

**THE FIFTH PORTAL : A STUDY OF SENSUALITY
AND ITS PERVERSIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF
WILLIAM BLAKE**



SUSAN HARRIS BARNES

THE FIFTH PORTAL: A STUDY OF SENSUALITY
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An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
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Susan Harris Barnes

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ABSTRACT

Sensuality in Blake's eyes is one of man's great resources; therefore, this theme becomes an important part of his mythology. According to Blake man needs to replace sexual repression and secrecy with more open emotion tempered by reason. A useful means of studying this theme is an examination of the image "hair." A tracing of Blake's sensuality through "hair" exemplifies the poet's consistent development of ideas and his own poetic achievements.

Blake deals with sensuality as it exists; and, because he wants man to understand the world as it is, he focuses on the misuses of sensuality. Thus Blake's hatred for oppression is seen in the tyrant who inhibits the sensuality of others and the "shadowy female" who taunts man with her sexuality when her religion is chastity. Often in Blake's description these characters wear a head covering such as a crown or a helmet. Since "hair" represents physical life its restriction signifies an obstruction of one individual by another. Blake also uses snakes, i.e., the Medusa figure, to illustrate the misguided, confused tyrant and the evils of the "female will."

Similarly, the unrestrained passion of Orc and the extreme sensuality of Vala are frequently revealed through their "locks." Blake uses this synonym to indicate the bondage of lust separated from intellect. The sex act when mutually enjoyed opens doors, but it is not omnipotent.

Blake fuses the theme of sensuality with irony and the kaleidoscopic image of "hair" reflects this fusion. In the same manner Blake's

increasing faith in the Imagination is mirrored in the maturation of Los. "Hair" identifies Los's humanity and Blake's understanding of man's psychology. Los is not perfect, but he learns from his mistakes just as every man must profit from experience. Once man accepts sensuality as affirmative he can use this natural response to open the gates of the Imagination.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Susan Harris Barnes entitled "The Fifth Portal: A Study of Sensuality and its Perversions in the Writings of William Blake." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Lewis C. Tatham
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Edward E. Irwin
Second Committee Member

Malcolm S. Giam
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

Walter E. Stamp
Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of sensuality is so crucial to the study of William Blake's poetry that no major critic has been able to ignore it. While no book-length examination has been made, whole chapters, such as the one in Bernard Blackstone's English Blake, have been devoted solely to this subject. The importance of sensuality to Blake is well-expressed by Thomas J. Altizer: "Sexual imagery dominates Blake's work from beginning to end; he succeeded in discovering a sexual theme and meaning wherever he cast his prophetic light. Perhaps nowhere else can one so fully uncover the underlying unity of Blake's work as a whole."¹

The abundance of scholarship indicates not only a variation of opinion, but also a complexity within the poetry itself. Therefore, the one definitive statement concerning sensuality remains to be written. It is an area that awaits the great harvest of explication. The purpose of my thesis is not to provide such a comprehensive statement, but to delve deeply into Blake's theme of sensuality through an intensive examination of the image of "hair."

Only one major critic, Stanley Gardner, has worked with "hair" to any particular extent. Gardner's primary thrust is, however, very narrow and the scope of his scholarship is far from inclusive. His main

¹Thomas J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 20.

points concern only one of Blake's mythological figures, and they are not particularly revealing. Although Gardner's study has merit, it hardly begins to explain the image.

An older, more influential scholar, S. Foster Damon, was one of the first to recognize the importance of Blake's symbolism: ". . . he gives us the Keys of Paradise. But he conveys them in symbols whose meaning he stipulates we first learn. We must find the meaning. Too many in this world mistake the word for the thought. . . ." ² A working knowledge of Blake's rich imagery is essential to the comprehension of his poetry. If there is any "key" to Blake, as many scholars have been anxious to assert, that "key" is, as Damon hints, notched by intricate symbols. There is a consistency within Blake's poetic structure, yet one symbol cannot be assigned a single meaning; instead, an image must be viewed from several points and often on several levels before a satisfactory interpretation may be made.

Gardner, who worked exclusively with Blake's symbolism, "found intense control, a symmetry of symbols interrelated and ordered and writing dramatically direct in its attack." ³ He also noted that some of the symbols extend to an epic range equal with many of Blake's themes. More importantly, however, is the fact that without imagery the themes are reduced to epigrammatic axioms. Blake's symbolism gives form

²S. Foster Damon, William Blake His Philosophy and Symbols (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. x.

³Stanley Gardner, Infinity on the Anvil (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. ii.

and marrow to his poetry. Thus the detailed study of a single image is valuable for its revelation of meaning and also for its insight into the minute particulars of Blake's verse. For Blake every man is a Minute Particular: "A Divine Member of the Divine Jesus."

Blake's symbolism is not, according to Frye, "for a tired pedant who feels merely badgered by difficulty: he is writing for enthusiasts of poetry who like the reader of mystery stories enjoy sitting up nights trying to find out what the mystery is."⁴ Investigating the labyrinth of Blake's multi-dimensional ironic imagery is as vastly rewarding as it is exceedingly complex.

The only truly effective method of indicating the complexities within Blake's mythological web is to examine closely a poem that demonstrates most of the levels of meaning for a given image. The fundamental ambiguity of Blake's poetry together with a microscopic view of his use of "hair" may be seen in "Earth's Answer," one of the Songs of Experience:

Earth rais'd up her head,
From the darkness dread & drear
Her light fled;
Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.⁵
(p. 18, ll. 1-5)

Blake's consistency is revealed by a comparison of this brief poem with his later long poems, which merely enlarge and elaborate the same ideas. The hair image, which has the basic meaning of sensuality, here refers

⁴Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 7.

⁵William Blake, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1965). All subsequent quotations are from this edition.

to a debased sensuality and carries connotations of jealousy, selfishness, and authority. The Earth's "locks" illustrate the bondage of the female within the moral code that she herself perpetuates with ego-centered possessiveness.

"Grey despair" covers the locks since jealousy, selfishness and virginity "chain" the Earth. "Earth's Answer," in Blackstone's words, "is a pitiful cry of incapacity--imprisoned energy longing yet unwilling to be set free."⁶ The color grey also connects this poem with the false wisdom and authority of old age and, therefore, to the tyrant figure. The Earth is often personified as a female and easily doubles as an image of the "female will" and "Mother Nature." The Blakean symbol is often dualistic: two levels of meaning are standard, and more are not unusual. Blake forges his multiple connotations with every type of irony until his poetry becomes progressively and profoundly interwoven.

In the five separate chapters of this thesis, I have focussed on "hair" images and related them specifically to the main themes of sensuality and the misuse of sensuality. Because this theme is crucial to Blake and because it provides a foundation for this entire study, the second chapter is an introduction to Blakean sensuality. The next chapter discusses the authority figure, primarily seen in The Songs of Innocence and Experience, and progresses to a more detailed account of the tyrant figures, Tiriel and Urizen. The fourth chapter is concerned with the perversions of the "shadowy female" and her dominance in an unregenerate world.

⁶Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (Connecticut: Archan Books, 1966), p. 38.

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The final two chapters deal individually with two of Blake's mythological deities, Orc and Los. The former was the poet's first "hero" while the latter became his final hope for Eternity. Blake's shift in emphasis from Orc to Los represents a meaningful change in his attitude and in the thrust of his poetry. In addition to being a magnification of a Minute Particular the image study is also a vehicular means of following Blake's labyrinthine poetry. It is not only a valuable guide, but also "the end of a golden string" which refers, in Northrop Frye's opinion, ". . . not to a technique of mystical illumination as is generally assumed but to a lost art of reading poetry."⁷

⁷Frye, p. 11.

CHAPTER II

SENSUALITY

Although major critics are still discussing its importance and its meaning, sensuality is a vital theme within Blake's poetry. The contradictory opinions of scholars stem from Blake's life-style, from the inherent complexity of his mythology, and from his seemingly Janus-faced statements about sexuality. The point is that Blake's view is consistent. He explicitly defines the affirmative nature of sensuality in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and carries this theme from Songs of Innocence and Experience to his epic masterpiece, Jerusalem.

Sensuality has a definite place and a definite purpose. When it occupies the correct place and fulfills the proper function, sensuality is a perfect contrary, yet when it is misplaced and misused, sensuality becomes an imperfect negation. Although he concurrently develops the negative aspects of sensuality with the positive, he never allows the reader to misinterpret the two. Blake is a supreme ironist and a genius who frequently veils his beliefs in ambiguity to force the reader to use his perceptions to see through the poetry into life itself. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to discuss Blakean sensuality from affirmative to negative and to present some of the critical interpretations of this theme.

Within the Book of Thel and Songs of Innocence Blake defines his feelings about man's relationship to man and man's relationship to woman. The central message of the former poem is that "everything that

lives,/ Lives not alone nor for itself." Yet Thel, the virgin, cannot see past the "little curtain of flesh" that obstructs the "bed of our desire." She flees from the experience of love, "the human form divine," and the necessary link between innocence and experience. Of course, love need not always be sexual; however, for Blake "love is life" and sexual love is primary. As Northrop Frye clearly states, "Sexual love, however, is the door through which most of us enter the imaginative world and for many it affords the sole glimpse into that world."¹ It leads the innocent child into experience and into a response that requires at least partial self-negation and "sets another before him." Thus love between the sexes opens man's awareness and enables him to become humane. "He who Loves," writes Blake, "feels love descend into him & if he has wisdom may perceive it is from the Poetic Genius which is the Lord."

The most obvious statement of Blake's views on sensuality is found in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, an early work which concisely introduces all of the ideas and themes of Blake's later works.

Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason
is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

Energy is Eternal Delight.
(p. 34, pl. 4)

To free man from the "abyss of the five senses," Blake calls for "an improvement of sensual desire":

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would
appear to man as it is, infinite.
(p. 39, pl. 14)

¹Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 73.

The sense of touch is the "door to perception," and, as Bloom explains, "You do not expand your sense of touch by avoiding sexuality, but only by rising through it, and to see more, you must begin by seeing everything you can."² At the end of the Marriage it is clear that sensuality is a maximum force within man. He need only use it and his contracted senses will open.

The sense of touch is the most important sense because it awakens the others. Furthermore, touch manifests itself, primarily, in the gratification of sexual desire. Thus in The Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Blake's most vigorous plea for free love, Oothoon cries:

Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind!
Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water?
(p. 49, pl. 7, ll. 16-17)

Blake stresses the need for unselfish love, "for everything that lives is holy." Blake repeats this line in America: a Prophecy and expands it beautifully with the clause "life delights in life." "Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd," sexual love is pure and rightfully holy. "Blake anticipates," according to Clark Emery, "Freud and Lawrence in the stress he places upon the necessity for full, affirmative sexual union."³

In Chapter Four of Jerusalem Blake states the religious relationship between the body and the mind:

I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than
the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of
Imagination.

(p. 229, pl. 77)

²Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse (New York: Doubleday), p. 83.

³William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, ed. Clark Emery (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1968), p. 18.

The body, which is one part of the soul, must be free and should be indulged, or to use one of Blake's most incisive aphorisms, "the road to excess leads to the palace of wisdom." "We cleanse the doors of perception, the senses, not by denying them and cramping them, but by indulging them to the utmost."⁴

When recognized as the gateway to the Imagination, sensuality cannot be perverted. Sexuality is an absolutely positive force when man accepts it as a means to an end. It is true, however, as Damon points out, that Blake does not emphasize the sexual act entirely for its own sake. In the world as we know it, sex "not only keeps man's senses open, his imagination stirred, and his selfhood in abeyance; it is actually a way into Eternity, the only way left open to the man who has no creative power in poetry, painting, or music!"⁵

Blake attempts to guide the ordinary man to freedom through a self-awareness that he can only begin to achieve by utilizing and indulging his sensuality. Thus when man represses or denies his sensual responses or those of others he is guilty of a maximum offense. "The amount of space Blake devotes to the suppression of natural sexuality suggests that this is in fact the ultimate perversion."⁶ An even

⁴Bernard Blackstone, English Blake (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), p. 52. An interesting comparison to Blackstone's statement is found in Kathleen Raine's eccentric, stylized volume, Blake and Tradition: "It is important to insist upon the humble place that Blake assigned to sexuality and to 'love'" (p. 215). It is such misguided conclusions as this that prompted Gleckner's review of Miss Raine's analyses as often more "maddening than illuminating."

⁵S. Foster Damon, William Blake His Philosophy and Symbols (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), pp. 101-102.

⁶Jean H. Hagstrum, William Blake Poet and Painter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 85.

greater misuse is suffered when a man or a woman inhibits the sexuality of another. For Blake the sin of the century was the belief that "woman's love is sin." Such a misguided dogma enslaved man through the will of the "shadowy female" and the natural religion of authoritative priests, scientists and rulers. Much of Blake's poetry presents ambiguously these negative elements of life caused by man's naturally fallen state.

In the opening of Europe: a Prophecy Blake in lovely metaphor talks about "the five windows" that "light the cavern'd Man." The sense of touch allows man to go beyond himself:

Thro' one, himself pass out what time he please, but he will not;
For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.

(p. 59, pl. iii, ll. 5-6)

"Of all the now isolated and disordered senses only touch or sex can find a passageway that offers a way out of the fallen time, for this is the one sense that is capable of both an immediate and a reciprocal union with its object."⁷ Yet there is a perversity in man that makes him secretive. He thrives on the sweetness of forbidden fruit and, "gets a thrill," as Blackstone says, "from thinking he is naughty."⁸ Man misuses sexuality, according to Blake, when he becomes secretive. Blake sees no reason to hide the sex act in darkness: "The nakedness of woman is the work of God." He terms virginity, "pale religious lechery," and hates the virgin who traps her man and runs away. He advocates free love, yet he is very aware of the allure of unlawful lust.

⁷Thomas J. Altizer, The New Apocalypse: The Radical Christian Vision of William Blake (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1967), pp. 19-20.

⁸Blackstone, p. 56.

The potential of sexual love is infinite, and, therefore, Blake continually writes of its misuse to prove its potency. For example, The Song of Los provides a clear summary of what happens to man's sexual impulses in the fallen world. When the "joys of love" are feared, the human race begins to wither until a "Philosophy of the Senses is complete" and given "into the hands of Newton & Locke." "A society that demanded coyness of the woman or that regarded the beloved a possession rather than a partner was for Blake the type and result of humanity's real fall."⁹

The Songs of Experience describe quite clearly man's need to fall and catalogue the obstacles that may prohibit or retard his fall. Selfish love, one of Blake's giants of restriction, is depicted by the Pebble in "The Clod and the Pebble." The unforgiving "thou shalt not" attitude of conventional morality promulgated by priestcraft is the subject of "The Garden of Love." "Without Forgiveness of Sins, Love is Eternal Death." The binding love of the parent is illustrated in the "swadling bands" of "Infant Sorrow" while a similar type of restrictive affection is the theme of both the "Nurses Song" and "My Pretty Rose Tree."

Blake maintains his indirect approach in Jerusalem. The entire poem resounds with Blake's "fierce desire" to awaken man to "Eternal Life." Again he accomplishes this not by dictating norms, but by directing man through an inductive description of life's minute

⁹Irene Taylor, "Metamorphoses of a Favorite Cat," Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. David V. Erdman, and John E. Grant (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 296.

particulars. Abused sensuality, for example, is practiced by the Druids who demand "Chastity from woman" and by Rahab who began the "System of Moral Virtue." It is only at the end of Jerusalem that the Eternals are reunited with their emanations and any future hope is secured.

Blake is basically hopeful even though his poetry reflects the decadence of everyday life. Misused sensuality is a product of the real world, but when utilized correctly it becomes man's entrance into Eden. The following chapters focus, therefore, on the sensual gateway exemplified by "hair" imagery, the most immediate section pertaining to the developing tyrant and his fundamental role in Blake's mythology.

CHAPTER III

AUTHORITY FIGURES AND TYRANTS

The concept of authority is first seen in Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Blake builds from the idea of authority to the figure of the tyrant, most effectively depicted in Urizen. Blake, who despised restriction of any sort, states emphatically in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that "one law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression." The unbending authority of the church and the state is antithetical to Blake, who recognizes that man himself made god into a tyrant: "Know that after Christs death he became Jehovah." Blake's consistency is again seen in the evolution of the authority figure through the mythological Urizen.

Two poems in Songs of Innocence incorporate the authoritarian nature of the society of Blake's time. Underlying "The Little Black Boy" is the reality of an authoritarian society controlled by white-skinned people who consider themselves better than black. The fundamental irony of the poem is evident in the final lines:

And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.
(p. 9, ll. 27-28)

The little black boy's earlier words of protection and his final words of submission reflect Blake's disgust for the prevalent attitudes of the eighteenth century. Both boys are in "Innocence" and must eventually fall into "Experience"; however, the little black boy's fall is predictable in that he is "inferior" to the English child.

The "silver hair" of the white boy is seen for its preciousness and for its dissimilarity to the black boy's hair. The boy "strokes" the precious hair in an effort to become like the English boy; however, the act of "stroking" itself indicates submission and implies reverence. By "touching" the English boy's hair, the little black boy begins his fall into "Experience." He rejects the protection of his mother's words and hopes to make the white boy "love me." The hair symbol reveals the essential irony of the overall poem and points to the natural goodness of the black boy's "Innocence" together with his necessary fall into "Experience." Although the authoritarian, Urizen, is not present, his oppressive single law is felt throughout this poem.

In a second poem, "The Chimney Sweeper" Blake again utilizes truthful, trenchant satire to denounce the practices of his own lifetime. He predicts the youthful death of Tom Dacre, the chimney sweeper:

Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare,
 You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.
 (p. 10, ll. 7-8)

The complexity of Blake's imagery is exemplified by the two words white hair. White is correctly associated with the purity and youthfulness of Tom. It ironically suggests age, which Tom will never attain. White, the absence of color, actually foreshadows the sweep's early death.

In order to keep the soot out of his hair, he shaves it: the extreme contrast heightens the irony and also creates a bald head that has a very slim chance of reaching its traditional virility. As Gleckner points out, "the white hair cannot be spoiled because it is not there substantially; yet to the imagination the hair is there,

unspoiled and in a sense protected." He sees the soot as a "kind of shade under which the white hair or soul lies protected."¹ Gleckner's interpretation of this poem is more figurative than mine; I see the poem as a literal condemnation by Blake of the sanctioned horrors of his day.

On another level of thought Blake is fusing the ironies of "hair" with the potentiality of the sense of touch. The soot cannot touch non-existent hair, and a bare head leaves no chance for the fall to "Experience." The sense of touch is gone, shaved off, and, therefore, the gateway to "Experience" and "Higher Innocence" is closed. Blake beautifully substantiates the satiric intent of his poem within this image and foretells the death of Tom since he was doomed to the state of "Innocence."

Although the tyrannical and heartless owner of Tom is physically absent from this poem, his cruelty and the cruelty of a society that creates such a monster are dominant. They are the vortex at which Blake aims his criticism. In Songs of Experience Blake moves from the implied to the explicit in his disapprobation of the father in "A Little Girl Lost" and the priest in "A Little Boy Lost."

In the former the father believes, as Enitharmon later teaches, that "woman's love is sin" and belatedly tries to block his child's fall to "Experience":

O the dismal care!
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair
(p. 30, ll. 33-34)

¹Robert F. Gleckner, The Piper and the Bard (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959), pp. 109-110.

Literally, the image indicates age and authority, yet "hair" is ironic in that the father symbolizes repression rather than sensual fulfillment which will open the gates of vision. Moreover, the father is denying the fertility implicit in his hair and in the blossoms which hold a flower's reproductive organs. The father reflects the possessiveness that Blake believes encloses man within his five senses. Neither the parent nor any "authority" figure has the right to restrict another, especially within the state of innocence.

In a similar passage in Chapter I of Jerusalem Blake refers to the "goary locks" of Abraham: "As Abraham flees from Chaldea shaking his goary locks" (p. 158, l. 27). Abraham represents the ancient patriarch, the epitome of the father figure, whose gospel of one law would be horrible to Blake. The word goary denotes the bloodstained sacrifices of the Druids. The spelling is altered from gory to goary to resemble the "hoary hair" of authority and pseudo-venerability. Thus the negativity and irony of the passage are doubled.

In "A Little Boy Lost" Blake has widened the authoritarian figure to include the priests of natural religion:

The Priest sat and heard the child.
In trembling zeal he seiz'd his hair:
He led him by his little coat:
And all admir'd the Priestly care.
(p. 28, ll. 9-12)

In effect, the priest has seized the child by his potential sexuality and frozen him "in an iron chain." The priest's touch is ironic in that it signals doom, not life, for the boy. The priest represents simultaneously the priestcraft despised by Blake, Druidism, and perhaps Joseph Priestly², the scientist. The child becomes the human sacrifice

²A reference to Priestly and his scientific discoveries is implied by the final burning of the child.

of the Druids and is thus related to the evil of nature-worship. The irony in the poem concerns the priest's doom since he initiated the boy's death. The priest, by seizing the potential passion and emotion of the boy, has destroyed his own similar characteristics and cast himself into Ulro.

Blake's overall intent in the poem is to question the self-righteous child-killers in England: the donors to orphanages and the owners of chimney sweepers. He does this by proving that man cannot be governed by authoritarian reason alone; man must stay out of Ulro and maintain a balance between reason and emotion.

The figure of authority becomes more specific in America: a Prophecy within the form of Albion's Guardian Prince, George III. Blake originally viewed the American Revolution as a blow for liberty. Thus, the "wrathful prince" is likened to the fire-breathing dragon:

His voice, his locks, his awful shoulders, and his glowing eyes
Appear to the Americans upon a cloudy night.

(p. 51, pl. 3, l. 17, pl. 4, l. 1)

The prince represents the oppression by England of the American colonies while his "locks" reflect this binding nature and the restrictions of the English on the Americans. Blake frequently employs the synonym, locks, to convey a negative interpretation generally connected with a form of restraint, such as female possessiveness and authoritative repression.

The triple meaning of lock ("hair," "a device for securing a door, etc.," and "to shut in place") adds to the intricacy of the image in that Blake's "locks" connote a fastened or repressed physical life. Blake's use thus assimilates both the unchangeable denotative meaning of the word and his own connotations for "hair."

The oppressive Guardian of Albion is again seen in Europe: a prophecy, where he is more closely identified with the tyrant Urizen. He comes from Urizen's "southern porch" and is described as

Once open to the heavens and elevated on the human neck,
Now overgrown with hair and covered with a stony roof,
(p. 62, pl. 10, ll. 28-29)

The word overgrown implies the single love of nature united by Blake in the Druidism and Deism of Francis Bacon. Perhaps the visual image is one of an overgrown forest, a paradise to Bacon and an anathema to Blake. In this sense man would be imprisoned by his five senses and unable to get loose. Furthermore, there is a suggestion of denseness of growth, so man could not see "through" the brush. The "stony roof" increases the idea of both physical restriction and blockage of vision. "Hair," like man's sensual nature, should be free and unbound, just as man should see through his eyes not merely with them.

The "overgrown hair" seems to say that too much emphasis on the purely sensual is harmful to man. The senses provide only an entrance for man to go beyond himself. On yet another level the meaning can be interpreted as "not seeing the forest for the trees." Certainly Urizen does distort reality. He becomes the "God a tyrant crown'd," even though he is the creation of mankind.

As the image of Albion's Guardian gives way to Urizen, the rebel, Orc, is introduced:

The Guardian of the secret codes forsook his ancient mansion,
Driven out by the flames of Orc; his furr'd robes & false locks
Adhered and grew one with his flesh, . . .
(p. 63, pl. 12, ll. 15-17)

Blake sees the Orc-Urizen cycle within the French Revolution. Through the image of "false locks" he demonstrates the tyranny of Urizen: his

one law symbolizes extreme restriction. Furthermore, the pseudo-superiority of the French aristocracy may be seen in their pretentious "locks." Thus Urizen's hair as locks is literally and figuratively false. Orc destroys Urizen whose defeat is secured by his own laws of bondage. His locks grow as one with his flesh; therefore, his potential freedom is doubly destroyed. His hair is bound in locks and his locks are bound to his body.

The illumination of Albion's Guardian that accompanies the poems is also of significance to this interpretation. Blake depicts the "Angel" with bat wings³ and a three-tiered, pointed crown with a cross on top that covers all of his hair. The three tiers and the cross ironically suggest a Christ figure since the number three implies both the Trinity and the triple crosses of Calvary. The crown itself may be George III's or Christ's; regardless, it is an inanimate, man-made object, just as Urizen, who ultimately wears it, is a "mind-forg'd manacle."

The pointedness of tiers adds phallic symbolism heightened by their proximity to the sensually symbolic "hair." The crown binds the Guardian's hair to his head and blocks his view of a higher vision. This particular plate is one of the best representations of Blake's multi-level, multi-dimensional imagery. His complexity grows, yet it is sequential, not oblique.

³ Jean H. Hagstrum, William Blake Poet and Painter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 115. Bat wings are associated with debasement of the passions and perverted sexual love.

It is interesting that Milton in Book III of Paradise Lost wrote that the "Spirits elect/ Bind their resplendent locks." These "spirits" are in fact Angels and perhaps provided the inspiration for Blake's use of "Albion's Angel," who is bound by his own laws and locked within his own senses. Blake's expansion of Milton's image is superb.

Another, more developed, prototype for Urizen is Tiri-el, the aged tyrant:

Old man unworthy to be called. the father of Tiri-els race
 For every one of those thy wrinkles. each of those grey hairs
 Are cruel as death. & as obdurate as the devouring pit
 (p. 273, ll. 12-14)

The greyness of the hairs, together with the wrinkles, suggests age and deterioration. The "hairs are as cruel as death" because Tiri-el has not achieved anything. He is living a death in life since he has never surpassed the one-fold vision. The "hairs" are also as hard-hearted "as the devouring pit" of reason. Tiri-el lacks the prolific, the creative, which could eliminate the excess of reason that rules him. He curses his sons as Urizen does, yet he created their misery as well as his own. Thus, if each of his "hairs" stands for a son, the cruelty is ironic because it is self-inflicted. The sensual salvation inherent in "hair" and the number of Tiri-el's children does not seem to have helped him; he has never succeeded in going beyond himself. The inevitability of his bodily decay corresponds to the unavoidable deterioration of the world he has fathered.

In a later passage Tiri-el is becoming bald:

How came thine hair to leave thy forehead how came thy face so brown
 My hair is very long my beard. doth cover all my breast.
 (p. 276, ll. 3-4)

Tiriel's baldness and "shriveled beard" contrast with the hairiness of Har (the speaker above). Tiriel is not only aging, but is also becoming powerless to learn the whys of his self-created chaos. In losing his hair he loses the capacity figuratively and literally for sexual fulfillment.

It is notable that in all of the illuminations Tiriel is shown with a long beard and white hair on the back of his head. This representation reinforces the symbolic meaning of Tiriel's "baldness." In addition, the pictured whiteness of his hair is again suggestive of an absence of life. Tiriel characterizes death in life and selfish misuse of potential.

Har, on the other hand, is aged but has long hair and a beard covering all his breast. "Hair," however, is misleading in respect to Har who is a pathetic and sterile Adam in a naturalistic environment despised by Blake. His "hair" would indicate a possibility for sensual escape which at his age is impossible. Har's beard may be "the beard of the earth" in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Har is a complete phoney who put on a falsely "piteous face," "wept" for his son, Tiriel, and then quickly forgot his tears.

Tiriel in continuing his odyssey asks the thunder:

Where doth he hide his terrible head & his swift & fiery daughters
Where do they shroud their fiery wings & the terrors of their hair
(p. 279, ll. 2-3)

Tiriel, who is levelling a curse on his sons and daughters, calls for thunder, fire, and pestilence to take over the world. The "terrors of their hair" indicate a destruction of man's physical self, the passion within the "fiery wings." It is logical that Blake would kill man through his unfulfillment: that is, the obstruction of his senses.

Later, Tiriel curses his youngest daughter, Hela, directly:

Let snakes rise from thy bedded locks & laugh among thy curls
He ceast her dark hair upright stood while snakes infolded round
Her madding brows. . . .

(p. 280, ll. 43-45)

His curse brings snakes to her head just as Athena's curse caused Medusa's head to be covered with serpents. Her lack of hair would symbolize an inability to attain sexual gratification, further complicated by the analogy that would turn to stone any man who looked at her. The snakes rise from her "bedded" locks, a word usage that carries an implicit irony.

The upright snakes serve a dual purpose as both phallic symbols and symbols of evil. They correspond to the "serpent temple form'd" in Europe, thus the human sacrifices of the Druids and the priestcraft of "A Little Boy Lost." Tiriel calls for laughing snakes, but the laughter seems to be aimed at Tiriel. In addition their laughter is contrary to the insincere weeping of Tiriel. Tiriel's tyranny destroys Hela's sensuality just as the moral laws of natural religion and individual selfhood enslave every man.

The most comprehensive treatment of Blake's supreme tyrant, the mythological Urizen, is found in The Four Zoas. In "Night the Sixth" Urizen suffers as did Albion's Guardian in Europe from hypertrichosis:

Hair white as snow coverd him in flaky locks terrific
Overspreading his limbs. in pride he wanderd weeping
(p. 343⁴, p. 73, ll. 28-29)

Possibly Blake's most intricate use of "hair," these lines unite the idea of "frozen hair" fixed in Deistic nature with the "overgrown hair"

⁴The second number following quotations from The Four Zoas refers to the page in Blake's manuscript.

of the Guardian in Europe. He presents a monstrous, terrifying figure totally blocked by his own senses from any vision above Ulro.

"Snow" is obviously related to nature and the season of winter with its connotations of death and decay. It is a solid that accurately describes Urizen's state of opacity. Again "hair" has been regimented into locks, specifically, "flaky locks." Their flakiness intensifies their connection with snow and, therefore, Urizen's natural religion.

False pride revealed by his insincere tears has condemned Urizen to a self-inflicted death in life. Pertinent also is the previously discussed connotative and denotative meanings of "locks." It seems also that with the one word white, by definition the absence of color and by connotation the opposition of age and youth, Blake has created a marvelously succinct symbol for death in life, especially effective when used with "hair."⁵ In the earlier prophecy, America, Blake refers in the canceled plates (p. 57, pl. b l. 16-17) to the "snowy beard" of Urizen that "streams like lambent flames down his wide breast/ Wetting with tears, & his white garments cast a wintry light." His "snowy beard" complements and deepens the meaning of his "flaky locks" and "white hair" while the entire passage is an excellent example of the unrivaled power of Blake's mythology. He maintains an unequalled continuity within his impeccably woven imagery.

⁵ Similar in appearance is Old John, a figure in "The Ecchoing Green," a Song of Innocence. Old John's "white hair" suggests agedness and "Experience," yet he resides in "Innocence" with the children on the "green." His laughter demonstrates a childlike state while his position "under the oak" connects him with the nature-loving Druids who live vicariously and unsuccessfully, as does this man with his memories of youth. Old John's restraint in delusive Beulah foreshadows the death-in-life of Har.

Later in the same "Night" Urizen journeys through his dens, the unconscious id:

Thus Urizen in sorrows wanderd many a dreary way
 Warring with monsters of the Deep in his most hideous pilgrimage
 Till his bright hair scatterd in snows his skin barkd oer with wrinkles
 (p. 344, p. 74, ll. 9-11)

The lines, reminiscent of Tiriel's wanderings, demonstrate Urizen's perverted brightness (intellect) and frozen senses that have isolated him within a "mundane shell." The "wrinkled bark-like skin" further indicates this point and links him with the oak trees of Druidism. The hair image also foreshadows his continual loss to "red Orc" because Urizen's potential has blown away and he has grown too old to regain it.

A further comparison with Tiriel is seen at the beginning of "Night the Sixth":

I gave sweet lillies to their breasts & roses to their hair
 I taught them songs of sweet delight. . . .
 (p. 338, p. 68, ll. 10-11)

Urizen is lamenting over his daughters as Tiriel did. Both thought their "gifts" were enough and neither realized that he was the cause of his children's evil. The rose symbolizes beauty, femininity, love and purity: all misused by his daughters, "rocky-forms," who practiced the gospel of Enitharmon. In his fury Urizen crowns them with the Medusa's "wreathed serpents" exactly as Tiriel cursed Hela.

Further reference to "white hair" and another parallel with Tiriel occur in "Night the Seventh":

With a crash breaking across the horrible mass comes down
 Thundring & hail & frozen iron haild from the Element
 Rends thy white hair yet thou dost fixd obdurate brooding sit
 Writing thy books. . . .
 (p. 347, p. 79, ll. 8-11)

Orc is berating the self-centered Urizen, who feels threatened by the "iron" of Los, but sits stubbornly, like Tiriel, and feels sorry for himself. His "white hair" is not the labyrinth it has been previously since it clearly connotes age and pseudo-venerability. Urizen in the fallen state is not wise; his foolish, single-minded act of writing in his books proves his total immersion in selfhood. The verb "rend" denotes a violent tearing apart characteristic of the rapes committed by the rebellious Orc.

Blake's mythology concerns the fall of the four eternal which precipitated the fallen state of man. On a psychological level Blake's mythological characters reflect the human brain and the individual's constant battle with life. Blake attributes Urizen's "fall" primarily to his selfish rejection of the contraries. In "Night the Second" Blake predicts the inevitable fall of Urizen:

At the first Sound the Golden sun arises from the Deep
And shakes his awful hair
(p. 317, p. 34, ll. 58-59)

Enitharmon is singing a song which causes Urizen, the Golden Sun, to arise. He is God in her world dominated by the female will. Yet, in this context his presence connotes Apollo and the spiritual level of Urizen's strength. The "awful hair" denotes reverence but also implies fear. The "Shake" seems not to mean a weapon, but rather a release. The potential within Urizen is great. If he were to use his senses correctly and join with the other Zoas, he could free himself from his vegetable existence. The subsequent "Echo" is remindful of the circumstances of the eternal's fall. That is, the fall of one leads to the demise of the others.

Urizen's fall is then completed in "Night the Third":

To cast Ahanian to the Earth he siezd her by the hair
And threw her from the steps of ice that froze around his throne
(p. 322, p. 43, ll. 3-4)

Urizen predetermined his fall and created the mundane shell by casting out Ahanian (as did the priest who seized the boy in "A Little Boy Lost"). Immediately Urizen's surroundings solidify and bind him in the state of opacity. As before, "hair" is relevant as a rejection of the sensual (in this instance, sexual) gateway to Eden.

Urizen has been convinced that Ahanian is sinful. When he later refers to her "moist locks," he is castigating her sexuality. He believes her love is destructive and hints at the idea of possessiveness in the word locks. Her image thus becomes "watery" and purely physical. It is ironic that Urizen fails to recognize the need to open his senses. On another level, Blake includes the idea of wisdom represented by Ahanian and hurled out by Urizen. Moreover, Ahanian as the emanation and creation of Urizen is vital to him. As Blake later notes in "Night the Eighth," "A male without a female counterpart /is/ a howling fiend."

Blake builds, as Gleckner suggests, from the father, priest, king to the tyrant, Urizen, who collectively "produce the harlot (Blake's 'virgin'), religion, morality, and jealousy." Yet, "the real enemy is the individual self, through which father, priest, and king can reach the individual soul. . . . The only way to overcome him is by cleansing the windows of perception, and by achieving a vision of the eternal unity that can be achieved only through selfless creation."⁶

⁶Gleckner, pp. 46-47.

Man, "the human form Divine," must individually escape Generation, yet repression does not lead the way out. The sense of touch is ever-present, unavoidable in man's sensual response. Yet sexuality is easily exploited and frequently perverted by the female who pursues the moral law. Such a practice is the subject of Chapter Four.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHADOWY FEMALE

In this decade of the 1970's Blake could be misunderstood by many females as an eighteenth-century male chauvinist pig. However, Blake was absolutely not an anti-feminist. His beliefs would liberate the female as well as the male. Yet his words, taken out of the context of his symbolism, might seem to dismiss the female as wholly sensual and totally despicable. The focus of Blake's vituperation is the society that molds such a female, not the sex itself. "The 'Female Will,'" as Frye points out, "has no necessary connection with human women, who are part of humanity, except when a woman wants to make a career of being a 'harlot coy,' or acting as nature does. The female will is rather the elusive, retreating, mysterious remoteness of the external world."¹

Beginning with Songs of Innocence and of Experience Blake rejects the sacredness of chastity. The sexual response is not only normal, but also essential to the fall into "Experience," which must preface man's vision of "Higher Innocence." Blake expands his ideas concerning the negative forces in the world and within man to introduce in the prophecies the "shadowy female," who personifies possessiveness, jealousy, and conventional morality. His complex imagery culminates in the figure of Vala as she is portrayed in Jerusalem.

¹Northrop Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience," Huntington Library Quarterly, XXI (1957), rpt. in Northrop Frye, ed., Blake A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 29.

An irreversible Blakean sin is committed by the girl who refuses her angelic lover in "The Angel." The maiden's rejection of love leads to her sudden old age:

For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head,
(p. 24, ll. 15-16)

The obvious reference is to age and the demise of fertility. The girl in this poem is similar to Thel, who questioned relentlessly and then chose to stay in "Innocence." This girl is not as confused as Thel, but designs to obtain the comfort of her "Angel." She first hides her love and then arms herself against his future entreaties. The maiden willfully shuts the door to "Higher Innocence" and dooms herself to the state of Experience. She figuratively grows old immediately since she is now incapable of reaching a higher vision.

Blake uses the same lines, substituting the word But for the word For in closing the poem "in a mirtle shade" (not a part of Songs of Innocence and of Experience). The difference in this poem lies with Blake's general purpose. Here he is supporting free love as opposed to the binding love between the speaker and the mirtle tree. Furthermore, he is satirizing the intense Deistic belief in nature. The female (mirtle tree) is often associated with nature in Blake and the worship of nature which leads man into Ulro. In this case the speaker's spectre leads him to a murder he cannot redeem and an infertility he cannot change.

Excessive possessiveness is also reflected in a poem entitled "Song":

He shew'd me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
(p. 404, ll. 5-6)

The speaker, a virgin, finds a lover who puts flowers, lilies of purity, in her hair. The purity of the lily and the passion of the rose accentuate the sensuality inherent in the girl's "hair." The sense of touch is implicit and symbolic of their sexual union. The love which might be perfect is ruined by the lover who imprisons the girl and "mocks her loss of liberty." This short poetical sketch was written before Blake created the tyrannical Urizen whose treatment of his daughters is much the same as the "prince's" treatment of the maiden in this poem. Yet the ultimate oppression of the female is similar.

Another form of restriction is seen in the binding love of the parents in "The Little Girl Found." They search "all night in woe" for Lyca who is found sleeping in the "palace" of the lion. Although the poem is rich with symbolism, Blake's point is simply that all, including Lyca, must fall into "Experience." The parents want to stop her, but such a hindrance is wrong. Finally, they see the lion:

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down,
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.
(p. 22, ll. 37-40)

By following their little girl to "Experience" they have been led to the "Higher Innocence" of the adult who understands experience and yet sees through the eyes of a child.

The hair imagery is related to the lion and demonstrates Blake's beliefs in the goodness of sensuality. Since the sense of touch is the portal to "Experience," it is also prerequisite to any higher vision. Thus the lion's hair "flow'd" suggesting fertility and an

unlimited potential for sexual release. The lion is kingly and, therefore, "golden," but he is also quite literally golden in color. The eighteenth-century belief, if it is not timeless, that man's sexual impulses are his baser or animal-like instincts is entirely anti-Blakean. For Blake, the animal representing sexuality would be the lion, the king of beasts. Furthermore, the hairy lion that is a part of nature brings man into his kingdom to give it life.

In the first of these four poems, the female's dishonesty leads to a double suffering: that is, in denying her lover the maiden also stifles her own progression. In the next two poems a male is the cruel, possessive destroyer of two lives, and in the fourth poem the constricting love of the parents almost destroys the happiness of the child. Obviously, Blake's censure is social not sexual. Yet his symbolism gradually centralizes on the "female will" whose chief proponent is Enitharmon, the emanation of Urthona.

In the Preludium to America: a Prophecy Blake introduces the deceptive daughter of Urthona: "Crown'd with a helmet & dark hair the nameless female stood;" (p. 50, pl. 1, l. 4). The darkness of her hair suggests an evil, ulterior motivation. The girl is a virgin, nameless, because, like nature, she is barren when not possessed by man. Her hair is her "crown" because sensuality to Blake is supreme. Yet this "shadowy daughter" is a forerunner to the willful children of Enitharmon who use their sensuality to bind man. Thus the image of the crown is ambiguous. Like the "helmet," it covers the hair, shuts out sensual potential, and thereby acts as a roof blocking man's eternal vision. Blake repeatedly symbolizes his concern with seeing through the eye not with it. Invariably, in his poetry he refers to this objective.

The wily daughters of Enitharmon are introduced in the Preludium of Europe: a Prophecy:

The nameless shadowy female rose from out the breast of Orc:
Her snaky hair brandishing in the winds of Enitharmon;
(p. 59, pl. 1, ll. 1-2)

Again, the female is deceptive; her "snaky hair" associates her with nature that is binding and sterile. Undercutting this is the idea of evil, and the Medusa figure which includes Tiriel's daughter, Hela. Snakes as both phallic symbols and symbols of evil very effectively connote perversion when joined with "hair." Hela, who is condemned to howl from the mountains, parallels the "shadowy female" of Europe and seems most clearly to represent Blake's association of the female with nature.

The gospel of Enitharmon, "that woman's love is sin," epitomizes disaster for Blake. Thus, the daughter's "hair" brandishes as a weapon since Enitharmon's instructions in female-craft become a weapon against man. When sexual gratification becomes sinful, man is restrained and loses his ability to go beyond his senses.

Whereas Blake sees man's fall as a result of the teachings that "woman's love is sin," Milton depicts Sin as a human form who invades the earth after man's fall. Sin, according to Milton, is one of the daughters of Satan. Since Blake does not see Hell on an eternal or a literal level, but as the creation of man's selfhood, Milton's interpretation would seem to illustrate the natural religion that Blake abhorred.

The ammunition of Enitharmon's disciples may be seen within Tiriel's phrase "terrors of their hair." The "terrors" would be

comparable to the designs of the three virgins in "The Golden Net." They used their passions, trapped natures, and tears and sighs to ensnare man within the "golden net" of their morality.

The females in The Four Zoas are primarily the emanations of the four Eternals. As an emanation, the female is the creation and the life's blood of the Zoa. However, Blake is not necessarily capitalizing on the Biblical concept that Eve was created from the rib of Adam. Rather, he is using the female to personify man's creativity: she is the greatest achievement of his imagination. On a mythological level the female emanation is essential to the male, but in reality the female is associated with the morality of natural religion and nature. She is also frequently connected with jealousy and possessiveness since these are the final "rewards" of misused sensuality.

Enion, the emanation of Tharmas, in "Night the First" reflects an over-possessive, binding love like that of the parents in "The Little Girl Found":

They sulk upon her breast her hair became like snow on mountains
Weaker & weaker, weeping woeful, wearier and wearier
Faded & her bright Eyes decayd melted with pity & love
(p. 300, p. 8, ll. 8-10)

The image is much enlarged by its association with "snow." On a mythological level "snow" refers to the winter season and the mountainous realm of Los and Enitharmon, "the sulking boy and girl," born to Enion. Figuratively, "snow" is Enion's cold and frozen (solid) state which negates her potential and likens her to the mountains of nature. She demonstrates the misguided pity and selfish love that would destroy her own ability to change and the children's ability to

fall into "Experience." The whiteness of the snow accentuates the death in life that results from any prolonged stay in "Innocence."

From the beginning of The Four Zoas Enitharmon is again contemptible. She plots and maneuvers everyone to her own liking. When she awakens Urizen in "Night the Second," her singing also prompts a reverberation:

The Eccho wakes the moon to unbind her silver locks
The golden sun bears on my song
(p. 317, p. 34, ll. 60-61)

The moon relates Enitharmon to Diana, goddess of chastity, whose virginity may be used to good purpose, but whom Blake often uses as a terror of the female will. The word silver places her in Tharmas's realm and suggests the linkage of love with the jealous imprisonment implicit in the word locks.

Urizen, Enitharmon's god, bears out her song that "the joy of woman is the Death of her most best beloved." Between them, Enitharmon and Urizen implement one of Blake's most caustic proverbs: "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion."

Similarly in "Night the Seventh" Enitharmon again exercises her will by trying to get Los to recruit for her:

Enitharmon spread her beaming locks upon the wind & said
O Lovely terrible Los wonder of Eternity O Los my defence & guide
Thy works are all my joy. . . .
(p. 356, p. 90, ll. 15-17)

Her sensuality is devious and definitely causes the loss of freedom implied by "locks." They "beam," ironically, since the suggested wisdom and passion are not rightfully Enitharmon's: they are her disguises. She is not actually offering herself to Los; her purpose is selfish and her means are sexuality and flattery.

Ultimately, however, Enitharmon in "A Vision of the Last Judgment" is rewarded for her gospel and deceit: ". . . another demon with a Key has the charge of Sin & is dragging her down by the hair" (p. 546). Sin is a woman who is brought down by her own wiles. She gets the end she deserves in that she is dragged to her doom by the power she misused. Later in the same poem the "Inquisition" is represented by a woman who is "dragged up by her hair." Thus the female passion may also be exploited by men for their own ends. To Blake, both the female who uses her sexuality as a weapon and the male who abuses feminine sexuality are destructive.

More and more frequently Blake exemplifies the female's perversion of sexuality by substituting the word locks for hair. In addition to the multiple meanings for "locks," Blake, by interweaving the eighteenth-century fashion of wearing wigs or hair in curly locks, has given birth to a symbol that grows just as a child. The implication is also prominent that curls are man-made and bind the free nature of a person's hair. They suggest and represent the pretensions of the society that Blake so vigorously wanted to modify.

Blake makes a rather concise statement concerning the female and her relationship with nature in the great harvest of "Night the Ninth":

Her great men howl & throw the dust & rend their hoary hair
 Her delicate women & children shriek upon the bitter wind
 Spoil'd of their beauty their hair rent & skin shriveld up
 (p. 387, p. 134, ll. 11-13)

As in "A Little Girl Lost," "hoary hair" is used ironically to include all of Blake's negative forces: the priestcraft, the Deists, Swedenborg, Bacon, and Druidism. They are as animalistic as Orc ("rend") because they have misused the sensuality inherent to their "hair." Thus, the

third line includes the disciples of Enitharmon who have lost their power to subjugate others. Their "hair" which has been torn from the skin signifies their loss of the ability to enslave man through a perversion of sexuality. Their "skin shriveld up" resembles bark and, therefore, the "tree of mystery" that Blake often associates with the female.

The image of the "tree of mystery" unites nature-worship with the repression of sexuality: thus the "harlots" who "employ" and then guard their virginity and the moralists who hide the sex act in the veils of darkness. Man exists in the fallen state of Generation and within this state woman's love is not sin. According to Brian Wilkie, ". . . from the viewpoint of the person in the earthly state of vegetation and generation, woman's love is a noble and a healthy alternative to war."²

A Biblical "heroine," and perhaps Blake's prototype for the sensually delusive Vala is the scheming Dalila of "Samson." Dalila uses the sexuality of her "neglected hair" to try to "seduce" from Samson the secret of his strength. She threatens to "tear my crisped hair" if he does not tell her; the crispness of her hair connotes her deceit because it has lost its softness, its luster, and its life. Actually, Dalila is brittle, but Samson is unaware of her duplicity.

Furthermore, the line alludes to insanity and the idea that Dalila will lose her mind without Samson's trust and become lifeless. The

²Brian Wilkie, "Epic Irony in Milton," in David V. Erdman, and John E. Grant eds., Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 18.

irony is in the fact that Dalila's hair should be crisp in view of her treachery. However, the "strong hair" of Samson is even more ironic in that his hair is his strength and also his downfall. The relationship of "hair" to sensuality increases the intricacy of the passage since his passionate love for Dalila destroyed his objectivity and ultimately his power.

The culmination of the "shadowy female" is Vala, the emanation of Luvah, ruler of the emotions. Vala is the epitome of unrestrained passion. She distracts man by her single purpose and can be equated with the equally wrong love of nature for its own sake. Her name itself hints of a veil that blocks man's vision and prohibits his imagination. Since Vala when separated from Luvah represents an extreme perversion of passion, Blake does not mention her "hair," but only her "locks." In "Night the Third" of The Four Zoas, for example, ". . . Vala trembled & covered her face, & her locks were spread on the pavement" (p. 320, p. 40, l. 9).

This line is part of Ahania's vision of Urizen's fall. Ahania sees Vala for what she is and recognizes that Urizen will fall prey to her deceptions. Urizen is mistakenly convinced that Ahania has "become like Vala." Thus he casts his emanation into "Non-Entity" and creates "the world of Darkness." Vala trembles and covers her face in an effort to entice the "Darkning Man." She is neither afraid nor modest. Her duplicity is seen in the spreading of her "locks." She, like Enitharmon, seems to be unselfishly offering herself. Yet the result of such a union is predetermined by the word locks. The man-made "pavement" completes her connection with the temporal world.

This exact line is repeated in Chapter 2 of Jerusalem (p. 190, pl. 43, l. 44). In this poem Vala, "the sweet wanderer," is tempting Albion. Her utter abuse of sexuality is instrumental in making Urizen Albion's god.

In another duplicated line Vala, in the alternate version of "Night the Seventh," is compared with Mary Magdalen:

Scatter the blood from thy golden brow the tears from thy silver locks
Shake off the waters from thy wings & the dust from thy white garments.
(p. 396, p. 93, ll. 4-5)

Vala is Blake's mythological harlot of "the Kings of the Earth." Her "silver locks" and "golden brow" connect her with Tharmas and Urizen: both improper as lovers of the emanation of Luvah. The same line occurs in Chapter 3 of Jerusalem (p. 214, pl. 65, ll. 40-41), but is sung by the Spectre of the Sons of Albion.

Throughout Blake's epic masterpiece, Vala uses passion as a weapon against man and succeeds in corrupting the giant Albion. Vala scatters blood since pure sensuality "devours the Human" and "unsatiated love" causes man to rush into war. Vala's tears are "terrors of her hair," no more "precious" than the "silver" of her "locks." Vala, whose "locks" truthfully hold "Storms and Pestilence," seems to anticipate the modern women's liberation movement in her doctrine: "The Human Divine is Woman's Shadow."

Vala's counterpart in Time, Rahab, embodies the false, sensual female in Chapter 3 of Jerusalem:

Each within other. On her white marble & even Neck, her Heart
Inorb'd and bonified: with locks of shadowing modesty, shining
(p. 222, pl. 70, ll. 21-22)

The beautiful and irresistible Rahab is seen sitting in the "oak groves" of Albion. She is the most destructive force of nature whose "nets of

beauty & delusion" will bind man to the vegetating world of Generation. Blake describes her in perfectly accurate terms as "white marble," a very succinct phrase implying opacity, solidness, and death in life. Obviously, her "locks" display a modesty as phoney as the "love" she proffers.

Earlier in Chapter 3 of Jerusalem, the emanation of Albion has been "closed in the Dungeons of Babylon" by the Daughters of Beulah:

She sat at the Mills, her hair unbound her feet naked
Cut with the flints: her tears run down, her reason grows like
The Wheel of Hand, incessant turning day & night without rest
Insane she raves upon the winds hoarse, inarticulate:
(p. 208, pl. 60, ll. 41-44)

Since the Mill belongs to Urizen, Jerusalem is misplaced. Her "hair" is flowing and her feet are naked, but her passion is not unrestrained. She is trapped by reason into a "Religion of Chastity." This "Moral Pride" is the triumph of Vala, who glories in the selfish despair of Jerusalem. The entire passage is a splendid example of Blake's labyrinthine symbolism. The reason and the Mill of Urizen are integral parts of the "Wheel," which represents the circular religion of good and evil that turns incessantly twenty-four hours a day.

In a related passage also in Chapter 3 of Jerusalem, the Purple of Caiphas and the Scarlet of Pilate prominent in "A Vision of the Last Judgment" unite with animalistic passion: "The Veil of Goats-hair & Purple & Scarlet & fine twined Linen" (p. 207, pl. 59, l. 55). The Daughters of Los are weaving garments of deception. The clothes enhance the beauty and charm of Tirzah and Rahab, and allow them to hide their ulterior motivations. In reality, the clothing draws another "veil" over man's eyes and obscures his vision of Eternity.

Although Vala always typifies sexuality, her passion is not impure when she is united with Luvah, her creator. Thus in the great harvest of The Four Zoas, Vala's "locks" disappear: "Her garments rejoice in the vocal wind & her hair glistens with dew" (p. 380, p. 126, l. 35). The dew in her hair relates to a Biblical passage in Daniel in which dew comes from heaven. Thus sexual union, when it is two-sided and mutually enjoyed, opens the door to man's senses and allows him, by indulging the body, to exalt the soul. On a mythological level the passionate Vala is not remotely destructive when correctly mated with Luvah.

Later in the same "Night" Vala is awakened by Luvah's touch and leads her "flocks" to the "silent valley":

And on the rivers margin she ungirded her golden girdle
 She stood in the river & viewd herself within the watry glass
 And her bright hair was wet with the waters . . .
 (p. 383, p. 129, ll. 13-15)

"Wet hair" has an ageless sexual connotation while the idea of water is associated with elemental nature and, therefore, the regenerative female. The "waters" also pertain to Tharmas, who strokes "the water from his beard" in the next line. Tharmas, after ridding himself of his "watry image," calls on Enion, his emanation, to arise.

Vala's "bright hair" is unlike Ahania's in that the light comes from Orc and refers to the fire of lust rather than wisdom. In this case the brightness is justified because Vala's passion is for Luvah.

A comparable passage is found in "Night the Eighth" in which the goodness of the sexual response is also evident:

He awakes the sleepers in Ulro the Daughters of Beulah praise him
 They annoint his feet with ointment they wipe them with the hair of
 their head
 (p. 362, p. 113, ll. 36-37)

The he above is a Christ figure and the passage alludes to the washing of Jesus's feet by Mary Magdalen. Although Rahab, Blake's Whore of Babylon, is trying to destroy the "Lamb of God," Christ teaches the forgiveness of sins and eventually forgives Mary Magdalen of her harlotry. By using their hair to dry his feet the Daughters are, in effect, opening the sensuous gate that they fearfully closed on Tharmas in "Night the First." The beginning with the feet also connotes a progression from a lower to a higher vision. Furthermore, it parallels Milton's entrance through Blake's left foot.

The "shadowy female" is perhaps Blake's most potent symbol for the jealous, over-possessive, intolerant viewpoint of those who would make chastity a religious ideal. Accordingly, Clark Emery defines Hell as "that situation in the male-female relationship which occurs when the woman asserts her will against the man's or permits her love to descend into jealous possessiveness."³ Yet the "shadowy female" is powerless without the rebellious fires of Orc.

³William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, ed. Clark Emery (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1968), p. 23.

CHAPTER V

ORC: THE DEMON RED

In the minor prophecies Blake's "hero" is "fierce Orc," the mythological god of rebellion and untempered passion. The spirit of Orc that rages in every man was for Blake the hope of future generations. Although he never fully abandoned Orc, Blake did come to have much more faith in the poetic imagination of Los.

Blake introduces his belief in revolution without naming Orc in "A Song of Liberty":

10. The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield forth went
the hand of jealousy among the flaming hair, and hurl'd
the new born wonder thro' the starry night

13. The fiery limbs, the flaming hair, shot like the sinking sun
into the western sea.

(p. 43, pl. 25-26)

The "wonder" is Orc, the rebel, whose struggle with Urizen, the tyrant, is continually cycled in the world. In the first reference the good established by the rebel's emotion is ruined by the jealousy of "the starry king," Urizen, who hurls Orc into "Urthona's dens." The fall of man is predetermined by the fall of the Eternals. Thus, when Urizen is overcome with jealousy and casts out the contrary necessary for his own existence, man too feels the consequences.

The action is similar to Urizen's treatment of Ahania: a misdeed prompted by possessiveness and jealousy that caused his own tragic fall. A second similarity exists between Urizen and the priest who seized the little boy in "A Little Boy Lost." The one-fold vision of Ulro is unavoidable when man allows his passion or his intellect to rule without

the balance of the other. Urizen's "speary hand" is the "hand of jealousy" that inevitably results from the oppression of one law, religious, political, or social, on all people.

The imagery in this passage develops throughout all of Blake's poetry. The "flaming hair" suggests fire, in this case the "flames" of emotion that lead to excessive passion or insurrection. The second sentence demonstrates the ineluctable cycle of rebellion: as the sun must set and rise, so must Urizen and Orc constantly replace one another. Orc's passion represents the potential of "hair" as the sense of touch to release man. Yet such an attempt will always be unsuccessful when separated from the intellect. Man must be unified if he is to eliminate the "stone laws," "religious lechery," and the "chains of jealousy."

The essentially sensual connotation of "hair" continues in the Preludium of America: "Dark virgin; said the hairy youth, thy stern father abhorr'd" (p. 50, pl. 1, l. 11). Orc is hairy; that is, he has reached puberty and is ready for the sexual fulfillment he sees in the "shadowy daughter of Urthona." The "stern father" is the same authoritative figure seen in "A Little Girl Lost." Thus, the Orc cycle begins with a conquest of virginity and authority. The full deceit of this sexual invocation is not clear until after Orc rapes the maiden:

Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy,
The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;
(p. 50, pl. 2, ll. 21-22)

The rape introduces this poem of rebellion because sexual freedom is prerequisite to other freedoms. Yet the irony lies in the fact that forced intercourse is debased. Sexual love has to be two-sided. Thus, the virgin first responds with joy and later becomes over-possessive

and tormented. Blake foreshadows this unsuccessful union with many images, such as the "helmut" that obstructs man's vision and restricts his potential. Passion, the libido, misleads Orc because he acts without the counter-balance of reason. Although Blake emphasizes the positive force of emotion, especially sexual gratification, it cannot operate alone.

In Europe, the "shadowy female" rises from the breast of Orc. "Womans secrecy" is a result of man's overabundance of passion. Yet the problem is circular in that the religion of chastity establishes the "sins" of the body which lead to the repression of desire. Eventually, the id explodes and Blake's "brothels" are built. The "wheel" of man's strife will be self-perpetuating until man realizes that "All deities reside in the human breast."

A Xerox copy of Orc is Fuzon, the angry son of Urizen in The Book of Ahania:

1. Fuzon, on a chariot iron-wing'd
On spiked flames rose; his hot visage
Flam'd furious! sparkle his hair & beard
Shot down his wide bosom and shoulders.
(p. 83, pl. 2, ll. 1-4)

The fire signifies Fuzon's passion, while the length and sparkle of his beard represent his virility. All of the imagery surrounding Fuzon is sexual: the "spiked flames" are phallic symbols and his face and body appear consumed with carnal lust. Fuzon is irritated with Urizen's sterility and is thus viewed as antithetical to his father. Fuzon, whose name blends fuse and on to suggest the start of a fire, is flaming with an emotion that should lead him to the four-fold vision of Eden; however, the irony is not apparent until later when Fuzon becomes the tyrant that Urizen has been.

In the major prophecies Orc becomes more demonic and less capable of guiding man to liberty. Thus in "Night the Fifth" of The Four Zoas Blake replaces Orc's "hair" with "locks":

His nostrils breathe a fiery flame. his locks are like the forests
Of wild beasts there the lion glares the tyger & wolf howl there
(p. 335, pl. 61, ll. 23-24)

Orc, who has been bound on a mountain by his parents, Los and Enitharmon, is described as a fire-breathing dragon. Yet Orc has been "crucified" much as Christ was. Blake at one time did see Orc as man's "savior," and he continued to view Jesus as the finest example of the "human form divine."

Orc's "locks" relate to nature and the wild, bestial quality of revolution. In addition, they mirror the "Chain of Jealousy" whose "infernal fibres" have taken root even into the "center of the earth." The bondage of desire invariably results in jealousy. As John Beer states, "Desire pursued for its own sake can chain man to the earth."¹ The forest, which was previously noted in Europe as an obstruction to sight, is now complicated by a mountain that belongs to the domain of Los and, therefore, indicates unnatural use while connoting Urizenic hardness: a multilevel Blakean view negating the force of one contrary acting alone.

Later in the same "Night" Urizen recounts the fall of Luvah:

Thy pure feet stepd on the steps divine. too pure for other feet
And thy fair locks shadowd thine eyes from the divine effulgence
(p. 337, p. 65, ll. 1-2)

¹ John Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe (New York: Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 19.

After Tharmas fell in "Night the First," a chain reaction occurred among the other Eternals. It is logical that Luvah's vision would be blocked at this time by his "hair," his sensual gateway. After the fall, Vala, Luvah's emanation, distorts her sensuality into the epitome of sexuality. Moreover, Orc, Luvah in Time, becomes the representative of man's passions. Thus Luvah's "hair" as "locks" is doubly significant as a perversion of sensuality that necessarily precipitates bondage. The potential power of Orc is great, but he, like Urizen, misuses it.

The word fair indicates the ease with which man can fall victim to over-sensuality. Vala, for example, is too beautiful to resist. Luvah's descent evolves into the extreme passion of Orc; thus, it is natural for his "vision" to be both literally and figuratively impeded by his "locks." "Fair" also denotes "golden" in terms of hair and, therefore, implies an invasion of Urizen's realm. Luvah and Vala in "Night the First" left the Heart, their rightful place, and "flew up into the Brain," the home of Urizen.

In "Night the Seventh" Urizen becomes envious of the "howling fiend" and descends into the "Caves of Orc." While Urizen broods, Orc gains the momentum first seen in "Song of Liberty":

Then bursting from his troubled head with terrible visages & flaming hair
His swift wingd daughters sweep across the vast black ocean
(p. 46, p. 77, ll. 25-26)

Orc is still fettered and once again represents the rebellious, passionate spirit unchecked by reason. His "hair" burns with the "fire" that could melt the "snows" of Urizen if Orc were not bound. The phrase "flaming hair" is another example of Blake's labyrinthine imagery. The hair of sensuality coupled with the fire of lust creates a forceful symbol of overt sexuality.

Orc's daughters are the "shadowy females" of Generation who are born out of fear, jealousy, and bondage. They aptly fulfill Blake's proverb: "He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence." Orc is not allowed to vent his emotions; therefore, he fathers "pestilence," the female-craft.

In these lines Blake is simultaneously mixing Miltonic myths with several Greek myths. Orc's daughters sprang from his head as Athena sprang from the head of Zeus and as Sin burst from the head of Satan in Paradise Lost. His daughters are "swift wingd" as was Pegasus, the horse that sprang from the blood of Medusa. Since Athena originally changed Medusa's hair into serpents because of Medusa's copulation with Poseidon in one of Athena's temples, the entire passage effectively attacks authority, natural religion, and abstinence. The various associations with snakes is very applicable to Orc, who rises "like a serpent of fiery flame." The snake as both a phallic symbol and a representation of evil is an ideal metaphor for Orc, the " . . . fallen form of Eros, domination, and the will to power."²

An exact duplication of Orc's role in America occurs in the alternate version of "Night the Seventh": "The hairy shoulders rend the links free are the wrists of fire" (p. 395, p. 91, l. 17). As before, the rape centers on a "nameless shadowy Female." The sexual encounter is depraved because it is prompted by Orc's jealousy of Vala, who has become the "Harlot of Los" and the "deluded harlot of the Kings of the Earth." The fettering of Orc has been and is supremely wrong; bondage

² Morton D. Paley, Energy and the Imagination (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 250.

of any kind is inhuman while the repression of emotion is inherently antagonistic to Orc's nature. It only aids the continuous "wheel"; thus, Blake would "sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desire."

Perhaps the most significant perversion related to Orc is the sacrifice of Luvah in Chapter 3 of Jerusalem:

They put aside his curls; they divide his seven locks upon
His forehead: they bind his forehead with thorns of iron
(p. 216, pl. 66, ll. 22-23)

The entire Druidic ceremony is an allusion to the passion and death of Christ. Luvah's torturers are the Daughters of Albion, who represent the authoritative priestcraft. Luvah's "seven locks" refer to the "Seven Eyes of God," which is all that remains of Eternity and all that precedes the Apocalypse.

The "locks" do not only pertain to Luvah's enslaved sensuality, but also to his present victimization. Since both "curls" and "locks" are man-made constraints of "hair," the immediate association is with artificiality and, again, meaningless, ritualistic ceremony. It is perhaps more significant that these female Herods are destroying Luvah through his potential sensuality. Luvah has been freed from the "furnaces of affliction" in The Four Zoas, only to become the sacrificial lamb.

A short, rather inconsequential poem crystalizes many of the complex meanings and levels of meaning which Blake attaches to "hair," especially as it relates to Orc:

Abstinence sows sand all over
The ruddy limbs & flaming hair
But Desire Gratified
Plants fruits of life & beauty there.
(p. 465)

The theme of the poem is sex, specifically the idea that without it life is destroyed. The "ruddy limbs & flaming hair" allude to the figure of Orc and the vitality and eagerness of life itself. Without gratification man is left in the desert of "Experience" or in the two-fold vision of Generation and can never hope to rise. But with sexual fulfillment the tree of life grows and the door to creativity opens. In this sense the body is one part of the soul and not an entity in itself. Thus when a proper relationship between the contraries, the mental warfare of the prolific and the devourer, is maintained, man can reach the four-fold vision through Los's Gate: the Imagination.

CHAPTER VI

LOS: THE WATCHMAN OF ETERNITY

Within Blake's unique and complex mythology the one ultimate redemptive force is Los, the Fourth Zoa and "Watchman of Eternity." Los, who is the fallen form of Urthona, can live even in the one-fold vision of Ulro. He represents the Imagination: that is, the creativity which guides man to "the Divine Vision." For Blake the Imagination, "the Human Existence Itself," is the only hope in a world dominated by science and reason. Man strives continually against oppression, but if he falls into the "vast unfathomable abyss," he has the strength of Los to depend on: "For All Things Exist in the Human Imagination."

The hair imagery that Blake attaches to Los is interesting in that it is basically reverse symbolism. The imagination is always a positive force, yet man may at any given moment be misled, misunderstood, or mistaken. Thus any of the Zoas may be deceived or incorrect, even the supreme Los. Essentially "hair" is not relevant to Los because Blake's Imagination is a spiritual not a physical energy within man. Therefore, the few times in which Los is related to "hair," the symbolism is negative: that is, Los or another figure is in error.

Blake's masterful use of irony, which facilitates the depth and the richness of his images, is also the essence of the relationship between "hair" and Los. Throughout his mythology the symbols that surround any of the Zoas often mirror their errors. In "Night the Fourth" of The Four Zoas Los has assumed the attitude of Orc:

Los answered in his furious pride sparks issuing from his hair
 Hitherto shalt thou come. no further. here thy proud waves cease
 (p. 325, p. 48, ll. 11-12)

Sparks normally refer to the initial fire of rebellion and, therefore, to the Orc-Urizen cycle of tyranny. Los is about to engage in the same type of struggle with his father, Tharmas. Because Tharmas has told Los to "Rebuild this Universe," Los becomes enraged and defends his "God, Urizen the King." Intense anger is as inappropriate for Los as is the excessive pride which prompts his wrath. Orc is rightfully the proud, angry young man, the Jimmie Porter, whereas Los, who should never become that physical, is the undaunted ego, the Christ-like figure who saves man from himself.¹

In "Night the Fourth" Tharmas repeats Los's words as an indictment against his son:

Take thou the hammer of Urthona rebuild these furnaces
 Dost thou refuse mind I the sparks that issue from thy hair
 I will compell thee to rebuild by these my furious waves
 Death choose or life thou strugglest in my waters, now choose life
 (p. 328, p. 51, ll. 31-32, p. 52, ll. 1-2)

Because Urizen and Luvah have fallen, Tharmas mistakenly assumes that he is God and that Los, because he is Urthona, should be able to rebuild "the ruins of Urizen." Tharmas in this passage has taken on

¹Bloom in his commentary explains a similar line: "In scorn stood Los red sparks of blighting from his furious head" as a prevalent reference to the "fiery hair of the poet in the Age of Sensibility." Such a notion, although not wholly inaccurate, is pointless. The passage in question is some fourteen lines below a line that actually uses the noun hair. Why the same comment was not attached to that line is curious. Regardless of Bloom's reasons for a delayed response, the dismissal of the image as a mere allusion to the inflamed spirit of the poet would be ludicrous if it were not so pathetic from a Blakean scholar of such merit. Perhaps the crux of such an understatement is that Blake should never be oversimplified or underestimated. The extraordinary genius of the man is mirrored in a comparatively minor image such as "hair."

much of the aura of Neptune, the aged, tenacious god of the sea. He believes that his waters are all-powerful and that he could subdue any force that Los might issue. He drowns any semblance of war within Los and leaves him with the impossible task of creating a fixed form in chaos.

As he watches "the Shapes of Enslaved humanity," Los eventually "becomes what he beholds" and again begins raging against Tharmas. Los has simply not arrived at his full potential. Blake's conception of the power of the Imagination grew within himself. Therefore, the same power must have time to mature within Los. It is Blake's technique to humanize his gods; thus Los would have to suffer and work before he could attain maximum strength.

Before Los can become Blake's "hero," he must be unified with the Spectre of Urthona. The Spectre which first separated from Los in "Night the Fourth" appears as an ally of Tharmas's in "Night the Sixth":

In his hand a knotted Club whose knots like mountains frownd
Desart among the Stars them withering with its ridges cold
Black scales of iron arm the dread visage iron spikes instead
Of hair shoot from his orb'd skull. his glowing eyes
Burn like two furnaces. . . .

(p. 345, p. 75, ll. 14-18)

The Spectre of Urthona and Tharmas have joined in a plot to kill Urizen. The fact that such a deed would destroy all of the Eternals is explicit in "iron spikes" instead of "hair." The door to the senses is not only blocked but eradicated. There could be no growth, no flux in iron. It is a solid seen in points, perhaps an ironic sex symbol, on his head and in scales on his face. Although iron is the proper metal for Urthona, it takes on an inhuman grotesqueness when perverted by the

Spectre. The fire in his eyes indicates a misuse of the flames of Orc and further illustrates his monstrous appearance.

The entire visual image is one of the serpent, a frequent Blakean symbol connoting evil, sexuality, natural religion, and the sterile Medussa who is associated both with the female and with nature. The ugliness of the Spectre complements Blake's feeling about man's baser nature: that part of man which asphyxiates his creativity and limits his existence to the mundane shell of Generation. The Spectre's "mottled club" is similar in proportion and in appearance to the one held by the Cerne Abbas Giant, a prehistoric land carving in southern Dorset.

The "orbed skull" doubles the idea of a circle and implies the falseness of the circular view of religion: good leading to evil, evil to good and so on. By killing Urizen, Tharmas and the Spectre of Urthona would be condemning themselves and practicing the priestcraft of natural religion.

Just as every man has his Spectre, every man may be misjudged by those around him. In Milton Los is misunderstood by the mortals who rightfully identify him with the concept of time:

Los by mortals nam'd Time Enitharmon is nam'd Space
But they depict him bald & aged who is in eternal youth
All powerful and his locks flourish like the brows of morning
(p. 120, pl. 24, ll. 68-70)

Los would not be bald in old age as he is the Savior, the Imagination, of man. For Blake baldness connotes the opposite of traditional virility. Without "hair" man becomes static. His gateway to a higher vision is cut off and his doom is predetermined. None of Blake's illuminated works depict completely bald men; virtually all of his

significant figures reveal hair unless their heads are covered by some meaningful man-made ornament.

Los would be eternally youthful and "all powerful." The use of "locks" instead of "hair" is perhaps unusual for Blake since the former image generally indicates a bondage of sensuality. However, in Los's case the "locks" suggest a binding, forceful potential rather than a restriction. The flourishing nature of his locks also heightens the limitlessness of Los's supremacy. The entire passage on a primary level of figurative meaning is a lovely metaphor accurately descriptive of "The Spirit of Prophecy."

Los reaches his full importance in Jerusalem, yet he remains subjugated by his own beliefs. He is still capable of making errors and becoming confused:

As he sat before his Furnaces clothed in sackcloth of hair
In gnawing pain dividing him from his Emanation;
(p. 200, pl. 53, ll. 5-6)

Enitharmon's division from Los causes him great suffering; therefore, he wrongfully dons the hair shirt of the Penitent. His weeping is reminiscent of Urizen's insipid tears and signifies a gross misjudgment on his part. As the guiding force of this poem Los should not be crying; he simply has not yet realized his potential. Blake ingeniously utilizes the hair shirt, a selfish, useless method that cannot help Los. Furthermore, since it represents a perversion of hair, it is unmistakably wrong for Los.

Throughout Jerusalem Los gains insight and power, but he has not yet learned to see through his eyes. Self-torture is too passive, too indulgent for Los, who must be active: he is the light in the darkness. Yet at this point he sees with his eyes only and is miserable.

Later in the beginning of Chapter 4 the same mistake recurs:

While Los laments at his dire labours, viewing Jerusalem,
Sitting before his Furnaces clothed in sackcloth of hair;
(p. 231, p. 78, ll. 10-11)

The hair shirt is again inappropriate for Los, but he again is confronted with bleakness and misery. He cannot awaken Albion and unite the Zoas by wallowing in self-pity. He must first shed his Selfhood in order to lead the way for the others. Even the greatest of men have selfish moments and even the most intelligent become confused when all seems to be going wrong. Los has once more watched the shapes of enslaved humanity for so long that he has "become what he beheld."

Blake's awareness and understanding of the human psyche is unsurpassed in poetry. He did not create the perfect man and name him Los; rather, he thoroughly humanized Los in an effort to prove the power that the imagination offers within every human being.

"Hair" frequently swings between the contraries. It is a very positive symbol used ironically with Los to show that any energy may be abused and that any man may be thwarted by the very force that should lead him forward. Such is even the problem of Los, who only gradually learns of his own great potential. Once man correctly uses his organs of perception, he may progress from the sensual to the sensuous and finally to a communion with "the real man, the Imagination."

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

"Hair" has been the means to an end in this study of Blakean sensuality. It is the "end of the golden string" that leads the student into Blake's poetry as a whole and proves unquestionably that Blake himself reaches the Poetic Genius within the four-fold vision of Eden. "Hair" exemplifies Blake's kaleidoscopic imagery: it unfolds more beauty and more complexity the longer it is studied. Because he is a master of imagery, Blake is able to weave a poetic web with artistry and precision. His images are carefully interwoven; they connect, intersect and fuse into a unique system. "Hair," as a Blakean image, is aptly summarized by the poet's own aphorism, "One thought fills immensity."

Man in an unregenerate world is bound by his senses; the only means he has of opening his senses is touch, specifically, the gratification of sexual desire. Thus sensuality is one of man's great assets; he has only to use it correctly and it will open the door to the Imagination within him. If man represses his sexual impulses, he becomes a vegetating human being incapable of any life other than the vicarious existence of an "Old John."

Blake focussed on this theme in his earliest poetry and consistently applied and expanded his first conclusions. His positive belief in sensuality never died, and although Blake himself never practiced free love, his faith in it is undeniably prophetic.

Since this thesis deals most frequently with the perversions of sensuality, it is obvious that Blake feels deeply the evils that he sees within the world. Thus he endeavors to guide man to a better life. Blake is at all times the proponent of the Individual and of the right of the Individual to rule himself. Thus he loathed the tyrant and any representative of social, religious, or political authority. In reference to sensuality Blake feels that such oppression is too great. Each man needs the freedom to experience life and love uninhibited by the rest of the world. Sex cleanses man's perceptions, but since the fall he has consigned sexuality to darkness. Like Urizen and Tiriell, who fail to realize their tyranny, man fails to recognize the power of his natural sensuality.

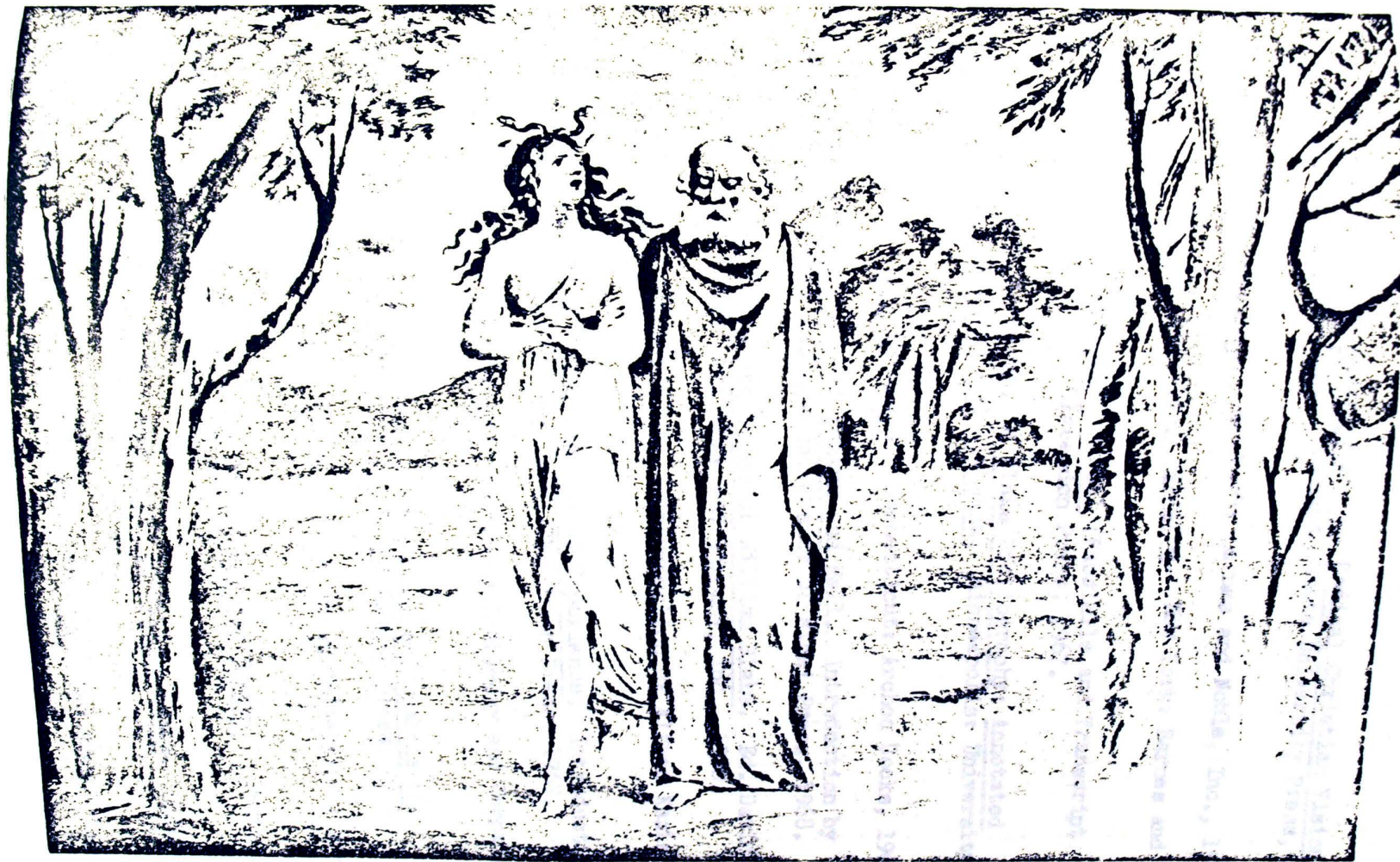
In reality it is the woman, the "shadowy female," who espouses the doctrine of conventional morality. She is the one who regards woman's love as sin and promotes the holiness of virginity. But to Blake such females are merely game-playing, flaunting their sex and then withholding it. Similarly Blake detested the "female will," the selfish misuse of any individual by another. When either the male or the female in a relationship restricts the other through possessiveness or jealousy, the creative potential is smothered.

The rapes of Orc are also unproductive and the utter sensuality of Vala enslaves rather than releases man. When passion rules without intellect, jealousy is the usual result. And to Blake jealousy is an anathema. It fosters most of man's undesirable characteristics and strengthens rather than weakens his Selfhood. Sensuality should not block creativity. It should awaken man's awareness and lead him to the Imagination.

Blake's major theme of Imagination is represented by Los, whose growing power is visible within the theme of sensuality. Although Blake regards the Imagination as man's supreme faculty, Los, like any man, will fail and will learn through experience. Eventually the Imagination becomes the one hope that man cannot lose regardless of how confused or tortured his life is. Sensuality is not the mighty power that the Imagination is, but sensuality can help man to the gate of the Imagination. Sensuality fused with reason opens the portal, and man is capable of realizing his potential.



Plate II: Europe



Tiriel Walking With Hela

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