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THE TREE OF MYSTERY: A STUDY OF
IMAGERY OF EVIL IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S
SYMBOLIC SYSTEM

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THE TREE OF MYSTERY: A STUDY OF IMAGERY OF EVIL
IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S SYMBOLIC SYSTEM

An Abstract
Presented to the
Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Loretta Beths Tucker
June, 1977

ABSTRACT

The Tree of Mystery is a unique and consistent image within the fully developed mythology of William Blake. Throughout the major prophecies, Blake's use of Tree symbology is the basic image for religious and social evils. A study of the history of the growth of the Tree of Mystery in the shorter poetry is essential to an understanding of the implications of the poet's Tree imagery and the consequences of the Tree's spreading and clutching layers through man's error and illusion.

In William Blake's three major prophecies, The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem, the Mysterious Tree image becomes more profound, for the poet takes from the banyan tree of Milton's Paradise Lost the idea that the Tree roots itself as its branches touch the ground. Hence, the Tree of Mystery is a dominant image of fear and evil in the individual poems and contributes to Blake's concept of evil: exploitation, cruelty, conflict and hypocritical humility.

Upon close examination, the Tree of Mystery in William Blake's poetry reveals that the complex symbology is consistent with the poet's system of the fourfold vision and indispensable to the cycle his poetry completes with the unity of the Four Zoas in Jerusalem. It is with the culmination of the Four Zoas that the Tree of Mystery disappears in Blake's major prophecy, and the completeness of man is achieved.

Thus, the Tree is evident in the writing throughout the fourfold system, except in Eden, the final stage of the post's system.

This study shows the far-reaching implications of the Tree as a symbol for the evils of tyranny which result in repression and restraint and man's delusion in the material world. The tree is a powerful and increasingly horrific symbol for the error and illusion within man. The mistaken division of good and evil hinders him from the attainment of his ultimate goal: truth.

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Loretta Beths Tucker entitled "The Tree of Mystery: A Study of Imagery of Evil In William Blake's Symbolic System." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Levin C. Collins

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Clarence Spurd

Second Committee Member

Edward E. Irwin

Third Committee Member

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Graduate Council:

William H. Ellis

Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For William Blake, one invariable sign of man's fall is his readiness to judge, punish and execute his fellow man. Blake's favorite symbol for this propensity is the Tree of Mystery, and throughout the myths, the Tree is at the root of human deception, ignorance and evil. The essential idea about the Tree of Mystery is found in one of the Songs of Experience, "The Human Abstract." The Tree, found in the Human Brain, is defined by George Wingfield Digby as "representative of the repressed unconscious, which is projected in a substitute and disguised form."¹ The literary and art critic further elaborates that the Tree is rooted in the secrecy of hypocrisy, self-deception and the entire world of illusion.² Finally, it is one of the most subtle and difficult psychological phenomena to penetrate, and the various protagonists become ensnared in the "intricate labyrinths" of rooted evil and error.³

William Blake developed a full mythology with his own characters and circumstances in terms of imagination and symbolism, both romantic features of his poetry. Through the poet's special perception, insight

¹George Wingfield Digby, Symbol and Image in William Blake, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 86.

²Digby, p. 86.

³Digby, p. 86.

or intuition, he sees man in a divided condition, collectively and individually. The purpose of the poetry is to reveal this divided condition, while at the same time anticipating a future in which man will be restored to unity. This division is a primal evil in Blake, resulting in tyranny imposed by man over man. The tyranny is inflicted on man through moral law, religion and woman's love. The Tree of Mystery is the poet's symbol for this tyranny, as it is an outgrowth of the misconceptions, fears and both the abstract and general knowledge that can engulf man in the fallen state.

Blake believed that the divisions and tyranny among men could be fruitful. Constructive divisions are contraries, and ideally life should be mental strife, for only then can man have progress. Throughout the myths, man is in a divided state, just as the sexes divided with the fall of man. Blake expressed his idea of seeking the unity of man in "To Tirzah." His theory was that man must pull away from the natural body to an elevation of the spiritual or oneness with God. The poem is a condensed summary of the entire cycle of Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. The same idea is expressed in the Last Judgment in Jerusalem with the unity of the Four Zoas and the disappearance of Blake's major symbol for evil: the Tree of Mystery. In "To Tirzah," the poet is anticipating the triumph of the imagination over the natural body, which will take man through the cycle of Generation. In the fourfold vision, the poet sees four different degrees in the vision of man: the least vision man can have is the single vision or Ulro; the twofold vision, Generation, involves emotion and imagination; Beulah is the threefold vision and the metaphor for this

stage is the condition of a resting place; Eden is the ultimate and most creative stage, representative of the fourfold vision. It is in Eden that the Tree of Mystery will vanish forever. The final stage will be reached when the full cycle of poetry is completed in the major and final prophecy, Jerusalem.

S. Foster Damon states in his introductory section to the Blake Dictionary, a detailed and essential study of the poet's symbols, that Blake's basic purpose was "the discovery and recording of new truths about the human soul."⁴ He further states, in defining the Tree of Mystery, that the "contrary to the Tree of Life is the Tree of Mystery, whose fatal fruit brings spiritual death, causing man to set himself up as Elohim or a judge."⁵ These two ideas reinforce the thesis that the Tree symbol is of primary importance in the poet's search for truth.

Commentary on Blake's poetry falls into two categories: moral allegory and historical allegory. The reading which Harold Bloom gives to Blake in Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument,⁶ minimizes Blake's historical allegory but explicates ideas and images, of which the Tree of Mystery is one, that give coherent expression to Blake's thought. Bloom associates the Mysterious Tree of the prophetic works with the "tree" in the minor poems. There is no study tracing the cycle of the Tree of Mystery throughout the poetry.

⁴S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1971), p. ix.

⁵Ibid., p. 410.

⁶Harold Bloom, Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 247.

In an article "On the Nature of Blake's Symbolism," W. H. Stevenson cites the Tree of Mystery in his discussion of symbols Blake used to conceal his ideas. He argues that the poet absorbed many elements into his symbols, that he did not organize them rationally, and that they are meant to appeal to the imagination and not to analysis.⁷ The outgrowths of the basic Tree imagery are varied and numerous and drawn from Blake's imagination rather than observation. But in appealing to the reader's imagination, the symbol also appeals to analysis, for the Tree is consistent with the poet's conception of evil and evolves in a complete cycle in the poetry.

A brief history of the growth of the Tree of Mystery is found in the shorter poems. Different evils are depicted in the individual poems, which will combine in the longer narratives as the Tree typifies Blake's fallen world and accounts for the loss of direction in that fallen world through the functions of evil protagonists. In "The Human Abstract," the Tree is associated with the human form; Cruelty, later to become Urizen, is found in the history of the growth of the Tree. The Mysterious Tree represents the consequences of repressed anger in "The Poison Tree." The "Preludium" to Europe: A Prophecy depicts the Tree as a symbol of delusion which is in the material world. In Chapter III, the theme of tyranny is realized by moral law, and reason is the instrument of tyranny. The Tree symbology is dominant in The Book of Ahania with the division of the sexes, as Urizen casts out Ahania and woman's love becomes sin. The argument of The Four Zoas in Chapter IV is that the

⁷W. H. Stevenson, "On the Nature of Blake's Symbolism," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 15 (Fall 1973), pp. 445-60.

fall of man is due to the division of the Zoas. Urizen separates himself from the other Zoas, and later he encroaches on their functions. In Milton, evil is seen as intellectual error, or a type of error which man makes for himself. This epic poem leads into the final prophetic book, Jerusalem, in which the Mysterious Tree belongs to Albion until the final apocalypse. In Jerusalem, the Tree becomes an increasingly repulsive image as it continues to grow in false religion and false morality.

Essentially, for Blake, the fall of man is embodied in two mythical patterns: the division into male and female (Spectre and Emanation), and the conspiracy of Urizen (abstract intellect) and Luvah (passion) to seize power. This study explicates the Tree of Mystery symbolism in the poetry and illuminates the poet's conception of evil within the two mythical patterns.

CHAPTER II

TREE OF MYSTERY SYMBOL: AN EXPLICATION AND HISTORY OF GROWTH IN SHORTER POEMS

The Tree of Mystery symbolism goes beyond Blake's forest imagery, composed of dead trees that symbolize the complicated rooted errors of the social order and man's dogmatic mind. The essential idea about the Tree of Mystery is that it represents the repressed and unconscious, projected in a substitute and disguised form. The Tree springs from a displaced and rationalized effect. This is the secret root not only of hypocrisy and self-deception, but of the entire world of illusion. The Tree springs up from the tiniest seed and grows rapidly into a great tree. It is one of the most subtle and difficult psychological phenomena to penetrate, and it is the root of human deception, ignorance and evil. Blake believed evil and illusion to be a growth of abstraction and mystery. The Tree of Mystery is the outgrowth of the misconceptions, fears and abstract and general knowledge which can engulf a man.

The first appearance of the Tree of Mystery in Blake's published works is in the short poem "The Human Abstract," although the Tree is never mentioned by name. The poem is important to this study, because in it the poet gives a brief history of the growth of the Tree.

Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears:
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Caterpillar and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

(ll. 7-20)¹

The Tree grows monstrosly and inescapably, overwhelming its creator. The speaker of the poem could be the devil, as he sees false humility as a way of people's gaining power both for themselves and over other people. When man's selfishness increases, Cruelty, who later becomes Urizen, "knits a snare" and takes over watering the tree with tears of hypocrisy. False humility then takes root under his foot, propagating a mysterious, dismal shade overhead, bearing fruits of deceit. Here the raven, a symbol of death, will make its nest. The Tree in the poem is apparently depicting the false church of mystery. Blake sees the false humility as a way of people's gaining power and as a weapon of priestcraft feeding on mystery as do the Caterpillar and the Fly. The Tree is said to grow in the Human Brain and not in Nature.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain
(ll. 21-24, p. 27)

The title of the poem, when defined literally, further explicates the Tree found within the Human Brain. "Human" here means mortal or a creature of the material world; an abstraction is an unreality, the opposite of a

¹William Blake, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), p. 27. Note: All subsequent quotations are taken from this text.

definite image, which can take a divine form."² It is noteworthy that this poem replaced an earlier and rejected Song of Experience, "A Divine Image." It suggests that from the beginning, Blake associates the image of the Tree of Mystery with the human form, and the earliest evidence of this source in his poetry is found in the lines of "A Divine Image."

Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror, the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy, the Human Dress
(ll. 1-4, p. 32)

"The Human Abstract" from Songs of Experience is a matched contrary to "The Divine Image" in Songs of Innocence (p. 12). The virtues of the earlier poem, "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love," change to exploitation, cruelty, conflict and hypocritical humility. The later poem brings together the human and the divine; and divinity, symbolized by Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love, offers the best qualities in man. They are also qualities essential in becoming the whole man, and it is these virtues which will overpower the deadly Tree in the final prophecy.

Two points are important to this study. First, Blake replaced the rejected poem, "A Divine Image," with "The Human Abstract." Thus, the same adjectives describing evils and errors in the mind were earlier attributed to the human form. Secondly, "The Human Abstract" is a contrary to the poem "The Divine Image," which is a completely different poem from "A Divine Image." The idea here is similar to the traditional theme of good versus evil, but Blake did not subscribe to traditional con-

²W. H. Stevenson, ed., The Poems of William Blake, (W. W. Norton Company, Inc., 1971), p. 216. (Note xii). Article states: "The Human Image" is a draft for "The Human Abstract." Both poems are contrary to "The Divine Image" in Songs of Innocence.

cepts of good and evil. It is from these two points that a pattern evolves throughout the poetry, which is illustrative of man in the midst of error until he reaches the fourfold stage, and then the contrary is true with the disappearance of evil imagery.

Tree symbolism was not always used in a negative manner. In one of the earliest Songs in Poetical Sketches (p. 405), "Love and harmony combine" as the tree aspires upward. If read as personification, the lovers are two trees whose branches and roots embrace. Instead of the raven, the turtle dove builds her nest in the branches. Later, as Blake perfects his system, the tree becomes rooted in the material world and signifies the error of sexual repression.

The effects of repressed anger are obvious in the lines of "A Poison Tree," from Songs of Experience. It is still the same Tree as in "The Human Abstract." Once again, the Tree of Mystery is found in the brain. The poison tree is also tended with fears and tears of deceit. Allegorically, the poem expresses the consequences of eating the fruit in the Garden of Eden: man becomes subject to death. Here, anger is repressed and projected in a disguised form, the poison apple. The second anger the persona feels is deceitful, secret and fearful because the anger is hidden. This poison tree is wrath and grows both day and night, bearing beautiful looking fruit. The "foe" knows to whom the bright apple belongs and steals into the garden to eat the fruit.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretchd beneath the tree.
(ll. 13-16, p. 28)

The wrath which grows into a poison tree and bears the apple of death is an exemplum of how the Tree is nurtured by man and how it grows

to produce fruit that is deceitful, that causes more secrecy and fear within yet another person, and that ultimately leads to the death of both. Through his use of this type of Tree symbology in the earlier, shorter poems, Blake anticipates the evil circumstances which will plague the mythological protagonists in the prophetic books.

The Tree of Mystery as an upside-down tree personifies woman. In the "Preludium" to Europe: A Prophecy, the "nameless, shadowy female" complains that "all the overflowing stars rain down prolific pains" (Plate I, l. 15, p. 59). Although the essential idea of the Tree is slightly different, the descent of man is connected to the Tree of Good and Evil, and this is the same Tree within the mind in "The Human Abstract." The upside-down tree appears to exist in nature; nevertheless, it too lives in the mind and is a symbol of the delusion which is in the material world. The female speaks:

My roots are brandish'd in the heavens.
 my fruits in earth beneath
 Surge, foam, and labour into life, first
 born & first consum'd!
 Consumed and consuming!
 Then why shouldst thou accursed mother
 bring me into life?
 (ll. 8-11, p. 59)

The woman's imaginative and creative power are embedded in the earth. The Tree typifies Blake's fallen world and accounts for the loss of direction in that fallen world. Since the "Preludium" of America, the "shadowy female" has become exhausted from giving birth to her children. At one time, there was a vision of hope in the union of the female and Orc, but the children who would have profited are stolen by Enitharmon as soon as they are born. The inverted existence beneath the earth is the same idea later developed with the spreading

roots of the Tree of Mystery within the abyss in The Four Zoas. Then the Tree will be personified as the illusory female Vala, who assumes the guise of the Rahab-Tirzah duo in order to inflict evil and pain upon man. In the shorter poems, the Tree is associated with the human form and the mind; in the longer narratives, the poet's evil protagonists are a direct outgrowth of the evil and Mysterious Tree.

CHAPTER III

THE BOOK OF AHANIA: PRIMAL EVIL OF DIVISION

With the division and self-centered separation of Urizen's soul come other evils in The Book of Ahania. There is a constant social and moral emphasis in the poem. Blake is showing a distinction in the two kinds of attitudes toward sexuality: the distinction between the innocent sexuality of a free and impulsive life and the degraded sexuality of selfish jealousy and deception and calculation that breed under rationalization and a dividing sense of morality and law. The characteristics of the Tree in the poem are its obscurity, its poisonous nature and its self-generation in a labyrinth of roots.

In The Book of Ahania, Cruelty is called Urizen, and the growth of the Tree of Mystery is repetitious of the earlier poem, "The Human Abstract." The first appearance of the Tree in the narrative poem is in Chapter III.

2: With difficulty & great pain; Urizen
Lifted on high the dead corse:
On his shoulders he bore it to where
A Tree hung over the Immensity
(ll. 51-54, p. 85)

As Urizen carries Fuzon's body to the Tree, the growth of the many trees is described as a past action.

3: For when Urizen shrunk away
From Eternals, he sat on a rock
Barren; a rock which himself
From redounding fancies has petrified[.]
Many tears fell on the rock,
Many sparks of vegetation;
Soon shot the pained root

Of Mystery, under his heel:
 It grew a thick tree; he wrote
 In silence his book of iron:
 (ll. 55-64, p. 85)

This stanza of the poem is important because it reminds the reader that Urizen has already "shrunk away from the Eternals" in an earlier poem, The Book of Urizen. The story of Ahania evolves as it does because Urizen has already become ensnared in the trees of the dark and oppressive forests of gloom. In Fuzon's revolt, Urizen is struck by a fiery beam, dividing his soul into male and female. From the self-centered separation of Urizen's soul spring other evils. "Self-closed, all repelling, abstracted, brooding, secret, dark" are all adjectives used to describe Urizen in Chapter I, Pl. 3 of The Book of Urizen (p. 69). In The Book of Ahania, the self-centered and self-interested reasoning of man is realized in sexual imagery. Because Urizen is caught up in the encompassing Tree, error begets error and he casts out Ahania as his false reasoning power prevails over his desire for pleasure. Urizen sees Ahania as sin, although she is his female portion, or Emanation. Once a part of him in love, she is driven from him as she becomes an object of his lust. With Urizen's lust for Ahania comes jealousy, and he hides her in darkness and silence. Urizen creates sin when he rejects Ahania; in this respect he parallels Milton's Satan. However, Milton's Satan is persistent to the end in his sin, and Urizen eventually learns by experience and will be redeemed.

He groand anguishd & called her Sin,
 Kissing her and weeping over her;
 Then hid her in darkness in silence;
 Jealous tho' she was invisible.
 (ll. 34-37, pp. 83-84)

The poet is showing a distinction in the two kinds of attitudes toward

sexuality. Urizen's kind is degraded and inspired by selfish jealousy and calculation that breed under a dividing sense of morality and law. The outgrowth of the Tree of Mystery is the false system of morality. Ahania, now cast out by Urizen, becomes the "mother of Pestilence."

8: She fell down a faint shadow wandering
 In chaos and circling dark Urizen,
 As the moon anguish'd circles the earth;
 Hopeless! abhorrd! a death-shadow,
 Unseen, unbodied, unknown;
 The mother of Pestilence.
 (ll. 38-43, p. 84)

Urizen feels that he is now free from pleasure and shapes a bow from "an enormous dread serpent" as he sits on a "dark rooted Oak." The serpent is a symbol of sense and materialism, and the dark rooted oak is a symbol of religious and moral error. The "poison'd rock" which he readies for Fuzon signifies moral law. Fuzon can be identified as a Christ figure, who lived by passion and not law and is crucified by Urizen on his self-contrived Tree of error or religious mystery, which has sprung from the rock. Urizen escapes from the labyrinth of trees with difficulty. But because Ahania is divided and spearated from him, he is no longer enriched by her presence.

5: The Tree still grows over the Void
 Enrooting itself all around
 An endless labyrinth of woe!
 (ll. 2-4, p. 86)

The Tree grows over the void left by Ahania, and her love is now sin. Tyranny as a theme within the poem is realized by moral law and reason, as they become the instrument of tyranny. Imagination comes under the dominance of reason.

On the Tree of Mystery Urizen crucifies Fuzon, his fiery and

rebellious son. For forty years, the arrows of pestilence fly around the Tree, and the invisible Ahania, hovering around the Tree on which Fuzon has been crucified, laments:

Why didst thou despise Ahania
To cast me from thy bright presence
Into the World of Loneness
(ll. 62-64, p. 87)

Fuzon is also a source of pestilence, which began with the separation of Urizen from Ahania. Ahania remembers the fulness of life before she was cast out by jealousy and fear through the false and self-destructive reasoning of Urizen.

In The Book of Ahania, the growth of the Tree is presented as a flashback, for the Tree is already there when Urizen takes Fuzon's "dead corpse" to it. As in "The Human Abstract," the image of the Tree sprouting from under foot or under heel is ambiguous. The Tree does not grow in nature, yet it seems to be rooted in the earth. The Tree became rooted in the mortal world of materialism as it began to grow when Urizen "shrunk away from Eternals" in The Book of Urizen. The Tree is a consequence of false pity and humility, which man can use effectively and deceitfully over his fellow man. In this way, he keeps his fellow man under foot in order to continue his false charade of pity, which results in his own personal gain.

In the poem, the Tree is nurtured with the tears of Urizen while he sits on a rock, already petrified from his "redounding fancies." Ahania is aware that this is all Urizen's cruel contrivance; Urizen seems to resemble Fuzon.

4: Weeping I walk over rocks
Over dens & thro' valleys of death
Why didst thou despise Ahania

To cast me from thy bright presence
 Into the World of Loneness
 (ll. 60-64, p. 87)

She is now cast out from him in cruel jealousy and selfish fear; delight for her cannot be renewed. In the chains of darkness, the lamenting voice of Ahania is heard.

Where bones of beasts are strown
 On the bleak and snowy mountains
 Where bones from the birth are buried
 Before they see the light.
 (ll. 44-47, p. 89)

As long as Ahania is apart from Urizen, she sees only darkness and a destiny of death for herself like the dead animals of prey in a wasteland.

In The Book of Ahania, the implications of the Mysterious Tree imagery are far-reaching, as the consequences of its rapid outgrowth of layers through error and illusion can halt only with exposing the first rooted error. For this reason, Urizen's sin becomes more involved and complicated in the poem. Another of Blake's protagonists, Tiriell, is much like Urizen, probably an earlier version of Urizen. Tiriell is slain by the reason's horror of the consequences of its own supremacy over will and feeling. His basic error is one of reason, and his story also ends in negation. Having awakened too late to his own intellectual error, Tiriell can only die in despair. But this is not the fate of Urizen, for he will learn by experience and eventually be redeemed. Urizen is not actually the protagonist in The Book of Ahania, for Ahania is the center of the prevailing theme. Urizen is responsible for the way the Tree of Mystery affects Ahania's life. In The Four Zoas, Urizen is the protagonist, and the Tree of Mystery belongs to him.

CHAPTER IV

THE FOUR ZOAS: URIZEN'S CONSPIRACY

The argument of The Four Zoas is that the fall of man is due to the division of the Zoas. With the division of the male and female (Spectre and Emanation), the conspiracy begins and Urizen and Luvah struggle to gain control over man. Man is divided into four beings, each representing a major part of the whole: reason, passion, imagination and compassion. In the poem, Man is asleep and Urizen (reason) and Luvah (passion) struggle over him for control. Urizen wins in the struggle of reason versus passion, and Man, now ill, submits to his control. Repressed Luvah (passion) comes under the control of the cruel female, Vala. Vala is important to the study of Tree imagery, for her temporal manifestations, Rahab and Tirzah, are born of the Tree of Mystery.

Urizen is determined to make himself another world in which he can rule and one better suited to his needs and will. In Night the Seventh A, the Tree of Mystery takes root, grows, and becomes Urizen's Tree. A passage describing its growth is reminiscent of the Tree springing up around him in The Book of Ahania.

For Urizen fixd in Envy sat brooding &
coverd with snow

His book of iron on his knees he trac'd
 the dreadful letters
 While his snows fell & his storms beat
 to cool the flames of Orc
 Age after Age till underneath his heel
 a deadly root
 Struck thro the rock the root of Mystery
 accurs'd shooting up
 Branches into the heaven of Los they
 pipe form'd bending down
 Take root again wherever they touch
 again branching forth
 In intricate labyrinths oerspreading
 many a grizly deep
 (Blake's Page 78, ll. 1-8, p. 346)

Because of Urizen's envy, the Tree shoots up under his heel, the
 "sinister" left heel, and even affects Los (imagination). The Book
 of Iron becomes entangled in the roots of the Tree indicating an
 entanglement of religion and war.

Amazd started Urizen when he found
 himself compass'd round
 And high roofed over with trees. he
 arose but the stems
 Stood so thick he with difficulty &
 great pain brought
 His books out of the dismal shade.
 all but the book of iron
 (ll. 9-12, p. 346)

Night Seven continues the narrative with Urizen's confrontation of Orc.
 Orc replaces Fuzon, whom Blake used only once in his mythology, which
 was in The Book of Ahania. Orc curses Urizen as he reads from the
 Book of Brass or philosophy. As Orc curses Urizen for his hypocrisy,
 Orc is drawn under the power of Urizen's Tree, changes into a serpent,
 and loses his human form entirely.

Terrified Urizen heard Orc now
 certain that he was Luvah
 And Orc began to Organize a
 Serpent body
 (ll. 43-44, p. 349)

and

Of all his wandering Experiments
 in the horrible Abyss
 He knew that weakness stretches out
 in breadth & length he knew
 That wisdom reaches high & deep &
 therefore he made Orc
 In Serpent form compell'd stretch out &
 up the mysterious tree
 He suffer'd him to Climb that he might
 draw all human forms
 Into submission to his will now knew
 the dread result
 (Blake's Page 81, ll. 1-6, p. 349)

Urizen does not know that he is sinful or that his "wandering Experiments are the deeds of a creature trapped in evil and the Tree of Mystery.

Urizen's hatred of Orc is not simple; the "intricate labyrinths" of Urizen's envy take root wherever they touch, and they have as many sources as victims. To Blake, "evil is not an absolute; it is an error or a delusion, and it springs from the mistaken division of good and evil."¹

The literary source for the Tree becomes more profound in The Four Zoas. Blake's Tree is much like the banyan tree that roots itself as its branches touch the ground in Milton's Paradise Lost.

Branching so broad and long, that
 in the ground

¹S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, p. 133.

The bended twigs take root, and
 daughters grow
 About the mother trees, a pillared
 shade
 High overreached, and echoing
 walks between.
 (IX, ll. 1104-07)²

Blake's Tree branches above in the heavens, and its roots similarly branch out in an abyss, an inverted, perverted image of the heavens. The poet imagines a flat earth with an abyss like a "nether sky" underneath it. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the Tree is found in a cavern.

So he took me through a stable and
 through a church and down into the church
 vault, at the end of which was a mill.
 Through the mill we went, and came to
 a cave; down the winding cavern we
 groped our tedious way, til a void
 boundless as a nether sky appeared
 beneath us, and we held by the roots
 of trees and hung over this immensity.
 (p. 40)

In the scene, amidst the twisted roots of the oak and the fungus, the Angel and Blake experience an illusion of Hell. Blake continues to use this description of the Tree as a basic image throughout the poetry. The two mythical figures, Urizen and Albion, are under the repressive and evil influence of the Rahab-Tirzah team who assumes varied guises throughout the poetry. The women are born of the Tree of Mystery and eat of its allegorical fruit.

²John Milton, Paradise Lost, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962), p. 232.

In Blake's myth, Enitharmon plays the part of Eve eating the apple and persuading Los to do the same. The Tree, which attracts Enitharmon grows dangerous fruit, and the Tree is used by the Serpent Orc for his own malicious purposes.

Beneath the tree of Mystery which in
 the dismal Abyss
 Began to blossom in fierce pain shoorring
 its writhing buds
 In throes of birth & now the blossoms
 falling shining fruit
 Appeard of many colours & of various
 poisonous qualities
 Of Plagues hidden in shining globes
 that grew on the living tree
 (Blake's Page 82, ll. 18-22, p. 350)

There are echoes of Paradise Lost as Satan, or serpent, slides up to Eve among the leaves of the forbidden fruit, flatters her, and eventually wins her over. Here Orc is the serpent, but Blake's tempter in the poem is the Spectre of Urthona:

The Spectre of Urthona saw the Shadow
 of Enitharmon
 Beneath the Tree of Mystery among the
 leaves & fruit
 Reddning the Demon strong prepared
 the poison of sweet Love
 (Blake's Page 82, ll. 23-25, pp. 350-51)

The Spectre of Urthona is the fearful ordinary ego of fallen man or a shadow of imaginative power. But like Eve, the Shadow of Enitharmon is intoxicated with the fruit of the Tree and desires to embrace the Spectre, although she finds him horrible. The Spectre embraces the Shadow of Enitharmon in an act of love from which comes a "wonder horrible," an ultimate form of error who is Vala. This is a turning

point in the entire cycle of poetry. Now begins necessary evil toward the redemption of mankind, which is a necessary step toward the culmination of the Four Zoas.

The Tree of Mystery in Night Seven A is crucial to the development of the shadowy female Vala, the "delusive beauty of nature," as well as a Satanic Urizen who is a concentration of all that is deadly in a fallen intellect. Vala's lust for vengeance, the sadistic cruelty of the fallen heart, becomes yet another root of Urizenic religion, and it so intensifies mystery that the furious Urizen is tangled further in his roots of error. Illusions or "states" of Vala associated with moral virtue or Deism and born of the Tree of Mystery are developed in Night Eight as a "false feminine counterpart."

The personification of Mystery as woman summarizes all the evils found in the "sisters," Rahab and Tirzah. Rahab is born from the Tree of Mystery:

The Synagogue Created her from Fruit
 of Urizens tree
 By devilish arts abominable unlawful
 unutterable
 Perpetually vegetating in detestable
 births
 Of Female forms beautiful thro poisons
 hidden in secret
 Which give a tincture to false beauty
 there was hidden within
 The bosom of Satan The false Female
 as in an Ark & veil
 Which christ must rend & Her reveal
 Her Daughters are Calld
 Tirzah She is namd Rahab their various
 divisions are calld
 (ll. 20-26, p. 364)

Mystery is part of Rahab as it is part of the Tree of Mystery which shoots up from the errors of Urizen. Therefore, the evils of the Tree spring from Urizen's evil acts in the poem as well as from the evil nature of the

Veils of ignorance covering from
head to feet with a cold web
(ll. 19-21, p. 362)

Their looms are in contrast to Enitharmon's weaving in Cathedron as
Los guards Golgonooza.

Los sat in Golgonooza in the gate
of Luban where
He had erected many porches where
branchd the Mysterious Tree
(Blake's Page 90, ll. 62-63, p. 355)

The Gate of Luban faces East toward the land of darkness, and it is here
that Los stands guard.

Eastward of Golgonooza stands the Lake
of Udan Adan In
Entuthon Benithon a Lake not of Waters
but of Spaces
Perturbd black & deadly in its Islands
and its Margins
The Mills of Satan and Beelzeboul stand
round the roots of Urizens tree
(ll. 23-26, p. 362)

Enitharmon works at her redemptive weaving, by which she creates
clothing for the lost souls that wander in and out. All spirits passing
between Ulro and Golgonooza go through the Gate of Luban. The Tree
of Mystery growing here is the Tree belonging to Rahab-Tirzah.

For this Lake is formd from the tears &
sighs & death sweat of the victims
Of Urizens laws, to irrigate the roots of
the tree of Mystery
They unweave the soft threads then they
weave them anew in the forms
Of dark death & despair & none from
Eternity to Eternity could Escape
(ll. 27-30, p. 362)

The weaving that the Rahab-Tirzah team does keeps the spirits within
Ulro; it is a negation of the type of redemptive weaving that Enitharmon
does.

In the Song passage, the cruelty of Tirzah is described by emphasizing her good intentions in helping Albion. She wants to change him and conform him to her own possessive desires; however, in the Song her true intentions are masked in her special kind of maternal benevolence.

O thou poor human form O thou poor
 child of woe
 Why dost thou wander away from Tirzah
 why me compell to bind thee
 If thou dost go away from me I shall
 consume upon the rocks
 These fibres of thine eyes that used to
 wander in distant heavens
 Away from me I have bound down with
 a hot iron
 (ll. 31-34, p. 364)

Tirzah continues her Song, and she binds man "upon the stems of vegetation." She has the kind of power that restricts man to an existence which may be beautiful but inhibits and torments the free human spirit, thwarting man's creative and imaginative powers. When Urizen embraces her, he sinks until he loses human form, becoming a dragon and "A form of Senseless Stone remaind in terrors on the rock" (l. 32, p. 367). The female figures of Rahab-Tirzah are more to be feared than the male figures of Urizen-Satan. The laments of Enion and Ahani seem to anticipate a crisis or end as Night Eight closes. Mysterious Rahab is consumed in fire, but another Mystery springs forth:

The Ashes of Mystery began to animate
 they calld it Deism
 And Natural Religion as of old so now
 anew began
 Babylon again in Infancy calld Natural
 Religion
 (ll. 32-34, p. 371)

Still, the basic and essential root of the Tree is not destroyed, and another form of error, Deism, springs forth.

Night Nine commences with Vala returning to innocence and purity and Rahab-Tirzah vanishing as illusory monsters.

Rahab & Tirzah wail aloud in the wild flames
they give up themselves to Consummation
(Blake's Page 118, l. 7, p. 372)

And with the vanishing mystery of wrath, "The Tree of Mystery went up in folding flames" (Blake's Page 119, l. 4, p. 373). The Four Zoas ends with the redemption of Urizen and the eternal Vala. The Tree of Mystery goes up in flames, as well as Orc and Rahab-Tirzah, all of whom subsisted on its treacherous fruit. Thus, the poet ends the myth with the words: "End of The Dream" (Blake's Page 139, l. 11, p. 392).

CHAPTER V

MILTON AND JERUSALEM: POETIC CYCLE COMPLETED IN THE LAST JUDGMENT

The epic poem Milton anticipates the apocalypse in the new world of Jerusalem. Error and evil are revealed; only negations are annihilated and not contraries. As the successor of Milton, the poet must purge himself of Milton's mistakes and prepare himself as a leader of men in the new world of Jerusalem. The fallen condition and the divided state of man are emphasized in both Milton and Jerusalem, and a final confrontation between good and evil is revealed as the Last Judgment nears and the poetic cycle is completed. Although the Tree of Mystery per se does not appear in Milton, the familiar "shadowy female" does in the form of Leutha, the Emanation of Satan. Leutha gives birth to sin in much the same way that Sin is born in Paradise Lost. "In dreams she bore Rahab the mother of Tirzah & her sisters," (Plate 13, l. 41, p. 106) is a line at the beginning of the last section of the Bard's Song in Milton which is entirely devoted to Leutha's lament. It is the Bard's Song which caused Milton to descend, and the Rahab-Tirzah team represents the error within the brain of Milton. They are the sin, error and torment found in the brain of man in the poem. This is a type of error which man makes for himself. It is important in this study only to note that the misconceptions, outgrowths of the Tree of Mystery symbolism, are found in the mind of the protagonist as sin. Milton is another account of the creation of Rahab, mother of Tirzah and

her sisters who are born of the Tree of Mystery and eat of the allegorical fruit.

A passage in Milton anticipates the fourfold vision in Jerusalem and reflects the creative and imaginative capabilities of man.

There is a Moment in each Day that
Satan cannot find
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it,
but the Industrious find
This Moment & it multiply. & when
it once is found
It renovates every Moment of the Day
if rightly placed[.]
(Plate 35, ll. 42-47, p. 135)

On an affirmative note, these lines serve as a prelude to an awakening to eternal life or ultimate truth (imagination) found in Jerusalem. Only then will the Mysterious Tree disappear.

The Tree of Mystery is prevalent as an image in Jerusalem, and the Tree belongs to Albion. The figure of Vala is important in the symbology in this Book just as she is a crucial figure to the mystery, cruelty and evil surrounding The Four Zoas. In earlier works, she is presented in a number of guises; here she is presented as Albion's Emanation or the shadow of Jerusalem.

The second chapter of Jerusalem begins with a varied repetition of the opening scene of the first chapter showing Albion, in his self-will, turning a deaf ear to the inward calling of the Divine Humanity. He is egotistical and jealous, and he behaves as Urizen does in the myths of Urizen and The Four Zoas. The effects are the same.

Cold snows drifted around him: ice coverd
his loins around
He sat by Tyburns brook, and underneath
his heel, shot up!
A deadly Tree, he nam'd it Moral Virtue,
and the Law

Of God who dwells in Chaos hidden from
the human sight,
(ll. 13-16, p. 172)

In Albion's state of wretchedness:

The Tree spread over him its cold
shadows, (Albion groand)
They bent down, they felt the earth and
again enrooting
Shot into many a Tree an endless
labyrinth of woe!
(Plate 28, ll. 17-19, p. 173)

Albion's family disintegrates, and he becomes hostile to his sons who
attack Jerusalem. This is similar to the earlier work The Book of
Ahania in which Urizen becomes hostile to his son, Fuzon. Albion's
Tree continues to spread, a rooting product of error; even Los is
unable to avoid its disastrous effects.

And the roots of Albions Tree enterd
the soul of Los
As he sat before his Furnaces clothed
in sackcloth of hair
In gnawing pain dividing him from
his Emanation
Inclosing all the children of Los
time after time.
(ll. 4-7, p. 200)

The images of Albion's Tree become more horrific as the roots of the
Tree continue to grow by which Blake is representing false religion and
morality. The human society formed by the blind, lost Children of Albion
is a writhing, evil, slimy "polypus" whose tentacles embrace the entire
earth. The tangle of roots is in a rocky underworld. Having refused to
be joined in love, they are subdued by fear and are linked together by
their hatred for one another and the suffering to their victims. These tor-
turers become one with that which they see and discover that in the
end, they are torturing themselves.

Ah! alas! at the sight of the Victim &
 at sight of those who are smitten,
 All who see become what they behold
 their eyes are covered
 With veils of tears and their nostrils
 & tongues shrunk up
 (ll. 35-37, p. 216)

The terrible, poisonous, spreading polypus is Albion's Tree of Mystery.

The Human Form began to be altered by
 the Daughters of Albion
 And the perceptions to be dissipated into
 the indefinite. Becoming
 A mighty Polypus nam'd Albions Tree:
 (ll. 46-48, p. 217)

Here there is a blending of two images: the spreading polypus and the spreading, clutching Tree of Mystery. The parasitic implication is that the polypus sticks to stone like mistletoe to a tree, containing poison in its tentacles.

By Invisible Hatreds adjoined, they seem
 remote and separate
 From each other; and yet are a Mighty
 Polypus in the Deep!
 As the Mistletoe grows on the Oak, so
 Albions tree on Eternity: Lo!
 He who will not commingle in Love must
 be adjoined by Hate
 (ll. 53-56, p. 217)

The Sons and Daughters of Albion display cruel and destructive activities in their fallen or earth-bound state. The unreal world which they continue to build is much like Stonehenge with huge rocks, dead ideas and a scene filled with wars, destruction and death. This scene of horror is surrounded by the "Mighty Polypus" or the Tree of Mystery. The clutching and branching out of the Tree is inescapable, and the ramifications are endless:

And the Twelve Daughters of Albion united
 in Rahab & Tirzah
 A Double Female; and they drew out from
 the Rocky Stones
 Fibres of Life to Weave for every Female
 in a Golden Loom

The Rocks are opaque hardnesses covering
 all Vegetated things.
 And as they Wove & Cut from the Looms
 in various divisions
 Stretching over Europe & Asia from
 Ireland to Japan
 They divided into many lovely Daughters
 to be counterparts
 To those they Wove, for when they Wove
 a Male, they divided
 Into a Female to the Woven Male. In
 opaque hardness
 They cut the Fibres from the Rocks
 groaning in pain they Weave;
 (Plate 67, ll. 2-11, pp. 217-18)

Rahab-Tirzah weave the Natural Body as opposed to the spiritual "till the Great Polypus of Generation Covered the Earth" (Plate 67, l. 34, p. 218). As in The Four Zoas, it is difficult to distinguish between the two manifestations of Vala, now the female pretender to the role of Jerusalem. It will suffice that Rahab represents false religion, both restrictive and moralistic, while Tirzah represents an ambiguous false philosophy. These two cruel women of the temporal world, along with the Daughters of Albion, reject the idea of loving those who show love, mercy and pity. As the evil, feminine principle that controls the evil, masculine principle in The Four Zoas, Rahab is unseen but dominates just as she does in this passage.

To put in act what her Heart wills; O who
 can withstand her power
 Her name is Vala in Eternity: in Time
 her name is Rahab
 The Starry Heavens all were fled from
 the mighty limbs of Albion
 (Plate 70, ll. 30-33, p. 222)

The last line states the complete downfall of Albion, which is also repeated as the last line of Chapter III. Albion has lost his universality and becomes a single, self-centered being. Albion appears to be much like Urizen at this point, but he is about to awaken from his long death-

like sleep.

The awakened Albion learns the last truth about the meaning of human life in Chapter IV. It is the Last Judgment when error and sinful pride are cast out, and man rises to his new and heavenly life. It is the death of self-hood, and this is a good kind of death for man.

As God is Love: every kindness to
another is a little Death
In the Divine Image nor can Man exist
but by Brotherhood
(Plate 96, ll. 27-28, p. 253)

The interpretation of "Divine Image" here is consistent with lines in an earlier poem, "The Divine Image," from Songs of Innocence.

For Mercy Pity Peace and Love,
Is God our father dear;
And Mercy Pity, Peace and Love,
Is Man his child and care.
(ll. 5-8, p. 12)

The short poem, "The Human Abstract" is a matched contrary to "The Divine Image." As Blake continues to perfect his system, the Tree becomes rooted in the material world and signifies the error which binds the free and imaginative form to a dead low-bound material life. The virtues of the earlier poem, "Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love" are seen in "The Human Abstract" as exploitation, cruelty, conflict and hypocritical humility. And in this poem the poet gives a brief history of the growth of the Tree of Mystery, which grows in the minds. Depicting the false church of mystery, the Tree of Mystery is mentioned for the first time in "The Human Abstract." The poetry has completed a cycle, for with Albion's "Divine Image" comes the fourfold vision. Albion is now living and acting with the whole man: body, brain, heart and spirit, the unity of the Four Zoas. And now

Where is the Tree of Good and Evil that

rooted beneath the cruel heel
(Plate 98, l. 47, p. 256)

The trees, with the rest of the universe, become merged in the union of God and man. Even inanimate things are stressed as having a part in true humanity.

All Human Forms identified even Tree
Metal Earth & Stone. All
Human Forms identified, living going
forth and returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months
Days & Hours reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the
life of Immortality
(Plate 99, ll. 57-60, p. 256)

The Tree of Mystery represents evil and error, and the ultimate goal of man, for Blake, cannot be attained until they are overcome. Man must seek and find the answer within himself. The idea is of primary importance in the poet's quest for truth. Contraries are necessary; negations must be annihilated. Without the Mysterious Tree imagery, there could be no Eden or fourfold vision within the writing. In The Four Zoas, Vala is an illusion in the mind of man. Her temporal manifestations are Rahab and Tirzah, both evil and delusive counterparts. In Jerusalem, Vala is the Emanation of Jerusalem, the fourfold city, and the poet's cycle completes itself. With the unity of the Four Zoas, the Tree of Mystery disappears, for the completeness of man is achieved. Thus, the Tree is evident throughout the poetry, except for Eden, the final vision in the prophecy. With the unity of the Four Zoas, Urizen is redeemed; Milton is prepared for the great awakening; and Albion becomes the whole man. Only then does the Tree of Mystery disappear.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explicate the Tree of Mystery symbolism and to illuminate Blake's concept of evil. For Blake, the primal evils are division and encroachment. The purpose of his poetry was to reveal the divided condition of man and the evils which follow the divided state. However, the poetry anticipates a future in which man will be restored to unity within the concept of the fourfold system.

The Mysterious Tree symbology in Blake's poetry is of primary importance toward an understanding of the poet's fourfold system. An overwhelming and encompassing symbol for cruelty, repression, tyranny and intellectual error in the earlier work, the Tree becomes a symbol for the religious and moral values imposed on man, as seen in the poet's own time during the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution.

Blake does not believe in the war between good and evil; he sees only the creative tension presented by the struggle of man to resolve the Contraries. The primal evils in Blake's poetry are division and encroachment; he is always attempting to explain how the split in man occurred and to show the necessary struggle for man to unify himself as an integral and imaginative human nature. Man can be whole only when the imagination is at work, for then it is connected with a special perception, insight or intuition.

The theme of the poetry is always the defense of the integral human personality; this includes the body, brain, heart and spirit. But when the human personality is not integrated, the poet's persistent symbol for the misconceptions, errors, fearfulness, and abstract knowledge which derive from a repression or restriction of one or more of man's faculties is the ambiguous Tree of Mystery. In short, the Tree is a symbol for the secrecy, unnatural restraint and fear of life and is imposed on man by the materialism of the external world. The symbol for evil represents the deception in the mind, and the end result is a distortion of the personality. Blake sees the division or repression of any one of the Four Zoas as evil, because it limits or inhibits man's imagination. The symbol for Blake's concept of evil or negation is the ambiguous Tree of Mystery. Although the Tree of Mystery appears regularly throughout the poetry, it is a complex symbol and the extent of its numerous meanings is not precise. It does seem to represent a split in the human consciousness caused by the development of the intellect at the expense of the imaginative and sensual life. According to Blake, the division of man is the primal evil. The division results in the separation of the Spectre from the Emanation, and it is typified by the Tree of Mystery. Throughout the poetry, the Tree of Mystery illuminates the poet's concept of evil.

The fundamental idea of Blake's poetry may be described as unity springing from diversity. This is a tension between opposites, and Blake states as much in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell."

Without Contraries is no progression.
Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and
Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary
to Human existence.

(Plate 3, p. 34)

The final statement of the poet is that man's quest toward working out his solution against external evil is found within his own soul. Man must continue to fight, not with physical force, but with weapons of the spirit. The fight is for the restoration of the Whole Man, the true unity based on the essential tension between Contraries. William Blake hoped that man would look within himself for insight that could illuminate and purify his daily living.

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