittling away of determinate meaning which *also* accompanies the movement of the Third Text. The Third Text expands, simultaneously, in a variety of directions; it is constituted by the *field* of the Text, the woven fabric of differences and references.

Importantly, I would argue that despite the virtual status of the Third Text, the *materiality* of Blake's image-texts is woven into it. While it is not identical to either image or text, and is certainly not a physical object, it is shot through with traces of physicality as well as of that which is incorporeal; it is spectral, marked by the continuous appearance and disappearance of the corporeal. This manifests itself in a variety of ways. As I have noted with reference to the general title page, Blake's image-text relations place emphasis on the materiality of Blake's poems and the legible textuality of his images.[35] In this sense, each comes to exceed the conceptual limitations of its own art form. To phrase this differently, the process of producing a Third Text highlights the porous and malleable boundaries between image and text, opening up the space in which the conceptual frames of text and image are broken or undermined.

[35] As I have emphasised above, the materiality of Blake's written texts is a significant feature of his illuminated books. While I acknowledge that the hand-written text is *both* visual *and* verbal, and that Blake's inter-linear designs affect one's readings of his poems, this complex field of interaction is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It does, however, reinforce the fact that in some cases – as in certain copies of "Nurse's Song" – the written text becomes almost pictorial. This does not indicate the subordination of text to image, for the text does not lose its ontological nature *as text* (an exception might be made for instances where the text has become illegible). If the text – hand written, beautifully presented – comes to be enmeshed with the pictorial, then the pictorial is also, reciprocally, being enmeshed with the text.

## Producing a Third Text

The Third Texts generated by *Songs* are invigorated by a number of factors, including the abbreviated nature of the poems and their corresponding images, the tendency to set up relationships across *Innocence* and *Experience*, and the structure of variation. "The Sick Rose", a poem found in *Experience*, provides a particularly nuanced example of the ways in which a Third Text can be generated both within an individual image-text, but also across different copies of, and pages in, an illuminated book. Like many of Blake's *Songs*, the simplicity of both the poem and image of "The Sick Rose" is deceptive. The poem consists of two quatrains, with the second and fourth line of each stanza rhyming.

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

(E23)

The image depicts a rose bush which has wilted to the ground, forming a rough oval (see Figs. 29 and 30). While there is evidence of detailed work in Blake's engraving of the leaves and thorns, in many copies both the rose at the base of the image and figure emerging from it are roughly rendered.

The poem takes as its subject a rose, which is being addressed by the speaker. It opens with a common literary convention, as the speaker uses an emphatic "O" to preface his (or her) address, and follows this with a declaration concerning the rose's state of being: it is sick because it has been corrupted by a worm. In the poem this worm is male. His flight at "night" in "the howling storm" (ll.3-4) associates him with a night-hunting predatory bird which actively seeks out the rose. This "howling storm" might also be linked to the passion of his "dark secret love" (l.7). It is left ambiguous as to whether this love was always destructive, and has therefore been concealed, or whether its secrecy (and the implied concealment – and even repression – which accompany this) have transformed it into something dark. This description of the worm operates in contrast to that of the rose, which is contained in a single place, a "bed"/ of crimson joy" (ll.5-6). This "bed/ of crimson joy"

might suggest a visible, explicit sexuality. This sexuality is not necessarily positive; for example, crimson is a colour sometimes associated with sin.[36] It is this erotic quality which first attracts the worm and brings about the destruction of the rose's life.

At first glance, this reading of the poem seems to correlate with the image. The rose bush in the image has wilted until it lies on the ground, which suggests that it is sick. The way in which it has wilted creates a circular frame, completely enclosing the text. It is only once the eye has travelled the circuit of the image that it moves to the poem, so one's reading of the poem is framed by the image from the very start. The human figure emerging from the rose might be understood to be an anthropomorphised representation of the "Sick Rose". The rose, though not cited as female, is often assumed to be female because the worm *is* referred to as male. In most late copies and some early copies of "The Sick Rose" this assumption is supported by the fact that the figure fleeing the rose is clearly female, with distinctive breasts (see copy AA (1826), Fig. 31 and early copy A, Fig. 34).

However, in most of Blake's early works the gender and identity of the figure fleeing the rose is unclear; this points away from a simple cumulative addition of image and text, and towards a Third Text reading. In copies C and R for example (Figs. 29/32 and 30/33), hetero-normative assumptions are undermined. In each of these images the figure emerging from the rose is androgynous. Moreover, in both copies the figure's body language is ambiguous; the open-armed pose may suggest a flight from destruction, but it could also be indicative of ecstatic release. This sense is heightened by the facial expression of the figure in R. These elements cause some disjunction from what might naïvely be understood to be happening in the poem.

There is also the matter of the worm. The first thing that the reader is told of the worm is that it is "invisible", yet in copies C, R, and AA the worm is made visible, wrapped around the figure's waist. The worm may, of course, be invisible only to the rose, and not to the reader. Nevertheless, the appearance of the worm highlights the differences between the

[36] Isaiah 1:18 states "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (King James Bible). There is also an implication of the "scarlet woman" as harlot.

visual medium of printing and the "song", which can be read aloud. This serves to highlight the porous boundaries between image and text, for while they are different ontological objects, both are engaged in an act of telling – the image is, in a sense, legible.

In turn, this points to the multiple levels of narrative available in Blake's Third Text.[37] The notion that image and text tell "*the* story" is misleading: there is evidently far more than one tale to be told by "The Sick Rose". One of the instances in which the potential for an alternative story arises is in copy B. In both copy A and copy B, there is no worm wrapped about the emergent figure's waist, but the figure itself *is* a worm, with a long, sinuous and phallic body emerging from the rose (Figs. 34 and 35). In copy A, this serves to heighten the notion that the tale is a sexual allegory. That the worm is female here, introduces an added complication, once again diverging from what seems to be represented in the poem, and possibly pointing towards an interpenetration of the figure of corrupted femininity with that of the worm. In copy B (Fig. 35), the snub-nosed worm is affected by a green blight. This covers the rose, and has extended downwards, so that it seems to be devouring the figure's arm and spreading across its torso. The worm has either been caught up in its destruction of the rose (this might suggest an interpretation of the "dark secret love" as a sexually transmitted disease, such as syphilis), or the rose has its own teeth and has destroyed the worm. The rose becomes, potentially, the aggressor, rather than the victim.

Copy B plays off the previously mentioned ambiguity in *Songs* concerning the states of innocence and experience. The blight represented in this image may strengthen interpretations of the poem as a tale about the corruption of the rose's vibrant desire. One might, though, question whether the rose's desire is initially innocent, or whether it was corrupt from the start. This is further complicated by the ambiguous role of the worm in the spread of this corruption. This question can most easily be explored by considering "The Sick Rose" in light of its so-called "companion poem" in *Songs of Innocence*, "The Blossom". "The Blossom" (see Fig. 36), runs as follows:

> Merry Merry Sparrow
> Under leaves so green
> A happy Blossom
> Sees you swift as arrow

[37] See Glossary, "Narrative".

Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my bosom

(E10)

It is one of the more ambiguous poems in *Songs*. The speaker refers to him/herself in the first person ("my Bosom" (ll.6 & 12)), but otherwise remains an indefinite figure. The intense and emphatic descriptions provided by the speaker in "The Sick Rose" are missing. The tone of "The Blossom" is characterised by the sing-song and even babyish repetition of the words "Merry" (l.1), "sobbing" (l.10) and "Pretty" (l.11). The image of a flame-plant (Fig. 36) occupied by putti and a large winged female is visually attractive, but its impact is more dispersed than in "The Sick Rose", while the figures show none of the desperate intensity of the latter poem's accompanying image.

In this context, the connection between "The Sick Rose" and "The Blossom" may seem to be nothing more than a mutual link to flowers. However, a sexual reading of "The Blossom" is suggested by several factors. For example, the sparrow is a traditional emblem of wantonness, and the blossom is associated with reproduction and female sexuality (as suggested by the term "to deflower"). As Essick states in *Songs*, by responding to such hints "we can allegorize the poem into a highly deflected and fragmentary narrative of the penetration of a female's vulva (the 'Blossom') and vagina (the 'cradle narrow') by a phallus (the arrow-like sparrow) approaching 'under' her leaves/clothes" (36). The "sobbing" of the second stanza "signifies post-coital *tristesse*" (36).

As Essick's account suggests, the sexual reading of "The Blossom" may be regarded as somewhat reductionist and insensitive to ambiguity. The titular blossom's continued happiness (l.9) is, for example, at odds with the notion of post-coital *tristesse* experienced by the robin. There is also a tension between the pursuit of potentially facile and immediate sexual gratification, and hints of a deeper and more profound connection offered by sexual intimacy. On one hand, the demand for immediacy is implied by the imagery of the

sparrow's "swift" and arrow-like movement (l.4), as well as by the poem's repetitions. Combined with the speaker's apparent inability to produce an integrated account of his or her sexual experience, this suggests that the encounter is characterised by a degree of superficiality.

On the other hand, David Gillham has argued that the "sobbing" post-coital *tristesse* voiced by the robin reflects a certain fullness of feeling (*Blake's Contrary States* 164). The sense that there is positive depth to the sexual feeling expressed in the poem may be supported by the images of the plate. The flame-plant represented in "The Blossom" has phallic connotations, the vibrant upward sweep of its lines suggesting that its energy is potent. This plant is not necessarily the "happy blossom", but serves to draw attention to the winged female figure in its branches. Her coloured robe and placement in the open space between two strands of the flame-plant attract the eye. One suggestion is that she is a mother, and that the bundle in her arms is an infant, as in copy R (Fig. 37). The infant could stand for the positive consequences of sexuality. This implies that in the state of innocence sexuality is not only spontaneous and perhaps facile, but is also productive (creating the child).

When compared with these figures of innocent passion, the rose takes on a more experienced persona. For example, despite the speaker's explicit description of the rose's passion, this desire is initially hidden from the worm; it must be "found out" (l.5). The blossom may be obscure, but it is never hidden. The rose, like the worm, is associated with concealed sexuality, rather than with the open, innocent sexuality of the blossom. Moreover, the rose and the worm present a less fragmentary, and far richer sexual experience than that of "The Blossom". As David Gillham argues in *Blake's Contrary States,* the worm is not a purely evil figure. He is relentless, but not "furtive or mean" (166).

> He is said to destroy, but the destruction involves a 'dark secret love' which takes some of its character from the compassionate concern of the poet. This is felt in the opening line: 'O Rose, thou art sick!' which is an involuntary cry in which concern, intimacy and admiration are felt.
>
> (166)

Gillham goes on to suggest that while the sick rose and the worm's "dark secret love" are "erotic and, in the context, even fierce, … they are also rich and wonderful. 'The Sick Rose' suggests the deep and intricate emotions that the sexual act involves despite the secrecy and the possessive taboos with which [e]xperience surrounds the passion" (166-7).

Gillham, intent on arguing that Blake intended a "gulf" to exist between innocence and experience, suggests that "The Blossom" and "The Sick Rose" "do not quite fit into their respective series [of innocence and experience]" (169).This discrepancy may be attributable to too sharp or literal-minded a distinction between innocence and experience as regards sexuality. However, there is also an alternative reading of "The Blossom", offered by Rodney Baine and Mary Baine, in which the poem is understood to be concerned with a mother addressing her child, who is the blossom ("Blake's 'Blossom'"). This is plausible both in view of the figures of mother and child in the design and because the "happy Blossom" (ll.3 & 9) can be associated with the joyful infant in "Infant Joy" (E16; see Fig. 38).[38] Baine and Baine associate the mother and child depicted in the image with the Madonna and Christ, and consider the manner in which sparrow and robin are connected both with tales of Christ and with stories of sympathy (24-35). They conclude that the birds are actually acting as objects for the child's first lesson or experience in sympathy. The mother/Madonna tells the child/Christ of the robin and sparrow (which like the child are held near her bosom, where she can feel them keenly) in order to prepare the child for the universal need for sympathy, a key component of innocence (26).

I would argue that there is no reason for these two readings of "The Blossom" to be mutually exclusive. Their Textual structure opens a space in which the poem and images can be inscribed in multiple ways. Similarly, there is no need for "The Blossom" and "The Sick Rose" to be considered ill-fitted within their series. The Third Text constituted by "The Blossom" and "The Sick Rose" comments on the states of innocence and experience, and directs the reader/viewer to look between the sharp division of these states and towards his or her own visionary perceptions. Innocence can be read as a creative state of positive sympathy, but its emotion can be shallow and fragmented. Experience is a state in which a profound depth of emotion can be explored, but in the worm's determined hunt for the rose, as well as in the rose's own desire, there may be a lack of sympathy which encourages destructiveness. This latter point is well illustrated by the two figures that are suspended on the branches above the rose in "The Sick Rose" (Figs. 29 and 30). Whatever their colouring,

[38] "The Sick Rose" echoes the basic design of "Infant Joy", adding another thread which might potentially be spun into the already-complex intertext being constructed here.

these figures draw the reader/viewer's attention, owing to the movement of the gaze along the curving line of the bent branches. They seem to be anthropomorphised rosebuds; David Erdman calls them "sister rose[s]" (*Illuminated Blake* 18). The topmost figure is distorted, having a segmented torso and two arms on its left side. It may be impaled by thorns. Erdman notes that to reach the rose, the worm must have inched along the stem's thorns and passed the topmost figure, "deflowering" it (18). This figure heightens the sinister nature of the worm's passion, particularly as the topmost rosebud has become wormlike, a visual analogue for the distorting power of repressed sexuality. The lower rosebud is lamenting her sisters' suffering (Erdman *Illuminated Blake* 18). She is the lone figure of sympathy in "The Sick Rose", unmentioned in the poem but exerting stress on the reading process.

These readings of innocence and experience, which are concerned with their sympathy, creativity and destructiveness, share a common thread: each of them is, to some extent, salutary. This theme is further strengthened by a historical reading of "The Sick Rose". In "The 'Insidious Poison of Secret Influence': A New Historical Context for Blake's 'The Sick Rose'", Jon Mee has convincingly argued that "The Sick Rose" may be a response to the political backlash surrounding politician George Rose, who was the subject of widespread public scrutiny in the year in which the poem was drafted. He had used public funds to run the campaigns of Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger.[39] Mee notes that in this highly censored period (just three years after the French Revolution) pamphlets often figured corruption in terms of a sexual economy, and that Blake's poem is probably a covert commentary on George Rose's corruption (116). For example, if one reads the figure emerging from the sick rose as a fleeing female, then the "dark secret love" that drives her out may represent homosexual desire. This was often associated with corruption in Blake's time, and was also associated with George Rose in certain satirical pamphlets of the period.[40] This fleeing, female figure may also have been a reference to England which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, was facing its destruction as a result of contemporary corruption (116). This latter reading is supported by the fact that the rose is often used as symbol for England. In this sense, the poem's portrayal of the corruption of an individual may be

[39] The term "Prime Minister" is something of an anachronism, having come into use after Pitt's period.
[40] Mee uses William Dent's *Public credit, or, the state idol* as an example (*British Museum Collection Database*).

eclipsed by its serious indictment of the state of England at the time. It is possible that the figure fleeing the rose might represent liberty fleeing England.

Mee is also able to link "The Sick Rose" to the millenarian movements of Blake's time. He argues that Blake's poem "exploits a specifically biblical figure to reinforce the notion of the Rose controversy as part of an apocalyptic political pattern" (118). The rose, as Mee argues, was already a part of Enthusiastic, millenarian discourse.[41] Appearing in the Bible, in Songs 2:1, the Rose of Sharon is (in the Protestant tradition) to be read as a type of Christ. Mee suggests that in "The Sick Rose" Blake takes the figure of the rose as the figure of the second coming and effectively "inverts it to produce a symbol of Antichrist" (119). The Christ-like, open-armed pose of the often-serpentine figure emerging from the rose supports this interpretation. One might even suggest that the figure is being born, as in some copies the rose resembles female genitalia. This becomes a twisted and sinister reflection of the joyful birth represented in "The Blossom".

The commentary that "The Sick Rose" and "The Blossom" make on the states of innocence and experience comes to have a far-reaching and salutary effect both on an individual level and on a national level. The Third Text produced by the interaction of images and texts is constantly shifting. It is a productive field generated by the reader and viewer's interaction with a range of material objects and Textual constructions. In broader, Blakean terms (and to return to Behrendt's argument), it is a field of vision which operates in a time-space that is simultaneously occupied by image and word and also facilitated by their inter-relations.

## The Supplement

Before considering further some of the ramifications of these interactions, a modification must be made to Behrendt's formulation of the Third Text. Behrendt rightly argues that the Third Text is not constituted by a simple, complementary relationship between image, text and reader. However, as Derrida's formulation of the Text suggests, there is a level on which textuality *requires* addition. Derrida's metaphor of adding threads is not a case of a simple

[41] See Glossary "Popular Enthusiasm".

sum; this addition not only creates something new, but also becomes implicit in that to which it was added. It is an act of supplementation, which Derrida frames as both addition and replacement.[42]

The notion of a supplementary Third Text is doubly important in the context of the scholarly treatment of *Songs*. Over the years, a number of readings have arisen which understand innocence and experience to be completely separate states, with the book of *Experience* having arisen out of *Innocence* and then having been added onto it in a teleological movement motivated by, for example, an increasing disillusionment in Blake's outlook.[43] These readings of the books are paralleled by assumptions that Blake's images have been added onto his poems in similarly teleological processes. David Erdman, has gone so far as to suggest in *The Illuminated Blake* that "every graphic image in Blake's illuminations has its seed or root in the poetry", or if not in Blake's poetry, then in a "textual base" from another poet's work (16-18). While this statement is now dated, and Erdman does not treat Blake's image-text relations as simple "sums", the implication of this "assumption" is that the images came after the poems or texts and were added to them as illustration or illumination. Erdman does not deny that images are significant, but he understands the poetry to be the *origin* of the images.

To approach this problem differently, a close examination of Blake's production leads one to challenge naïve assumptions concerning the so-called "addition" of *Songs of Experience* to *Songs of Innocence*, or the straightforward stitching of Blake's images to his texts. This is where Third Text readings offer a dynamic alternative understanding. They point to a complex movement of *both* addition *and* replacement, which can be associated with Derrida's theorization of the supplement.

The supplement is a complex philosophical term, initially used by Derrida in his engagement with the work of Rousseau (*Of Grammatology*) and Husserl ("The Supplement of the Origin"). My discussion of the supplement will not focus on Derrida's commentary on these

[42] See also pp. 23-25 above.

[43] Both Northrop Frye (*Fearful Symmetry* 4) and David Gillham (*Contrary States* 4) warn against this (in the latter instance, this must compete with Gillham's determination to frame innocence and experience as contraries).

two philosophers, but on the ways in which the construct of the supplement might be applied on a broader scale. The simultaneous addition and replacement of the supplement signals a non-complementary understanding of addition, which allows Derrida to use the supplement to undermine the binary of presence and absence, and by extension, the binary of within and without. This latter facet of the supplement, and the movement which it entails, is most applicable to the image-text relations of *Songs*.

As an addition, the supplement works much like the supplement to a set of encyclopedias; it adds extra information to an already-existing body of information. As Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology*, the supplement adds itself, "it is a surplus", but not in any simple, complementary way for it is "a plenitude enriching another plenitude" (144).[44] In fact, the supplement-as-addition is "the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence" (145). Derrida's reference to plenitude and presence comes in the context of Rousseau's discussion of speech and writing, writing being a dangerous but necessary supplement which protects presence when speech, which is itself a plenitude, fails to do so.[45] The general corollary of this is that the supplement-as-addition is capable of "fullness" of meaning, even as it remains *outside* of that to which it is added. Derrida's language also suggests that the supplement-as-addition is somewhat subversive, for as "the *fullest measure* of presence", the supplement must be used to appraise, determine or even define, that to which it is added; it becomes the very possibility of presence.

This subversion is indicative of the second meaning of the supplement. As Derrida notes, when something is supplemented, the supplement not only adds to it – it also highlights a lack or deficiency in that to which it is added. Take, once again, the example of the supplement to an encyclopaedia. Such a supplement is necessary only because some information was *lacking* in the original encyclopaedia. In this sense, the supplement is not only an addition, but is also a *replacement*, because it acts "*in-the-place-of* [that which is lacking]*;* if it fills, it is as if one fills a void" (145).

[44] In "Signature Event Context" Derrida associates the "plenitude of meaning" with "absolutely current and present intention or attention" (316); writing of this passage, Royle argues that plenitude is related to the desire for pure presence (67).

[45] See *Of Grammatology* 142-5. See also Jonathan Culler on the supplement in *On Deconstruction* (101-6) and Paul de Man's "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau" in *Blindness and Insight.*

This dual motion of addition and replacement has powerful repercussions for the notion of origin. The lack which the supplement acts in-the-place-of is primordial; it arises because, from the beginning, there was an absence in that to which the supplement is added. When the supplement replaces or substitutes itself for this lack, it becomes implicit in the origin of that to which it is added. This occurs despite the fact that it is posterior to the origin. Indeed, origin is intertwined with *telos* through the circularity in terms of which one is implicit in the other. Put another way, "by delayed reaction, a possibility produces that to which it is said to be added on" ("The Supplement of the Origin" 89). Moreover, even as a replacement, the supplement is not a complement – it cannot fill up, or make the origin complete, but remains exterior, "outside of the positivity to which it is super-added" (*Grammatology* 145). So, the supplement is both within (a substitute) and without, both posterior or *telos* and originary, a measure of both plenitude and lack. It reveals that that to which it is added is *always already* incomplete and partially characterized by absence. As Derrida writes, we are dealing with "the supplement of origin: which supplements the failing origin and which is yet not derived; this supplement is, as one says of a spare part *[une pièce],* of the original make *[d'origine]* [or a document, establishing the origin.]" (*Of Grammatology* 313; parentheses inserted by translator).[46]

As Jacques Neefs indicates, all *pages* are characterised by the possibility of supplementarity:

> [u]pon the surface of the page the writer develops a specific relationship, on one hand with the visibility of the text, with its wholeness, with its unity, and on the other, with the possibility of adding, of correcting, of commenting – in short, of re-working the text. The page serves as a plan that also plays an active role in the writing's genetic aspect, offering the freedom to modify the relationships between groups of statements as well as the possibility of a more or less hierarchical placing of statements.
>
> ("Margins" 135)

Neefs' point is made with reference to the history of marginal annotation and revision in the Western tradition, in which Blake participated. Blake's revisions to his own works and his annotations to other writers' works form one of the primary sources which can be used to frame his illuminated books. Importantly, the history of the illuminated book is to some extent rooted in a similar history of supplementary modification. As Michael Camille writes

[46] In his suggestion that the supplement is not derived, Derrida is reiterating the exteriority of the supplement. The supplement is not "descended, or deduced from a source" (*OED* online, "Derived, adj."); it does not arise from the origin which it supplements.

in *Image on the Edge*, the development of the extra-textual space of the margin as a site for artistic elaboration occurred in about the twelfth century, when the "physical materiality of writing as a system of visual signs" became the primary stress of the text, and the word had to be divided from the image that adorned it by methods of textual organization and analysis (20).[47] As the image came to occupy the margin of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts, it took on both a physical and a figurative framing function. Images were used to comment on textual content – they were used to illustrate, counterpoint, mock, subvert, uphold and complicate the overall representation of a written text. These early Illuminated books set a precedent concerning the combination of image and text, for the text, like God and the Church, was at the centre. The image, like mankind and all aberrations, was on the border, a secondary force, albeit one with the power to be subversive.[48]

As I have already attempted to show, Blake's production process and the Third Text itself undermine this sort of hierarchizing, where images always come after the text. The case of Blake's images and texts is, more accurately, one in which, the written Text and pictorial Text are modified and supplemented by each other in the space of the page. Sometimes this supplementation involves the image's coming to occupy the margin of the text, simply because the "rules" for physically spacing written texts are set, whereas those for placing the image are not; however, this is not a mark that the images are secondary or an afterthought. The physical supplementation of image by text and vice versa might be described as the first level of supplementarity in any of Blake's illuminated pages. Inextricably interlinked with this is the supplementation of the Text by the reader/viewer, who in the process of moving between image and text comes to formulate a Third Text. In *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, a further level of supplementary movement exists.

[47] Camille notes that, prior to this, manuscripts often combined images and words, making the word the site of fantastical deformation and play; this was made possible because monks used *meditatio*, a form of reading through which the word was always "masticated" and "digested" before being uttered (*Image* 18).

[48] Illuminated Manuscripts have several distinctive differences from Blake's illuminated books. This is not only because the monks or nuns who did the drawings were probably different from those who were the scribes, but also because each manuscript was absolutely distinct and unique. Blake's prints are singular, but they still constitute a material instance of iterability, because they were made with the "same" plate. Moreover, while the term "illuminated printing" evokes Illuminated Manuscripts, and Blake's images and texts also interact subversively, the visual structure of the plates of *Songs* is far more strongly derivative of the embroidered sampler than of an illuminated page (Myrone, *The Blake Book* 72). Such samplers (see Fig. 39) introduced the domestic visual world of decoration and design into *Songs*, and may have seemed an appropriate intertext for Blake, especially in light of his claim that *Songs* was a book for "every child" ("Introduction" l.20, E7).

This is the supplementation of the *states* of innocence and experience, which arises out of, but is not identical to, the supplementation of image and text. If the reader/viewer has access to more than one copy of *Songs*, this supplementation will be further affected by *différance*, as the threads which are added and substituted into the Text will be deferred by the differences between copies.

These differing levels of supplementarity can be explored by analysing the frontispieces, title pages, and "Introduction[s]" to *Innocence* and *Experience* in relation to each other. Both *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* "begin" with frontispieces, full page designs without any text. As Stanley Gardner notes in *Innocence and Experience Retraced*, these designs introduce a pattern through which Blake's images *anticipate* his texts in *Songs* (18). This is in part because the reader usually gains a general impression of the visual appearance of a page (its images and writing) before they read the writing. This visual dimension of the page is, however, modified by the reading of the poem.

The frontispiece to *Innocence* (see Fig. 40 and 42) shows a male figure, holding a pipe, with a flock of sheep grazing in the background. The figure's gaze is focused on a child who appears floating on a cloud, as in copy A (Fig. 42), although in some copies this may appear to be a clearing in the foliage of the trees (Fig. 40). The child's direct gaze and open-armed pose suggest that he is communicating something to the figure. The "Introduction" to *Innocence* runs as follows:

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

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

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear,
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read –
So he vanish'd from my sight.
And I pluck'd a hollow reed.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear 20

(E7)

The "Piper" and the child "on a cloud" (l.3) are clearly associated with the figures on the frontispiece, whose identities are retrospectively established by the poem. Even if one does not physically turn back to the image, the image speaks clearly to the text, and vice versa. The two supplement each other.

Both poem and frontispiece might be interpreted as expressions of innocence. The Piper and child interact sympathetically; the child is a carrier of inspiration, facilitating access to the Poetic Genius. Upon interacting with the child, the Piper is shown to have unproblematic access to imagination; he can generate songs, which are beautiful enough to evoke weeping (ll.7-8). He also has no ostensible struggle when switching media, from pipe to voice to pen. This unproblematic access to imagination is accompanied by the ability instantly to disseminate his songs about the "Lamb" (a symbol of Christ) to "[e]very" child (l.20). There is an assurance that *each* of these children will "joy to hear" (l.20) his songs, suggesting also that these songs are unlike the dull didactic children's verses which were common in eighteenth-century writing.

It might be fairly easy, in this context, to return to the notion of illustration, but assumptions regarding sympathetic interaction are not sustained by the Third Text produced by the "Introduction" (Fig. 43). The images on this plate do not reflect the poem in the same manner as the frontispiece does. Eight miniature panels contained within twisted vines or branches frame the poem.[49] Some of these display birds or standing figures, whose movements suggest freedom and spontaneity. Other panels appear to show seated figures, echoed throughout *Innocence* by the seated nurse/mother figure. The bottom-most panels on the page are obscure in most copies, their interpretations ever-unstable, although they do not seem to depict Piper, child or valleys wild. The reader is forced to engage with these scenes of innocence more generally, and to consider their relationship with *Innocence* as a

[49] Erdman associates these occupied panels with those formed by the Tree of Jesse in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts (*The Illuminated Blake* 45).

whole rather than with the "Introduction" alone. Like the general title page, they provide a meta-commentary on both the image-text relations in *Innocence* and on the relationship between the content of its images and texts. They signal events which may happen on pages to come, and suggest that the images may provide different "experiences" from the text.

There is also the hint, embedded within the Third Text of these plates, that the self-contained state of innocence may be under threat. On one hand, this is suggested by poem, where the Piper (upon transitioning from song to written text) "stain[s] the water clear" (l.18) with his pen, suggesting a dual motion of clarification and potential contamination. The images present a similar ambiguity. As Gardner notes, the Piper in the *Innocence* frontispiece is not only a carefree and pleasant figure, but a shepherd whose body protectively completes the circle of trees which surrounds his flock (18). As the protective shepherd figure is associated with God/Christ in the New Testament and other poems of Innocence ("The Shepherd" and "The Little Black Boy"), this is not necessarily negative, but it suggests that innocence may not always be easily preserved.[50] As Zachary Leader notes in *Reading Blake's Songs*, the title page (Fig. 41), which usually appears between the frontispiece and the "Introduction", lends a sinister atmosphere to the opening of *Innocence* (65-9). Both the emptiness of the plain on which the children and the nurse appear, and the gnarled, twisted tree that hovers over them, are inherently threatening.

This veiled implication of a threat becomes tangible in *Experience*. The frontispiece of *Experience* (see Fig. 45) is clearly derived from that of *Innocence*. The image shows a young man with a child above him and sheep in the background. This similarity indicates that that *Innocence* and *Experience* will deal with interconnected representations or subject matter, and that the addition of the latter book is a commentary on the former, a supplement to it which comes to modify, and even substitute itself for, that which it follows. Thus, the frontispiece of *Experience* shows several significant differences from that of *Innocence*. As Leader notes, the vertical, symmetrical appearance of the two figures in the *Experience* frontispiece contrasts sharply with the curving diagonals of the frontispiece to *Innocence* (131). Although the child in *Experience* has wings, it must be carried on the adult figure's

[50]On the second plate of "The Little Black Boy", Christ (here also the "father" (l.27)), is depicted with a shepherd's crook.

head, weighing down his brow, and suggesting a mental weight that has the capacity to fly, but does not do so. This stands in contrast to the child depicted in *Innocence;* he has no wings but apparently has no weight either.

One need not necessarily conflate the Piper with the striding figure, or the wingless child on a cloud with the winged child. Leader, however, argues that there are several factors which might direct one to read the *Experience* panel as depicting the same figures, but at a later point in time (131). For example, the title page for *Experience* (Fig. 44), which follows the format of a relatively traditional death scene, shows two young people weeping over two adults. These grown children can be connected to the small children on the title page of *Innocence*. The boy and girl stand in similar positions on both plates, with the girl in front and the boy behind. Time has passed and the children, previously fascinated by the book held by their nurse/mother, have been drawn into the state of experience by an encounter with death (Leader 132). In this context, the viewer might see the frontispiece of *Experience* afresh, as a scene of the Piper and child after the passing of time. The pipe is gone, as is the child's cloud, and it seems that experience has brought about concerning changes (including the child's inability to fly despite his growth of wings). If read in a purely teleological sense, the threat to innocence seems to have fulfilled at least some of its potential, as the aged Piper strides away from the sheep that he once guarded.

The degree to which a shift has occurred can be confirmed by looking at the "Introduction" to *Experience*. The reader/viewer finds that this poem does not follow the pattern that *Innocence* has established. It does not refer directly to the events of the frontispiece, except perhaps to suggest that the Piper has become a Bard. The poem runs as follows:

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk'd among the ancient trees.

Calling the lapsed Soul
And weeping in the evening dew:
That might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew!

O Earth O Earth return!

Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass,

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv'n thee till the break of day.

(E18)

If the figure on the frontispiece is, indeed, the Bard, then the Piper of *Innocence*, once caught in an eternal present, has been transformed into the Bard who has entered into the realms of present, past and future and come face to face with experience. This temporal change draws attention to the complex temporal relationships first opened out by the general title page (the eternal, innocent present of Eden contrasted with the progress and/or entropy of experience).[51] The Bard has heard the "Holy Word", a reference both to Genesis 3:8, where Adam and Eve hide from the judgement of God/Jehovah, and to John 1:14, where the word of God is made flesh in Christ. As Leader points out, despite the assurances of Frye ("Blake's Introduction to Experience" 25) and others that the "Holy Word" must be associated with Jesus as in the Miltonic tradition, the passage hints at a punishing God, whom Blake identified with Jehovah. The calling of the "lapsed Soul" (l.6) endorses the language of a religious tradition which Blake associated with constriction, oppression and the separation of man's body and soul (136).[52]

This is troubling on a number of levels. Frye argues that the "Introduction" declares that the Bard belongs to the tradition of the Hebrew Prophet; he has heard the "Holy Word" and can presumably speak of it (25). However, Leader perceptively notes that the Bard also seems to have become disengaged from his own human divinity. His image is St. Christopher-like, and it may be that he is proclaiming the divinity of the child (and, in the context of *Innocence*, of the imagination). The child is, however, made to look like an icon or totem, and "[m]an's

[51] It should be noted that Copy A, from which I have taken most of the Figures for this portion of my study, has no general title page, and this particular reading can thus adhere only when Copy A is viewed together with other copies. That it is still titled as *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and not *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* may be another indicator of the tendency to ignore certain differences between copies; *Innocence* and *Experience* are also numbered differently in this book. However, copy A, together with copy R (which has a general title page), was the first copy of combined *Songs* in which the two sections were printed together. This makes the situation more complex, if still indicative of a certain suppression of difference.

[52] These aspects of religion are satirized by the cynical-naïve voice of "The Little Vagabond" (E26).

god-like nature no longer emanates from an unmistakably human form, but from the iconic paraphernalia of religious tradition" (132). When coupled with the Bard's transfixed expression and un-relenting forward movement, these factors point to a state of imaginative lapse, rather than to one of vision.

Unlike the Piper, the Bard also faces problems with disseminating his works. The words "Hear the voice of the Bard!" (l.1) may be an assured command and declaration that the Bard will be listened to. However, they could also be a plea for the public to listen to a prophet who, in losing touch with his human divinity, cannot pass on his message. This disconnection is further emphasised by the confusion of pronouns in the poem. The reader does not know whether the "Who" calling the "lapsed Soul" is the Bard or the Holy Word. Equally, any of these three figures (Bard, Holy Word, or lapsed Soul) "might control/ the starry pole", and it is not clear which of them calls to the "Earth", or whether more than one of them might be involved in this call. In the "Introduction" to *Innocence* there is synergy between voice and word, with each word and act of creative expression belonging to Piper, child or both. In the state of experience, no such synergy exists, and the confusion of voices makes it difficult for the reader to arrive at stable assumptions about the speakers, as each speaker's position is modified by multiple possibilities of interaction which also shift between image and poem.

The lack of stability is further entrenched by "The Earth's Answer" to the prophetic plea that she no longer "turn away" (l.16). While the plea seems progressive in the context of the "Introduction", her answer gives a damning account of the oppressive father figure (the Bard or Holy Word or both). The Earth ends her poem by declaring:

> Break this heavy chain,
> That does freeze my bones around
> Selfish! vain!
> Eternal bane!
> That free Love with bondage bound.
>
> (E19)

In the midst of this confusion of voices and the disjunction between words and their possible meanings or implications, readers/viewers begin to re-evaluate their initial interpretation of the "Introduction" to *Innocence*. The Piper's unproblematic references to

voice and the dissemination of meaning might begin to seem naïve or ironic, rather than sincere. Readers/viewers are reminded that *Songs* is a children's book, written for adults by an adult who had obviously keenly observed the world of experience. Paradoxically, it is Blake's writing from his experience which constitutes the very possibility for the representation of innocence. The similarities and differences between the opening plates of *Innocence* and *Experience* expose a supplementary relationship, where experience comes to add itself onto the state of innocence. It forces the reader/viewer to return to *Innocence* with the eyes of experience. This may establish a reason for the pervasive sense of threat of the frontispiece and title page to *Innocence*. Innocence does not lead in a simple, teleological progression, towards experience; experience is always already present as a trace in innocence. The whisperings of experience show that innocence always already carries the seeds of experience.[53]

However, from the preceding discussion it is equally apparent that *Experience* is strongly influenced by *Innocence*, and the notion that it is simply "disillusioned innocence" is undermined. The reader/viewer draws many assumptions about *Experience*, as both a book and a state, from *Innocence*. For example, the image accompanying the "Introduction" to *Experience* (Fig. 46) might be connected to the "starry pole" (l.9). The female figure reclining on a divan-like cloud is strongly reminiscent of *Night* and *Dawn*, the two reclining female figures from Michelangelo's Medici tomb in Florence (*The World of Michelangelo* 142-3); these figures are at once languorous and sorrowful, certainly experienced. Significantly, on the "Introduction", the figure's head and body are turned away. This might suggest it is the Earth "turn[ing] away" (l.16). However, readers/viewers have also been taught by *Innocence* to look beyond illustration and towards the Third Text. In this context, they may be reminded of the first figure seen floating on a cloud, that of the male child on the frontispiece to *Innocence*. One might think back to the "Introduction" to *Innocence* and to the moment when the child, too, turns away; once the Piper's song turns into the written word, the child "vanishe[s]" (l.15). Does the child abandon the Piper or the Piper the child, much as the Earth has both abandoned and been abandoned by the Bard and Holy Word? It seems that the instability of representation and the problematic relations among people

[53] A useful example of this is the refraction of "The Chimney Sweeper" of *Innocence* through the perceptions of an older, and in some ways experienced, boy (E10).

that might be considered characteristic of experience arise in *Innocence* and implicitly supplement the very act of writing *Songs*. Simultaneously, the reader remembers the supposedly innocent voice of the Piper and wonders whether there is any way for a circular movement in which experienced figures such as the Earth to re-establish a connection with their divinity.

Robert F. Gleckner proposes that this re-connection is at the very heart of *Songs*. According to him, the book opens a dialectic of innocence, experience and higher innocence. Here, innocence is ignorant and unconscious selfhood.[54] Experience is conscious selfhood, a state of disillusionment, but one from which the guiding light towards unity may emerge. Higher innocence is reached when the self is recognised as "experience" and ultimately denied, thus achieving a vision of eternal unity through selfless creation (*The Piper and the Bard* 45-8). Gleckner's analysis, though dated, is useful, indicating a degree of oppositional progression. I am less persuaded that Blake is engaged in a teleological dialectic of progression (in this case, in the Hegelian sense). I understand different manifestations of innocence and experience to arise through the Third Text, and to defer and supplement one another. The state of innocence is as much a supplement to experience as *Experience* is to *Innocence*, and if there is a progression through opposition, it may be in the confirmation that these binaries are always inter-implicated, never the simple or received forms of knowledge that society, the Church and their institutions might impose.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida writes that the "chain of supplements" functions as a continuous branching out, as "that of an infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer" (*Grammatology* 157). In the case of *Songs*, this branching is not limited by the fact that *Experience* came after *Innocence*, or that certain images or texts may have been produced before their companions, consequently finding their roots in them. This reading would be deficient in the same manner as closed and literal-minded, historical-psychological-biographical readings of Blake's oeuvre often are. The process of reading and viewing is

[54] Gleckner describes selfhood as the division of body and soul, a deficiency which may divide man from the imaginative oneness of humankind with God.

characterised by a continuous forward and backward movement, an oscillation which allows supplementary relations to expand, simultaneously, in multiple directions.

## The Tyger and the Lamb

In the final estimation then, the Third Text of *Songs* encourages, and sometimes even requires, the reader/viewer to move away from literal orientations and towards figurative Textual engagements, which are embedded in the object. He or she becomes the co-creator of a Text that spans well beyond preconceived notions of innocence versus experience, or of the "frames" of image-as-concept and the text-as-concept. The dynamic production of meaning encouraged by Blake's illuminated books might, following poststructuralists such as Derrida, also be treated as an opportunity to cut through discourses which establish hierarchies and suppress alternative ways of reading and seeing. The very difficulties of Blake's Third Texts invite alternative readings; to return to Derrida's metaphor, they spur the reader/viewer to "risk" the "addition of new threads" ("Plato's Pharmacy" 63).

It is useful to conclude this discussion of the image-text relations of *Songs* by returning to Blake's disjunctive deployment of image and text in "The Tyger", and briefly examining this poem in relation to its companion piece, "The Lamb".[55] In this context, "The Tyger" is construed as engaging with the act of creation as a process of framing. Blake did not employ the term "frame" particularly often, and he used it in only one of the *Songs*. This instance occurs in "The Tyger" (Figs. 1 and 49). The word "frame" appears twice in "The Tyger", in the first and last stanzas.

> Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
> In the forests of the night;
> What immortal hand or eye,
> Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
> …
> What immortal hand or eye,
> Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
>
> (ll.1-4 & 21-24, E24-5)

[55] See also pp.12-13 above.

The act of framing by "hand" implies construction and creation. Johnson's *Dictionary* states that to frame is "[t]o form or fabricate by orderly construction and union of various parts…[; t]o fit one to another… [;t]o make; to compose…[; t]o form and digest by thought" ("*To* FRAME. *v.a.*"). The poem's descriptions of seizing, twisting, hammers and anvils (ll.8, 10, 13 & 15) carry some of these connotations. Its rhetorical questions also communicate the sense that the speaker may be "forming and digesting by thought".

However, Johnson's definition of framing carries the implication of orderliness and the union of parts or the fitting of one to another. This is a qualified process in "The Tyger".[56] Although the speaker of "The Tyger" seems to understand something of the process of creation/ production, the language that he or she uses expresses ambiguity about the mysterious, terrible force that "frames" the beast. The poem is most easily read as addressed to the Tyger (ll.1 & 21) with references to his creator in the second person. The speaker probes how the Tyger may have been created:

> In what distant deeps or skies.
> Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
> On what wings dare he aspire?
> What the hand, dare sieze the fire?
>
> (ll.5-8)

The Tyger seems to have emerged from a distant, unfathomable realm. The speaker attempts to comprehend what kind of creator might have managed to "sieze" the flame in order to "frame" the Tyger (ll.5-9). In the next stanza, the process of creation is compared to blacksmithing, the "art" of twisting molten substances into a definite shape (ll.9-16). What

[56] This is to leave aside questions which refer more literally to framing as the act of surrounding an image with a border of sorts, thus marking the limit of the inside from the outside. A further point of investigation into Blake's image-text relations might be through engagement with Derrida's treatment in *The Truth in Painting* of Kant's notion of the *parergon*, that which (like the frame) appears outside of the *ergon* or work. For Kant, a *parergon* is a form of ornamentation, outside of the work, but Derrida argues that the frame as *parergon* is not strictly extrinsic to the work or to its value. The frame/ *parergon* may be outside of the work, but it also "liberate[s] surplus value by enclosing labor … it is called up and gathered together as a supplement from the lack – a certain 'internal' indetermination – in the very thing that it comes to frame" (*Truth in Painting* 71). Importantly, the lack and indetermination which the frame supplements "cannot be determined, localized, situated, *arrested* inside or outside *before the framing*, [and] is simultaneously … both product and production of the frame" (71). However, the question as to whether Blake's images literally frame his texts is highly problematic. While Blake's texts are often surrounded by his images, they cannot be treated as frame-like in the same way as the frame on an oil painting, which is made and fitted by another person. As noted above, they are even different from the "frame" created by the images of an illuminated manuscript, which sometimes literally insinuate themselves into the text. In some copies (copies R and W, for example; see Figs. 30 and 17) Blake even drew frames around his image-texts. Further investigation of this issue thus needs to be undertaken with considerable care.

appears is a union of disparate parts: the fire of the Tyger's eyes (l.6), the "twist[ed] sinews of [its] heart" (l.10) and the "furnace" of its brain (l.14). The Tyger emerges as a mutable, shifting, and dangerous creature. In this instance, creation is framed as something unfathomable, perilous and awe-inspiring.

This fearful encounter with creation might be contrasted with the exploration of "making" in "The Lamb", which is the companion poem of "The Tyger". "The Lamb" (see Fig. 48) approaches the question of creation from the standpoint of *Innocence*. When read simplistically, the poem offers a simple and naïve explanation of creation, its tone acting in contrast to that of "The Tyger". At the outset of the poem, a child addresses a lamb, asking "Little Lamb who made thee/ Dost thou know who made thee" (ll.1-2). Like the speaker of "The Tyger", the child devotes some time to actually describing the creature before him, but he does so in the spirit of one young and innocent creature addressing another, and his focus is on the "delight" and "rejoic[ing]" evoked by the lamb (ll.5-8). In the second stanza, the child answers his own question about who made the Lamb, "telling" it (ll.11-12) that Christ is its maker:

> He is called by thy name,
> For he calls himself a Lamb:
> He is meek & he is mild,
> He became a little child:
> I a child & thou a lamb,
> We are called by his name.
>
> (ll.13-18)

These lines bring to the fore a complex, supplementary movement, which in turn generates questions regarding the supposed simplicity of the lamb's creation and of the attribution of that creation to Christ. In lines 13-18, the child, lamb and Christ (who is "the Lamb of God") are not only connected, but inter-implicated.[57] Jesus calls himself a lamb, and thus to *be* a lamb is to participate in the name of Jesus. Similarly, because Jesus "became a little child" to be a child is also in some sense to be Jesus through a commutative reversal. Hence child and lamb are both "called by his name" (l.18), and Jesus is also synonymous with child and lamb. If one thinks in terms of Blake's notion of Divine Humanity, Christ *is* the child *and* the

[57] It should be noted that Blake's notion of God involved the conviction that Christ *is* God (see esp. *Laocoon*, his final work in illuminated printing, where he wrote: "GOD is JESUS" (E274)).

lamb, just as they embody him.[58] It is not merely the case that Jesus made the lamb, but equally that the lamb, child and Jesus have *all* participated in the *process* of creation, thus disseminating the benign energy of Jesus. This unity may have application across the whole of *Innocence*. For example, in the "Introduction" to *Innocence*, the child who brings inspiration declares that the Piper should "Pipe a song about a Lamb" (l.5). Significantly, like lamb, child and Christ, or Piper and child, the reader/viewer of Blake's illuminated books is invited actively to participate in imaginative engagement and creation.

"The Lamb" is, however, subject to the same supplementation by experience as the rest of *Innocence*, and the image-text itself suggests yet more complex implications. The poem ends with a repeated line, "Little Lamb God bless thee" (ll.19-20) in which the child, empowered to speak with and on behalf of the lamb, invokes a blessing. This blessing might have been understood by Blake to be performative; in view of the inter-implication of child, lamb and Jesus, the child *is* Divine Humanity. Within the context of Blakean thought drawn out by Essick in relation to *Christ Blessing*, the child's divinity should allow him to transcend the split between word and idea; like Christ, the child becomes the incarnation of God, the source of the *logos*.[59] In the accompanying image, the child's hands stretch towards a lamb, one palm exposed and about to touch the lamb in a sign of blessing, while the lamb returns his look adoringly. Of course, in blessing the lamb, the child is also blessing himself and Christ.

Nevertheless, this blessing simultaneously indicates the impossibility of a pure, motivated language. When the child repeats his blessing at the end of the poem, he is also pointing to the iteration of that blessing. As I note in Chapter One, this repeatability is the very possibility of performativity; it signals the differential nature of language, which withholds a unification of word and idea through the *logos*. In this instance, the supplementation of Christ/God by the child may also imply that the creation (which, in John 1:1 begins with the "Word"), is modified by difference and non-plenitude. These reflections make Blake's image

[58] This forms a significant contrast to Charles Wesley's "Gentle Jesus…", the poem upon which 'The Lamb' seems to have been modelled. The first stanza of Wesley's poem states: "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild/ Look upon a little child,/ Pity my simplicity,/ Suffer me to come to Thee" (ll.1-4, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* 194). Wesley's preoccupation is with the separation of child and Jesus, which works in the opposite direction to Blake's poem.

[59] See pp. 44-6 above.

in “The Lamb” both more and less disjunctive. It is more disjunctive because the child’s gesture seems to imply that this is a scene of blessing. It is less disjunctive because it is literally just a pastoral, homely scene, representing a child and his flock of sheep. The image depicts the mundane, “fallen world”, although the poem, child and lamb are protectively enclosed by the frame of the saplings to the left and right of the page, tendrils of foliage reaching towards the words in an incorporative manner.

This complex intermingling of the certainties and perfect unity of creation with indeterminacy and absence is extremely significant in terms of “The Tyger”. The last line of the penultimate stanza, and the final question posed to (or about) the Tyger, is “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?” (l.20). On one hand, this question points to the strong opposition between the innocent lamb and the fierce Tyger. One of the problems that the speaker may have with “The Tyger” is that it undermines any attempt to work from an “argument from design”: attempts to deduce the Creator from the “The Tyger” are thwarted, denying an orderly world where the creature would be the consequence of the productive effort of a suitably equipped creative Mind. Ontologically and ethically, there is no clear answer as to what sort of Creator would elect to shape a creature like the Tyger. By contrast, “The Lamb” would seem to offer such an argument from design. However, as the preceding discussion suggests, “The Lamb” too points to a creation that is not a simple, uni-directional process, or even necessarily linked only to plenitude. The gap between processes of making might not be as immense as it otherwise seems. This is not to say that Tyger and lamb can be equated, but the two are contraries, necessarily held in opposition.

The speaker of “The Tyger” does not see the animal’s creation as negative. However, he or she is in awe of it and disconcerted by it. The vibrant Energy of the Tyger, “burning bright,/ In the forests of the night” (ll.1-2), is a created force which is also destructive and which cannot quite be resolved. The fifth stanza of the poem introduces particular ambiguity:

> When the stars threw down their spears
> And water'd heaven with their tears:
> Did he smile his work to see?
> Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
>
> (ll.17-20)

The spears and tears of the stars are not necessarily hostile. One can throw down one's spears in surrender and cry in joy, as the child in the "Introduction" to *Innocence* does. Heaven might also be reacting to the Energy of the Tyger in despair. This latter reading is suggested when the song is placed within the context of Blake's oeuvre, where stars and heaven have complex connotations, connecting them to Urizen as one of Blake's figures of distorted reason who is associated with a punitive God.[60] The reaction of the stars frames the Tyger as belonging to an Energy that breaks the bounds of distorted Reason, in much the same way as the Angels of *The Marriage* frame the Devils of Hell. In this context, the speaker's question "Did he smile his work to see?" (l.19) might have multiple connotations. The question is rhetorical, leaving open the problem as to whether the speaker is describing a Urizenic God who is dissatisfied with the Tyger, a creator who takes pleasure in the Tyger's Energy, or some transcendent being who exceeds this particular binary. The placement of these lines, at the crescendo of the furiously creative energy which has forged the Tyger, strengthens the connection between this creator and Energy, but does not resolve the question.

Thus there is uncertainty as to what form of creation the speaker is examining. The Godly creation of the Tyger might be paralleled by the speaker's attempts to "frame" it in a poem and image. If this is the case, then the shift from the speaker's reference to who "could" frame the "Tyger" in the first stanza (l.4), to who "dare" frame it in the final stanza (l.24), may point to the presumptuous, audacious and dangerous nature of an attempt to echo the force of creation in one's art. In a sense, this danger may be exposed by the image, which, of course, does not "fit" the poem. As John E. Grant playfully points out in his title for an article on "The Tyger", "This is Not Blake's 'The Tyger' (With Apologies to René Magritte)" (see Fig. 1 and 49).

[60] See *America a Prophecy* (b.5, E58). In the Preludium to *Europe a Prophecy* "all the overflowing stars rain down prolific pains" on the shadowy female whose fiery progeny is misused by Enitharmon, a female force which represses prophecy and free love (1.16, E61). Martin Nurmi reads this feature of "The Tyger" in a similar manner, connecting it to Blake's politico-historical context. He argues that in other illuminated books there is an apocalyptic "pattern of the starry kings' armies throwing down their weapons and weeping, whether in repentance or in the unrepentant anguish of defeat" ("Blake's Revisions of 'The Tyger'" 673). Nurmi goes on to suggest that in light of this pattern, the stars' casting down of spears in "The Tyger" may be understood to "describe a victory for political liberty, if only as a symptom or a result of the apocalypse" (673; see also 674 fn 11).

As noted in Chapter One, the appearance of this pictorial Tyger is not a matter of technical deficiency. Blake drew many fierce creatures in his time, including some sketches of fierce tigers in the *Notebook*, though these post-date the poem by some years. Even the Tyger's background (coloured in tepid hues in copy C (Fig. 1)) does not fit the poem. The stark and leafless tree leaves the Tyger open from the front, exacerbating the sense of its vulnerability. Its thin branches also separate the stanzas into even units. This creates visual divisions which force halts and contemplative pauses in the poem. These halts can be at odds with the almost relentless movement created by the pressure of question-asking in the first to forth stanzas. This image certainly seems to detract from, and perhaps even to disparage the sometimes fearful mystery of the poem. One might frame it, somewhat differently, by considering the sublime elements of the poem. V. A. De Luca argues that in the Romantic period, "the sublime experience was typically presented as a three-fold moment: an encounter with a stimulating object (striking scenery, for example), an episode of discontinuity (usually described as vertigo or blockage or bafflement), and a sudden ecstatic exaltation" ("A Wall of Words" 218-19). This is but one definition of the sublime, which has become a highly contested term. De Luca uses it because of the aptness of these parameters for describing the reader's encounters with Blake's difficult poems, which sometimes form seemingly impassable "walls of words".

"The Tyger" is not one of these walls, but its speaker has gone through a similar process: he or she has encountered a stimulating object and is baffled by it, but through it he or she *simultaneously* experiences sublime awe. The image parodies this bafflement, and the sense of awe is displaced by it. It prods one to remember that the speaker is located within *Experience*, where beings are often disconnected and unable clearly to perceive one another, like the Bard of the frontispiece, who proclaims the divinity of the winged child without looking at him or engaging with him, all the while forgetting his own Divine Humanity. The image emphasises what, in Blakean thought, is the power that the "eye" holds to shift the reality of that which it perceives. It may be suggesting that the reader/viewer must take care not to become so over-awed as to forget his or her inherent Divinity – even if, as the lamb implies – that Divinity is not a site of full presence.

In these two poems, Blake has "dared" to frame "fearful symmetry" with absurdity, and with the mundane. The suggestion is that the reader/viewer could do the same. Zachary Leader argues that, in the case of "The Tyger", Blake's combination of image and text is a failure, the disjunction being too jarring for the reader/viewer (58). This is, in fact, the point. The idyllic and protected setting of the lamb is not necessarily what it may seem, and once the reader/viewer has engaged with the challenging indeterminacy of "The Tyger" and of Blake's other Texts it seems even less likely that one might reside purely in such an ideal state. Indeterminacy will always haunt our readings of Blake's images and texts; it will disturb reader, viewer and critic as they negotiate image and text, innocence and experience.

The indeterminacies with which the reader/viewer of Blake's illuminated books battles *are* dangerous, and the leaps he or she is asked to make *are* presumptive. This is, however, necessary within the frame of co-creative interpretations, of reading/writing/viewing. In a sense, indeterminacy is always already present in Blake's work. "The Tyger" and "The Lamb" are but two examples of Blake's Third Text, but they develop several key aspects of this dissertation. Most particularly, they point to *Song*'s resistance of mastery over the Text. Each act of "framing" is subject to rupture or to friction with other frames. This should not be used to mask the deficiencies which may arise in any given analysis. It should, though, bring readers and viewers to acknowledge that even if we are always "getting a few fingers caught" in Blake's Texts, the threads that we introduce do not bring an end to the process of weaving. *Songs* shows readers and viewers – adult or child, innocent or experienced – that they are empowered weavers of an imaginative Text which has its roots in the relationship between image and poetry. This empowering relationship is not, however, without its moments of doubt and failure. It is to an examination of these moments that I now turn.

# Chapter Three

## Vision and Obscurity in *America a Prophecy*




– William Blake, detail from *America a Prophecy*, copy A (2.18-21, E52).[1]

The emphasis placed by *Songs* on frame-breaking and the function of the reader/viewer stresses the significance of the *form* of Blake's illuminated books. In this context, Stephen Behrendt's suggestion that it was Blake's intention to open the realm of vision not only through content, but also through form, bears close examination. As noted above, in "'Something in My Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts", Behrendt proposes that the processes involved in viewing Blake's often idiosyncratic and incommensurable combination of image and text encourage accession to vision. The title of Behrendt's article foregrounds the *difficulties* presented by Blake's illuminated books. It suggests that for the reader/viewer, Blake's illuminated texts – his Third Texts – are often agitating, causing uncomfortable, reflex-driven physical reactions. Behrendt relates the discomfort caused by the incommensurable, and often difficult to understand interactions of Blake's images and texts to the latter's apparent concern with engineering exchanges with his audience. Behrendt writes:

[1] 1795. Object 4. © Morgan Library and Museum. Electronic (Blake Archive). Relief etching, hand colouring and white-line etching on paper.

> Blake directed his art towards engendering in his audience the sort of accession to vision that had been Elisha's part. In this sense Blake's is a deliberately and radically iconoclastic political art in its distrust of – indeed its attack upon – the easy, conditioned 'answers' to complex problems that are the stock-in-trade of all Establishments bent upon maintaining control not just of individuals but indeed of all the artifacts and institutions of national culture. Blake's texts foster independence of mind and vision precisely because they deny us the comfort and intellectual leisure offered by determinacy.
>
> (93)

A similar perspective is suggested by Jon Mee in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*. Mee writes:

> Blake's illuminated books … eschew any … transparent relationship between the media [image and text]. They challenge the reader to an actively hermeneutic role and seek to induce vision in the reader rather than merely presenting it for consumption. This feature of the illuminated books may have origins in the enthusiastic desire to free religious experience from the mediation of commentaries, ceremonies, and even texts themselves.
>
> (22)

While Mee is less focused on discomfort than Behrendt is, the idea that Blake's Texts *induce* vision not through transparency but through some degree of opacity or impenetrability rooted in their image-text relations is in line with Behrendt's argument. In both cases, it is suggested that Blake's illuminated books were not intended immediately to bring about clarity of vision. Rather, his political and enthusiastic agenda led Blake to produce illuminated books that would act as "irritants", clouding conventional, received vision, and forcing readers and viewers into recognizing their own place in forging vision.[2]

Behrendt's argument is, in certain ways, an extrapolation of Barthes' writings concerning the erotics of the Text. Barthes describes interaction with the "writerly" Text as bringing about *jouissance*, which "means enjoyment in the sense of enjoyment of a right, of a pleasure, and most of all, of sexual climax" ("Theory of the Text" 32).[3] As noted in Chapter One, it refers to the ecstatic loss of a subject (the reader/writer of a Text) in a "textasy", a moment of orgasmic bliss in which the subject is undone, or deconstructed, by language because he or she has no secure identity as a "receiver" of a set message ("Theory of the Text" 32; Moriarty 149). Behrendt's language of discomfort and irritation is very different from Barthes' description of "textasy". However, the notion that the identity of a reader/viewer, his or her wholeness as receiver of a "set" message, can be deconstructed by

[2] See Glossary, "Popular Enthusiasm".

[3] The "readerly" text, in contrast, brings about *plaisir*, pleasure based on the experience of the reader as a subjective individual, a self-sufficient consciousness or wholeness, capable of reflection, but separate from the Text, which reproduces within the subject the teachings of culture that have been imbibed (Moriarty, *Roland Barthes* 150-1 & 153-4).

the encounter with a Text is central to Behrendt's claim that the Third Text can offer accession to vision.[4] In the face of the "set" messages of Law, Religion, Government or other such acknowledged institutions, reader/viewers are shown that they themselves are the producers of the Text.

This suggests that the presence of particular formal characteristics might allow one to anticipate the emergence of a Third Text, and possibly even its effects. As Behrendt notes, Blake stated that his images and texts included nothing insignificant (*A Vision of the Last Judgement* E560; see pp. 84-5 above). For this reason Behrendt argues that, although he speaks of lack of determinacy,

> *[i]n*determinacy is not the point …; the point lies instead [in] that unconventional sort of determinacy that rests upon the intellectual and imaginative compact that Blake takes for granted between himself and his responsive, contemplative reader, a compact mediated physically by the illuminated pages.
>
> (90)

Blake, according to Behrendt, manipulates our expectations about determinacy "to force us to recognize and appreciate the multiplicity of potential signification that resides in seemingly every word, every line, every suggestion" (90). The Third Text remains elusive in its shift away from a "set message", but in Behrendt's account this continuing elusiveness would be offset by its effect: while readers/viewers may not have full certainty as to what Blake's individual vision entails, they would still be aware of, and would (ideally) participate in, Blake's particular discourse or practice of independent vision.

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[4] Behrendt's notion of releasing individuals from intellectual bondage might be modified by Saree Makdisi's discussion of Blake's dislike of the selfhood (*William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s*).* Makdisi intimates that Blake was strongly critical of "the stable unitary subject, the sovereign individual essential to the newly emergent world of liberalism, republicanism, and commodity culture" (2). Behrendt is less explicit about this. He intimates that community vision was important to Blake, but returns to the notion of an independent practice of vision (albeit one which is independent because it is free of attachment to institutions, rather than because it is necessarily practised alone). Importantly, Barthes' challenge to identity shares some focus with Blake's. Barthes was also concerned with the deconstruction of the stable, unitary subject. However, as Makdisi goes on to note, Blake's language is one of "imagination, of power, of sharing and being in common: that is, the language of radical antinomian enthusiasm, which he, like others, inherited from older currents of thought and modified for the exigencies of his own time" (*Impossible History* 2-3). This language is very different from that of Barthes, whose theories of the Text might be said to lead away from the Author-God and other such manifestations of pure presence. See also Glossary, "Antinomianism".
(*Saree Makdisi's studies of Blake provide important (if sometimes controversial) qualifications of many common assumptions regarding Blake's context and politics. While my central focus differs from his, I have included relevant citations of his views both in-text and in footnotes.)

This is not to say that Blake was uninterested in giving his audience comprehensive accession to his personal vision. Indeed, Blake's late work suggests that there might be a move, through a shared *practice*, into a communal realm of vision. *Jerusalem* ends with a triumphal accession to vision which involves the awakening of the all-encompassing power of the imagination to create not only "Memory" and "Intellect", but also "Space" and "Time" (98.28-32). This entry into visionary awareness further involves the identification of all languages, as well as "Tree Metal Earth & Stone" as human or human forms. All human forms have, in turn, been "identified", allowing for a utopian, eternal form of communication without obscurity, even though, in reality, the final pages of *Jerusalem* may be read and viewed repeatedly without leading to a fully determinate interpretation (98.35-6, 99.1-4). This is the representation of the literal apotheosis of language and of vision, their glorification to a divine level.[5] As W. J. T. Mitchell notes, whilst the full-page image at the end of *Jerusalem* does not suggest that the poet/ painter/ prophet's work is over, he is able to rest, leaning on his compass, some of his work done (*Composite Art* 218).

This confirmation of aesthetic achievement is, however, the culmination of a hundred-page long illuminated book, probably completed three decades after Blake printed his first copies of *Innocence*. In the early works there is a more problematic connection between a supposed rise into vision and the "irritants" and absence of conventional determinacy which might potentially facilitate such a rise. In *America a Prophecy* this absence of determinacy can be connected to both obscurity and an overflow of meaning. Obscurity is both a formal quality and a theme or motif of this Text, which enforces itself throughout poems and images, and particularly in their Third Text relations. In this illuminated book the simultaneous coming together and decentring of image and text, and of history and myth, often emphasises the problematic and conditional elements of independent vision and its practice. An encounter with Blake's illuminated books does not always result in some compact between Blake and the reader/viewer (on the model of Behrendt's "unconventional sort of determinacy" (90)). The overflow of meaning generated by Blake's Texts – the shift away from the "set" message – may draw the reader/viewer into a realm

[5] See Essick's *Blake and the Language of Adam* for a phenomenological discussion of this facet of *Jerusalem* (see especially pp. 195-236).

where vision disappears in the face of *in*determinacy, since it is vitiated by fallenness or never emerges at all.

This is suggested by the final lines of the Preludium of *America a Prophecy* (pictured in the epigraph; see also Fig. 55). In most copies of *America*, these lines are absent, as they have been covered or masked during printing (see Fig. 57). Here, the Bard, who Blake associates with the prophet, ceases his song. "[A]sham'd", he shatters his harp against a "ruin'd pillar in glittring fragments", before turning away, silent, to "[wander] down the vales of Kent in sick & drear lamentings" (2.18-21, E52). These lines are juxtaposed with an image of a young man rising from the earth like the sun.[6] His vision is fixed on the heavens (although the heavens, in this instance, are occupied by the text of the rest of the plate). This figure is, I will argue below, associable with Orc, visionary deliverer of the fires of revolution. In a movement which is echoed throughout *America*, vision, in its complex relation to prophecy, comes to be haunted by spectres of self-doubt and failure. Yet these spectres do not always represent a total loss of vision. An experience of reading and viewing Blake's visionary illuminated Texts is not always a matter either of achieving full and utopian accession to vision or of falling into a total failure of vision and entrapment beyond the circle of the imagination. Rather, experience of this kind involves acknowledging the shadow that falls between these two poles.

## Vision

Before moving on to a discussion of *America a Prophecy* as both visionary and spectral Text, it is important to take note of some of Blake's more direct engagements with the idea of "vision". I have already discussed certain of these, and connected Blake's notion of vision to those of perception and imagination. However, as some of the most important ideas deployed within his early and late works, these terms and their interrelations require more detailed framing. Stephen Vine has argued that Blake's notion of vision is an aesthetic one, which involves the persuasion that vision, which stems from the human imagination, is

[6] The sun appears to his right, which on a map is associated with the East.

more real than any nature outside of the imagination (*Spectral Visions* 20-1). In *A Descriptive Catalogue*, Blake writes:

> The Prophets describe what they saw in Vision as real and existing men whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same; the clearer the organ the more distinct the object. A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. … The painter of this work asserts that all his imaginations appear to him infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than any thing seen by his mortal eye.
>
> (37, E541-2)

This is one of the most significant passages for any understanding of Blake's account of vision. For Blake, vision is not achieved through the "perishing mortal eye", and its object is not located in "mortal and perishing nature". It is "imaginative and immortal" sight which is important to Blake, and what he sees is "Spirit and … Vision" of the kind seen by prophets and apostles, who are *producers* of visions, rather than just receivers. This is also connected to the notion of Divine humanity, the idea that man is one with God. The objects of vision are not seen because they are externally present; they are seen because they are well imagined, the imagination being the shared faculty of man and God.

This link between vision, imagination and Divine humanity is also articulated with notions of infinity and eternity. In *A Vision of the Last Judgement,* Blake intimates that infinity and eternity are associated with the imagination, possibly even generated by it:

> This world of Imagination is the World of Eternity it is the Divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body This World <of Imagination> is Infinite & Eternal whereas the world of Generation or Vegetation is Finite & [for a small moment] Temporal[.]
>
> (69, E555)

Here, the infinite and eternal do not necessarily entail the familiar understanding of an endless extension of time and/or space. Rather, they rise through the imagination and transcend the finite, temporal world; they are qualitative, rather than quantitative.[7] Thus, although "[i]mmortal", eternity is also both concrete and singular. This is implied by Blake's

[7] Importantly, in the continuation of this section of *A Vision*, Blake makes reference to "Permanent Realities" which "Exist in that Eternal World"; the things we see reflected in the mundane world will be "comprehended in their Eternal Forms" in the world of imagination. This reference to Eternal Forms is, in many ways, suggestive of the existence of full presence outside of the mundane world. This aspect of Blake's discourse exists in some tension with a poststructuralist reading of his illuminated books, though as I argue in Chapter One, and as I will illustrate below, Blake's oeuvre in no way disallows readings in which absence, difference and the stubbornly indeterminable play a role. Blake's reference to "Eternal Forms" reflected in the mundane world also raises questions regarding his possible affiliation with neo-Platonism, although holding too fiercely to this particular connection has been criticised by writers such as Morris Eaves (*William Blake's Theory of Art* 11, 23).

writings about "minutely articulated" imaginings which are *not* "a cloudy vapour or a nothing". This singularity is, however, also subject to iterability. In his annotations to Swedenborg, Blake writes: "That there is but one Omnipotent Uncreate & God I agree but that there is but one Infinite I do not. for if all but God is not Infinite they shall come to an End which God forbid" (27, E604). Here, there *is* a multiplicity of infinites; indeed, *everything* is infinite. Thus *each* "infinite" is singular, but infinity itself becomes repeatable. This once again highlights its qualitative aspect.

This strain of thought is present not only in Blake's slightly later works, but also in his very early illuminated books. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he engages with imaginative and immortal sight, suggesting that "the firm perswasion that a thing is so" can "make it so"; through such "perswasion" one might reveal the "infinite which was hid" (12 & 14, E38-9). *The Marriage* connects this shift in perception explicitly with discomfort and with the salutary cleansing of the senses which is involved in Blake's particular brand of "infernal" printing. In the text on plate 14 (Fig. 79) he introduces the notion of the "infernal method":

> The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true. as I have heard from Hell. … the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.
>
> This will come to pass by a [sic.] improvement of sensual enjoyment. But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.
>
> If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.
>
> For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.
>
> (14, E39)

This passage describes a movement through which perceptions ruled by the finite and corrupt are consumed by fire and give way to perceptions of infinity. Here Blake retains the language of vision; he is dealing with "appearance", with the way in which the world is perceived. He suggests that he can shift perceptions through "printing in the infernal method".

Blake's description of infernal printing refers directly to his own process of relief etching, in which he literally reveals "the infinite which was hid" by melting away the "apparent surface" of a copper plate in a bath of acid or "corrosives". The implication of the text of plate 14 is that Blake's relief-etched writings and images must be valued both because they

literally display the "infinite" and because they act on the reader/viewer in such a way as to cleanse the doors of perception, exposing the connection between body and soul. This latter process is also "corrosive", even as it is "salutary" and "medicinal".[8] The process of reading Blake's illuminated books is uncomfortable. As the prophet Ezekiel states in the previous plate of *The Marriage*, in "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite" one must not resist "genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease or gratification" (13, E39). One must assume that these words apply not only to those who produce prophecy, but also to those whom they uplift. This may be suggested by the flame-shrouded image at the head of plate 14 (Fig. 79). Here, a figure lying on the ground is awash in flames. A second figure hovers above him. The two are connected by the encompassing gesture of the latter, which is reminiscent of Michelangelo's God in the creation of the world segment of the Sistine Chapel. The image is simultaneously suggestive of a divine, God-like or Christ-like benediction and a salutary transmission of information. In *America* it is implied that such cleansing by fire is also a transmission of information, for the opening of speech in the second section of the poem is preceded by a trumpeter who blows flames, rather than sound (Fig. 58). These flames, stemming from an instrument conventionally used to alert people to announcements or arrivals, stream down the left-hand margin of the page, while in the foreground a family, looking backwards, flees from them.

## "[M]elting apparent surfaces away"

*America a Prophecy* engages fairly overtly with the notion of vision.[9] Its title frames it as a prophecy – the first of what Bindman calls the "full-scale prophecies of the 1790s" (*Complete Illuminated Books* 153). These include the other two continental prophecies, *Europe a Prophecy* and *The Song of Los*, as well as Blake's Urizen series: *The* [First] *Book of*

[8] Blake's "medicinal" texts might in some respects be construed as a *pharmakon,* a cure which, if used too harshly (or in the wrong manner), might also become a poison. See Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" for extensive discussion of the *pharmakon* in relation to Plato's *Phaedrus*.

[9] As with many of Blake's illuminated books, the printing history of *America a Prophecy* is complex. While all of the plates for *America* seem to have been etched in 1793, the Preludium was added only after the first etched state of the poem (Erdman *Illuminated Blake* 139), and there are four plates (a-d), which were left out of the book, probably because of their potentially actionable references to George III (see Blake Archive "*America a Prophecy*"). As with *Songs*, I will focus on copies which were completed before 1800. I use copies A, F, H and K in my discussion of *America*, focusing primarily on copy A. See also Volume 2, p. 32 for a brief discussion of the motivations for this selection.

*Urizen, The Book of Los*, and *The Book of Ahania*. "Prophecy" is not, however, necessarily a stable designation. Johnson's *Dictionary* defines "Prophecy" simply as "[a] declaration of something to come; prediction"; however, when defining a "Prophet", it gives the alternative definition of "[o]ne of the sacred writers empowered by God to display futurity" ("Prophecy. n.ſ.", "Prophet. n.ſ."). Thus, while the term might refer to a foretelling or foreshadowing of future events, it also refers more generally to the divinely inspired expression of the will of God and to divinely inspired speech or writing (*OED* online, "Prophecy, n."). As a prophet and the *producer* of his own vision, Blake is encountering God not as a separate entity, but as implicit in himself. As Blake writes in *There is No Natural Religion*, "[H]e who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (b, E3).

In appropriating the term "prophecy" and, by extension, the title of "prophet", Blake was participating in the rich prophetic canon of the 1790s, which included both Biblical prophecy and contemporary, Enthusiastic prophecies and visions.[10] According to Jon Mee, Blake sought to use and supplement this prophetic tradition, and even those of Blake's illuminated books which do not overtly claim to be prophecies share certain features of form, style, and allusion with the prophetic canon of the 1790s (*Dangerous Enthusiasm* 20-1).[11] Mee argues that Blake felt himself to be seeing a certain rendition of Biblical eschatology in the 1790s: "[T]he ultimate fulfilment of biblical prophecy … [was] to be found in the process of liberation which seemed to be renewing itself in the American and French Revolutions. The Christ who returns from the grave is Blake's Orc" (22).

## Setting the Scene for Prophecy

The fact that Blake is dealing with the culmination of a revolutionary eschatology in *America* and his other "prophetic" books suggests a highly complex relationship with his historical context. For the most part, Blake's *America a Prophecy* does not point to a far-off future. The bulk of *America* is explicitly concerned with the American Revolution of the late 1760s

[10]This can be seen in the work of Richard Brothers (see Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm*) and Joel Barlow (see Erdman, "William Blake's Debt to Joel Barlow").

[11] Mee argues that one of these features of style was obscurity. Obscurity can be *directly* linked to certain eighteenth-century conceptions of prophecy, where it was pursued as a rhetorical strategy, modelled on Biblical prophecy, which would excite the appetite for knowledge and exercise the imagination (26-7).

and 1770s. However, its focus is not on the emergence of a new nation. As Warren Stevenson writes, Blake seems to emphasize "the downfall of tyranny as a prelude to the millennium" ("The Image of Canada in Blake's *America a Prophecy*" 72).[12] This can be extrapolated from *America*'s final passage:

> Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France Spain & Italy,
> In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians
> Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues
> They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven
> Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of despair
> With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the fires of Orc;
> But the five gates were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted
> And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men[.]
>
> (16.12-24, E57-8)

Several aspects of Blake's approach to revolution emerge here. Firstly, in *America* the downfall of tyranny is signalled not only by the American Revolution, but also by the continuation of the revolutionary spirit in the guise of the French Revolution (alluded to as the moment "when France reciev'd the Demons light" (16.15, E57)) and in a projected European revolution. As Harold Bloom notes in his "Commentary" on *The Complete Poetry and Prose*, the "five gates of their law-built heaven" are likely the five senses, closed by the controlling forces of State, Church and other such institutions (E903). Orc's spirit of revolutionary force lights infernal revolutionary fires which will consume the gates of the senses. Through this revolution of the senses, man will presumably come to perceive the world in an alternative manner. Precisely what this manner is, Blake's final lines do not say; they reveal only the spread of revolutionary fire.

In light of this final passage, it might be argued that *America* is more about the French Revolution than the one in America. The context in which it was written supports this. Blake began writing *America* in 1792, over a decade after the American War of Independence and when the French Revolution was only in its third year. As John Brewer notes, although British optimism about the outcome of the French Revolution had initially been strong, from 1792 onwards support for the Revolution began to wane ("'This monstrous tragi-comic scene': British reactions to the French Revolution" 15). The September Massacres of 1792, the execution of Louis XVI in early 1793, and France's declaration of war against England

[12] See Saree Makdisi's "Blake, America and the World" for a detailed consideration of Blake's major reservations concerning the post-revolutionary course of America.

shortly thereafter seemed to confirm the predictions of violence and doom by commentators such as Edmund Burke. As Brewer notes, Burke recognized the events in France as a new sort of revolution. He condemned it as a violation of nature and a rejection of prescription and convention, dominated by politics which were a "madness of reason" (16).

In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, written in 1790 before the height of the Revolution's violence, Burke depicted the Revolution as doomed to fail. Burke used a number of strategies to argue this; these include comparing what he saw as deficiencies in the French Revolution (and responses supporting it) to the English Revolution of 1688. He wrote that the latter "was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty. … The very idea of the fabrication of a new government is enough to fill us with disgust and horror" (119). For Burke, the French Revolution was an object of ridicule and terror. He asks "[c]an I now congratulate ... [the nation of France] upon its freedom? ... Am I to congratulate an [sic.] highwayman and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights?" (93), before moving on to state:

> It looks to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, but of all Europe, perhaps of more than Europe. All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. … Every thing seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragi-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind: alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror.
>
> (95-6)

These attitudes, combined with the Pitt government's suppression of radicalism (including the proclamation against seditious writings), created an atmosphere in which open endorsement of the revolution was dangerous (Brewer 17-18). Blake was a firm supporter of the Revolution. He has been associated with the same circle as Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft and and William Godwin (Behrendt, "History When Time Stops" 382). Among these figures, Paine is particularly significant. He played important roles in both the American and French Revolutions. His *Common Sense*, which propagated notions of individual liberty and representative government, was an extremely powerful force during the American Revolution (Marc Philip, "Introduction" to *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings* 41). In *Rights of Man*, published in response to Burke's *Reflections*

*on the Revolution*, Paine called Burke's writings "flagrant misrepresentations … an outrageous abuse on the French Revolution and the Principles of Liberty … an imposition on the rest of the world" (*Rights of Man* 86). He supported "Government founded on a *moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man*" (*Rights of Man* (Part II) 213). Paine's rhetoric can also be linked to attempts at restorative, even distributive justice (see especially Chapter V of *Rights of Man*).

Importantly, Saree Makdisi argues that direct and uncritical extensions between the rhetoric of Paine and that of Blake fail to acknowledge significant differences between them (*William Blake* 30). He argues:

> Blake may have supported the French Revolution, but, much as he may have opposed priestcraft and the aristocratic state, it is not clear that he necessarily sympathized with all of the rhetoric or the logic of the progressive revolutionaries [such as Paine and Joel Barlow], with all their zeal for moral virtue and superiority over the aristocratic or Oriental other (notions which Blake, for his part, always regarded as destructive).
>
> (*William Blake* 30)

Makdisi argues that Blake's antinomian roots gave him a different understanding of liberty to that of Paine, and that he did not necessarily agree with Paine's understanding of "liberty and its philosophical foundation in natural law and the freedom of commerce" (30).

Nonetheless, even if Blake's politics cannot be subsumed into Thomas Paine's discourse of liberty, like many other radicals he continued to support the Revolution in 1792-3, particularly before the advent of the Terror. This general context is vitally important to the reading of *America*. Blake seems at the very least to have begun *America a Prophecy* as a response to the reactionary/anti-revolutionary point of view of Burke and others. As William Richey notes, in representing a rebellion which by the 1790s was far less controversial than the Revolution in France, Blake was able to champion the Revolutionary cause without exposing himself to censure and arrest ("'The Lion & Wolf shall cease'" 196-7).[13] Thus, *America* implicitly promotes the revolutionary spirit in France, and may imply that certain systems of thought and government were nearing an end.

[13] Richey (196-7) also suggests that Blake may have been following a discourse propagated by Paine, who supported the notion of a worldwide revolution, stemming from America (*Rights of Man* (Part II) 210-212). However, in "Blake, America and the World" and *William Blake*, Makdisi criticises such claims, pointing to their tendency to view history as a triumphal sweep of civilization, stemming from Anglicised America and Europe and subsuming the rest of the world. He proposes that Blake followed an alternative, synchronic model of history ("Blake, America and the World" 84-5).

However, while it has strong historical roots, *America* is not a straightforward catalogue of documented events. It is, as its affiliation with prophecy implies, a re-visioning of history. *America* bridges Blake's earlier, explicitly socio-political and historical works (such as the poem *The French Revolution*) and the slightly later works, which are set more firmly in the realm of his personal mythology. It takes the historical events of the American Revolution and the early stages of the French Revolution, supplements and frames them with personal mythology, and in this fashion directs attention to the continuing spread of revolutionary energy in the 1790s. Even so, in many ways the book is less a foretelling than an attempt to break through the received forms of information *about* the American and French Revolutions, and to guide the reader/viewer to consider these revolutions and revolutionary energy through the lens of vision.

## History and Myth

In *America*, the intricate interplay between history, myth, prophecy and image-text relations introduces a Third Text which is characterised by significant obscurity and indeterminacy. This encourages the reader/viewer to engage imaginatively with a history which is not limited by controlling, empiricist discourses. Revolution becomes the site of prophecy; as Steven Vine notes, revolution *is* revelation in *America* (*Spectral Visions* 25). Both the images and text of *America* contain multiple allusions to history, "traditional" myth, Biblical subject matter, and Blake's personal mythology or pantheon.[14] However, Blake's treatment of history and myth is different in these two media.

In the text, the interaction of history and myth is relatively overt and works through the supplementary relationships between different sections of the poem. It also includes direct references to historical people and events. The text of *America* begins with a Preludium, a two-page-long tale revolving around the escape of Orc from imprisonment by Urthona, whom Blake was later to frame as one of his four Zoas.[15] Urthona, the *un-fallen* form of the prophet Los, is associated with imagination and inspiration. Blake does not explain why Orc

[14] See Glossary, "Mythology".
[15] See S. Forster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* 426 for a summary of Urthona's role in Blake's oeuvre, focusing primarily on his symbolic importance.

might have been chained by Urthona, although in “Africa”, the first section of *The Song* of Los, he intimates that Orc is, “chain'd down with the Chain of Jealousy” (3.22, E67).

Orc’s moment of escape is combined with his rape and conjectural “liberation” of his jailer, the shadowy daughter of Urthona. The daughter, previously silent, is granted a voice by his assault. The section ends with her first speech, in which she associates herself with America, speaking of her “American plains” (2.10, E52), and her sense of events happening in “Canada”, “Peru” and “Mexico” (2.13-13, E52). She feels Orc’s spirit writhing through and across these geographic spaces. Seemingly in response to this, she comes to feel “limb rending pains”, which she states are “eternal death” and “the torment long foretold” (2.15-17, E52).

The Prophecy section of the poem directly follows the Preludium, but is immediately distanced from it by the appearance of a cast of historical figures, who are associated with the American Revolution. “Washington, Franklin, Paine & Warren, Gates, Hancock & Green” (3.5, E52) are standing on the Eastern shore of America, facing “Albion’s Guardian Prince” across the Atlantic.[16] From this vantage point, Washington opens with a speech which decries the “bended bow” and “heavy iron chain” of enslavement directed towards them from Albion’s cliffs (3.8, E52). His speech is, however, interrupted by a blast sent across the Atlantic by the Guardian Prince, whose reaction seems to prompt the emergence of a “Zenith” (4.4, E53). Though he will be identified only later in the poem, this is Orc; his (re)appearance is described in sublime and terrible language, as he rises from the Atlantic to stand against the forces of Albion (4.2-11, E53). The Guardian Prince gives way to (or perhaps metamorphoses into) Albion’s Angel, and these two titanic figures engage in a battle of words. Albion’s Angel sends flame and pestilence to sweep over the Atlantic and attack the Revolutionaries.

[16] A designation such as “Albion’s Guardian Prince” may seem vague in relation to concrete (though often misrepresented) historical figures such as Washington and Paine, or to characters such as Orc, who is firmly entrenched in Blake’s later mythological canon. However, as I will discuss below, allegorical decoding of figures such as the Guardian Prince (who might be associated with King George III, for example) is fraught with complications and problems. I have thus resisted the practice at this point.

Eventually, the "rushing of th'inhabitants [of America] together" turns back the tide of pestilence, which then races back across the Atlantic to attack Albion's Angel and all that he stands for (14.27, E56). The fall of Albion's Angel provokes the appearance of Urizen, the spirit of bound and divided perception (and Urthona's opposite Zoa), who is revealed to have been the force behind Albion's Angel. Urizen sweeps down from the heavens and covers the Atlantic – and Orc – with "clouds & cold mists", hiding them "Till Angles & weak men twelve years should govern over the strong:/ And then their end should come, when France receiv'd the Demons light" (16.13-15, E57). The poem thus ends with the French Revolution beginning after years of suppression by Urizen.

As this summary suggests, the shadowy daughter is not mentioned amidst this maelstrom of historical and mythic personages in the Prophecy section of the poem. This does not, however, mean that she has disappeared. The two sections of the poem are supplemental; the daughter associates herself with the geographic body of America, and this geographic body is the *site* of the Prophecy section. In light of this, Michael Ferber suggests that she may have *become* the historical level of the poem, "a potential … terrestrial embodiment of revolution" ("Blake's *America* and the Birth of Revolution" 82). If this is the case, then the geographic and historical entity of America comes, supplementally, to constitute and embody a mythological figure, and the mythological figure to represent America. In turn the revolution in America, already related to the intervention of a host of mythological characters, comes to be related to the violent assault on the shadowy daughter. The action which unfolds in the Preludium *is* the birth of revolution, and it is the pains of revolution that the shadowy daughter feels. The association of the Preludium with the mythical element of *America* is strong enough for Ferber to have argued that the mythic level should be called the "preludic" (90).

This complex and often obscure intermingling of history and myth is also visible in the images, but in a very different way. The images of *America* do not, as a rule, name their historical figures, as the names "Washington", "Paine", and so on identify some of the figures appearing in the text. These images also tend to be presided over by nude and robed

forms; in contrast to *Songs*, not a single figure wears the "modern" dress of Blake's period.[17] Several of these figures are represented with titanic proportions; others stand, crouch or lie in cruciform and promethean poses, which link them to representations of myth and the Bible. Cross-sectional scenes, which show both an earthly level, and delve beneath the ground or rise into the sky, are reminiscent of Biblical paintings in which earth, heaven and/or hell are simultaneously represented.[18]

However, while these images might seem to be primarily (or only) mythic or "preludic", they carry a variety of references which introduce the historical level in a manner which is different from the text, but equally strong. For example, the focal point of the frontispiece (Figs. 50 and 51) is a titanic, winged figure, chained to a breach in a wall constructed of massive, carved blocks reminiscent of classical architecture. To his right is a woman wearing an expression of desolation, with two children clutching her. She sits on a carved stone block which may be a sarcophagus or tomb, its appearance pointing towards absence and loss, but also towards the rediscovery of forgotten legacies. These figures and classical ruins evoke the mythological dramaturgy of ancient times. However, Blake's image is also clearly mediated by Renaissance influences, as well as Neoclassicism and connected tendencies in eighteenth century art. For example, the chained titan, woman and children seem to be derived almost directly from the style of Michelangelo's drawings of human bodies. The classical references of the architecture and figures can also be related to the harnessing of Greek and Roman references by the aesthetic and politically informed *avan't garde* of Blake's period, including Jacques Louis David in France. Furthermore, following Robert Rosenblum, it might be argued that the image (and Blake's style more generally) can be related to a late eighteenth century movement in architecture and the figural arts, which saw a drive towards simplification, and a disregard for illusionistic techniques (*Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* 153-8). This can be seen in Blake's use of simplified, flattened surfaces (in the sky, for example) and strong outline (159). Significantly, Rosenblum argues that this transformation, a return (via form) to *tabula rasa* or new beginnings, was "motivated by that late eighteenth century spirit of drastic reform which found its most radical culmination in the political revolutions of America and France" (146).

[17] See, for example, the images of "The Echoing Green" copy C (E8, *Blake Archive*).
[18] See, for example, *The Last Judgement* scene of the Sistine chapel.

The image thus takes as its intertexts not only ancient myths, but also Renaissance and eighteenth-century art. This more recent history of the appropriation of classical forms infuses Blake's scene just as strongly as reference to myth. The historical present is yet more fully evoked by the weapons in the foreground of the image. One is a cannon, which is partially out of frame. It brings to mind the conflicts of early modernity, and most particularly the clashes of the American and French Revolutions. The second object is a cross-like broken sword. In copies A and H the reflective black iron of the cannon is echoed by the chains which secure the giant's forearms to the earth, suggesting an imprisonment manufactured in the present, even if he is a figure who seems to arise from the ancient past.

Moreover, the visual style of *America*, particularly in monochrome copies such as F and H, may be an analogue of the political images and cartoons found in the print culture of Blake's period. In *Prophet Against Empire*, David Erdman argues that this is a feature of both *Europe* and *America*. While he does not establish direct connections between *America* and individual satirical prints of the 1790s, he does point to specific parallels between other Blakean works of the period and satirical prints by James Gillray. For example, Gillray's satirical print titled *The slough of despond;-vide-the patriots progress* (Fig. 80) can be directly associated with certain of Blake's works. The image satirizes Charles Fox, a fierce opponent of Pitt and supporter of the French Revolution. The most important detail for Erdman's purposes is the representation of "The Straight Gate: or the way to the Patriots Paradise" in the top right corner. Fox is unable to reach this entry to the promised land of liberty. However, the promised land is an illusion. Behind the gate is a rickety ladder stretching toward the moon and falling short of it. Gillray's point is that the promised land of liberty ("Libertas" is inscribed on the flag above the gateway) is as unreachable as the moon. Blake seems to have responded to this on plate 9 of his emblem series *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (Fig.81). In Blake's image, a ladder stretches towards the moon, but he has lengthened it so that it rests against the moon, rather than on wobbly wooden struts. Although the way is long and narrow, the ladder will allow the youthful pilgrim about to begin the climb to reach the moon, the promised land of liberty (*Prophet* 203-4). From this, Erdman extrapolates that other prints in Blake's emblem series (which spans the *Notebook* and *For Children)* are also political. Significantly, both the illustration of death's door on

plate 12 of *America* (Fig.73) and the head-clutching figures of plates 4 and 5 (Figs. 59, 61 and 64) appear as emblems in the *Notebook*. "Death's Door" (Fig. 82) also appears in *For Children*. This implies that the images in *America* might also be satirically derived (203-6). It was also common for Gillray to include mythic subject matter in his political prints, although his satirical irreverence is far more overt than Blake's.[19]

As Mee points out, Blake was something of a *bricoleur* who often incorporated facets of popular culture (of which Gillray was a part) in his prints (*Dangerous Enthusiasm* 9-10).[20] This is an important qualification to claims that the images of *America* are *only* mythological or "preludic". Ferber, for example, has argued that "almost nothing historical or literal can be found" in the images in *America*, although he acknowledges that some figures – angels, sybils, serpent-riding children – might be intermediate, between history and myth. In light of this, he argues that the reader/viewer of *America* literally sees the visionary dimensions of Blake's text in the images (90-1). Ferber acknowledges that some vertical shifting (from historical to mythological levels) and lateral shifting (between different mythological narratives or representations) occurs both in the image-text relations and in the text. However, he does not note that this is a feature of the images. His claim is reductive in light of the historical references implicit in Blake's images, even if the figures represented are not specific historical persons. Ferber's attribution of "literal" vision to the images is also problematic, in that it implies that only the mythical level, and not the historical one, is subject to vision; it thus closes off certain visionary elements of the text. Washington's confrontation of the Guardian Prince is surely as strongly visionary as the Preludium.

[19] Blake's images are, of course, without many of the features of caricature employed by Gillray (emaciated and comically distorted bodies, depicted with a far lighter use of outline than Blake typically employed). For an example of Gillray's "classical" and "mythic" cartoons see Fig. 83, *Light Expelling darkness, - evaporation of Stygian exhalations,-or- The sun of the constitution, rising superior to the clouds of opposition*, which depicts Pitt as a Roman charioteer driving up a road of cloud (consult the *British Museum Collection Database* for a detailed description of the various allusions made by the plate).

[20] Mee's deployment of the term "bricolage" is derived from that of Lévi-Strauss, but "[acknowledges] Derrida's point that all textual constructions … are always already formed by received languages" and can recombine "elements from across discourse boundaries such that the antecedent discourses are fundamentally altered in the resultant structures" (3). This process of play is yet another factor which destabilizes the notion of unitary origin (see Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences").

However, both the conjectural separation of image and text and that of historical and mythic levels are deceptive. As the interactions between the Preludium and Prophecy texts and the presence of contemporary allusions in classical-form have already indicated, the structure of history and myth in *America* is, to some extent, supplemental. The instability emerging from such supplemental relations is even stronger in *America* than it is in *Songs*. To an extent *Songs* is stabilized by the brevity of each section of the book, while in the Prophecy section of *America*, an image or portion of text might have no relation to anything which shares the plate with it, and instead be related to something depicted much later in the book. The rather neat "pairing" of "sets" of images and poems found in *Songs* is also less common. In *America* one does not find a mythological plate paired with a historical one as one finds with innocence and experience.[21] The narrative and interpretative modalities of the mythological and historical levels of *America* cannot simply be separated without some suppression and manipulation of the illuminated object.

It is at least to some degree in consequence of the already-existing tension between history and myth that *America a Prophecy* comes to be constituted by a Third Text which is characterised by irritants, obscurity and a lack of conventional determinacy. Significantly, this indeterminacy does not necessarily rely on incommensurability or disjunctive image-text relations (although this may sometimes be the case). It can also be the seeming *coherence* of Blake's images and texts which forces a more direct, imaginative engagement with representations of history, and with Blake's historical present.

The complex interface between image, text, history and myth might best be illustrated by engaging briefly with certain of David Erdman's historical readings of *America*. Erdman is fully aware of the fact that in *America* "the text is not there to help us follow the pictures, nor the picture to help us visualize the text; both lead us to an imaginative leap in the dark

[21] For an example of a supplemental pairing of two plates in *America*, see plates 8 and 10 (Figs. 67 and 69). There are even instances in the continental prophecies where an image from one poem matches the text from another. For example, in *America* Blake writes of the plagues of Albion's Angel, which "flew forth out of their clouds/ Falling upon America …/ As a blight cuts the tender corn when it begins to appear" (14.19-21, E56). Behrendt argues that this description corresponds to plate 9 of *Europe*, which depicts two figures apparently blowing blight from their trumpets ("Irritants" 84).

… beyond the dark and the fire" ("*America*" 93).[22] As the seminal writer of "historicist" Blake criticism, Erdman's imaginative leaps tend to involve his extensive contextual and historical knowledge of Blake's times and Texts. There is a strong impulse within his writings on *America* to identify certain of Blake's mythical characters with human counterparts. This impulse is, in part, rooted in the Text itself. Blake tends to give just enough factual, historical referents to sharpen the awareness of his audience, causing them to *look* for historical figures and events in images and texts that would otherwise be assumed to form aspects of his personal mythology.

Erdman identifies the Guardian Prince of Albion who appears in the text of plate 3 (Figs. 58 and 60) with King George III (*Illuminated Blake* 142). This identification is based primarily on plate 4's alternative state, plate b (plate 4: Figs. 59 and 61, plate b: Fig. 63). Plate b is apparently the earlier state, and while its text is completely different from that of plate 4, most of plate 4's images derive from it. The text of plate b begins with the line "Reveal the dragon thro' the human; coursing swift as fire/ To the close hall of counsel, where his Angel form renews" (b.2, E58), and goes on to describe the Angel's arrival at a council held by "George the third … & his Lords & Commons" (b.9, E58). On the strength of this passage, Erdman argues that the dragon, Angel and King George (their human form) are all one. However, on plate 3 and its alternative state, plate a (Fig. 62), Blake calls the "Guardian Prince of Albion" a "dragon form clashing his scales at midnight" (3.16, E52).[23] If the Guardian Prince is the dragon, then he must also be associated with the Angel and George III. This is further suggested by the images of plate b (Fig. 63). One of these is a dragon with limp, human hands, which do not fit with the rest of its fierce demeanour. Like the image of the "The Tyger", this evokes a sense of uncanny disjuncture. A jagged line, possibly a bolt of lightning, seems to come from the dragon's hands. Directly in front of him is an aged man (the Angel described with "snowy beard" on plate b (b.16, E58)), whose streaming robes echo the shape of the dragon's tail, and whose sceptre might be the transformation of the

[22] For criticism of Erdman's approach to image-text relations, in which he argues that all images must be rooted in the texts, see Chapter Two, esp. p. 96.

[23] This line is the same on rejected plate "a" and plate 3. Plate a precedes plate b in the manuscript "Three cancelled plates from 'America a prophecy'" in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection.

fork of the lightning. Here, the dragon seems to metamorphose into the Angel, who holds the sceptre of Britain's king.[24]

On plate 4 (Figs. 59 and 61), which is the version included in the "finished" *America*, the action of the text is rather different. One is still introduced to the Guardian Prince's dragon form on plate 3, but on plate 4 the reader/viewer "sees" Orc rising from the ocean; there is no council and no passage describing the transformation of dragon into Angel. King George still makes an appearance in Plate 4, but only to remind the reader/viewer that following the introduction of Orc, "The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision" (4.11, E53). This suggests that the King of England should *not* to be associated with the image of the dragon, but rather with the leftmost of the two cowering adult figures at the base of plate 4.

Of course, even without knowledge of the text of plate b (which, in any case, can be read only like the erased level of a palimpsest, and not as *the* "original" and thus "intended" state for the images), one might associate the King with the Guardian Prince, the dragon and the bearded figure/Angel. Firstly, the royal title of the "Guardian Prince" suggests some relationship with an actual historical figure. Secondly, as Erdman proposes, there is a sense that plates 3 and 4 represent the eastern shore of America and the western shore of England respectively ("America" 106). This suggestion seems most apt when applied to copy K. Here, plate 4 (Fig. 61) is coloured in dense purplish and greyish reds, which echo the reds, purples and greys of plate 3 (Fig. 60). In both plates, this colouring seems to resonate with the text on plate 4, where the Atlantic is observed to be "Swelling, belching from its deeps red clouds & raging Fires!" (4.3; E53). In both copies A and K, the sense of facing coasts is implied by several factors: the last line of the stanza at the base of plate 3 extends onto plate 4, connecting the two pages. The land at the base of plate 3 gives way on the right; plate 4 might represent a beach scene with the ocean on the left, the large object to the right being a piece of driftwood or even a whale (see Erdman "America" for the latter). In this context, the only figure looking westward like the king is the bearded man with book and sceptre. The sceptre is, as noted above, also the symbol of kingship. The transformation

[24] George III can be seen holding a sceptre, for example, in James Gillray's" *-A kick at the broad-bottoms!-i.e.-Emancipation of all the talents!".* This cartoon is dated 1807, but it depicts a very similar object (Fig. 84).

from dragon to Angel/human is still suggested by the images of plate 4, a remnant from plate b. Thus, even in plate 4, there is confusion as to whether or not certain images and figures in the text should be identified with each other.

Erdman suggests that the images of plate b and hence of plate 4 are part of a progressive cartoon, establishing a separate "narrative" which follows a structure very different from the text and which sets the text into play ("*America*" 106-8).[25] The Guardian Prince/ George III is represented in three different states: dragon, bearded man/Angel and cowering, head-clutching figure (*Illuminated Blake* 412 and "*America*" 106-7). Whether or not the second, child-clutching male figure added to plate 4 might be a fourth stage in this cartoon is questionable. However, even if one reads this as a progressive cartoon, the image-text relations and the supplementation of history by mythic figures cannot be firmly catalogued. A variety of unstable interactions is created. The Guardian Prince and the King of England, for example, come simultaneously to represent a variety of different states (both states of mind or "soul", as Blake uses the term in Songs, and types of embodiment). The reader and viewer must strain to establish narrative coherence. In this instance, the image-text relationships are both indeterminate and obscure, *despite* a certain conjunction between what is represented in the images and the text.

This forces the imaginative engagement of Blake's audience. As readers and viewers are pushed to consider the relationship between history and myth, they are forced to look beyond comfortable, and supposedly finite and empirical representations of history. Nor are these images satirical in the same manner as Gillray's, which are understood to be reflective of certain realities. Representations which might place historical figures such as King George outside of the field of imagination, or leave them unaffected by the "firm perswasion" of the visionary, are undermined. Blake's personal myth does not simply explain events or justify the interactions of historical figures; it arises (at least in part) out of imaginative engagement with them, and then returns to supplement them. History and myth come to be inseparable. *Both* are the object of vision and are to some extent produced by vision. In this sense, *America* seems to follow the pattern suggested by Behrendt, since the work

[25] See also plates 1 (Figs. 54 and 56) and 5 (Fig. 64).

fosters independence of mind and vision by using the Third Text to deny the reader/viewer the comfort and intellectual leisure offered by determinacy.

## Hortatory Prophecy

This move away from what Behrendt terms intellectual leisure and towards that which is salutary and corrosive points to a feature of Blake's prophecy which might be referred to as "hortatory". Mee (following certain of Blake's contemporaries) defines this as a form of prophecy used to persuade people to act in a certain way, rather than as a means of foretelling (and limiting) the future (27). That Blake was overtly engaged in this aspect of prophecy is suggested by one of his annotations to Watson:

> Every honest man is a Prophet he utters his opinion both of private & public matters/Thus/If you go on So/the result is So/He never says such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. a Prophet is a Seer not an Arbitrary Dictator".
>
> (Annotations to Watson 14, E617)

Here, Blake does not appropriate prophecy for himself alone, nor does he specify its content. Rather, he treats prophetic discourse as "a place to speak from which can be taken up by any 'honest man'" (Mee 28).[26]

Of course, *America* is not without hints at futurity. In the final lines of *America* quoted above, the spread of the fires of revolution is also a projection into the future, albeit one which may have seemed close at hand in 1792/3, as France occupied parts of continental Europe and entered into war with England. The lines are suggestive of an apotheosis of vision which had not yet occurred. Blake's projections onto history further intensify this sense of futurity. For those readers and viewers who are not yet a part of his visionary world – remaining bound by what Blake would have understood to be the perceptions of the fallen world – much of the material presented in *America* is not associated with the past, but a fiction which has never come to pass.[27]

[26] This has some affinities with Biblical prophecy. Prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel highlight the ethical and social consequences of certain values and kinds of action, rather than seeking to pre-determine the future.

[27] There are, potentially, strong messianic connections here. To such readers and viewers, *America* may seem to be a story rooted in imagined time, in a time immemorial which is only really accessible through disappearing traces, and which will manifest itself only in the future to come. However, and at the same time, Blake's texts are messianic in the sense that they form an optative projection of ideals and values, which may exert a transformative power over the present. I will discuss this messianic orientation briefly with reference to Derrida at the end of this chapter.

However, any appeal to the predictive function of *America a Prophecy* is qualified by Blake. In the image on plate 14 (Fig. 75), one sees a young scholar, leaning on books (possibly the Testaments) listening to a sybil or prophetess. His books are closed – knowledge of a certain sort is denied him – and he is apparently oblivious of the almost overwhelming onslaught of plague and blight sent by Albion's Angel and the "fierce rushing" of the inhabitants of America seen in the text (14. 16-24 & 27, E56). In place of this knowledge, the sybil makes a gesture which Erdman argues is meant to demonstrate that life is but a span (*Illuminated Blake* 152). The prophecy that she presents to the boy does not involve a move to infinity. It is concerned only with death.[28] If read conventionally, the image of an open-jawed snake wrapped around the sybil's loins may imply that all she gives birth to may already be fallen. This image suggests that prophecy can be insidious, a form of entrapment proposing futures of fallen perception, where the revelation of the "infinite which is hid" never happens. The reader/viewer remains trapped in the cavern or grave from which Blake wishes his audience to rise.

In contrast to this, the "hortatory" function of prophecy leads directly forward to infinite perception and to vision.[29] What constitutes the "honesty" of a prophet is not the ability to see the future, but the ability to express honestly that which is seen through the imaginative organs. Thus, in the "Memorable Fancy" on plates 12 and 13 of *The Marriage*, when the narrator asks Isaiah and Ezekiel "how they dared so roundly to assert. that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition", Isaiah dismisses this fear (12, E38). He states:

> I saw no God. nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded. & remain confirm'd; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote.
>
> (12, E38)

Here, the "hortatory" voice of honest indignation is the voice of the prophet and of vision.[30]

[28] The engagement with "eternal death" is a feature of the shadowy daughter's encounter with prophecy, and will be discussed at length below.

[29] As I will discuss below, this aspect of "hortatory" prophecy is teleological, even if it does not quite claim the power of foretelling.

[30] There is some slippage of meaning involved in Isaiah's speech. "Imposition" may refer to deceit (see Chapter One for a discussion of Edward Larrissy's analysis of Blake's use of the term). From the traditional religious perspective, one would assume that God (the Father) speaks to humanity, his children. Isaiah would

The Third Text emerging from *America* is engaged in "melting apparent [historical] surfaces away". It encourages the reader/viewer actively to participate in this process by making use of his or her imaginative organs to re-vision history. This is also a visionary process. Blake's "hortatory" message in *America* is that the reader/viewer should seek the infinite which was hid. He or she must allow the "five gates" of the senses to be "consum'd" (16.22, E58). One must seek to break through the received forms of information both *about* the American and French Revolutions and about revolution more generally. Significantly, what I have described as "hortatory" prophecy seems to have had some connection to justice for Blake. Proceeding from his statement that "Every honest man is a Prophet", he writes: "It is mans fault if God is not able to do him good. for he gives to the just & to the unjust but the unjust reject his gift" (E617). In this context, to be just is to intervene imaginatively in the world through a "firm perswasion" of one's "opinions". Those who reject God's gift of prophecy are unjust, and God cannot do them good. It would seem that an aspect of doing good (of attempting to give justice, to be just, and to read justly) involves giving space to alternative opinions and different ways of engaging imaginatively with the world; in a sense, this requires giving space to the other. This candour combined with openness is central to the notion that multiple Third Texts might arise from *America*.

However, the move away from "organical perception" is also characterised by a profound ambiguity. If there is more than one way to weave the Text, and more than one way of perceiving inherent in it, then voices may arise which *do not* adhere to what Behrendt has described as Blake's "unconventional sort of determinacy". Beyond the site where the reader/viewer realizes his or her power to imagine and create is a site where this power is undermined, shown to be deficient. In *America a Prophecy*, there is a constant tension between the coming of revolution as revelation, and moments where the reader/viewer is potentially overwhelmed, swept away by visionary uncertainty and by the crisis of that which cannot be envisioned.

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then be deemed literally to have seen and/or heard the Deity in a physical sense. He states, however, that he neither saw nor heard God in "a finite organical perception". Conversely, in terms of Blake's thought, God and man are integrally interconnected, so there is no deception. Through a displacement of the familiar notion of prophecy, the "voice of God" has come to reside in "the voice of honest indignation".

Both the language of discomfort adopted by Behrendt and the Barthesian discourse of the erotics of the Text might serve as reminders that a degree of transgression is involved in deconstructing the reader/viewer as the receiver of a set message. In *Reading William Blake*, Behrendt argues that this transgression takes the form of an *assault* on the senses of the reader/viewer in the continental prophecies. He suggests that under the mantle of his infernal method, Blake seeks to *violate* and *break* in order to liberate the reader/viewer from fallen aesthetics, language and perception (*Reading* 102-5).[31]

According to Behrendt, this violation can be associated with the act of rape which initiates the action of *America*. He describes the rape of the shadowy daughter as "emblematic" of that which seeks through violence "forcibly to break through" the reader/viewer's "conditioned resistance" to operations which would cultivate the senses and open them to vision. He goes on to suggest that this violence seeks to "liberate … readers even as it 'ravishes' them" (*Reading* 105). While Behrendt is not referring specifically to the Third Text here, his argument in *Reading William Blake* has some affinity with its "irritants" and transgressions.[32] I would argue that Behrendt's contention is at least superficially correct. Blake's treatment of violation in the Preludium and in *America* as a whole *does* connect it to a visionary demystification of the senses, although (as I will discuss below) this violation can *also* lead to a site where vision is overwhelmed, suppressed and negated.

Before proceeding to a discussion of this emblematic violation, it must be emphasised that the Preludium is presented as a scene of revolutionary origin, and thus the (supplemented) genesis of a visionary discourse. One of the factors which supports this reading is the Preludium's place among the other two continental prophecies. Like *America*, both *Europe a Prophecy* and *The Song of Los* deal with the precursors to and/or ramifications of revolution. Behrendt (working from a number of other scholars) convincingly argues that the narratives

[31] For a discussion of the enthusiastic, antinomian and Painite liberal precedents for the use of transgression, see Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm*.

[32] "Irritants" was published several years after *Reading William Blake*. While Behrendt does make reference to a meta-text consisting of image and text, and even uses the term "third text" in the earlier work (49), his focus is broader than in "Irritants", while the theory is somewhat less defined.

of the continental prophecies establish the following (roughly) chronological sequence: "Africa", the first part of *The Song of Los*, begins the sequence, and is followed by *America*, then *Europe* and finally by "Asia", which is the second part of *The Song of Los* (*Reading William Blake* 110-111 and "History When Time Stops"). The most striking evidence for the bracketing of *America* and *Europe* by the two parts of *The Song of Los* is that the last line of "Africa" is identical to the first line of the Prophecy section of *America*. Similarly, the last lines of *Europe* are echoed by the first of "Asia".[33] Within this sequence the Preludium of *America* is displaced (as is the interlinked Preludium of *Europe*). Although in the bound illuminated book *America*'s Preludium comes directly before the Prophecy section, in the narrative established by the text, "Africa" supplants it. Within this sequence, the Preludium comes to fall either before "Africa" *or* in an alternative space and time, which supplements the continental prophecies but is not part of their chronology in a linear sense. In either case, the Preludium comes to resemble a time immemorial which can be accessed through Blake's visionary power. It represents a genesis, albeit one subject to the replacement of the supplement.

The images of the Preludium emphasise the sense that these pages constitute an "originary" moment. Plate 1 depicts a standing man with his hands upraised (Figs. 54 and 56). Beside him is a weeping woman. Both figures have turned towards a youth who is promethean; he is chained to the ground, eyes open, looking upwards. Below him, the writhing and humanoid roots of a tree lead the eye to a self-clutching man, looking outward at the viewer. He seems to be a re-visioning of the titanic figure chained to the rocks on the frontispiece, but without his wings. Erdman suggests that this is another progressive cartoon, showing the different states of revolutionary birth. Ideally, it would be read in a clockwise direction, so that the self-clutching man is transformed into the promethean figure (100). This cruciform figure then leaps up to become the standing man, bypassing the

[33] The chronological link is not as explicit in the images, though the supplemental framing of image and text comes to form complex chronological interconnections. It should also be noted that the movement from *America* to *Europe* is less clearly marked than that from "Africa" to *America* or from *Europe* to "Asia". As Bloom notes, the Preludium of *Europe* "[follows] the situation of the one to *America*" (E903). However, the Prophecy section of *Europe* covers a far longer period of history than that of *America*, alluding to the events of *America* as only part of this history (see especially 9.9-16, E63). Nevertheless, *Europe* can be said to "follow" *America* in the series.

state between lying and standing. This state is represented on plate 2, where a man crouches ready to rise (Fig 55 and 57; "*America*" 100).

If this is read as a progressive cycle of origination, it is, however a fallen cycle. The chained figure seems to refer to Orc, who in the text of the same page is described as a "youth" riveted by "tenfold chains" (1.11-12, E51). His identification with Prometheus, the fire-giver, may also relate to Orc, the bringer of revolutionary fires. Finally, his almost-cruciform pose associates him with Christ. When Orc fulfils himself in standing form it is not, however, in the guise of a risen Christ. Other artworks within Blake's oeuvre link the standing figures to Los and Enitharmon, the parents of Orc.[34] Their pose also associates them with Adam and Eve. As Erdman notes, they are turning about, "looking backward" ("*America*" 100), which is characteristic of conventional images of the expulsion from paradise.[35] Orc/Prometheus/ Christ rises into a state of fallenness, becoming Adam/Los.

Of course, this transformation is itself undermined by the movement of the image. The lines of the image lead the eye in the *opposite* direction to Erdman's supposedly "ideal" progression. In both copy A (Fig. 54) and copy H (Fig 56) the gaze is initially drawn by the branches to the standing man, who is the focal point of both images. The viewer follows the angle of his head, along his line of sight, past the woman and to Orc/the Promethean youth. The gaze is then pulled downwards by the roots, to the man shut up in his cavern. Beside him is a worm, which, among its many connotations, carries that of mortality (Damon 451). As Erdman notes, the very structure of the image "traps hope", which may spring up from the earth, but is sent back again by the movement of the image ("*America*" 100). In the context of these images – which readers/viewers see before they embark on reading the text – the "visionary" process represented by the text begins to seem ambiguous.

This trapped and repetitive cycle is strongly echoed by the text. The Preludium's narrative begins with a pause as Orc's masculine gaze frames the shadowy daughter, who stands

[34] See *Los and Orc* in the Tate collection. Butlin suggests that this image was painted before the Preludium was produced. A similar image appears in in *The Four Zoas*, where Los and Enitharmon go to weep over their son, Orc, whom they have imprisoned (*Paintings and Drawings* Cat. 255).

[35] See pp. 63-5 above. If these figures are Adam and Eve, it should be noted that while they are obviously tormented in some way, they are still naked; they have not yet clothed themselves, and are possibly not yet fallen.

silent before him (1.1, E51). This establishes a tension very close to that which Laura Mulvey detects between narrative progression in films and the woman as bearer of the look. Woman is, according to Mulvey, "an indispensable element of spectacle" in "normal" narrative film, but her visual presence tends to work against the development of the storyline by "[freezing] the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" ("Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 63). The verbal passage in which the shadowy daughter first appears is, of course, very different from a filmic scene. It is a literary image, rather than a visual one, and the daughter of Urthona is conspicuous by her apparent absence from Blake's visual images in the Preludium. However, the tension between Orc's active gaze – ever seeking to pin down and isolate the shadowy daughter – and her mute figure creates a stress in the narrative, foregrounding the scopophilic elements of the poem.

This scopophilic pause is extended by a lengthy description of the daughter's obscurity, which will later serve as the catalyst for her violent demystification and – if one works from Behrendt – her movement into "vision". The daughter is described in a language of darkness and cloud, "shadowy" and "nameless". Her nakedness is covered by obscuring clouds, which "roll round her loins,/ Their awful folds in the dark air" (1.1 & 7-8, E51). Even though she is introduced as bearer of Orc's gaze, she is powerful and weapon-like, "a quiver with its burning stores, a bow like that of night,/ … Invulnerable tho' naked" (1.5-7, E51). She is also "Crown'd with a helmet & dark hair" (1.4, E51). While a crown would typically expose her face, the helmet's visor carries the potential to conceal it. As Derrida remarks in *Specters of Marx*, this "visor effect" allows one to "see without being seen" (6-7). Most importantly, the shadowy daughter is "silent … as the night;/ For never from her iron tongue could voice or sound arise" (1.8-9, E51). This inability to speak is the most important marker of her obscurity; not even language, whether fallen or visionary, can disrupt the armour of her obscurity.

Just as she is introduced as bearer of Orc's gaze, the daughter's silence is conditioned by Orc. She is merely, "dumb till that dread day when Orc assay'd his fierce embrace" (1.10, E51). Thus, even when imprisoned, Orc is always in a position of some power. In a long monologue, addressed to the "Dark virgin" (1.11, E51), he is able to describe his spirit, displaying the power of self-designation despite his incarceration. As Wright suggests, there

is something of Odin in Orc's description of himself as a transmutable spirit, eagle-lion-whale-serpent, haunting the plains of America. There is no narratorial authority for Orc's transformation, and like Odin, it may be the power of his rhetorical and poetic abilities, rather than "godly" power, which transmutes him ("'Empire is no More': Odin and Orc in *America*" 27). If orchestrated through the infernal method, rhetorical ability can, however, change the world. It seems that Orc is able to define and constitute a world outside of his prison (even the passing of "fourteen suns" is associated with *his* abode). His rhetoric is visionary. This comes to fuel his revolutionary function, particularly in the Prophecy section where the "war" which takes place across the Atlantic is primarily one of words.

There is, though, a space that Orc's spirit cannot pierce. Although the shadowy daughter is subject to his gaze, he cannot see her face. He says to the daughter: "when thou bringest food/ I howl my joy! and my red eyes seek to behold thy face/ In vain! these clouds roll to & fro, & hide thee from my sight" (1.11-2.5, E51-2). These are the final lines trapped within the repetitive cycle represented by the images on the first plate. At the head of the next page Orc breaks his chains, seemingly in response to the shadowy daughter's obscurity:

> Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy,
> The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;
> Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting struggling womb;
> It joy'd: she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile;
> As when a black cloud shews its light'nings to the silent deep.
>
> (2.1-5, E52)

This is the emblematic rape of which Behrendt writes. The shadowy daughter's *obscurity* literally "irritates" Orc. It throws him into the heightened state of "despairing love" and "jealousy" which allows him to rend his chains.[36]

The climactic assault is ambiguously depicted. Orc "assay[s]" his "fierce embrace" and "seizes" the "struggling womb" in an act which is undeniably violent. However, its representation is very different from that of the rape of Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, for example.[37] Oothoon's rape is also depicted in a single, climactic line: Blake

[36] As noted above, in "Africa" Orc is chained by jealousy, suggesting some sort of reciprocal relationship between his imprisonment and escape.

[37] *America* and the continental prophecies are closely linked to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, which, as Ronald Paulson has argued, "chronicles the attempt of the revolutionary principle to fly from America to

writes simply that Bromion (Oothoon's rapist) "rent her with his thunders", after which she lies "on his stormy bed/ … and soon her woes [appal] his thunders hoarse" (1.17-18, E46). Blake's treatment of Oothoon's rape resounds with trauma, and Oothoon (who unlike the shadowy daughter has always had a voice) laments in woe. In contrast, the shadowy daughter is not "rent", but only "siez'd"; immediately after the rape, her womb "joy'[s]" (2.3-4). She seems to experience a sexual climax, and responds to Orc with "her first born smile", a smile of sensual delight and perhaps of liberation (2.4, E52).

The image on plate 2 (Fig. 55 and 57) is also suggestive of the liberation of hope. As noted above, the viewer sees a young man climbing out of the earth; he can be associated with Orc, who has just freed himself. This is a missing stage in the progression depicted on the first plate of the Preludium. Instead of leaping straight from the promethean posture to that of standing Adam/Los, this figure gathers his strength, ready to spring. On the next plate (Fig. 58), the first of the Prophecy section of *America*, a flying figure appears as the top-most image, in the place where one would traditionally begin to read. It dangles broken chains, and its chest and belly are fearlessly exposed. This is a possible depiction of Orc, who having leapt upwards, now flies.

Orc's assault has at least two significant effects on the shadowy daughter. Firstly, she "put[s] aside" her clouds, voluntarily leaving obscurity behind her. The words "Soon as she saw the terrible boy" (2.6, E52) suggest that her vision was, like Orc's, obscured by her clouds. Secondly, she gains a voice. Her "virgin cry" bursts forth. If her rape is, as Behrendt implies, emblematic of a violation which seeks to break through conditioned responses – and, one might assume, undermine the intellectual leisure and determinacy with which these responses may be associated – then the first six lines of this plate may uphold this. The daughter is liberated from the oppression of obscurity and an "iron tongue".

This violent, visionary liberation from obscurity also has some precedent in Blake's historical and ideological context. Steven Vine analyses the liberation from obscurity represented in *America* in connection with Blake's animosity towards Burke's discourse of the sublime,

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Europe, where the soil is not so receptive" (*Representations of Revolution* 93). *Visions* was also bound together with *America* and *Europe* in some cases.

specifically in relation to reactionary writings about the French Revolution. In *Of the Sublime and Beautiful* Burke seeks out the moments at which conventional intellectual systems fail in the face of awe and wonder. This may seem to be in line with Blake's visionary politics, as manifest in poems such as "The Tyger". However, Burke also describes the sublime as a point at which vision and imagination are lost, or even annihilated. For example, he ends his discussion of "Power" by writing of the loss of imagination in the face of the sublime:

> Thus we have traced power through its several gradations unto the highest of all [the Deity], where our imagination is finally lost; and we find terror, quite throughout the progress, its inseparable companion, and growing along with it, as far as we can possibly trace them. Now as power is undoubtedly a capital source of the sublime, this will point out evidently from whence its energy is derived, and to what class of ideas we ought to unite it.
>
> (*Of the Sublime*, n. pag.).

As Vine notes, in this conception of the sublime, the mind is baffled by spectral indistinctness and the imagination is undone in obscure dread (26-7). He suggests that it may have been interpreted by Blake as a "mystificatory ideology", which would work to the advantage of "kings, tyrants and gods [who] invariably rule by obfuscating, veiling or hiding themselves, thus passing themselves off as fearful and powerful by virtue of their obscurity" (28-9). He argues that Burke's discourse runs directly counter to Blake's aesthetics and politics of vision (28). This is in line with the aspects of Behrendt and Mee's arguments, which associate Blake with resistance to institutional indoctrination and the suppression of vision.

This politics is implicit in plate 15 of *America* (Fig. 76) where the plagues turned back by the "fierce rushing" together of America's inhabitants smite the forces of Empire (14.27, E56). In this passage, we see what Vine describes as an "apocalyptic demystification" (27-8). The salutary "fires of hell, deform … ancient heavens with shame and woe" (15.15, E57). The bard of Albion, his Angels, Priests and all other scions of ancient heavens are revealed for the grotesque, scaled creatures that they are, and if they are not already below ground, they are sent fleeing there. Meanwhile,

> The doors of marriage are open …
> … the fires of Orc,
> … play around the golden roofs in wreaths of fierce desire,
> Leaving the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth
> For the female spirits of the dead pining in bonds of religion;
> Run from their fetters reddening, …

They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times[.]
(15.19-25, E57).

The image of plate 15 is focused on these final lines. It shows a series of women immersed in flames, curled into foetal positions and grasping one another, but to the left a figure rises with the flames. The image flows upwards, leading towards a series of plants and female figures, culminating in a bird perched on a vine, but pointing its head straight upwards. This freeing of female desire can be linked to the shadowy daughter's rape, strengthening the sense that it too should be read as an apocalyptic demystification.

Importantly, there is more than one way in which the rape scene can be read or viewed as "emblematic" of demystification and the consequent rise to vision. In *Reading William Blake*, Behrendt's discussion of the violent cleansing of the doors of perception equates the reader with the shadowy daughter. Her liberation through Orc's violence is regarded as following a parallel trajectory to the reader/viewer's violent liberation from the "caverns" of perception by Blake's disruptive texts. However, Behrendt's argument in "Irritants" (as well as Mee's argument in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*) introduces different – but equally valid – terms into the equation. They suggest that rather than being liberated through violence, reader/viewers are "self-liberated" through being "irritated" by a lack of conventional determinacy. This implies a different "emblematic" relationship between reader/viewer and Text, and Orc and the daughter. Orc is violent, but in the Preludium he is not obscure to the same extent as the daughter. Her obscurity infuriates Orc to the point of his breaking his shackles. In this context, it is the shadowy daughter who is emblematic of Blake's Texts (which cause discomfort through obscurity), and Orc who is emblematic of readers/viewers who are driven by the loss of conventional determinacy to liberate themselves from the chains of received knowledge.

Thus the Text is both violent Orc and obscure daughter; the reader/viewer is both liberated daughter and Orc, who must liberate himself. The two composite roles are fundamentally and inextricably intertwined. In this context, even when they are being liberated, readers/viewers must simultaneously carry the responsibility of being liberators. If "[e]very honest man is a Prophet", then so too is every man and woman responsible for reaching towards his or her own imaginative perception of the infinite.

There are, however, a number of complications which arise in relation to this movement towards a visionary demystification and a (projected) imaginative compact with Blake which is mediated through his Texts. Even if it is emblematic of salutary demystification, the rape of the shadowy daughter *cannot* be read in a purely positive manner. Moreover, the very obscurity which characterizes both Blake's Texts and the experience of the reader/viewer before demystification may be understood to militate against the determinate aspects of Blakean vision.

As implied by Vine's discussion of tyrants and gods who rule through obscurity, Blake was not simply accepting of all forms of obscurity or indeterminacy (Vine 29). In his Annotations to Reynolds, Blake responds to Reynolds' citation of Burke's notion that "obscurity . . . is one source of the sublime" by stating that "<Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of Any Thing Else>" (194, E658). Blake also criticised some aspects of indeterminacy. In *A Descriptive Catalogue* he associates the *determinate*, bounding line of his images and prints with vision (E549-50). In his annotations to Reynolds, he states that "Vision is Determinate & Perfect" (48, E646), and he later elaborates on this in *Jerusalem*, writing: "[t]he Infinite alone resides in Definite & Determinate Identity" (55.64, E205). These statements all relate to the generative aspects of the imagination and infinity. As noted above, Blake regards vision and the infinite as qualitative; they are made manifest by "firm perswasion", which (as the word "firm" may imply) requires not only strength but also concreteness.

It is in light of statements such as these that Behrendt qualifies his argument about the Third Text, stating that "*[i]n*determinacy is not the point". Instead, the reader/viewer comes to share a compact with Blake, which opens up the determinate aspects of vision in place of determinate, received knowledge ("Irritants" 90). However, in *America* there is an extremely fine line between an "unconventional sort of determinacy" which is fuelled by "irritants" in the Text and an indeterminacy and obscurity which haunts vision with spectres of its own failure. This latter form of indeterminacy manifests itself in the Preludium, creating a strong

disquiet with regard to the supposedly "emblematic" and "liberating" rape of the shadowy daughter. Behrendt's notion that the violence and discomfort of Blake's Text does indeed "liberate … even as it 'ravishes'" comes to seem only partially correct (*Reading* 105).

There are aspects of the shadowy daughter's opening speech which suggest that her violation has led her to a site where vision is overwhelmed, suppressed and negated, rather than encouraged. The daughter's speech is seemingly a consequence of her rape. While she initially responds to Orc's actions with a "smile" and "joy", her words contradict this. They do not reveal in her an enlightened, generative compact with vision, but a fallen perception of history, in which Orc is strongly implicated. Together with the daughter's "demystification", this opens out the indeterminate aspects of the Text. In the first lines of her speech, the daughter describes Orc as "the image of God who dwells in darkness of Africa; /… fall'n to give me life in regions of dark death" (2.8-9, E52). Through this link to darkness, Orc is once again inter-implicated with the shadowy daughter (the violated feminine principle) and with her obscurity.

The imagery of the "darkness of Africa" can be connected to fallen history. In *The Song of Los,* "Africa" is constituted by a hyper-abridged re-telling of the fall of humanity, which stretches from Adam and Eve to the opening of the Prophecy section of *America*. The poem tells the history of the binding of the five senses by laws and religions; this includes the binding of the sense of sight, which results in darkness (*Song of Los* 4.13-17, E68). Similar references to fallenness and darkness are made by the frontispiece (Fig. 50), where the fallenness of the chained (angel-like) titan is coupled with figurative blindness (he hides his eyes) and black skies overhead. Lack of vision is also displayed by the book-reading figures of the title page (Figs. 52 and 53), who refuse to look outwards, despite the urging of their cherubic companions. Meanwhile, all of the figures occupying the top portion of the page are oblivious to the plight of the woman below them, literally backed by darkness and clinging to a corpse.

In the context of such intertexts, the shadowy daughter's description of Orc as dwelling in the darkness of Africa associates him with fallen history. History and mythology are once again intertwined, and they point to the challenge of achieving a pure, uncontaminated

vision in the fallen world. That Orc is the "image" of a God, rather than a God himself, also points to this; he may be a false god. These connotations are, nonetheless, at odds with the image at the base plate 2 (Fig. 55), in which the rising sun points to Orc as a bringer of light.

The daughter's speech is made more incongruous by the lamentation with which it ends: "O what limb rending pains I feel. Thy fire & my frost/ Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightning rent;/ This is *eternal death*; and this the torment long foretold" (2.15-17, E52; my italics). The fact that the daughter can access that which has been "foretold" is a clear indication that on some level she has achieved prophetic vision. However, this is not the "hortatory" prophecy with which Mee suggests Blake was most comfortable, and which stems from "every honest man" (or woman) speaking his (or her) convictions. Rather, the shadowy daughter's reference to "eternal death" suggests that she foresees her entrance into the repetitive cycle of death.

"Eternal death" was to become a significant trope in Blake's later works, representative of being cut off from vision.[38] In the Preludium to *Europe*, the shadowy daughter reappears as the "nameless shadowy female [rising] … from out the breast of Orc" (*Europe* 1.2, E60). She is trapped into unwillingly bringing forth "howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings./ Devouring & devoured roaming on dark and desolate mountains./ In forests of eternal death" (*Europe* 2.4-6, E61). The shadowy daughter will, in the future, be caught in a cycle where both she and everything to which she gives birth are ever-consuming and consumed. Significantly, these fiery kings seem to be the result of Orc's rape; he has "fall'n" *literally* to "give … life" by impregnating the daughter (*America* 2.9, E52). In a sense, his act of rape *is* his fall. In this context, the suggestion that the rape of the shadowy daughter – and the Textual experiences associated with it – result in any definitive liberation must be challenged. The shadowy daughter's clouds may disappear, she may be able to see clearly, but what she sees is the *opposite* and *negation* of Blake's "infinite which was hid". As Vine notes, "eternal death" represents a movement in which history escapes from vision (42).

[38] See Damon's *A Blake Dictionary* for a discussion of eternal death in relation to Blake's complex notion of Hell (180).

According to Vine, the moment of the shadowy daughter's speech is a crisis point in *America* (42-5). On one hand, it carries the threat of inchoate events. For example, the daughter associates herself with America, and thus the genesis of the revolution comes to be linked to the "struggling afflictions/ Endur'd by roots that writhe their arms into the nether deep" (2.10-11, E52).[39] Yet, the writhing roots felt by the daughter seem to form part of the trapped cycle in the images on the first plate. In this instance, the eternal death which the daughter foresees (or, alternatively, the loss of vision represented by this) may also apply to the American Revolution and to the French Revolution. These arise out of the same consuming fires of Orc which have given voice to her fallen perceptions of time.

Furthermore, as Vine notes, "eternal death" threatens the Text and reader/viewer with the escape of unrealized aesthetics (42-5). This potential lack of realization is evident in the already-troubling rape scene. I have previously read the shadowy daughter's "virgin cry" as referring to the first use of her voice, which bursts out of her. However, it is possible that "virgin" is an adjective referring to the daughter, suggesting that she is *still* a virgin. As Vine proposes, in this context the rape of the daughter may never have happened (42). This might be linked to Wright's suggestion that Orc's voice is Odin-like, his visionary rhetoric powerful but void of true Godly power. Here, the proposed relationship between violation and liberation – between violating Text and awakened reader – seems uncertain. Moreover, if Orc's rape of the daughter is understood to be an action through which the spirit of revolution claims that of America, then this attempted appropriation is abortive.

Vine argues that it is this uncertainty, *rather than* an assured connection to vision, which is propagated throughout *America* (42). In the Preludium, the reader/viewer sees the potential collapse of Orc's power into ghostliness; the visionary, revolutionary rhetoric which he presents fades away. This is, as Vine suggests, a spectral moment, in a Blakean sense (46). Blake used the term "spectre" in a variety of ways. In his mythology, the "Spectre" results from the division of man into different components. It is the disembodied

[39] This, once again, links the shadowy daughter with Oothoon, who is described as "the soft soul of America" (*Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 1.4, E45).

counterpart of humanity and the rational, masculine portion of the divided man.[40] The Spectre is not, however, a figure of measured reason. As the Spectre of Urthona states in "Night the Seventh" of *The Four Zoas* (Night VII), the "Spectre is in Every Man insane brutish/ Deformd" (VIIa84.36, E360). Harold Bloom notes that the Spectre of Urthona is "the imagination trapped in a temporal will, unable to extricate itself from a crippling fear of futurity" (E960).

One of the ways in which this fear manifests itself is as a terror of "eternal death". In Night VII the Spectre of Urthona states that he is "as the Spectre of the Living". He contrasts himself with "spectres of the Dead" and states that "till these terrors planted round the Gates of Eternal life/ Are driven away & annihilated we never can repass the Gates" (VIIa 84.40-42, E360). Later in the same book he defines "Spectres of the Dead" as "Each Male formd without a counterpart without a concentering vision" (VIIa 87.29-30, E369).[41] He states that "without a Created body the Spectre is Eternal Death" (VIIa 87.38, E369). Thus, it is – according to him – eternal death which must be annihilated, and which prevents him from entering the gates of eternal life. Yet he is (in this state) without the power to annihilate these spectres. He cannot see beyond his perception of eternal death. Significantly, he is also *responsible* for this eternal death: he states, "I am the cause/ That this dire state commences I began the dreadful state/ Of Separation" (VIIa 87.32, E369).

It is in light of such representations of the Spectre that Vine argues that specifically *spectral* elements haunt *America*. He writes:

> [i]n Blake, the Spectre is a composite figure for the defeat of the visionary imagination. As its name implies, the Spectre refuses the determinateness of aesthetic form which Blake fiercely defended as the principle of his art in his annotations to Reynolds. … The Spectre is a name for the *disincarnation of visionary art* … this ghostly figure also haunts the imagination with its own negative image.
>
> (xii-xiii; my italics)

[40] In the late books, many of Blake's major mythological characters find themselves divided into four parts: humanity, the Spectre, the Emanation (the female portion separated from a unified male being), and the Shadow (the residue of suppressed desires). See Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* pp. 120-22, 190-91, 368-9 and 380-83 for a summary of the four portions of the divided man in Blake's oeuvre.

[41] The Spectre of Urthona's counterpart is Los, the fallen Urthona who is embodied. The spectres of the dead have no such embodied aspect.

The visionary demystification which (supposedly) occurs in the Preludium and on plate 15 (Fig. 76), is constantly undermined, not only by the shadowy daughter's speech, but by the Third Text of the Prophecy section. The uncertainty that this generates in the reader/viewer may be directed as much towards *vision* as towards conventional representations of history or reactionary responses to revolution. Indeed, Orc himself becomes spectral, haunting Blake's imaginative discourse by evoking its negative self-image.

As the descriptions of Orc in the Preludium suggest, his *persona* is highly unstable. When he (re)appears in the Prophecy section, he is not initially identified as Orc from the Preludium. Rather, he is described as an "enrag'd Zennith" (4.3, E53), who rises to the surface of the heaving Atlantic ocean, which is "Swelling, belching from its deeps red clouds & raging Fires!" (4.2, E53). The language of this passage is sublime in a Burkean sense – Orc is presented in terms of obscure terror which to some extent exceeds that of the shadowy daughter in the Preludium. He is described as a "human fire" who produces "heat but not light", his lack of illumination adding to the "murky atmosphere" (4.9 & 11, E53).[42]

Orc also "re-appears" in a visual aperture. If plates 3 and 4 (Fig. 60 and 61) are to be taken to represent the East coast of America and West coast of Europe, then the marginal space between them might be said to be the Atlantic.[43] The reader/viewer would then need to fill in the empty space between the plates by visualising Orc and the Atlantic.[44] It might be suggested that this is not an aperture at all, and that the image on plate 10 of *America* (Fig. 69) represents the moment of Orc's rise. His posture in this plate is, for example, reminiscent of the "springing up" position on plate 2 of the Preludium. In copy K (Fig. 70), surprisingly little light comes from the flames with which Orc is surrounded, giving the suggestion of "heat but not light". However, even if this is the case, plate 10 (particularly

[42] This may be an allusion to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Here, the "bottomless perdition" into which Satan and his hosts are cast is filled with flames of "darkness visible", which produce heat but no light (Book I ll. 47 & 63).

[43] This "marginal space" is not stable across copies. In copies F and H, for example, plates 3 and 4 are printed recto/verso on the same leaf, which means that the plates would be back-to-back, rather than facing. Information regarding the structure of copies A and K is not available from either the *Blake Archive* or the *Beinecke Digital Catalogue*. In the original scans of copy K, wear to the page and an identically placed tear is evident on the right-hand side of plate 3 and the left-hand side of plate 4 (cropped from the Figures 60 and 61), suggesting that these plates too, were printed recto/verso. Copy A might also take this form, or be printed as rectos only, or recto/verso with the plates facing.

[44] As I have stated above, he might equally be understood to be the flying figure in the upper-left hand corner of plate 3.

uncoloured copies such as H (Fig. 71)) cannot do justice to plate 4's sublime description of Orc. In the text, "his terrible limbs were fire/ With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark & towers/ Surrounded" (4.9-10, E53). Orc (or at least a facet of his complex persona) "appears" as a terrible and obscure figure in the text and as an un-visualised space in the images. The image on plate 10 may show this sublime description to be hyperbolical.

It is in this context that Albion's Angel appears (plate 5, Fig. 64). His vision seems to confirm the scene on the plate 4. He sees Orc as a "terror" and describes him as a "Spectre" who glows "his horrid length staining the temple long/ With beams of blood" (5.2 & 6-7, E53). This reference to Orc as a spectre should *not* be taken to mean that he is the same sort of being as the Spectre of Urthona. Indeed, it is Urizen (who appears at the end of the poem and is the progenitor of the discourse of Albion's Angel) who is conventionally understood to be the prototype of the Spectre in the later myth.[45] Nevertheless, the Angel's diction has implications in terms of Orc's indeterminacy. He understands Orc to be a figure of gothic nightmares, neither fully corporeal nor incorporeal, and therefore uncontrollable.

In the Angel's descriptions, Orc refuses determinate form. This indeterminacy is highlighted in a different manner by the shifts between the (untrustworthy) voice of Albion's Angel, and the descriptions of, and speeches by, Orc elsewhere in the book. For example, at the end of the speech in which he presents Orc as a spectre, the Angel declares that "a voice came forth, and shook the temple" (5.7, E53), implying that the speech on the next plate represents (or is literally) a destructive force which seeks to undermine order and connection to God. However, when Orc speaks on the next plate (plate 6, Fig. 65), his words are enlightened and peaceful. Its tone is radically (and jarringly) different from that of the bloody descriptions on plates 4 and 5. The speech of plate 6 is about the birth of a new era, where "The grave is burst, …. /The bones of death … Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening!" (6.1-4, E53). The "slave grinding at the mill", the "inchained soul" and his wife and children are loosed from their chains, dungeons and oppressors. The passage ends with the liberated cry "For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall

[45] The discourse of suspension between form and non-form, and of the twisted rationality which belongs to Urizen in this book, is evident in the Spectres which appear in later texts such as *The Four Zoas.* For discussion of this, see Vine, pp. 66-95.

cease" (6.1-15, E53). As Vine argues, this voice is not only one of liberation, but of *revelation*. The image of plate 6 (Fig. 65) shows a young nude, leaning back and staring contemplatively into the middle distance. There is no sense of urgency to his pose, nothing to reflect the magnitude of what is passing in the rest of the Text.

On plate 7 (Fig. 66), the Angel responds to Orc's speech of liberation by identifying him as a "Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities" (7.5 ,E53). This might mean either that Orc is the hater of the values and rights of humans (in which case, it directly contradicts the speech on plate 6 (Fig. 65)) *or* a hater of those in positions of public honour and respect. Somewhat disconcertingly, the image of plate 7 (Fig. 66) shows two youths sleeping beside and draped over a golden ram: it is an alternative vision to that presented by the Angel. This emphasises the reactionary nature of the Angel's voice, which Richey argues may even parody Burke. The Angel's speech on plate 9 of *America*, which includes the refrain "Sound! Sound my loud war-trumpets & alarm my thirteen Angels" (9.1, 13, 21 & 26, E55), reflects Burke's hawkish sentiments and rhetoric, mimicking certain of his speeches ("'The Lion & Wolf shall cease'" 200-2). As the poem unfolds, the Angel's discourse proves repeatedly to be hyperbolic and even hysterical. The "Sound! Sound!" refrain of plate 9 is repeated five times, and interspersed with passages where the Angel weeps and laments his inability to overcome Washington.

With Albion's Angel situated, fairly neatly, in the camp of reactionary dogmatism, the descriptions of Orc on plates 4 and 5 come to seem strongly reminiscent of Burke's quasi-sublime references to the French Revolutionaries and their "monstrous tragi-comic scene" (*Reflections* 96). In this context it might be argued that Orc is not a spectre, and that he merely represents the end of systems of oppression. The Angel decries him as a "Lover of wild rebellion, and transgresser [sic.] of Gods Law" (7.6, E54). In short, the Angel is threatened by Orc, and therefore casts him in a mysterious, terrifying, and repulsive light.

However, the reader/viewer will not have forgotten the Odin-like Orc of the Preludium: the Orc who is fallen and inter-implicated with the darkness and obscurity of the shadowy female. The Third Text of the Prophecy section is shot through with a similar ambiguity regarding visionary revolution and its failure. The need to remain aware of such ambiguities

is suggested by plate 7 (Fig. 66). The image of this plate would seem to contradict Albion's Angel's denunciation of Orc by showing that all in the world is, in fact, peaceful and calm. However, if one looks closely at the head of the ram, one might notice a decaying arm stretching out behind it. This suggests that there is a level of deception implicit in the scene and might spur the reader/viewer to look more deeply into the political or ethical concerns presented by the Text, and at the way in which Orc may not actually be as he presents himself.

Orc's declarations – his revelations – are often at odds with what is represented in the images. At the end of his speech on plate 8 (Fig. 67), Orc declares "Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consumd/ Amidst the lustful fires he walks: his feet become like brass,/ His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like gold" (8.15-17, E54). He claims to "stamp" the "stony law … to dust … make the desarts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their fountains" and embrace everything, "For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life" (8.5,8,13, E54).[46] This is a reiteration of the speech on plate 6, where "The grave is burst" (6.2, E53). However, the mortality of man is precisely what is represented in many of the images: there is a skull beside the nude on plate 6, a child dead in a field on plate 9 (Fig. 68), and an old man walking into death's door on plate 12 (Fig. 73).

Plate 13 (Fig. 74) is particularly interesting in this regard. The image depicts a promethean woman (she is connected with Oothoon, who is often depicted in this way). An eagle, whose tongue flames lasciviously towards her liver, is about to feast on her. Below her, on the ocean floor, lies a man (presumably a corpse) with devouring fish approaching. On one hand, this image of death could have retrospective force, being linked to the past which Orc will supersede when he declares that man is not consumed, the grave is burst and "the deeps shrink to their fountains" (8.5, E54). However, the ocean-side imagery may also be related to the text of the plate and to the "present" of the poem. Here, the "thirteen Governors that England sent" convene and, seeing the flames covering the land, "they rouze they cry/ Shaking their mental chains they rush in fury to the sea/ To quench their anguish;

[46] The words "For every thing that lives is Holy" are repeated in the final line of "A Song if Liberty" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (27, E45), as well as in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (8.10, E51).They form a refrain, strongly influenced by antinomianism, linking the positive revolutionary impulses in these early books.

at the feet of Washington down fall'n" (13.1-4, E56). While the rousing response of the Governors is not clearly depicted on the plate, the figures in the ocean might be associated with their quenching of anguish in the sea. On another level, they may also be related to the latter part of the plate, where "num'rous hosts" of Albion muster and "[Darken] the Atlantic mountains"; they are "Arm'd with diseases of the earth to cast upon the Abyss" (13.13-15, E56). The "Abyss" could be the ocean, and the figures represented could be the projected casualties of war. In short, one cannot know with any degree of certainty whether what is depicted in the image is supportive of Orc's revolutionary agenda or representative of its failure.[47]

There are many similar instances in *America* and they haunt Orc's discourse, showing his claims – his "honest opinions" – to be void. They disturb both the historical and mythic dimensions of the Text. If this is a "hortatory" prophecy, then not all the voices seem to express themselves "honestly". Readers and viewers must engage actively with the different voices and ways of seeing in *America*, with both expressions of visionary sovereignty and fallen perception. In some cases, the reader/viewer may emerge with a sense of the "unconventional determinacy" through which the imagination is invigorated by a multiplicity of significations. Yet, each moment of revelation is vitiated by some reference to fallen history; each instant of equilibrium is undermined by a *following* disruption to the narrative, the *next* moment when a vision, almost actualised, is swept away by the words or images of another plate. The threat of inchoate history and unrealized aesthetics always hovers just below the surface.

The Blakean imagination, as Vine notes, "sports ambiguously spectral wings" (47). This is perhaps best illustrated by the four lines which, in copy A, end the Preludium:

> [The stern Bard ceas'd, asham'd of his own song; enrag'd he swung]
> [His harp aloft sounding, then dash'd its shining frame against]
> [A ruin'd pillar in glittring fragments; silent he turn'd away,]
> [And wander'd down the vales of Kent in sick & drear lamentings. ]
>
> (2.18-21, E52)

[47] It is possible that this ambiguity is an aesthetic weakness. However, one might return here to John E. Grant's words regarding "The Tyger": even in cases where ambiguity is overwhelming, one cannot deny the artist's question in favour of the critic's answer (see p. 13 above).

These lines were omitted by erasure or by masking in all early copies but A (1795). They present an alternative voice, which haunts copy A. These words also supplement all other copies, deferring visionary certainty. They capture the moment in which prophecy is aborted, when the instrument of the prophet/Bard's song is smashed to "glittering fragments" and the Bard turns away in silence. This Bard is conceived as a historical figure: he wanders through the vales of Kent, where the English Channel is narrowest (at the Strait of Dover) and France is closest to England. His "sick & drear lamentings" lack any specific direction: they could be aimed at the plight of the shadowy daughter, at Blake's political present, at the future fires of the apocalypse, or at the failure of revolution. This aspect of the Third Text, which is liminal and suppressed in most versions, simultaneously reveals prophetic fulfilment in the vision presented by the image (Fig. 55) and the cessation of the prophetic voice in the text. Here the imaginative coherence proposed by *Jerusalem* falls away; prophecy is vitiated by fallenness, even as that fallenness is haunted by the potential return of visionary fulfilment.

## *America* and the Derridean Spectre

In light of this, I would like to propose an alternative treatment of *America* as a prophecy and Third Text. Thus far, I have shown that *America* is spectral in consequence of the moments when vision is haunted by the presence of fallen phantoms, or eludes the reader/viewer owing to the unrelenting indeterminacy of the verbal-visual Texts. The multiple voices of visionary fulfilment and spectral failure which emerge in *America* also, however, point to what have I discussed in Chapter One as the plurality and dispersal of Blake's voice. In Chapter One, I link this to the Derridean spectre; in *Specters of Marx*, he argues that spectres are always plural. It is uncertain whether these spectres are plural because they are the more-than-one of a crowd or community or because they are the less-than-one of dispersion without any possible gathering together, but there is always more than one of them (3-4). I will consider the ways in which "speaking to", looking at and listening to such spectres in Blake's work might affect questions concerning the relation of prophecy to present-time and justice.

As noted above, Blake considers acceptance of the prophetic and visionary aspects of one's "honest" opinion to be necessary for one to be "just".[48] This would imply that, in order to be just, one should also respect the "honest" "opinion[s] both … private & public" of others (Annotations to Watson 14, E617). For Derrida, the (always impossible) task of giving justice to the other involves a corresponding (but more open) movement: one must respect and remain open to the differences and disjointures which arise between oneself and others. According to him, these in-between spaces are always susceptible to communication with or about some spectre. There is always something spectral, and not quite reducible to knowledge, which occupies the space "between two" (*Specters* xvii). In *America*, such spectres emerge through Blake's Third Text and the intersections between his many "voices". I would argue that they may come to shift the way in which one approaches his "hortatory" prophecy, as well as Blake's invitation to participate in the production of vision. They also introduce alternative ways of viewing those moments where vision may seem to stutter and fail.

Before exploring the application of Derridean spectrality to Blake's image-text relations, the differences between Derrida's and Blake's conceptions of the spectre should be noted. On one hand, the two have certain commonalities. Some of these relate to their shared roots in Western tradition. For example, to differing degrees both Blake and Derrida's spectres are understood to be disembodied. Both notions of spectrality also have some link to death, although in Blake's case it is "eternal death" which is at stake.[49] Derrida's reference to Blake in *The Politics of Friendship* hints at other similarities. As noted in Chapter One, Derrida speaks of "do[ing] justice one day to the incessant return of [Blake's] ghosts… as well as to the infinite partition of all his divided spectres" (73). The division of Blake's Spectres may seem to point neatly to the multiplicity and "out-of-jointness" of Derrida's spectres. On the other hand, Derrida's interest in Blake's Spectres has more to do with their relation to Blake's transgressive understanding of the interplay between friendship and enmity, than with a substantive connection between their differing notions of spectrality. In effect, Blake's Spectre can be said to have exerted only a very limited influence on Derrida's

[48] See pp. 138-40 above.

[49] It should be noted that sometimes Blake did represent more conventional, Gothic ghosts and spectres. See, for example, his series of paintings "Six extra-illustrations to a second folio edition of Shakespeare" (1806-1809; esp. Butlin Cat. 547, Plate 591 and 594).

thinking. Nonetheless, the pertinence of Derrida's notion of the spectre to Blake's oeuvre far exceeds a simple similarity in terminology.

In *Specters of Marx* (most particularly the first chapter, "Injunctions of Marx"), Derrida engages with Marx, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and a range of other literary, historical and philosophical texts. He does so in order to reflect on the ways in which speaking with and listening to a multiplicity of spectres might affect questions of present time, justice and inheritance. Thus, although *Specters of Marx* takes as its focus a network of comments regarding the state of Marxism at the end of the 1990s, it can be applied well beyond the context of Marx.[50]

Derrida's insistence on the plurality of spectres arises, in part, from the notion that legacies are always haunted by more than one instruction or command to the inheritors (who may interpret these multiple commands in multiple ways). For example, although Marx is long dead, he returns to the present through a legacy which is Textual, but also political, institutional and ideological. It is also apparent that the legacy of Marx does not speak with a monolithic voice; it is characterised by a number of differing instructions and injunctions. This multivocality is applicable not only to Marx, but also to figures such as Shakespeare, Blake and Derrida himself, all of whom have left behind a Textual legacy. Derrida calls these multiple voices "spectres" because spectres are *returned*. In French, the ghost is called a *revenant*, meaning literally "that which comes back (from the dead)"; "[o]ne cannot control its comings and goings because it *begins by coming back*" (11). This means that to some extent the spectre is always a repetition, arising from a past over which one has no control. This is one of the reasons for Derrida's claiming that there are always many spectres. While the spectre (or *revenant*), always returns from the grave and is always "coming back", each return is also singular, different from all others, both a first time and a last time (4, 10).The

[50] This study does not extend to a discussion of the relationship between Marxism and Blake, although such a study would be quite feasible. Interestingly, in some ways Derrida's focus on Marx and Marxism co-ordinates fairly neatly with *America*. *Specters* responds to the ostensible death of Marxism in the early 1990s, when a range of critics – most prominently Francis Fukiyama – were proclaiming that the end of history and the global triumph of market economies was at hand (vii). While this is quite dissimilar to the end of time and the fires of revolution being proclaimed in Blake's period, the eschatological concerns arising out of Derrida's engagement with the "death" (and ghostly return) of Marxism – particularly in relation to its ironically utopian-messianic orientation – has significant potential for application to a study of spectrality in *America*, and the production of the 1790s more generally.

voices of Marx, Blake and Derrida (though they are vastly different in terms of their projects and impact) return to the reader/viewer as spectres which haunt our reading and understanding of their Texts.

Importantly, by connecting these voices to "spectres", Derrida is also linking them to that which maintains the space between "two". In the Exordium to *Specters* he writes:

> [w]hat happens between two, and between all the 'two's' one likes, such as between life and death, can only *maintain* itself with some ghost, can only *talk with or about* some ghost ... So it would be necessary to learn spirits.
>
> (xvii)

To an extent, Derrida is speaking literally. In the Exordium he addresses those who wish to learn to live, "finally", and he intimates that in order to learn to live, one must come to terms with death. Thus, in a sense, to learn to live is also to encounter the ghost, that which occupies the space between life and death.[51] However, the "between two" might include "any 'two's'", anything belonging to an interaction between two beings, objects or "things".[52] This includes what happens between an author's Text and its reader/viewer.

In this context, what arises in the space between *America* and the reader/viewer, or between the image (and its viewer) and the text (and its reader), might be said to be spectral. This has significant implications for how one might deal with this in-between space, where one "can only *talk with or about* some ghost" (xvii). Blake's Third Texts operate in this interstitial space. One cannot, in practice, come to terms with his illuminated books if one does not acknowledge this, if one does not talk *about* Third Text(s) (or Erdman's "leap in the dark", or even Mitchell's "composite art"). One must also "talk" (or interact) *with* the Third Text in that one must actively engage in producing it.

Of course, while one can comfortably talk about the spectres of Blake, one cannot reify the Third Text by calling it *a* spectre. This would imply that image and text are constituted by the (deferred and never full) presence of a (once) living being. However, the Third Text is

[51] Commenting on Derrida's Exordium to *Spectres*, Jeffrey Weinstock states, "Learning to live and coming to terms with death can only happen in the between, in an uncanny space between life and death – which is the space and time of the ghost … learning to live … means to 'learn spirits,' to learn to live *with* spirits, which is to learn to live with a restless past and one's being-towards death" ("Ten Minutes for Seven Words" 82).

[52] Derrida often uses the term "things" to refer to spectres, acknowledging that the spectre is unknown, that which defies semantics and ontology (*Specters* 6).

*spectral* for reasons more complex than its place as the time-space "between two". It shares a number of qualities with the spectre both because the spectral voices of Blake are woven into the Third Text, and because of its particular form. The spectre, as "defined" (or, more accurately, gestured towards) by Derrida, has several interesting analogues with the Third Text. Derrida's conceives of the spectre as:

> the paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some 'thing' that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the *revenant* or the return of the specter. There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reapparition of the departed.
>
> (6)

The spectre is that which hovers *between* the corporeal body and the spirit, constituted by both but neither one nor the other.[53] In an important sense, the Third Text is both a phenomenal form – it is materially actualized by the illuminated page – and a conception (idea or "virtual" Text) which is threaded through by the material form. It is thus neither wholly virtual nor fully material. Like the spectre, this Third Text is multiple; its Textual structure ensures this.

Derrida also writes of the spectre that:

> … one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge.
>
> (6)

This conception of non-present presence and being beyond knowledge can also be related to the Third Text, for it opens up some of the most important facets of *America a Prophecy*. The first chapter of *Specters of Marx* begins with a statement about *maintaining* spectres:

> Maintaining now the specters of Marx. (But *maintaining now* [maintenant] without conjuncture. A disjointed or disajusted now, "out of joint", a disjointed now that always risks maintaining nothing together in the assured conjunction of some context whose border would still be determinable.)
>
> (3; translator's parentheses)

Derrida's use of the word "maintaining" refers to multiple actions, all of which are implicit in coming to terms with spectres. *Specters of Marx* is, first and foremost, engaged in the act of maintaining in the sense that it "argues for" the continued relevance of Marx and Marxism in the face of critics who, in the early 1990s, had declared the end of this philosophical or

[53] The status of the spectre as the "phenomenal … form of the spirit" might, on the surface, have some application to Blake's doctrine of a united body and soul. However, the spectre is not actually embodied, so much as it is becoming-embodied.

political system. It is also about actively maintaining the existence of *plural* spectres, the many voices that accompany the name of Marx. However, if one is to maintain a spectre – a complex proposition, in light of the fact that the spectre is also *that which maintains* – one must maintain this ghostly form temporally, in the present, in a certain way. The French *maintenant* is a pun, referring both to maintenance and to the present as "now", implying that the two are bonded.

As suggested by my discussion of *différance* in Chapter One, the present for Derrida is always already fractured, "disjointed and disajusted", a present which, because it is dislocated, runs the risk of maintaining "nothing" in an appropriate context. The present is at once, both within and beyond the understanding of sequential time. Fredrick Jameson understands this disjointedness of the present to be one of the central features of Derrida's discussion of the spectre. He suggests that Derrida's ghosts might be understood to be moments when the present, which one would wish to consider secure and stable, "betrays" us; it is warped in such a way as to show that the living present is not self-sufficient ("Marx's Purloined Letter" 38-39). It is worth quoting Derrida at length on this issue:

> … What is the time and what is the history of a specter? Is there a present of the specter? Are its comings and goings ordered according to the linear succession of a before and an after, between a present-past, a present-present, and a present-future, between a 'real time' and a 'deferred time'?
>
> If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth. … [O]ne must perhaps ask oneself whether the *spectrality effect* does not consist in undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other.
>
> (39-40)

Spectres are, in this description, simultaneously a consequence and an illustration of the disjointedness of time. The Third Text, like the spectre, points to the disjointedness of the present. In *America*, it does so through challenging any perception of linear narrative coherence. This challenge is already, to some extent, present in the text and images alone, but it is intensified by Third Text interactions. Plate 11 (Fig. 72) serves as a good example. In *Illuminated Blake* David Erdman argues that on this plate the images "grow specific" (149), but when it comes to actually specifying what they represent, he lists a number of potential referents. Erdman first suggests that the swan-riding figure could be an adaptation of Orc, the curly-haired figure presented on previous pages (who is connected with Los and Adam

in the images of plate 1 (Fig. 54)). He links the swan rider to "Boston's Angel", who appears in the text (the words "Boston's Angel" hover above the swan rider's head like a label). Erdman in turn associates the swan rider with Samuel Adams, who called for independence in Congress, just as Boston's Angel calls for independence in the poem (11.15, E55) (149).[54] This is not, though, a stable designation. For example, Erdman also considers the figure's relevance to Thomas Paine and Paul Revere (riding or writing to spread alarm).[55] It seems that the "specificity" of this plate is not specificity at all.

Meanwhile, the narrative is once again disrupted. The appearance of Boston's Angel on plate 11 marks a return to the scene of America. On the previous plate (plat 10, Fig. 73), the narrative is disrupted by a description of the "vast shady hills between America & Albion's shore", which turns into a rather incongruous account of the "Golden world" and the "ancient palace… built in the forest of God/By Ariston king of beauty for his stolen bride" (10.5-10, E55). The indeterminate images on plate 11 make the narrative, which is once-again moving, stutter. The reader/viewer must also come to terms with the smiling serpent at the base of the plate 11 (Fig. 74). This creature might be associated with "serpent-form'd" Orc (7.3,E53), but it is being ridden by children. It would seem to have more relevance to *Innocence* than to *America*. Certainly, these figures seem to have little to do with Boston's Angel's urgent plea in the text, although a contextually determined reading will open up a number of potential connections.

Added to this is the (not unusual) feature of line 6, which ends with a series of tiny figures – a standing man and a horse, as well as vines or streaming banners. These figures too have no stable designation, no obvious connection with the text. The Third Text of plate 11 does not prevent the reader/viewer from constructing a narrative, but the sequential linearity of that narrative and the sense of singular, temporal progression, both historical and mythic, is certainly fragmented. In this account, both image and text may also constitute a spectral presence. Wherever one "fixes" vision to encompass a seemingly determinate happening,

[54] The reference to Boston, where the widely publicised Boston massacre and Boston tea party took place, once again draws history and myth together (see Erdman, *Prophet* 14 and 26 for brief reference to Blake's potential reception of these events).

[55] On plate 14, Blake writes "The scribe of Pensylvania casts his pen upon the earth" (14.15, E56), which Erdman takes to be a reference to Paine, owing to his involvement with the *Pennsylvania Magazine* (see *Prophet* 26 fn8a and *Illuminated Blake* 149).

its eventual (and in *America*, almost inevitable) disassociation from another narrative point of view means that the very feature which once seemed to stabilize vision now becomes characterised by spectrality.

This narrative disruption points to an alternative, visionary modality of time. The intertwining of history and myth is a feature of this visionary time; any suggestion that the living-present is stable and unitary, the unyielding product of a series of empirical, documented and "real" events, is undermined by the spectral qualities of *America*. These drive the reader/viewer to look between image and text, as well as beyond received knowledge, stable narrative and determinate historical representation. Through the functioning of the Third Text, *America* destabilizes "the border between the present, the actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it" (*Specters* 39).

Beherendt's and Mee's arguments would imply that this facilitates Blake's ("hortatory") re-visioning of history; it brings about visionary perception (and also prophetic "justness") in every honest man. However, just as the effects of spectrality undo "the dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other" (*Spectres* 40), the Third Text comes simultaneously to undermine this "hortatory" feature of Blake's prophecy. Even "hortatory" prophecy is engaged in a teleological process of sorts, which is also linked to the determinate aspects of vision. Despite its disruptive, obscure and indeterminate qualities, Blake's *America* still leads towards a specific historical outcome. Blake writes that Urizen's clouds spread over the Atlantic,

> Hiding the Demon red with clouds & cold mists from the earth;
> Till Angels & weak men twelve years should govern o'er the strong:
> And then their end should come, when France reciev'd the Demons light.
>
> (16.13-15, E57)

The colon at the end of line 14 suggests that the end of "Angels and weak men" is part of a balanced statement. The two parts are inextricably interlinked, the outcome – a re-visioning of the French Revolution and its consequences, which were still unfolding in 1793/4 – accepted and determinable. The decline of tyranny on plates 14 and 15, the smothering of the revolutionary fire on plate 16, and the re-emergence of the apocalyptic liberation of the senses towards the end of plate 16, indicate that a teleological process is involved here.

Even if Blake's prophecy does not quite represent final things, it points towards them. An alternative visionary history or eschatology is presented as the culmination of the "apocalyptic demystification" of *America*.

Eschatology is, however, reconfigured by the spectral nature of the Third Text. Derrida writes that hauntology – which is the question of the event as the question of the ghost – "would harbour within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. It would *comprehend* them but incomprehensively" (*Specters* 10). Blake's Third Texts are simultaneously within that sequence of time which leads to a specific future and outside of it, undermining it. This duality is inherent in the final plate of *America* (Fig. 77 and 78). While the poem ends in fires, the images conclude with the appearance of a titanic figure. The figure has long hair which spills over the right-hand edge of the page, coloured blue in both copies A (Fig. 77) and K (Fig. 78). There is evidence of the crease of a breast to the left of the figure's arm, suggesting that the titan is female. If one has followed the reading through which the shadowy daughter becomes the terrestrial and historical level of the poem, then this figure seems to be the daughter; in both copies A and K, her robe is coloured after stone, suggesting that she is of the earth, in consonance with her waterfall hair. Even so, this robed figure with blocky hands raised above her head in prayer seems far divorced from the warrior-like, naked, helmeted shadowy daughter.

The titanic female's body is populated by a number of small figures. On the crown of her head, a figure sits reading. On her back, we see another small figure, arms outstretched in prayer, emulating the titan's worshipful or perhaps even despairing pose. Behind this man or woman is a third figure, holding what may be a book. An embracing couple rest against the titan's foot. In both copies the figure in yellow/pink has a skirt pushed up above the knee, suggesting that the couple are lovers, although the overbearing pose of the figure in red/blue may imply a violent encounter like that in the Preludium. Finally, the belt of the titanic female and the ripples of her robes form a tree, below which sits a piper wearing a hat (this figure is directly "quoted" from *Songs* (see Figs. 23, 41 and 42)). Significantly, none of these figures seems particularly aware of their surroundings or of the fires into which Orc has plunged the world.

This composite image might be representative of the twelve years during which Urizen covers the fiery energy of Orc with mists and cloud. If the image *does* depict the shadowy daughter, then the small figures populating her body are Americans. These do not, however, seem to correspond to the people who appear in the text of *America*, rushing together in "wrath and raging fire" or standing "stern[ly]" as Urizen "howl[s] before" them (14.34 and 16.12, E56-7). The latter descriptions imply that the Americans see through Urizen's ploy to smother revolution. What is presented in this image is not a scene of transformation, or even of transformative awareness, but of people who have blocked themselves off and hidden away. The lovers do not see their surroundings, nor does the man reading the book, while the piper suggests a return to ignorant innocence. The prayerful poses of the titanic figure and the small person kneeling on the titan's back evoke the division of man from God, appealing not to the imagination or to internal perception of the infinite, but to a distant Urizen (or Orc). In the background, massive, almost anthropomorphised trees hark back to the twisted roots on the first page of the Preludium. At the base of the page, a thorny, flower-bearing plant grows. A serpent (possibly referring to Orc, who is "serpent-form'd" (7.3, E53)) writhes its way around the plant, risking the sting of thorns. These images seem to represent the cessation or abortion of the revolution represented in the Text. Only the book-holding figure on the titan's back looks towards the East, where Urizen spreads his clouds and where the light of revolution will have to rise again.

The Third Text which arises here is, once again, indeterminate, but it brings into question the very trajectory of the prophecy and revolution represented in the written text. On this page, visionary perception disappears to a place which is beyond determinate knowledge or coherently formed imagining. Neither image nor text can remain determinate whilst paired with its related other. The image of plate 16 is either drawn from an alternative present-future to that represented in the poem, or it comes from the past. If so, the past (which is so prominently represented at the outset of the poem in the Preludium and in the frontispiece) seems to *end* the images, at the very same moment that the future-present is announced. Here, the movement towards *eschata* (or end things) in the text simultaneously reaches back to some notional origin through the images. This supplementary movement undoes the contemporaneity of the present with itself.

Such incomprehensibility and these spectral aspects of Blake's Third Text undermine the certainty of vision; there is a level on which obscurity may finally defeat comprehensibility. Yet these Texts also open the messianic time-space of alterity. This space would welcome those others with differing visions to one's own, but it would *also* include those who bypass vision, and remain altogether other to the discourse of prophecy. In this space and time resides the possibility for a certain kind of visionary justice which involves the undermining of all forms of indoctrination; even those which may present themselves as revolutionary and visionary.

In *Specters*, Derrida spends some time exploring the notion of "justice", in relation to the other. Invoking different French translations of Hamlet's famous lines "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,/ That ever I was born to set it right" (*Hamlet* 1.5.189-90), Derrida remarks that that which is out of joint, which goes askew, can often be associated with perversion. It "can easily be seen to oppose itself as does the oblique, twisted, wrong, crooked, to the good direction of that which goes right, straight … and sets off directly, without detour, toward the right address" (20). In this regard, the spectral – and anything which is obscure, uncertain or outside of knowledge, including the Third Text – might be understood to be threatening and even morally wrong.

Derrida (in a movement typical of his deconstructive strategies) counters this understanding by stating: "with the other, is not this disjuncture, this dis-adjustment of the 'it's going badly' necessary for the good, or at least the just, to be announced? Is not disjuncture the very possibility of the other?" (23). There is more than one form of disadjustment. Readers must ask themselves "[h]ow to distinguish between two disadjustments, between the disjuncture of the unjust and the one that opens up the infinite asymmetry of the relation to the other, that is to say, the place for justice" (23). Continuing along this line of thought, Derrida asks:

> [D]oes not justice as relation to the other suppose … the irreducible excess of a disjointure or an anachrony … some 'out of joint' dislocation in Being and in time itself, a disjointure that, in always risking evil, expropriation, and injustice … against which there is no calculable insurance, would alone be able to *do justice* or to *render justice* to the other as other?
>
> (27)

How to do justice to the other, to that which is wholly unknowable, whilst allowing it to remain wholly other? The spectre, that which disjoints time (which is both within and outside of conventional time) and which maintains the space between two, is the possibility of giving justice to the other, of offering justice: "[n]ot … calculable and distributive justice … [or] a *rendering justice* that would be limited to sanctioning, to restituting and to *doing right,* but … justice as incalculability of the gift" (23).[56]

Of course, giving justice to the other, opening "the irreducible excess of a disjointure or an anachrony", may not *yet* be possible (27). Leonard Lawlor touches on this when he addresses Derrida's notion of hospitality. He suggests that in Derrida's writings on hospitality there is an acknowledgement of the force which "moves towards to the other to welcome and the force to remain unscathed and pulled back from the other, trying to keep the door closed" (n. pag.). He equates this with Derrida's idea of a "messianism without messiah," in which, like the messiah, the future is always to come, always coming back. It is *l'avenir*, which literally means "to come", and it will mark with insufficiency any attempt to give justice (n. pag.). When the spectre and the Third Text point to the "doubtful contemporaneity of the present to itself" (and thereby prevent the establishment of an opposition between the past-present and the future-present) they open the space for this future coming.

In the context of this gesture towards alterity, which is so strongly evoked by Derrida's spectre, I would like to return briefly to the interaction between Orc and the shadowy daughter. In particular, I wish to consider a different "emblematic" reading, where the rape of the daughter is representative both of a certain treatment of obscurity and indeterminacy and of the action of Blake's third Text. Orc, as I have attempted to show, is a difficult and flawed figure, particularly in his role as deliverer of revolution. Even if some of the depictions of him at his worst are rooted in parodies of Burkean language and imagery, from a certain perspective Orc is rabidly violent. He is a manifestation of revolutionary

[56] Derrida's reference to the "incalculability of the gift" is a comment on other writings which he produced in this period (it is linked most particularly to *Given Time*). While I am aware of this complex intertextuality, my focus here is solely on the bearing of the text on my discussion of *America*.

energy which has no bounds, and which seeks to transform all that it encounters into the likeness of itself.[57]

The shadowy daughter is initially described as being shrouded in "awful" obscurity. I have thus far read her silence and obscurity as a form of visionary disempowerment.[58] However, it must also be noted that her silence marks her as a being completely separate from Orc, who is characterised by his Odin-like ability to *speak*. In effect, the daughter's wordlessness is the sign of her *alterity*. This alterity is also marked by the absence of her silent form from the images. Whereas Orc's chained, promethean form is represented in the trapped cycle on plate 1, and possibly even on the frontispiece, the daughter's helmeted, naked form is not. At the outset of the Preludium, the daughter is *external* to the visual and verbal discourse in which Orc, Urthona and the prophet participate. The shadowy daughter's silence, her iron tongue, might even be understood to be the oppositional contrary to Orc's voice and visibility, that out of which progression should grow. She is also, despite her apparent bearing of spectral qualities in the Derridean sense, external to Derrida's discourse regarding the spectre, who can "see without being seen, but … [who] speak[s] in order to be heard" (8).

Orc's act of rape – which stems from his desire to reveal the shadowy daughter so that his "red eyes" may "behold" her and he may catalogue her attributes – is rooted in the same irrepressible need to secure an identification. Derrida identifies a similar desire to arrest the spectre (the unknown and disappearing) in speech in the characters of *Hamlet*. Barnardo, Marcellus and Horatio all display this inclination when they encounter the spectre of Hamlet's father, the dead the King (11). Rather than liberating the shadowy daughter, her rape (or the "seizure" of her womb) compels her to participate in Orc's discourse, which later in the Text becomes associated with visionary revelation. She is thrust into an acknowledgement of being "courted" by Orc's eagle-lion-serpent-whale form, although he is "drinking [her] soul away" (2.14, E52). Orc's act of rape forces the shadowy daughter into

[57] In *The Marriage* Blake writes that it is true that "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (4, E34). Here, Reason forms an "outer circumference" for Energy which suggests that some curtailment of Energy is necessary. It is the pervasive separation of Reason and Energy, the denial of the latter and the transformation of the former into institutional doctrine, which must be avoided.

[58] See pp. 144 and 146-7 above.

"joint" with his particular discourse, with his notion of "right" (whether this is construed as his "right" to behold her or the aptness of following the path of revolution). If she is the female titan on the final page of the Prophecy section, she has been transmuted from fierce warrior to robed and stone-like worshipper of a distant God. This is indicative of the "jointure" forced by Orc.

Here Orc is truly spectral in the Blakean sense, the negative self-image of a discourse which would regard "every man" (and woman) as a visionary *in his or her own right*. At the same time, the very need for *every* man or woman to project a visionary discourse in order to be just is also problematic. If Orc's rape of the shadowy daughter were somehow emblematic of the *necessary* rise into vision encouraged by Blake's Third Text, then his Third Texts (and the discourse which backs them) would come to offer nothing more than a closed and limited vision which left no room for justice to the other, no space for the other's "honest" opinion – or the absence of any opinion. Contrary to their form, these Third Texts would stand for the violent dismissal of all obscurity and indeterminacy. If understood too narrowly as a utopian tool which guarantees access to vision, the Third Text may in fact come to be contaminated in the same way as Orc is flawed.

However, *America*'s Third Text also resists such contamination. Throughout *America*, the reader/viewer encounters the spectral falling away of received forms of knowledge, including visionary knowledge. This is as much the case for received forms of prophecy – whether "hortatory" or predictive – as it is for history. Blake's *America* cannot be approached through a single discourse or way of seeing (whether this is the discourse of determinate vision or an indeterminate failure of vision). It involves a messianic projection of ideals and values, which potentially exert a transformative power over the present. However, like all messianic comings, this is characterised by the "the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable singularity of the *arrivant as justice*" (28), which always points to a future-to-come, rather than a present future. Like the spectre, the Third Text suggests that a vital aspect of the transformation of the present resides in the *destabilizing* of the present.

In light of this, Steven Vine's concluding remarks regarding the spectral nature of revolution are vitally important. He argues that if, in *America* and the other revolutionary prophecies, visionary sovereignty fails – if vision encounters a crisis point that it cannot overcome – then this also opens "a visionary immolation of tyrannous self-certainty which is crucial to Blake's critique of all forms of sovereignty" (46). This has strong affinities with Derrida's philosophical praxis: in order for there to be justice for the other, the present must remain *in deconstruction*, and so must all that is thought on the basis of the present (*Specters* 28).

# Conclusion

> But if one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task.
>
> – Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (9-10)

The image-text relations of Blake's illuminated books are challenging. They are indeterminate and often obscure. Even when they can be precisely delimited or defined, they are characterised by supplementarity and *différance*, resisting the mastery of author/artist and reader/viewer alike. Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to treat this as the starting point for writing and analysis, thereby acknowledging the qualifications which the complexity of Blake's image-text relations might introduce into both Blake studies and into studies of image-text relations more generally. Both of these fields tend to be haunted by externally imposed hierarchies. They are also often characterised by the suppression of aspects of visual and verbal Texts in the name of maintaining unified interpretations, and by the (re)shaping of their objects of study in such a way that these come to support an ideological or scholarly status quo. This dissertation seeks to acknowledge, shift, and even to break such frames by opening out the infinity of the relation of language to visual representation.

As Foucault's statement regarding the infinite relation of language to vision suggests, an act of preservation – and of meta-reflection – is required here.[1] This is necessary in any written or spoken analysis of images, including this study. As Michael Baxandall notes, even when a written analysis of art includes reproductions of its visual objects, these are always mediated by language; such mediation is inescapable in verbal analysis (*Patters of Intention* 10). Despite its non-hierarchical bent and its focus on the infinity of the relation between language and vision, this study thus risks appropriating the image for the text. This problem is connected with Foucault's exhortation to "erase" proper names. Here proper names refer

[1] Foucault uses the term "vision" in a conventional manner, referring to that which is literally seen. He does not refer to vision in the Blakean sense.

to the practice of naming figures in an image on the basis of knowledge exterior to the image. This might include writing that that the young man at the head of plate 6 of *America* (Fig.65) *must* be Orc because it is Orc speaking in the text, or that the tiger in the image (Fig. 1) is certainly the same as the "Tyger" in the poem. As Foucault writes,

> the proper name, in this particular context, is merely an artifice: it gives us a finger to point with, in other words, to pass surreptitiously from the space where one speaks to the space where one looks; … to fold one over the other as though they were equivalents.
>
> (*Order* 9)

It is with this assumed equivalence that Foucault takes issue. The need to erase proper names does not, he remarks, mean that language is "insufferably inadequate" (9). Nor should it suggest that one should never attribute a name to any figure outside of speech or writing. As I have commented in Chapter One, adequacy is not the point. The point is that *looking* at the figure of Orc, and understanding it to be Orc, are different processes to writing "this is Orc".

As discussed in Chapter One, one of the key concerns of this dissertation is to approach image and text with respect for the fact that they are different kinds of ontological objects. Their interactions are always, and perhaps inevitably, characterised by some gap which manifests itself in the processes of aesthetic production, in the process of reading and viewing, and in conventional attitudes towards image and text. This gap has been widely resisted by numerous approaches to image-text relations. These include theories which were contemporary with Blake: *ut picture poesis*, for example, concealed and suppressed differences by reducing image and text to commonalities; Lessing's *Laocoon* attempted to fix these differences in such a way that image and text would come to constitute immovable and opposing categories or genres. As, as W. J. T. Micthell notes, this gap is also resisted by comparative approaches to image-text relations more generally, which tend to rely on homogenizing concepts to ensure an equivalence between images and texts which would otherwise resist comparison; they rule out both generic incommensurability and unmediated forms of alterity (*Picture Theory* 87).

However, structures promoting stable or even static frames of "the image as concept" and "the text as concept" can and should be broken. There is no meta-language of image-text relations, no closed one-dimensional field, in which image and text will be conceptually

fixed and finally come to conform to each other's contours. There will always be either some chasm appearing or the generation of friction so strong that it sets fires, which (as in *America*) threaten to melt the gates of those "law-built heaven[s]" which deny the complexities of image and text (16.19, E58). The relationship between image and text is constituted by a shifting time/space which is traversed by the reader/viewer and which may occasionally be sewn together, but which cannot be closed or woven into a single piece of cloth. As Mitchell notes, if the relation of the visible to the readable (both written and spoken) is infinite, then "word and image" become un-satisfactory names for an unstable dialectic which shifts location in representational practices, breaking pictorial and discursive frames (*Picture Theory* 83).

Moreover, while image and text are different kinds of objects, there are also no "pure" images or texts. Each is always shot through with traces of the other, whether in the most obvious form of words appearing in images, or in less obvious moments, such as the saturation of an image in historical discourse or narrative vision in the text. This opening of the relationship between image and text brings into question the trend of attributing primacy to either medium (as, for example, in deciding whether the images or texts of Blake's illuminated texts "matter more", or which came first). It calls for the "limitations" of image and text to be re-described. Even the sequence of reading and viewing is always already flowing between image and text. In light of this, I contend that the relationship between image and text is inclusive but fissured, malleable but rooted in a physical object, traversing the image-text without end.

There is, however, still the problem of acknowledging this endless relation of visible and verbal in a written account. Foucault's proposed solution is to use "the medium of [a] grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and repetitive because too broad". Through this register, the image (which might otherwise be subordinated by language) can be interrogated "on its own terms", and might "little by little, release its illuminations" (*Order* 10). This should not imply that all the "illuminations" of the text are available on the surface of critical language, only because they share a medium. Nor should it imply that on occasion a similarly meticulous language which "erases" proper names is not necessary when encountering a text. In approaching image, text and their relation, one must (echoing

Derrida in *Specters of Marx*) attempt to evoke both senses of the French word *maintenant*, maintaining the irreducibility of each object and the uniqueness of an interpretative encounter in the (divided) present. In the end, erasing proper names is not the issue. Rather, Foucault's statement points to the requirement that one approach both image and text on their own terms.

This is, I would argue, the very possibility – and also the limitation – of the Third Text; in order for there to be such a Text, the reader/viewer must acknowledge that image and text work in different ways. In Blake's illuminated books, the dynamic structuration which operates between the poems and images on individual pages, across pages, and across multiple, differing copies supports this awareness in the reader/viewer. These features function to produce a multiplicity of variable meanings which traverse the images and poetry. Part of the contribution of this dissertation has been to focus on this aspect of the Third Text, and further to explore the implications of this multiplicity. As illustrated with regard to *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Blake's Texts actively break both pictorial and literary frames through both form and content, which (like the states of innocence and experience) also infuse and shape each other. In *Songs*, this breaking of frames may empower the reader/viewer, who is denied mastery over the illuminated book, but becomes the weaver of an imaginative Text with its roots in the relationship between image and poetry.

Framing Blake's production in terms of a Third Text also points to the potential to read his illuminated books both with and against the grain by supplementing them with the language of poststructuralism. The way in which Blake's image-texts "break the frame" of the conceptual separation between image and text, while undermining the conception of any hierarchical organisation, opens a space for poststructuralist theory; the notion of the Third Text offers a further access point. The thought of Derrida and Barthes is entangled with ideas of that which plays, marks, moves, defers, disperses, produces and traverses without centre or simple origin, and without end. One of the aspects of this dissertation's critical praxis has been to show that this emphasis on unending, inter-implicated and non-teleological processes has extensive and valuable application to the study of image-text relations, particularly in the case of Blake's illuminated books. Equally pertinent are

poststructuralist responses to binaries from a position *beyond* conventional, received knowledge and opposition. Thus, while on one level Blake's Third Texts correspond to a certain, political and Enthusiastic agenda which Behrendt, Mee and others identify as a driving force in the 1790s and more generally within his oeuvre, the relation of Blake's illuminated books to poststructuralism may offer fresh possibilities for signification.

Any application of poststructuralist theory to Blake's illuminated books must be refracted through Blake, and must also remain cognisant of its own limitations. At several points in this dissertation, I have encountered claims that poststructuralist readings may risk the establishment of the very unifying and homogenous concepts that both Mitchell and Foucault warn the scholar of image-text relations to resist. These claims are not without grounds. Although Derrida and Barthes engage delicately and subtly with different media, a reductively interpreted poststructuralist frame might give language, absence and even infinite signification precedence over non-linguistic forms of meaning or communication and presence – not to mention those moments when images, texts or their relationships tend towards the definite, the material, or closed meaning. The most striking example of this tension is Barthes' juxtaposition of the Text to the Work, which implies the foreclosure of the productive and generative structure of *objects*.

This dissertation acknowledges that Textuality – and poststructuralist theory more generally – cannot be used as a tool crudely to prize open Blake's image-texts. My utilization of poststructuralist notions does not involve a superficial manipulation of the objects of study to provide temporary purchase for theoretical analysis. Rather, the verbal-visual material considered in this dissertation is understood to modify the theory in significant ways. There is a continuing exchange and reciprocity between theory and Blake's illuminated books, which is homologous with the infinite openness of the relation between language and vision. For example, although the Text remains a device for framing the production of meaning which is anterior to Blake and his illuminated books, it supplements them and is supplemented by them. This is not to say that poststructuralist theory is a necessary accompaniment to examining Blake. However, when used in a way which is sensitive to and modified by the object of study, such theories provide valuable strategies for exploring the

shifting and unmasterable network of interactive meanings which arise from Blake's illuminated books.

Yet, even when one follows this path, approaching both the image and the text on their own terms and using theory with such sensitivity, there is something about Blake's illuminated books which marks all analysis as insufficient. Leonard Lawlor writes about such insufficiency with regard to absolute hospitality, which according to Derrida is never possible, except in the future-to-come:

> … Being insufficient, every attempt therefore requires criticism; it must be "deconstructed," as Derrida would say. But this deconstruction would be a deconstruction that recognizes its own insufficiency. Deconstruction … never therefore results in good conscience, in the good conscience that comes with thinking we have done enough to render justice.
>
> ("Jacques Derrida" n. pag.)

The same might be said of any study of Blake's image-text relations; each is marked as requiring criticism, for Blake's illuminated books will always, to some extent, escape analysis. However – like deconstruction – this very act of criticism is never sufficient in itself. I would argue that this insufficiency is a characteristic of all Blake criticism relating to the illuminated books, whether or not a given study is concerned with image-text relations. It is the flipside of what Morris Eaves recognizes as the practice of "altering 'Blake' as our desires, for him and for ourselves, alter" ("On Blakes We Want and Blakes We Don't" 414). The plethora of differing interpretations of Blake's illuminated books gestures towards the infinity of the task of coming to terms with these objects. Even though, when viewed in isolation, the majority of these studies openly suppress and deny alternative approaches, together they *maintain* the limitlessness which Foucault invokes.

A crucial limitation of Blake criticism has to do with the many-voicedness of his Texts and hence also of his legacy. As noted in Chapter One, one of the challenges which might be brought to the application of poststructuralist theory to Blake's image-text relations is that in certain places Blake's illuminated books seem to offer a theory of language which is phenomenological and performative. Essick goes so far as to suggest that this is projected into an ontology which presents Divine Humanity as having the potential to heal the split between internal and external, signifier and signified (*Blake and the Language of Adam*). However, in the early works at least, this strand of thought is vitiated by what Blake may

have perceived to be the "fallenness" of language, sign and communication. Even Blake's printing process is characterised by difference, juxtaposition and iterability; this points away from any transcendent origin through the will of Divine Humanity. It illustrates materially that presence and performativity are vitiated by, and to some extent dependent upon, absence, difference and repetition. As Stephen Vine argues (and as illustrated in Chapter Three) Blake's early works are riddled with double vision: struggles with terror and anxiety which sometimes collapse into obscurity and sometimes into calamity, making and unmaking, sustaining and then eroding Blake's visionary and prophetic sovereignty (*Spectral Visions*).

Vine's account highlights the significance of plurality and *dispersal* in Blake's early works, as opposed to transcendence or completion. If "Blake" returns to his reader through his illuminated books – as Behrendt, Essick and others implicitly assume in writing of his "intentions" – then he does so as a Derridean spectre: multiple but singular, elusive, occupying the interstices between the idea and the corporeal object. I am not suggesting that the spirit of Blake literally hovers in converse with his readers and viewers. However, what Derrida might call the "given threads" of Blake's Texts carry with them the legacy of their producer ("Plato's Pharmacy" 63). These might be understood to present certain injunctions to the reader/viewer, who is also the inheritor (and "supplementer") of Blake's visionary prophecies.

From a related perspective, Derrida questions how inheritors might receive such a legacy. In *Specters*, he writes of the "visor effect", which enables the spectre to see out of his visor, while the person encountering the spectre cannot see what lies beneath the helmet. This effect is heightened because the spectre can be invisible; it can "[look] at us and sees us not see it even when it is there" (6). However, we still feel ourselves contemplated by it, before any look on our part, according to what Derrida calls an absolute anteriority, asymmetry and disproportion (7). This look is asymmetrical and disproportionate because it can never be returned, except perhaps in a future-to-come. It shifts the terms of engagement, from an encounter in the apparently simple "present", to one in which a spectre (returning from the grave and sometimes from an inaccessible past) can interact with the living, even without their fully conscious awareness. This "de-synchronizes, [and] recalls us to anachrony", or to

the non-contemporaneity of the present with itself (6-7). Derrida argues that it is on the basis of the visor effect that we inherit from the spectre. *What* we inherit is the "law" of the "Father Spirit" (as Hamlet does from his father/King or as the global community receives a legacy from Marx).

Derrida offers a critical appraisal of this law, which has some application to Blake studies. Just as one cannot always *see* the spectre through its visor, and just as the spectre sometimes speaks without being seen yet in order to be heard, Derrida remarks that the first obedience to the injunction of the spectre is "[a]n essentially blind submission to his secret, to the secret of his origin" (7). This conditions all other obedience to the spectre's injunction. It may always be a case of someone else, another ghost, passing himself off as the "Father Spirit" for ghosts do not merely interact with the living, but also with one another; there is "commerce" among spectres which might see one passing itself off as another (7-8). This points to the veiled multiplicity of that which is apparently unitary. In view of this "radical and necessary *heterogeneity* of an inheritance", such an inheritance can only ever be gathered together (into a law) by the "*injunction* to *reaffirm by choosing*" (16). However, as Derrida notes, in this instance, "[t]he critical choice called for by any reaffirmation of the inheritance is also … the condition of finitude" (16). In other words in forcing one to *choose* a single inheritance, the different possibilities which inhabit the injunction "in a contradictory fashion around a secret" will be ignored, undermined. If one is concerned with law and "right", there is never any certainty that one will do justice to one's legacy, because one never knows whether one has listened to the "right" voice, or looked in the "right" way. There is always the potentiality for misinterpretation because of the "blind submission" required by the Father Spirit.

In contrast to this finitude, the infinite (in Derrida's formulation) does not pretend to "fullness" or full presence: "[t]he infinite does not inherit, it does not inherit (from) itself" (16). In his early works, Derrida connects the infinite with an "infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer" (*Of Grammatology* 157). The infinite does not inherit because, like the spectre (as the very site of the spectre) it undermines the notion that what has come before will lead in a correct, jointed and stable manner toward the self-sufficient present and onward to the

future. Hence, the infinite does not ask us to choose *only one*. In this sense, it opens the possibility for "do[ing] justice one day to the incessant return of [Blake's] ghosts… as well as to the infinite partition of all his divided spectres" (*Politics of Friendship* 73).

Derrida's account seems to imply that the "jointedness" of the law must be violated. Blake's early work shows a similar focus on violation and transgression. It is not only that at the end of *America*, "law-built heaven" must fall (16.19, E58). In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake writes that "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (24, E44). This is the final line of Blake's six-part discussion of the infernal Bible, and it is thus weighted as the concluding comment of this portion of the Text.[2] This line is separated from the rest of the text on the plate by a large design of a bearded man, on his hands and knees, seemingly crawling in a dark cavern (Fig. 85). He stares downwards, towards "One Law for the Lion…", and seems to have a look of horror on his face. One does not know what he is responding to. It could be that he is a law-giver, aghast at Blake's declaration, or that he is in the process of salutary, infernal upliftment through the agency of "[t]he Bible of Hell: which the world shall have whether they will or no" (24, E44). In either case, the line emphasises that the injunction to choose only one legacy is a form of oppression, and implies that such laws must be resisted, allowing Lion and Ox the power of self-designated law, or perhaps no law at all.[3]

In certain respects, this statement might be applied to Blake studies more generally. Blake's spectres destabilize single discourses and ways of seeing. While these spectres are fundamental to opening the infinite relation of language to vision, holding too firmly to only one of them may re-introduce the conditions of finitude. By making oneself accessible to the *multiplicity* of spectres and injunctions – rather than focusing on the injunction to choose *one* – it is possible to open the disjointures and interstices in which reside the possibility of reading and viewing Blake in good conscience and with responsibility, in the Derridean sense. However, as Lawlor notes, such "good conscience", as well as the notion of

[2] For discussion of the structure of *The Marriage*, see Erdman's Textual Notes, E801.

[3] This is, of course, only one of many injunctions in the early works, and it does not close the image-text relations of plate 24; the latter has barely been explored here. This is particularly true when one considers that it has a number of intertexts outside of *The Marriage*. See, for example, Blake's *Nebuchadnezzar* (1795) (Butlin, Cat. 302, Plate 406).

doing justice or giving justice, is always elusive. These are aspirations which can never be wholly encompassed or fulfilled.

This is the primary contribution of this study to Blake scholarship: acknowledging the infinite relation of language to vision and pointing to the inherent spectrality of this relationship without claiming to fulfil it. This spectral approach introduces subtlety into the analysis of Blake. It destabilizes critical orthodoxies, particularly those which construe Blake as the self-coherent deliverer of an apotheosis of vision through revolutionary ideology. This study points to the contrary moments and disjointures in Blake's oeuvre, but in a way that – as in *America a Prophecy* – leaves these convolutions and fissures open to the arrival of the other, whether in the form of other readings or viewings, other relations to British Romanticism, or other theories. It is also important to open a space for that absolute alterity which cannot be appropriated by words.

One of the consequences of such an approach is further to legitimate working on the cusp of multiple disciplines. This is a not only a literary investigation (as are so many studies of Blake), but also an enquiry which draws on the resources of art history and philosophy or literary theory. It breaks the institutional moulds and parameters which settle these disciplines in different academic departments and schools. Undermining the artificial, yet well-established, constraints imposed by the operation of twenty-first-century institutions is vital to engaging with image-text relations. The question of image-text relations, and of the Third Text, is thus a current and compelling multi-disciplinary concern.

Finally, the notion of infinity itself must come under scrutiny. In Chapter Three, I note that Blake's idea of infinity involves the concrete (but not the finite) and the singular. In "Auguries of Innocence" he writes of

> …see[ing] a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
> Hold[ing] Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour
>
> (1-4, E490)

Even leaving room for figurative language, the idea that there is a perceptible "World in a Grain of Sand", and that one can "hold" infinity, or find eternity in an hour points to the

notion that everything – each object, subject, moment – is an infinity in its own right. This suggests that infinity is qualitative, not quantitative. It requires a certain inwardness and an awareness of generative multiplicities. There are, moreover, different kinds of infinity – phenomenal (the "World"), spiritual ("Heaven"), spatial ("Infinity" which is "held"), and temporal ("Eternity"), all of which are to some degree intertwined.

On one level, this stanza of "Auguries of Innocence" implies that there is a certain order to infinity. This is suggested by its closed rhyme scheme and the presentation of clearly delineated access points: infinity is first seen (either literally or in "vision"), and then metaphorically touched and held. This order is difficult to associate with many of Blake's image-texts. However, like certain poems in *Songs of Innocence*, the projected simplicity of these first lines of "Auguries of Innocence" cannot remain untainted by the complexities of the external world. The very notion of multiple, differing eternities can undermine the perception of their orderliness. If the World is in a grain of sand, then its conventional place within the "order" of the universe (a celestial body, populated by humanity) is mutable and shifting. The same might be said of Heaven, Infinity and Eternity. I would suggest that the (infinite) plurality implied by "Auguries of Innocence" points to a certain spatio-temporal disjointure, which can be associated with the spectre, the Third Text, and Derrida's notion of the infinite chain of supplements.

Preserving the infinity of a task, then, does not involve some smooth progression which, while endless, moves outwards from a single point of origin and cleanly joins one stage of enquiry to the next. Rather, it involves the same inwardness and openness to disjointure that would allow one to "hold infinity" in the palm of one's hand. In Blake studies the necessity of preserving infinity is part of the nature of the material object. One must approach each image and text on its own terms, reading it as an infinity in its own right, challenging the equivalence of image and text. However, one should also remain open to way in which these multiple infinities share the world and are inter-implicated. Preserving the infinity of the relation of language to vision opens the scene of and for Blake's Third Texts, for the recognition of Blake as *both* poet *and* artist, and for those spectres which are always yet-to-come.



# Glossary

This glossary provides definitions and/or commentary on a number of terms which appear in the text of this dissertation. Certain of these terms are used to contextualize Blake. Others engage with particular theoretical, literary or art historical issues which require further elucidation, but which are not elaborated upon in the body of the discussion.

## Antinomianism

The *OED* online defines antinomian as "[o]pposed to the obligatoriness of the moral law" ("antinomian, adj."). As Jon Mee writes in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, this notion describes a "heretical hostility to the authority of the moral law which plagued the Christian Church more or less from its inception" (57). Mee emphasises the fact that antinomianism was less a "specific heresy", than a tendency (59). This hostility to moral law can, according to Saree Makdisi, be linked to antinomian principles stemming "from a sense that all living things together immanently constitute God (so that, in a line that Blake reiterates in many of the books, 'every thing that lives is holy')" (*William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* 8). Mee argues that antinomianism was one of the most significant features of popular Enthusiasm in Blake's time. Blake's hostility towards religious ceremonies and his frequent suggestions that transgression be rewarded were probably influenced by antinomian thought (*Dangerous Enthusiasm* 58-9).

## Blake and Romanticism

The notion of the existence of a Romantic historical master-narrative, established through "aesthetic norms", has been rendered highly questionable by recent studies of the Romantics, which have foregrounded the diversity and iconoclasm of this period. Hence, in the "Preface" to the *Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, Stuart Curran writes:

> If the aesthetics and history of the [Romantic period] reveal a similar preoccupation with process rather than completion, of skeptical explorations over dogmatic assurances, of multivalent instead of unitary modes of thought, then it follows that criticism representing the main concerns of the age needs to be conducted along dialectical lines that honor rather than resolve into simple formula the tensions responsible for its dynamic energies.
>
> (xiii-xiv)

Even within this context, Blake is a particularly difficult figure, because he is situated on the cusp of eighteenth-century art and literature and Romanticism. On the one hand, he reviled the scientific perspective of Newton and the enlightenment thought of Locke. On the other, he also expressed his disagreement with other late-eighteenth century Romantics. For example, in his annotations to Wordsworth's Poems, Blake writes, "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration" (E665). Morris Eaves points to this complexity in *Blake's Theory of Art*, noting that Blake can be a "puzzle to critics who try to see him as part of neoclassicism in the visual arts or of Wordsworthian romanticism in literature" (10-11). Blake, for instance, prioritized line in his theorization of his images. In the *Descriptive Catalogue* he wrote, "Leave out this l[i]ne and you leave out life itself" (E550). This view can be associated with the Greek revival in British Neoclassicism, as well as with Enlightenment notions of art such as those found in the *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds, where line is associated with classical aesthetics and academic art. However, Eaves suggests that Blake re-established the Enlightenment values regarding line on Romantic grounds, retaining a focus on line but replacing Enlightenment attribution to reason with imagination (25).

### Colour Printing

Colour Printing was an innovation which Blake had developed by 1794. As Robert Essick states, it involved the application of thick pigments directly onto Blake's relief-etched plate (*William Blake, Printmaker* 125). Blake would then print from the coloured plate as though it had simply been inked. When printed and squeezed between the plate and paper, the pigments tended to flow uncontrollably over the image, creating messy patches. Details of faces and strong outlines had to be executed directly by hand (126). See Fig. 49 for an example of a colour printed plate.

### Concept

The term "concept" can be problematic, particularly in terms of poststructuralist theory. Jacques Derrida has linked it to a history of metaphysical thought which is, for example, manifest in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure associates the term "concept" with

the signified, and hence also with the transcendental signified which he implies must exist outside of the system of relations that characterises language (*Positions* 19). For Derrida the notion of a transcendental signified existing outside of language is highly contentious (see Chapter One, especially p. 41, for an elaboration of Derrida's objections to the transcendental signified and Saussure's metaphysics). However, Derrida does not seek to exclude the term "concept" from discourse. Indeed, in the English translations of works such as *Of Grammatology* the word is used regularly. He acknowledges that one cannot escape the terms of metaphysics; rather, one must use them as a *bricoleur* would, harnessing what already exists but turning it to one's own purposes (see "Structure, Sign and Play" for a condensed discussions of Derrida's notion of the *bricoleur*, as adapted from Levi-Strauss). My use of the term "concept" retains an awareness of these complexities, avoiding the claim that what I call a "concept" is present in-and-of-itself, existing beyond the reach of *différance.*

## Design

Blake frequently used the term "design" to refer to his pictorial works, most particularly the larger portions of his images (see Stephen Behrendt, "Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts" 80). However, "design" has strong connotations of craft, and post-William Morris attitudes towards craft continue to place it within a hierarchy in which it is the lesser branch of art. I thus use the term advisedly, placing it within the tradition of Blake criticism, but excluding any derogatory connotations with respect to Blake's pictorial art.

## Dissemination

Dissemination is the act or motion of scattering or spreading. In the work of Derrida, it refers to the fact that language is always at risk of, or haunted by, dispersal (which has connotations of absence, but may, as Derrida notes in *Specters of Marx*, also result in the emergence of multiplicity (3-4)). In *Positions*, Derrida states that "[i]n the last analysis *dissemination* means nothing, and cannot be reassembled into a definition… If dissemination, seminal *différance,* cannot be summarized into an exact conceptual tenor, it is because the force and form of its disruption *explode* the semantic horizon" (*Positions* 44-5).

## Energy and Reason

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the Devil considers the relationship between Reason and Energy. He declares that "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (4, E34). However, he qualifies this by stating that Reason does not come from the soul alone, while Energy does not stem from the body alone (Blake wished to treat the body and soul as one, united by the senses). Blake also implies that Reason and Energy are not binaristic (or even necessarily part of a Hegelian dialectic). Rather, they are interrelated and interconnected as progressive contraries.

## *Ekphrasis*

In *Principles of Art History*, David Carrier defines *ekphrasis* as the verbal re-creation of a story depicted in a painting (or picture); a verbal metaphor for a visual object (103). It should be noted that there are several ways to define *ekphrasis*. For example, in "*Ekphrasis*, Iconotexts and Intermediality", Peter Wagner contrasts Carrier's definition with that of *ekphrasis* as the "verbal representation of visual representation" (10).

## Illuminated Books

The term "illuminated book" refers both to Blake's works in relief etching and to certain of his works in intaglio etching, such as *The Gates of Paradise*. While some scholars use the term "illuminated" to refer to coloured copies of Blake's work (see Stephen Louis Carr, "Illuminated Printing"), monochrome works also fall within the ambit of "illuminated books". Blake used the term "Illuminated Printing" (see below) to refer specifically to his relief-etched (and often hand coloured) works, while "Illuminated Book" seems to have had broader application (see *Prospectus* of 1793, E692-3).

## Illuminated Printing

In his *Prospectus* of 1793, Blake announces the sale of *America a Prophecy*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Book of Thel*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Songs of Innocence*, and *Songs of Experience*, as books "in Illuminated Printing" (E693). Illuminated printing thus

seems to refer to his relief etchings (the processes involved in relief etching are explained in Chapter One pp. 14-16). Before he presents this list, Blake writes:

> Even Milton and Shakespeare could not publish their own works. This difficulty has been obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public; who has invented a method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense.
>
> If a method of Printing which combines the Painter and the Poet is a phenomenon worthy of public attention, provided that it exceeds in elegance all former methods, the Author is sure of his reward.
>
> (2-4, E692)

## Image

In this dissertation, I have chosen to refer to Blake's pictorial elements as images. "Image" is an exceptionally broad term which can be applied to concrete and graphic images, as well as to perceptual, psychological, mental, or verbal images (Mitchell, *Iconology* 10). I use the term "image" to refer to the pictorial, visual and perceptual unless otherwise specified.

## Image-text

An "image-text" is a work in which both image and text appear simultaneously on the same page or surface. In *Picture Theory* W. J. T. Mitchell uses the hyphen of "image-text" to designate *relations* of the visual and verbal (89fn9). Mitchell contrasts this term with two other terms: "image/text", where a "problematic gap, cleavage or rupture in representation" occurs, and "imagetext", which designates "composite, synthetic works (or concepts) that combine image and text" (89 fn9). My use of the term image-text differs from Mitchell's in this regard, as it may designate any of these states. This is a practical choice, as Blake's illuminated pages may simultaneously involve relations and problematic gaps and cleavages or composite, synthetic combinations.

## Imagination

For Blake, the imagination was the central faculty of both God and man. S. Forster Damon writes that "here the two became indistinguishable" (*A Blake Dictionary* 195). Perhaps, Blake's most condensed statement to this effect is found in *Laocoön* (1826), where he writes:

The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is God Himself } ישע Jesus we are his
The Divine Body} Members

(E273)

Northrop Frye notes that "mental" and "intellectual" are exact synonyms for "imaginative" in Blake's writing (*Fearful Symmetry* 19), although this generalisation may on occasion obscure nuances of meaning. Blake's notion of imagination is strongly connected with his ideas concerning perception (see "Perception" below). For example, as noted in the body of the dissertation, the speaker in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* talks to the Prophet Isaiah, who suggests that "in ages of imagination … firm perswasion removed mountains" (12, E38). In other words – to put it perhaps too simply – imaginative perception or vision of the world is capable of changing or re-creating the world.

## Meta-text

The *OED* online defines "meta-text" as "[a] text lying outside another text, *esp.* one describing or elucidating another" ("meta-text, n."). However, I use the term in a slightly broader way. The prefix "meta-" can denote "change, transformation, permutation, or substitution" (*OED* online "meta-, prefix"). My use of the term carries these connotations. A meta-text not only elucidates the Texts outside which it lies; in a supplemental movement, it transforms these Texts.

## Mythology

Elements of Blake's oeuvre might be described as constituting a personal mythology. The *OED* defines "myth" as "[a] traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon" (*OED* online, "myth, n."). Blake's "mythology" takes its form from a variety of sources which might be considered traditional, and it certainly includes explanatory and justificatory elements when it is viewed in the context of his body of writing.

I do not consider myth in the sense adopted by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, where he interrogates modern myths of what he calls the "falsely obvious" (11). These are myths

arising from advertisements, television, depictions of nationalism, etc., all of which present themselves as "natural", and which are tasked with "giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal" (142). Elements of Blake's myths are certainly underpinned by this kind of thinking. For example, his representation of George Washington in *America a Prophecy* is characterised by a "falsely obvious" idealism and lengthy eloquence which, David Erdman comments, bears "no recognizable relation to any historical utterance of the laconic general" ("William Blake's Debt to Joel Barlow" 98). However, Blake's myths are also more strictly traditional; because they occur within a corpus of overtly imagined poetic text and pictorial representation, there is only limited "naturalization".

## Narrative

H. Porter Abbott has suggested that the most basic definition of narrative (its bare minimum) is that it must represent an *event* or series of *events* (*Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* 12). He is careful to note that several scholars require *more than one* event to form a narrative, whereas others also require a degree of causal connection between these events. Narrative, he suggests, has a sort of "cumulative" effect. However, for the reader and viewer of Blake's illuminated books, a concern with a clear, causally connected series may prove problematic. In many of Blake's works, this sort of progression is undermined. Thus, the application of the term "narrative" to Blake's illuminated books is a complex and even contentious issue.

It should also be noted that images may convey "narrative". Images have traditionally been considered "*a priori* handicapped" with regard to narrative, which is a strongly discursive form (Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, *Semiology and Art History* 202). However, a number of scholars have illustrated that images do, in fact, have some form of narrative structure. For example, Bal and Bryson suggest that semiotics opens images to narrative, even if the image will have a differing narrative structure from discourse (202-6).[1] Given the potential for

[1] Bal and Bryson have written of the obscured narrative hierarchy of painting. Here, the relationship between the narrator and the voices of "others" included within the narration is obscured by the fact that "all elements of the configuration of subjects are present on one surface" (204). However, they argue that there still are narrators, focalizers and actors in narrative painting.

radical interactions between image and text where the frame of both genres is broken (see Chapter One pp. 33-6), it is not necessary to enter into the sometimes problematic application of semiotics to art history in order fully to exploit the sense that images can carry narrative. In "Structural Analysis of Narratives", Roland Barthes states that:

> [t]he narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images … under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative.
>
> (79)

Barthes' project in this essay is structuralist and language-oriented – he uses the linguistic analysis of the sentence to determine the structures of narrative – but his initial suggestion that narrative can appear outside of language, and that it is integrally linked to history, highlights its pertinence to Blake's historically, socially and politically informed Texts.

## Perception

Blake's philosophy concerning perception is evidenced in a letter written to Rev'd Trustler in 1799. Blake wrote:

> And I know that This World Is a World of Imagination & Vision I see Everything I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun … The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. … As a man is So he Sees. As the Eye is formed such are its Powers You certainly Mistake when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not be found in This World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination
>
> (E702)

As this statement suggests, Blake understood perception to be linked to the imagination (see p. 65 for discussion of this quotation and see also "Imagination" above). He was a firm believer that people had different visions, and that such visions affected the world which they felt themselves to inhabit. As he wrote in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, "Mental Things are alone Real what is Calld [sic.] Corporeal Nobody Knows/ of its Dwelling Place" (94, E565). In *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye argues that this might be compared with Berkley's philosophy of "*esse est percipi*" ("to be is to be perceived"), although the two accounts of the functioning of perception are certainly not identical (14).

## Popular Enthusiasm

My references to "enthusiasm" denote the popular culture of radical religious enthusiasm, which found a particular resurgence in the 1790s, as can be seen in the discourse of Richard Brothers, among others. Antinomianism (see "Antinomianism" above) is a branch of such enthusiastic discourse. (See Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* and Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* for further discussion).

## Scriptor

"Scriptor" is a term appearing in the work of Roland Barthes. Barthes defines the scriptor in contrast to the author. He suggests that, whereas the author is understood to have preceded the Text, "the modern scriptor is born *at the same time* as his text; he is not furnished with a being which precedes or exceeds his writing" ("The Death of the Author" 52).

## Vision

Northrop Frye's seminal study *Fearful Symmetry* suggests that Blake viewed himself (and, perhaps, should be viewed) as a visionary who created, and even dwelled in, a higher spiritual world in which the objects of perception had been transfigured and charged with new intensity and symbolism (8). Blake himself made limited reference to "vision" in his early illuminated books, but from the time of *The Four Zoas* onwards he referred repeatedly to poetic "vision" and his own visionary status, as well as the role of the imagination and the "Poetic Genius" in his visionary pursuits. In the *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809, Blake wrote:

> The Prophets describe what they saw in Vision as real and existing men whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same; the clearer the organ the more distinct the object. A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing mortal eye can see does not imagine at all. The painter of this work [Blake] asserts that all his imaginations appear to him infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than any thing seen by his mortal eye.
>
> (E451-2)

See Chapter Three pp. 121-2 for an analysis of this passage and a detailed discussion of "Vision" in Blake's early works.

# List of References

The following references are adapted from the MLA style. Following MLA guidelines, the medium of publication is indicated. Recent MLA guidelines state that URL addresses are no longer required in reference lists as Web addresses are not static, and documents may appear on multiple databases (*Purdue OWL*, n. pag.). I have followed this practice when working with established archives (*Google Books*, *Project Gutenburg*, *Internet Archive, etc.*) or scholarly online databases (*Jstor*, *ProQuest*, etc.). In these instances, I specify only which archive or database a source has been taken from. Where relevant I indicate which format a source takes (PDF scan, Kindle, etc.). However, in certain cases, where lack of an URL address may lead to loss of clarity, stable URLs have been provided.


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