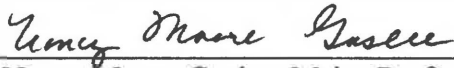


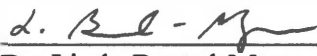
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Laura Ellen Rutland entitled "Hindrances, Acts, and the Scapegoat: William Blake, Kenneth Burke, and the Rhetoric of Order." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.



Dr. Nancy Moore Goslee, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Dr. Linda Bense-Meyers

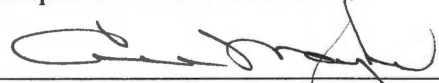


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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

HINDRANCE, ACT, AND THE SCAPEGOAT:
WILLIAM BLAKE, KENNETH BURKE, AND THE RHETORIC OF ORDER

A Dissertation
Presented for the
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Degree
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Robert Eugene Rutland and Elizabeth Jones Rutland, who have given so much from the beginning.

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Abstract

William Blake's works are full of the imagery of scapegoating, both violent and non-violent. Yet most of the critical attention to scapegoating in Blake focuses on the last of his major prophecies, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. In contrast, this dissertation will examine scapegoating in earlier texts, works written between 1788 and 1806. Using the rhetorical theory of Kenneth Burke, this study will examine the relationship between Blake's concerns about scapegoating and his antinomian rejection of law and rational systems of order.

This study will achieve three primary aims. First, it will show that Blake's obsession with scapegoating does not begin in the later works, but is already implicit in his earliest works. Second, this study will demonstrate that Blake's perspective on scapegoating is, like Burke's, connected to ideas about the dangers of symbolic orders, particularly when these systems become rigid. According to Burke, systems of order function as rhetoric, persuading us to commit ourselves to absolute attitudes and beliefs. These beliefs lead to guilt, because no system can be perfectly obeyed. Finally, this guilt leads to the selection of a scapegoat who redeems from guilt and unifies the community. For Burke, this pattern is embedded in the nature of language as we use it to create consubstantiation with others in our communities. Upon close examination, it appears that Blake has similar concerns.

Finally, this study will trace the changes in Blake's attitude towards symbolic order and scapegoating throughout the 1790's. In the texts that do not involve Blake's self-created mythologies, he criticizes the scapegoating potentials in particular systems—Christianity and Empiricism. However, once Blake begins to create his own mythologies, his critique of symbolic order becomes more generalized, applying to systems of order *per se*. In the *Lambeth prophecies*, the figure of Urizen represents order in general, and this order is rejected completely. But in *The Four Zoas*, Blake produces a much more complex view of symbolic order and scapegoating, attempting to overcome scapegoating and "Corporeal War" by means of what Burke calls an "ultimate dialectic," a hierarchy in which the quest for ultimate values occurs within a flexible and ever-shifting system.

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to identify specific texts by either Blake or Burke.

Blake

E Erdman, ed.—*The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*

Burke

ATH *Attitudes Towards History*

CS *Counter-statement*

DD *Dramatism and Development*

GM *A Grammar of Motives*

LASA *Language as Symbolic Action*

PC *Permanence and Change*

PLF *Philosophy of Literary Form*

RM *A Rhetoric of Motives*

RR *The Rhetoric of Religion*

Chapter I
Introduction:
William Blake, Kenneth Burke, and the Scapegoat

The poetry of William Blake abounds with images of violence, from the depictions of violent warfare in *America* and *Europe*, to the portrayals of ritual sacrifice that pervade *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Even when directly violent acts are absent, as in *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*, the imagery of violence often remains. For example, when little Tom Dacre, the chimney sweeper of *Songs of Innocence*, is shorn of his hair that “curl’d like a lambs back,” (l.12: E 10), the reader is invited to see Tom as a sacrificial lamb.¹ Likewise, the poisonous tree of the “The Human Abstract” is like the Druid oaks that appear in Blake’s later prophecies.² While Blake criticism tends to focus on the kinds of scapegoating and sacrificial violence that appear predominantly in Blake’s nineteenth-century illuminated texts, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, violence and sacrifice are both present to some degree throughout the opus.

In Blake’s works, violence appears in a variety of forms--ritual sacrifice, state

¹ All quotations from Blake are taken from David V. Erdman’s 1982 edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Short poems will be cited with line number, as well as Erdman’s page number. Longer works will be cited with page or plate number followed by line number, as well as Erdman’s page number. On occasion, chapter numbers may be used where they appear. Erdman indicates erasures from Blake’s illuminated plates through the use of italics. When deleted material is quoted in this document, the same convention will be used. Erased material may not always be quoted. The reader should also be aware that Blake both spells and punctuates in eccentric and inconsistent ways. These eccentricities will be copied exactly as they appear in the Erdman edition without further comment, since the repetitive use of “Sic” would be so constant as to be distracting.

² For a full discussion, see David V. Erdman’s *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, p. 272-73.

execution, warfare, and family violence, to name just a few. Often, Blake uses sacrificial imagery to protest forms of violence prevalent in his culture, including state execution and state-sponsored warfare, yet his attitude towards both violence and sacrifice remains complex. Revolutionary violence appears to be affirmed in early works like *America: A Prophecy*, despite Blake's commitment to Mental rather than Corporeal War. Similarly, religious images of sacrifice, ordinarily treated by Blake as unacceptable scapegoating, assume a positive role when joined with the notion of Self-annihilation in the later poems. In fact, the images of ritual sacrifice play a central role in Blake's opus, entwining themselves inextricably with Blake's treatment of topics like revolution, state oppression, the church, and even language itself. Non-violent scapegoating is even more ubiquitous, usually taking the form of accusations, recriminations, or efforts at revenge in contexts where the accuser is as guilty as the one he or she blames. These verbal forms of scapegoating are often the precursors of more violent actions that take place within the same poem or closely related works.

While there is considerable incidental mention of both scapegoating and ritual sacrifice in discussions of Blake's earlier works, those written, or at least begun, during the late 1780's all the way through the radical 1790's, I have found no study that focuses exclusively on either scapegoating or sacrifice in these texts. There are, however, some discussions of sacrificial elements in the later texts that Blake produced during the nineteenth-century, especially *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Mary Kelly Persyn's dissertation, "*Eternal Death*" and *Imaginative Life: Sacrifice vs. Self-Annihilation in the Works of William Blake*, offers a valuable full-length study comparing the concepts of sacrifice and

self-annihilation in Blake's poetry, but her focus is on *Milton* and *Jerusalem* only. Her work explores the distinction between sacrifice and self-annihilation, and her project aims to refute feminist claims that Blake scapegoats women. Persyn does not provide an exploration of scapegoating and sacrifice as they function in Blake's earlier career.³ Other scholars like Peter F. Fisher, A. C. Owen, Jon Mee, and Jason Whittaker focus on Blake's portrayal of Druids and Druidic sacrifice, providing excellent insights into the ways that Blake adapts the ideas about Druids that were common in his own cultural milieu.⁴ While very oblique references to Druid oaks appear in *The Songs of Experience* and in *The Book of Ahania*, and direct but brief mention of them occurs in *The Four Zoas*, Druids only play a major role beginning in the late works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Thus, all of these studies are mostly relevant to the understanding of these later prophecies.

However, it is my belief that the less specifically Druidic forms of scapegoating, sacrifice, and/or violence that occur in the earlier texts provide an important basis for understanding why Blake is so obsessed with Druids in his later works. In other words, we will better understand the sacrificial elements of the later texts if we carefully examine their precursors in the works that Blake wrote in his most active period in the late 1780's and throughout the politically volatile and violent decade of the 1790's. Thus, this study will focus on the various forms of sacrifice, scapegoating, and violence that appear in

³Persyn has also published an article based on part of her dissertation, "'No Human Form but Sexual': Sensibility, Chastity, and Sacrifice in Blake's *Jerusalem*." This article was published in the *European Romantic Review*, vol. 10, 1999.

⁴More detailed discussion of this approach to sacrifice will appear later in this study. The Fisher text referred to here is the article, "Blake and the Druids." Fisher's book, *The Valley of Vision*, does not include discussions of Druids or sacrifice.

selected works from the 1790's, including *The Four Zoas*, which was probably completed, or set aside, between 1806 and 1807, but which Blake began working on in 1796.

Although the later works—*Milton*, *Jerusalem*, and *The Ghost of Abel*—are obviously laden with sacrificial imagery, they will not be included in this study, in part because the scapegoating in these texts has already received some critical attention, but more importantly, because the first two of these are so long and complex that an analysis of all the elements of scapegoating, sacrifice, and violence in these texts would require a book-length study in and of itself. Yet, it is to be hoped that by the end of this study, the implications of Burkean theory for the later works will be clear, opening the path for further exploration in a second study.

The following chapters will explore the role of a variety of forms of sacrifice, scapegoating, and violence in William Blake's poetry, demonstrating how Blake's depictions of these phenomena point to a relationship between language as a hierarchical system and acts of violence and scapegoating that actually occur in culture. In doing so, this study will demonstrate that for the antinomian Blake, scapegoating, whether violent or non-violent, is one of the most virulent results of laws and of other forms of systematic symbolic order, all of them linguistic phenomena of which he is deeply suspicious.

Employing the theories of a twentieth-century antinomian rhetorician and literary critic, Kenneth Burke, I will argue that Blake's poetry demonstrates how symbolic systems and hierarchies may function rhetorically to produce a psychology of scapegoating in those persons to whom these symbolic actions are addressed. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how Blake's antinomianism softens and is transformed in the middle 1790's, as he begins

to recognize the unavoidability of hierarchical symbolic orders. With this recognition, Blake seeks a way to create and maintain order without perpetuating a cycle of scapegoating, violence, and ritual sacrifice.

This rhetorical approach requires, among other things, a shift in the traditional thinking about the relationship between language and history in Blake scholarship, that is, the artificial division of Blake criticism into two camps, mythological or language-based studies and historical studies. This sharp break is seriously misleading, particularly when we begin to think about the relationship between order and scapegoating in Blake's works. To demonstrate the problems with this split, we need to look briefly at some examples in the Blake literature. As we have already seen, we do not yet have book-length studies on scapegoating in Blake's works, but we do have discussions of violence written by critics whose primary concerns lie elsewhere. Generally speaking, these studies, like all Blake criticism, are generally read either as ahistorical analyses, based on concerns with mythology or language, or as historical studies that explore Blake's response to his own political context.⁵

One of the founding ahistorical critiques, Northrop Frye's classic *Fearful Symmetry*, attempts a complete overview of Blake's mythology, placing Blake's treatment of sacrifice and violence within the schema of the Orc cycle. According to Frye, Orc, the fiery revolutionary principle, suffers oppression at the hands of the Urizenic principle of

⁵Because there are so many reviews of Blake criticism that chronicle the history of this split, I will not repeat the narrative here. While some recent critics, like Nicholas M. Williams, have attempted to bridge the gap, most criticism continues to fall either into the category of historical criticism or into the camp of mythological or linguistically based studies. A thorough discussion of these different positions, and the placement of specific critics into these camps, can be found in Jackie DiSalvo's introduction to DiSalvo and Hobson's *Blake, Politics, and History*.

order, but eventually hardens and becomes Urizenic himself. Thus, violence is initiated by the agents of a rigid and abstracted order, then appears in a new form as revolutionary energy, and finally, recurs in its original rigid form as the spent energy of revolution hardens into a type of its original persecutor. Thus, this revolutionary principle becomes a kind of universal and cyclical myth.

Naturally, this view of violence as cyclical and recurring has been distressing to those critics who appreciate Blake for his radical social attitudes, and who want to find in Blake an advocate of real social change, social change that is not necessarily destined to produce a never ending cycle of injustice and violence. While David V. Erdman in his *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* does not specifically contest Frye's reading, he shifts the emphasis to show how Blake's images of Druidism, violence, and sacrifice actually refer to specific situations in Blake's own historical context. Ultimately, Erdman argues, Blake sees the revolutionary violence of his own time, the American Revolution, for example, as having the potential to escape from the death-dealing patterns of the past: "But the revolutionary war, with its articulate credo, is a harvest sacrifice made by people with opened eyes and an enlightened social program for cultivating the earth as a garden paradise" (251). Erdman understands Blake to be promoting violent revolutionary acts as necessary to the cause of justice, while condemning the sacrifices demanded by state-sanctioned warfare or execution. Recent historical criticism, like that of Christopher Z. Hobson, retains Erdman's basic assumptions while arguing that Blake's attitudes towards revolutionary violence are complex and change more over time than Erdman recognizes. Hobson, however, directly attacks Frye's description of the Orc cycle, arguing that "the

Orc cycle is almost entirely the product of Frye's imagination, not Blake's" (47).

Yet both Frye and Hobson are both partially correct about the cycle of violence represented in the revolutionary figure of Orc. Blake does depict a negative cycle of violence, as Frye suggests, but he also differentiates between better and worse forms of violence within the historical context. Furthermore, as Hobson suggests, Blake does recommend revolutionary violence at some stages of his career, certainly during the 1790's. Blake is not simply creating a universal myth. Yet the mythological elements of his works do point towards general claims about human life and about language.

The difficulty with the split between the historical and ahistorical approaches is that it assumes somehow that language is separate from history and that Blake is either as a commentator on his time or as the creator of timeless mythologies. Yet an either/or approach is not necessarily an appropriate response to Blake. Fortunately, some recent critics, recognizing that the texts contain both particular historical interventions and more general and universal language, have attempted to bridge this gap by demonstrating how Blake's mythological language works rhetorically.⁶ While Nicholas M. Williams' *Ideology*

⁶For some, especially those trained in classical rhetoric, it may seem strange to link the term "rhetoric" with a "Romantic poet," particularly a poet as eccentric as William Blake. Certainly, there have been deconstructive readings of Blake, like Peter Otto's *Constructive Vision, Visionary Deconstruction*, and there have been deconstructive approaches to Romanticism, perhaps the most famous being found in the work of Paul DeMan. These approaches, which are concerned with tropes and with other rhetorical strategies, are, nevertheless, often allied with those approaches that are seen as anti-historical. Scholars who are concerned with rhetoric in its traditional role of persuasion have perceived Romanticism as anti-rhetorical, concerned with the self-expression of the author rather than communication with an audience. This view, however, is often overstated. Even strongly expressivist criticism of Romanticism, like M. H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* and Morris Eaves' *William Blake's Theory of Art*, leaves room for the role of an audience. More recently, Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence Needham in *Rhetorical Traditions in British Romanticism*, collect articles that demonstrate a relationship between Romantic poetry and audience-based rhetorical traditions, both classical and Hebraic. See Bialostosky and Needham for a more complete discussion. For treatments of Romanticism as destructive to the discipline of rhetoric, see Brian Vickers' *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*, John Bender and David E. Wellbery's *The Ends of*

and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake is a Marxist study rather than a rhetorical one—Williams never uses the term “rhetoric”—his reading offers an explanation of how Blake’s mythological language functions rhetorically. Williams suggests that the use of mythological language allows Blake to draw upon a Utopian ideal readily recognizable in his culture, Christian apocalypticism, and use it to criticize destructive cultural systems. While Blake recognizes himself to be ensnared in the negative aspects of his own culture, complicit in the forms of language and thought that he most deplores, he uses the Utopian ideals of Christian apocalypse to confront his audience with the inadequacy of their cultural practices. Williams effectively explores how this Utopian mythology works for Blake by placing Blake’s poetry in conversation with other works of the period. Williams, however, pays little if any attention to the issues of scapegoating or violence.

Jon Mee, on the other hand, devotes considerable attention to Blake’s interest in sacrificial language. Mee accepts E. P. Thompson’s description of Blake as a working-class radical, strongly influenced by antinomian religious sects.⁷ For Mee, Blake is a *bricoleur*, who combines antinomian rhetoric, along with other aspects of eighteenth-century thought, into a new self-created structure. In his book *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790's*, Mee devotes a number of pages to a discussion of the contemporary sources for Blake’s images of human sacrifice and ritual violence. Specifically, Mee refers to texts which would have been well-known to

Rhetoric, and Patricia Bizzell and Bruce M. Herzberg’s textbook *The Rhetorical Tradition*.

⁷Thompson’s *Witness Against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* argues for a connection between Blake and a particular antinomian sect, the Muggletonians. Whether such a connection is true or not, Thompson makes a good case that Blake’s rhetoric is strongly influenced by the language of antinomian writing and preaching.

eighteenth-century readers: James Macpherson's Ossian poems, William Stukeley's discussions of Stonehenge and druidic ritual, and John Toland's *A Critical History of the Druids*, among others. Mee not only argues that Blake uses these sources but also that his adaptations of them demonstrate his essentially radical commitments.⁸

All in all, Mee's depiction of Blake as *bricoleur* is highly persuasive. It identifies sources for Blake's treatment of violence and sacrifice, and it takes into account another major element of Blake's project—his antinomian struggle with social and symbolic systems—a struggle expressed so clearly in the words of Blake's character Los, "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (*Jerusalem* 10.20; E153). Los's words encapsulate Blake's struggle with many of the symbolic systems that create his culture: Christianity in its various forms, eighteenth-century philosophy and natural science as embodied in the writings of the "Unholy Trinity" of Bacon, Newton, and Locke; the arts establishment, the monarchy; and the rapidly rising industrial systems of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Also, Mee's choice of the term *bricolage* accurately describes the patchwork quality of Blake's systems, which combine original, almost private, symbols with symbols derived from the larger culture. Finally, Mee's approach to Blake's system-making takes seriously the rhetorical elements of Blake's work, an aspect that cannot be overlooked since Blake defines himself as prophet and orator, both terms that imply a rhetorical motive—an interest in intervening in the public life of his culture.⁹

⁸Mee's discussion of Blake and Druidism depends in part upon the previous scholarship of A. L. Owen and Peter Fisher.

⁹For a fuller discussion of the terms "orator" and "prophet" as they relate to eighteenth-century rhetorical thought, see Leslie Tannenbaum's *Biblical Traditions in Blake's Early Prophecies*:

Placing Blake's prophecies in conversation with other radical thinkers of the period, Mee is able to demonstrate how the unusual form of Blake's work has its roots in his own culture and, indeed, has a rhetorical function. Blake is piecing together working-class Protestant thought and more middle-class and upper-class aesthetic forms in an attempt to protest church and state abuses without losing the imaginative richness of the religious language that he loves and knows to be familiar to people of all social classes.

Nevertheless, the concept of *bricolage* is not entirely adequate to deal with the ways in which rhetoric, symbolic systems, and scapegoating intersect in Blake's opus. The notion of *bricolage* implies no necessary connection between hierarchical system-making and various forms of sacrifice and violence, and Mee certainly makes no such connection. This study, on the other hand, will argue that such a connection appears repeatedly in Blake's eighteenth-century texts, and that whenever laws are made or systems are built in these works, then accusations, violent abuse of other individuals, warfare, and ritual sacrifice follow, usually immediately, and almost always as a direct result of the symbolic orders themselves. Furthermore, all of these behaviors function as forms of scapegoating in terms that Kenneth Burke also relates directly to language in its systematic forms. These connections between language and violence recur even as Blake's presentation of hierarchically ordered systems changes throughout his career. In fact, I will argue, the connection between violence and hierarchical symbolic systems is central to Blake's work and provides one rationale for explaining how Blake's mythological language intersects

The Great Code of Art. Further discussion of the connection between Blake, Romanticism, and rhetoric will appear in Chapter III.

with his historical concerns. For Blake, symbolic actions produce history. One cannot talk about language without talking about history, and one cannot talk about history without talking about language.

Thus, although this study may appear at times to depend more on transhistorical claims about language than upon actual historical events, we must always keep in mind that historical circumstances are giving form to Blake's thought, providing impetus for the transformation of his ideas about both particular historical situations and the functions of language in all time periods. The excellent historical studies of scholars like Erdman, DiSalvo, Hobson and many others is in no way incompatible with the approach taken here. In fact, central to Blake's concern is the attempt to work out the relationship between particular historical systems of order, particular social and cultural hierarchies, and claims about all hierarchical systems of order in any period of history.¹⁰

The difficulty for Blake is that as he uses language, his own poems and prophecies take a hierarchical form. In other words, he is involved in creating the very kinds of systems that he sees as dangerous. Ultimately, Blake's work expresses a severe tension. On the one hand, there is his antinomian rage at the eighteenth-century British cultural order, replete with its laws, and with its hierarchical systems of governance, science and religion, all of which, he argues, lead to scapegoating and, finally, to sacrificial violence in the form of state warfare. On the other hand, however, is the inescapable hierarchical order that emerges in his own language. Thus, Blake attempts to negotiate a new

¹⁰Good evidence for these types of connections is provided by those texts that explore the use of typology in Blake's writings. See particularly DiSalvo's *War of Titans* and George Anthony Rosso, Jr.'s *Blake's Prophetic Workshop*.

relationship between the rhetorical power of symbolic systems and the forms of violent scapegoating that he sees these systems as producing. In his mythological works, he shows an ever-growing awareness of the ways in which resisting the particular historical manifestations of sacrificial violence and oppression that so troubled him can recreate the same patterns in new and different forms. Thus he struggles to “create a system” that will escape this pattern. In a sense, Blake’s argument can be seen as creating a kind of dialectical pattern. On the one hand, he is producing rhetoric that addresses particular social problems common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On the other hand, particularly, in his mythological works, he is producing metarhetorical discourse, examining the ways in which language appears to work in general. Thus, he is commenting on specific social and cultural problems, protesting particular social evils that he wishes to correct, but he is also, through his use of mythological language, making more general claims about language, how it works, and how it contributes to violence in the particular social context.

In this regard, Blake can be compared to Kenneth Burke, the twentieth century rhetorician and literary critic whose work will provide the theoretical basis for this project. Burke’s critical and rhetorical work, like Blake’s poetry, is rhetoric in two senses of the word. As Stephen Bygrave points out, Burke’s work treats rhetoric as “both a practice and the study of that practice” (110). Burke uses rhetorical strategies to make particular interventions in the literary and social arguments of its own time, but he also makes metarhetorical arguments, general claims about the way that rhetoric functions in any situation or time. The connections between Blake and Burke do not end here. Bygrave has

noted a number of similarities between Burke and Blake. For example, Bygrave claims that Burke, like Blake, is creating “a Bible of Hell, an antinomian rhetoric . . .” (9). Burke describes himself as an antinomian, yet, like Blake, is driven by a demand for system.¹¹ I would add, further, that both men repeatedly use Biblical images of creation and fall (in highly unorthodox ways) to frame their claims about society and about language. And, most importantly for this project, both men are obsessed by the human capacity for scapegoating, and the relationship between this phenomenon and the nature of language itself. Both, particularly, are concerned about scapegoating in its more violent forms, or as Burke calls it in one of his poems, “the cult of the kill” (*RR* 4-5)¹² Both men invite us to question our trust in familiar symbolic orders by becoming aware of the way in which these orders function. Both of them hope that, as we engage in this questioning, we will become open to the possibility of positive transformation and less likely to scapegoat and destroy others in a futile attempt to hang on to rigid systems that we treat as ultimate

¹¹In a preface to a later edition of his first book, *Counter-statement*, Burke describes his delight in the antinomian impulses of his early text, a claim that clearly justifies Bygrave’s definition of Burke as an antinomian, like Blake (*CS* vii). Yet, Burke also claims, in the same breath, that all art is antinomian, a view with which William Blake would clearly have disagreed, unless, that is, the word “true” were added before the term “art.” See Blake’s annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds (E 635-61).

¹²Burke himself makes reference to Blake when he describes his “Lord,” a divine character who represents Logos or the positive functions of language, as a “Blakean bearded patriarch” (*RR* 276), a Urizenic figure who in Blake represents both order and oppression. Further, Blake’s poetry plays a large role in Burke’s early novel *Towards a Better Life*. Here the young writer who is the narrator and central figure of the novel writes a short story that appears as a chapter in the novel, a short story built around Blake’s poetry. Burke generally describes the character of John Neal, the young novelist in *Towards a Better Life*, in negative terms, while claiming that the work is a “ritualistic transformation” of his own youth (ATH 390). Burke’s analysis implies he identifies himself with Blake while, at the same time, mocking some of the more antinomian (Blakean?) aspects of his own project and character. But however mocking, this reference does support the argument that there is no real strain in connecting Burke and Blake. See also Austin Warren and, especially, William H. Rueckert’s article “Symbolic Action in Kenneth Burke’s novel, *Towards a Better Life*.”

when they are not. In the following section, we will examine the basics of Burke's rhetorical theory, particularly as it pertains to the relationship between language and scapegoating. In the process, we will explore the Burkean terminology and methodology that will govern our exploration of Blake's work.

Kenneth Burke, the Scapegoat, and the Rhetoric of Order: A Theoretical Overview

While the sacrificial imagery in Blake's work provides the initial impetus for this study, underlying the imagery, at its roots, is Blake's larger suspicion of symbolic systems in and of themselves. This suspicion of law and other hierarchical structures defines Blake as an antinomian, and certainly he sees these systems as having a variety of negative results, the truncation of the imaginative faculty being a primary one, since such a loss damages vision, creativity, and agency. These rigid laws and systems also lead, for Blake, to a variety of social evils, including entrenched economic injustice and scapegoating in a variety of forms.

The same basic principle holds true for Kenneth Burke. The strongest link between Blake and Burke is their essential antinomianism, although Burke is antinomian to a lesser degree than Blake, since Burke always accepts the need for systems at a fundamental level. Nevertheless, like Blake, he deplores the limited vision that devotion to one form of symbolic order can produce, and, also like Blake, he is concerned about the ways in which symbolic orders can mask or perpetuate social injustice, particularly economic injustice. But the social consequence to which he gives the most attention is scapegoating. Thus the relationship between scapegoating and symbolic order provides an excellent entry point into an examination of Burke's ideas about language. For this reason,

and because the relationship between symbolic order and scapegoating lies at the center of this study, we will begin our exploration of Burke's rhetorical theory with what is probably his most complete definition of scapegoating.

In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke defines the scapegoat as one who is "profoundly consubstantial with those who, looking upon it as a chosen vessel, would ritualistically cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it. Thus the scapegoat represents the principle of division in that its persecutors would alienate from themselves to it their own uncleannesses" (406). Yet, in representing their iniquities, it also involves a principle of unity, or merger. "In representing *their* iniquities, it performs the role of vicarious atonement (that is, unification, or merger, granted to those who have alienated their iniquities upon it, and so may be purified through its suffering)" (406).¹³ The scapegoat purifies the community by being identified with its evil, and yet, at the same time, being other than the community. In its role as "other," the scapegoat figure allows the community to become unified around a common enemy.

This process is certainly subject to any number of variations. Sometimes, for example, the suffering of a victim may be the founding event that acts symbolically to bind a group together in the first place, and then new sacrifices are required to hold the community together as conflicts emerge that must be purged if the group is to continue to

¹³In contrast to its large place in Burke's thought, scapegoating, at least in its real world dimensions, has received relatively little attention in the literature. For an extended discussion, see C. Allen Carter's *Kenneth Burke and the Scapegoat Process*. Carter metaphorically describes Burke's scapegoating theory as related to the rod, the ladder, and the skull (law, hierarchy, and death). My reading differs from Carter's primarily in placing an intensive focus on the relationship between Burke's scapegoating theory and his theories of language. This difference is one of emphasis, however. Carter also addresses these issues.

function. Burke exemplifies this particular process by describing a boyhood club, founded upon the killing of a rattlesnake and sustained by further “sacrifices” when conflicts over officers and dues threatened to tear the group apart (*RM* 266). Such sacrifices, presumably the sacrifice of other snakes or ritual reenactment of the original sacrifice, allowed the boys to renew their sense of community and reassimilate it. In other cases, scapegoating may serve to unify the psyche of an individual by purging guilt, something to which Burke gives attention in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. The religious idea of the redeemer provides another variant. As Burke himself suggests, the purgation of guilt, as exemplified in the Christian understanding of Jesus’s death, for example, can be a much more complicated symbolic process (*GM* 407). Thus, it will receive separate attention later in this discussion.

In any case, whatever form of conflict scapegoating is intended to purge, it is important to remember that for Burke, scapegoating can take a variety of forms. It can be as simple as the use of “dyslogistic terminology” to purify oneself or one’s group by blaming someone else for whatever conflicts arise (*RM* 141-42). It can also take a variety of violent forms. Burke suggests a number of them: the sacrificial death of Jesus, ritually understood; the Holocaust; warfare; even the punishment of criminals, insofar as a community “‘purifies itself’ by ‘moral indignation’ in condemning them” (406). The revolutionary impulse, be it Marxist or otherwise, can also derive from the scapegoating motive. Arguing that hierarchy is inevitable in any culture or in any symbolic system, Burke claims that the scapegoat can be “a revolutionary kind of expression,” when the moralizing of social class reverses the roles of the highest and the lowest on the hierarchy (*RM* 140-41). In other words, revolutionaries may scapegoat their oppressors if their

motives derive from the need to cleanse themselves by reversing the hierarchy which places them on the bottom and the oppressors on the top.¹⁴ It is not the violence of the acts, in and of themselves, that makes them scapegoating. It is the motivation that drives them. What is common in all these situations is the attempt to purge one's own conflicts, anxieties, or guilt by turning against or blaming someone else who is both alike and different from the individual or group benefitting from the sacrifice. Furthermore, in all of these situations, some sort of union or merger occurs, within a group or individual, by the symbolic separation from the scapegoat.

Burke is certainly not unique in arguing that the sacrificial victim is always both different from and similar to the community that uses him or her as the vehicle of purification. Nor is he unique in arguing that there is a relationship between the religious sacrifice described in the Christian narrative and secular forms of killing like warfare, genocide, or revolution. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, William Blake's contemporary, Joseph de Maistre, points out that even animal sacrifices are always chosen from "the gentlest, the most innocent, those nearest to man because of instincts of habits" ("Elucidation" 358). In the twentieth century, René Girard makes the same point by clearly delineating the marks of the human victim of scapegoating; the victim is similar enough to be symbolically substituted for community members, but different enough to allow the community members to victimize him or her without sanctioning violence

¹⁴François Furet and Denis Richelet provide a fascinating account that exemplifies this process in the context of the French Revolution. According to Furet and Richelet, when arguments were being made concerning whether or not Louis XVI should be tried prior to his beheading, Robespierre argued, "If the king is not guilty, those who have deposed him are" (*French Revolution* 163). Such an argument, while having clear pragmatic and political repercussions, also reflects the kind of cleansing motive that Burke describes here.

against others in the community.¹⁵ Furthermore, both Maistre and Girard describe executions as ritual sacrifices, and Girard is clearly interested in the relationship between scapegoating and warfare.

What is unique about Burke's contribution is his focus on the relationship between sacrifice and language. Burke's definition of the scapegoat focuses on the principle of division and merger as a function of language, the function that enables it to make connections between disparate objects and to separate and distinguish among objects that might otherwise be regarded as similar. In fact, the principles of merger and division, which figure so prominently in Burke's understanding of scapegoating, also operate in his overall definition of rhetoric. Burke defines rhetoric "*as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols*" (RM 43). Such cooperation occurs when human beings come to see themselves as consubstantial with other human beings, that is, when they come to experience themselves as essentially one with another person or persons, and to act accordingly, whether or not their interests are, in fact, the same. As was mentioned earlier, a combination of consubstantiality and separation is the necessary formula for scapegoating according to Burke's definition. Yet, these same two elements are necessary, according to Burke, for all rhetoric. We only use rhetoric to establish consubstantiality with others because we are in fact separate from them in some way (Burke, RM 22). The very principle that makes scapegoating possible is the same principle that makes rhetorical activity possible.

Insofar as rhetorical activity is a means of bridging these gaps between human

¹⁵See Girard's *The Scapegoat*, chapter 2, "Stereotypes of Persecution," pages 12-23.

beings, Burke sees all language as essentially rhetorical. All language use is a form of “symbolic action.” Scientific discourse, poetry, traditional oratory or rhetoric, or even entire symbolic systems like mythologies or scientific theories, are human actions, designed to produce effects on other human beings. While Burke accepts that description is an aspect of language, one that he refers to in at least one context in terms of a “chart” (*PLF* 6), his emphasis is on the ways in which all symbolic actions, including those that can be characterized as charts, have the potential to affect human motives—one of which is the scapegoating motive. In other words, if we describe our universe in religious terms, as a great chain of being with God at the top, our motivations, our attitudes and actions, will be created by that method of charting the world. Likewise, if we describe the universe as a great machine, and our bodies as little machines, that, too will form our motivations, and thus, our actions. Finally, if we come to see our system as absolute, whatever it is, we may develop the willingness to sacrifice human lives to keep it unchanged, particularly since that system allows us to maintain consubstantiation with other members of our community who are significant to us. In this sense, all language is rhetorical. It is both a primary determinant of our actions and one of its function is to connect us with some people while separating us from others.

Thus, for Burke, the conditions of connection and separation that require human beings to use language are the very conditions that make scapegoating a prevalent tendency. Scapegoating remains a constant possibility simply because of the dialectical potentials that exist in all language. One could argue that, at a structural level, scapegoating is unavoidable, insofar as it is an aspect of the process of merger and

division, which is necessary in any form of persuasive rhetoric. For example, if one argues against war, as Burke does himself, one attempts to unite one's audience against common foes—death, nuclear Holocaust, planetary annihilation, and so on. However, this form of merger and division is simply an unavoidable function of language. It is fundamental to the way language works and, as such, it is morally neutral.

Yet, because language works this way, it takes a remarkable level of attention and wisdom to assure that the separated term, or scapegoat, is not an innocent person or group, however innocent the process of merger and division might be in and of itself. It is even more difficult to avoid the sacrifice of relatively innocent victims, people or ideas that are not altogether good, but certainly no worse than those on whose behalf they are being scapegoated. Whether the scapegoated term in a symbolic action represents a person or an idea, the choice of a scapegoat is a moral issue, and the inevitable presence of what one might call the “structural scapegoat”¹⁶ makes the formation of violent motivations very easy. Yet, the scapegoating of people, treated as ritual sacrifices that will purge our guilt or conflicts, is avoidable. As Burke puts it, “Trying to be as cheerful as possible, one might say that sacrifice is *not inevitable*. But the *temptation* to victimage is ever born anew” (DD 29).

As the previous quotation demonstrates, there are a number of terms in play here, and Burke uses a variety of words to talk about the scapegoating principle without always distinguishing clearly between them. The terms scapegoating, sacrifice, and victimage all appear at various points in Burke's writing, and the phrase devil-term is also used to

¹⁶This is my term, not Burke's.

describe the term at the bottom of a symbolic order, the “structural scapegoat” against which a language user attempts to rally his or her audience. In the above quotation, for example, Burke uses the term “sacrifice” as a synonym for victimage, whereas elsewhere the term has a positive valance, and is used to talk about the self-giving that makes peace possible.

Thus, in this study, for the sake of convenience, different terms will be assigned particular meanings. Sacrifice is the broadest term, and can be used to describe either positive or negative forms of division, by which we separate ourselves from particular ideas, values, or people. If used in the negative sense, however, this will be clarified by the context. Often, it will be often used to describe the positive renunciation of vices or attitudes that are destructive to human relationships, the kinds of sacrifices that Burke suggests are “the essence of peace” (*RM* 125). These peaceful sacrifices can be contrasted with those which are “the essence of war, with men piously persuading themselves that they are never so comforted as when contemplating a blood-bath” (*RM* 255).

Scapegoating, a sub-category of the term sacrifice, will be reserved for theoretically avoidable forms of sacrifice, like the aforementioned blood-bath, those forms of sacrifice in which relatively innocent objects are sacrificed in order to purge the conflicts of others. This sacrifice may or may not result in physical brutality. It can include what Burke calls dyslogistic naming, or blaming, or it may include violence, but at its essence is the use of a person, group, or even a positive idea, as a way of displacing conflict. The term “ritual sacrifice,” will be used to distinguish a particular kind of scapegoating, involving actual victimage or killing performed as part of a religious ritual or in activities that are similar to

religious rituals. Finally, what I have called the structural scapegoat will be referred to as a devil-term. This term is a value-free description of how a particular idea is functioning in discourse. Whether or not a particular devil-term is a scapegoat in the negative sense can always be the subject of ethical debate.

These distinctions are important to make, since the same linguistic potentials that make victimage a temptation also make possible the Utopian gestures towards peacemaking that motivate Burke's project, at least in its latter phase. The same principles of merger and division that allowed Hitler to make scapegoats of the Jews are functioning when Burke makes war his devil-term. During World War II and during the Cold War, it is war as a principle that Burke wants to purge, whereas, in making the term "Jew" a devil-term, Hitler paved the way for both genocide and warfare.¹⁷ But the structure of purification is common to both. *A Grammar of Motives*, written in 1945, has the epigram "ad bellum purificandum"—towards the purification of war. This book, along with *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), and *The Rhetoric of Religion* (1961) all share a thrust towards peacemaking as their ultimate rhetorical aim.¹⁸ While Burke is essentially skeptical and ironic in his approach, and for him Utopia is ultimately unattainable, it is nevertheless

¹⁷Burke provides a fascinating analysis of Hitler's rhetoric, with its use of the Jews as a common enemy around whom the German people can unite, in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, pp. 191-220.

¹⁸Earlier works, like *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Towards History*, are focused more on a Marxian concern for changes in the economic order. These concerns never go away for Burke, but he places his emphasis differently at different phases of his career, according to what issues seem more pressing. For a good, brief discussion of the phases of Burke's career and the changes in the social emphasis of his rhetoric, see Thomas M. Conley's *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, pp. 268-77. For a further discussion of peacemaking as an objective of Burke's rhetoric, see Wayne C. Booth and, especially, David Cratis Williams.

possible to move in a Utopian direction, a direction that will involve relatively benign sacrifices and the reduction or elimination of violent scapegoating.

This cleansing of the scapegoating motive can best be achieved, according to Burke, if we recognize the dialectical nature of language, because this recognition prevents our absolutizing our own linguistic creations and then seeking scapegoats when we find the systems more absolute than we can endure. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke defines “dialectics” in the broadest sense as “the employment of the possibilities of linguistic transformation” (402). Symbolic systems change constantly whether we recognize it or not, but when we recognize the transformational quality of language, we gain a more realistic sense of the limits of our symbolic systems and we are more open to the continued transformation of those systems through negotiation with others. If we deny the fact that language and symbolic orders are constantly changing, we risk deifying the orders themselves and then sacrificing other people in a futile attempt to maintain them intact.

For the purposes of this study, it will be useful to explore Burke’s analysis of dialectics, or “the possibilities of linguistic transformation” in two aspects. The first is his analysis of how our rhetorical practices contribute to scapegoating. The second is his understanding of how particular forms of discourse are used to avoid violent conflict and how a different perspective on language can help us to avoid scapegoating activity. So far, we have examined a definition of scapegoating that shows how it functions as a structure of language. However, this definition only describes the process by which a scapegoat is created in terms of a specific function of language. It does not thoroughly describe how

the scapegoating motive is cultivated within the individual or community.

The source of the scapegoating motive can perhaps best be described in terms of a hardening or rigidifying of symbolic systems.¹⁹ When language is seen as an absolute, a symbolic system may become frozen since reality and language are no longer perceived as separate.²⁰ The confusion of reality with a limited description of reality always creates an artificial limit of scope. In fact, any terminology allows us to see and limits what we can see at the same time. Later in his career, Burke describes this phenomenon using the

¹⁹It is tempting to describe this hardening of symbolic systems by using the Marxist term “reification.” In fact, David Cratis Williams uses that term to describe the results of the “perfectionistic impulse” that Burke sees in language (203-04). Burke’s concept, like Georg Lukacs’, involves a freezing of cultural structures and a painful experience of alienation. Yet, Lukacs’ notion of reification is applied quite specifically to capitalist societies, while Burke clearly means us to see the potential for such hardening in *any* symbolic system, including Marxism itself. This distinction, does not, however, imply any negation of the strong Marxist impulse in Burke’s criticism. For a good, brief definition of “reification,” see the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*. Lukacs’ original discussion can be found in his *History and Class Consciousness*. The opening chapter of Max Horkheimer’s and Theodor W. Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* provides a more strictly Marxist view of sacrifice, one that distinguishes between earlier magical forms of sacrifice and those typical of capitalist, Enlightenment thought. While they do not use the term “reification,” their work reflects a more distinctly Marxist position.

²⁰This distinction between language and reality in Burke is very important to recognize. It is easy to read Burke as a pure social constructivist, but Burke himself was absolutely insistent that his position is not quite that. In his 1966 preface to the second edition of *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke remarks that he is often misinterpreted as saying the world is “nothing but the things we say about it,” and he vigorously objects to this idea: “The greater my stress upon the role of symbolism in human behavior (and misbehavior!), the greater has been my realization of the inexorable fact that, as regards the realm of the empirical, one cannot live by the *word* for bread alone. And though the *thing* bread is tinged by the realm of symbolic *action*, its empirical nature is grounded in the realm of non-symbolic, or extra-symbolic motion.” For Burke, physical reality is separate from the symbolic, although for symbol-using creatures, reality as experienced is always found in the dialectical tension the between physical and the symbolic (xvi). As Timothy J. Crusius notes, “. . . language is for Burke language in a scene, and this scene includes much that is not language . . .” (18). The consistent linking of the material and symbolic in Burke has led to his being claimed by both traditional Marxists and post-structuralists, although each group tends to discover too much of the opposition in his approach. For a typical Marxist reading, see Frank Lentricchia. See Cary Nelson for a representative discussion from a post-structuralist position. The introduction to Crusius’ *Kenneth Burke and the Conversation After Philosophy* offers a good overall discussion of the many appropriations of Burke. See also Gregory S. Jay’s account of a conference panel, published in *Pre-Text* under the title, “Burke Re-Marx.”

metaphor of a “terministic screen,” and he begins his discussion of the terministic screen with the following description:

Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality. (*LASA* 45)

This deflection of reality by the language used to refer to it is what Burke means by a terministic screen. Terminologies are like filters of language, and the screen through which we look directs our attention to one aspect of a thing rather than another. For example, Burke suggests that psychologists will interpret the same dream differently depending upon the school to which they belong. Different terminologies may even determine entire world views (*LASA* 45).²¹

The fact that terminologies create terministic screens is not a bad thing in itself. It is simply so. We cannot help but have systems of nomenclature, and they will cause us to focus our attention in specific ways. The problem occurs when we do not realize that we are looking through a screen. When a limited terminology becomes fixed and frozen, the ability to experiment with new ways of seeing is diminished. A less obvious result can be scapegoating. In order to explore how scapegoating results from these frozen systems, we will examine the different ways in which Burke describes the process in three major books: *A Grammar of Motives*, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion*.

The earliest of these, *A Grammar of Motives*, is seriously concerned with the problem of reductionism in the use of language. One form of reductionism is the process

²¹For a full discussion of terministic screens, see the article by that title published as chapter 3 of *Language as Symbolic Action*, pages 44-62.

by which we tend to separate dialectical pairs, such that one term is good and the other bad. For example, Burke mentions the mind/body dialectic. For Burke, the human being must be described ambiguously, in a space that joins these two terms. If we decide instead that mind and body are entirely separate, and then call mind good and body bad, we have set up a situation where we reject our bodies. While Burke does not fully discuss the implications of this splitting in the *Grammar*, it is only logical to conclude that a rejection of what is an unavoidable aspect of our own being might cause us to identify another person or group with the rejected element and thus use this person or group as a scapegoat to purge our conflicts about embodiment. There is also the possibility of denying the existence of either mind or body. The attempt to explain everything by means of one set of terms is regarded by Burke as fanaticism, and fanaticism can also result in scapegoating. If only one set of terms has any validity, it seems reasonable enough to persecute those who use any other term. In particular, *A Grammar of Motives* is concerned with the fanaticism of scientific positivism, but the risk of a fanatical reductionism is always a possibility for any philosophical position. The aim of the *Grammar* is the “encouraging of tolerance through speculation” (442).

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, scapegoating is presented as a function of hierarchy, most particularly of hierarchies that become rigidly frozen. Burke regards hierarchy as an inevitable aspect of symbolic systems—particularly social systems—but expresses concern about their tendency to become inflexible:

The hierarchic principle itself is inevitable in systematic thought. It is embodied in the mere process of growth, which is synonymous with the class divisions of youth and age, stronger and weaker, male and female, or

the stages of learning, from apprentice to journeyman to master. But this last hierarchy is as good an indication as any of the way in which the “naturalness” of grades rhetorically reinforces the protection of privilege. Though in essence purely developmental, the series is readily transformed into rigid social classifications, and these interfere with the very process of development that was its reason for being. (*RM* 141)

At its best, the system can provide a sense of wholeness by creating a connection which allows all participants, at every level, to experience themselves as belonging to a meaningful order. However, hierarchies can also cause hostility, since those at the top of any system tend to enjoy privileges denied to others. Thus, while members of different social classes may court each other, each class may also “deny, suppress, exorcise the elements its shares with other classes. This attempt leads to the scapegoat [the use of dyslogistic terms for one’s own traits as manifested in an ‘alien’ class]” (141-42). In other words, differences between individuals and groups of people (like gender differences or differences in occupation) always create something of a sense of mystery. The sense of mystery that social hierarchies create allows members of different social classes to see one another as consubstantial and alienated simultaneously, thus setting up the conditions for scapegoating. Yet any attempt simply to eliminate hierarchy is destined to fail, since some form of hierarchy is likely to emerge in any system, even a system of equality. In principle, if equality is valued above privilege, equality has been placed above privilege in a hierarchy of values.²² If the seeker after equality fails to recognize the inevitability of some sort of hierarchy in his or her new social order, he or she may simply create a world where chaos is valued above order (still a hierarchy). Even more likely is the scapegoating of the

²²Leland Griffin provides a good description of this phenomenon, within the framework of a larger discussion of social movements.

person who has obvious gifts or frailties that seem to belie the idea of equality. These results might well follow if one went in search of a “pure” equality.

The quest for purity, the search for a “perfect” version of whatever terminology, system, or value we espouse, is also a fundamental aspect of the hierarchical principle. Thus, Burke calls human beings “rotten with perfection” (*LASA* 16), prone to pursue the perfection of an idea or system to the point of self-destruction. The quest for purity follows logically from hierarchical thinking. Anything that is cold can be colder; anything that is hot can be hotter. The development of a terminology for good and evil thus lends itself to the pursuit of the “perfectly good” or the “perfectly evil.” Thus, the idea of hierarchy allows us to develop a principle of *entelechy*—of purpose, even ultimate purpose. This tendency is a primary reason for both the freezing of a symbolic order, which is seen as ultimate or perfect, and the need to scapegoat in order to cleanse it or ourselves of corrupting, imperfect elements.

At the end of *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke discusses the idea of “ultimate identification,” the tendency to seek consubstantiation with the ultimate in one’s pursuit of the pure and the perfect (*RM* 328). Thus, he addresses the idea of mysticisms, with a particular emphasis on false mysticisms, the seeking of unity with an ultimate that is not really ultimate. One such ultimate might be warfare itself, which calls for complex forms of social organization and order that some find very satisfying (*RM* 332), but one might even deify a symbolic system itself, a system seen as perfect and given religious devotion. Such a system might be a religion, a political system, a philosophical system, or a scientific theory, but once it is deified, it is evident how readily anyone who questions it might be

scapegoated. Since every system will really be limited, not ultimate, the need to continually quell one's own anxious questioning would be constant, and the scapegoat could serve to purge that anxiety. Burke sees this pattern as contributing to warfare, since often "men seem to prefer the simple suicide and homicide of militarist devotion, having persuaded themselves that the further dialectical growth of doctrine would be immoral" (*RM* 253). Again, it is important to remember that the deification of any given system is avoidable, as is the scapegoating that results from it, but the tendency to think in terms of ultimate values is built into the nature of language. In and of itself, this tendency is neither avoidable nor destructive. It is only problematic when the system itself is seen as frozen and becomes ultimate, setting up the scapegoating process.

The description of this process in terms of order, guilt, and sacrifice reaches its full development for Burke in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. In this text, Burke begins a new form of study, one that he calls "logology" or "words about words" (1).²³ *The Rhetoric of Religion* is based first on the argument that religious language, as language about ultimate reality, can be understood as language about language. One might say that language about an ultimate object, God being by definition the highest object conceivable, serves as the

²³My discussion is based on my belief that there is a continuity between Burke's "dramatistic" theory, as described in *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and the logological theory worked out in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. This position is certainly not universally accepted. Robert Wess argues that logology undermines the greatest strengths of Burke's system, its ability to treat language as a means for social change. Bernard L. Brock treats these two stages of Burke's career as reflecting completely different philosophical positions ("Evolution" 30-31). Others, like Trevor Melia, argue that logology simply works out the epistemological dimensions of dramatism, which has an ontological emphasis (112). My own reading is that Burke's work evolves, but this evolution develops the implications of early arguments. For further discussion see Biesecker (15-16 and 113), Chesebro, "Epistemology as Ontology." Most importantly, Burke himself, in "Dramatism and Logology," claims that he has created "two terms for one theory;" dramatism focuses on the ontological elements of Burke's system, while logology deals with the epistemological (89).

best means of understanding how the principle of hierarchical order works in all language.

In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke attempts to explain the underlying logic of religious language by examining Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and the first three chapters of Genesis as interpreted within the Christian tradition. Although similar ideas are discussed throughout the book, this discussion will examine particularly the introductory chapters of the text and the discussion of Genesis, overlooking the interesting but less relevant issues covered in Burke's discussion of Augustine.

In the early pages of *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke summarizes his book's argument in the form of a short poem:

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads to Guilt
(For who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption

(For who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs Redeemer
(Which is to say, a Victim!).

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(Hence: Cult of the Kill). . . (4-5)

This brief and pointed history of order forecasts Burke's basic argument on the Genesis narrative, in which God creates order in both cosmic and moral terms. As the familiar story goes, God first speaks a Paradise into existence and then commands that the first couple not eat from a particular tree. There is disobedience, then a fall into a cursed state

of existence that includes both guilt and mortality. Finally, there is redemption through vicarious sacrifices, animal sacrifices in the Hebrew Scriptures and the sacrifice of Jesus in the New Testament.

Burke argues that simply at the level of language, the terms of this narrative necessarily imply one another. For example, creation suggests fall, since it involves a movement from one unified principle, “God,” to a multitude of beings (and terms for them) that are potentially in conflict with one another. Commandments imply at least the possibility of disobedience. We do not command stones to do or not to do certain things. We command beings whom we think capable of a diversity of actions, and whose behavior we believe we can influence symbolically. Finally, the notion of punishment for disobedience suggests the notion of redemption, since a redeemer stands in for the guilty person, just as symbols stand for the objects they represent. “TREE” stands for a tall woody plant with branches and leaves. In an economic system, things become substitutable or exchangeable—sixty-five cents for a soft drink or for a ball point pen. The notion that a redeemer can substitute his suffering for suffering “owed” by the guilty is a very natural step to make as we move from one symbolic system to another.

The religious system that includes a commandment, disobedience, and, finally, redemption through sacrifice produces an order that Burke describes as rhetoric:

The subject of religion falls under the head of *rhetoric* in the sense that rhetoric is the art of *persuasion*, and religious cosmogonies are designed, in the last analysis, as exceptionally thoroughgoing modes of persuasion. To persuade men towards certain acts, religions would form the kinds of attitudes which would prepare men for such acts.” And in order to plead for such attitudes as persuasively as possible, the religious always ground their exhortations (to themselves and others) in statements of the widest

and deepest possible scope, concerning the authorship of men's motives.
(RR v)

Elsewhere, Burke makes a similar argument based on the concept of attitude as “incipient action” (GM 236).²⁴ Once a symbolic action is performed (and such symbolic actions need not be self-consciously rhetorical), attitudes are created that inevitably affect overt actions in the world.

Yet, while focusing on religion as a paradigm, Burke makes it extremely clear that religions are not the only systems capable of claiming “the widest and deepest possible scope.” He offers several examples of secular systems that fall into the same pattern. One of Burke's most powerful examples is the Cold War of the 1950's and 60's—two competing systems of political and economic governance, each regarding the other as responsible for all its woes, and each threatening the other with total annihilation. He also discusses the ways in which economic systems justify their inequities through the use of a system of law that includes strict sanctions for the violation of property rights. Finally he notes that supposedly value-free “systems” can contain the same impulses. Of technology he argues:

Insofar as technologism is a religion and it is a ‘religion’ to the extent that technology is viewed as an intrinsic good, so that its underlying, unspoken assumption is: ‘The more technology, the higher the culture,’ we had better favor a calculus that keeps us always aware of technology's possible relation to theology's vast motivational Cathedrals.” (RR 170-71)

Burke reveals here that his exploration of religion as an ultimate system of order is actually an intervention aimed at the warmongering “divinities” of his own culture. He claims that awareness of the principle of hierarchy in religion, with its sacrificial

²⁴Burke credits I. A. Richards for the term, citing Richards' *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, but then adapts it to his own purposes.

dimensions, will help keep us aware of the same principle when it arises in other systems of order.

Thus, he creates a chart to describe this process, and he entitles it, “Cycle of Terms Implicit in the Idea of ‘Order’—by which he means any fully developed form of order, not just the Christian system that he explicitly depicts (*RR* 184). Burke uses the term *logology* to describe his practice here. This project is based on his treating language about a transcendent God as equivalent to language about words, that always, in a sense, transcend the objects they describe. He sees the Genesis narrative as a language about language, translated into mythic or narrative terms. For example, he treats the six days of creation as language about the creation of order through classification:

Stated narratively. . . , such an idea of principles [of Order], or “firsts” would not be stated simply in terms of classification, as were we to say, “The first of six primary classes would be such-and-such, the second such-and-such” and so on. Rather, a completely narrative style would properly translate the idea of six classes or categories into terms of time, as it were to assign each of the classes to a separate day. . . Further a completely narrative style would *personalize* the principle of classification. This role is performed by the references to God’s creative fiat, which from the very start infuses the natural order with the verbal principle. (*RR* 201-02)

This personalized God acts both as author of a good world (cosmology) and as the authority who gives good commandments. And for Burke, this pairing is exactly what should be expected, because of the principle of the negative. The “negative” has two functions in language—to describe and to prescribe. We say that things “are” and “are not,” but we also tell people to do or not to do particular things. And we learn what the word “no” means as a command long before we learn to say “The cat is not here.” Thus, Burke argues, there is always the tendency for the language of description—things are or are not

so— to become mixed up with the language of prescription—do or do not do this thing:

First, consider the strategic ambiguity whereby the term “Order” may apply both to the realm of nature in general and to the special realm of human socio-political organizations (an ambiguity whereby, so far as sheerly empirical things are concerned, a natural order could be thought to go on existing even if all human beings, with their various socio-political orders, were obliterated). This is a kind of logical pun whereby our ideas of the natural order can become secretly infused by our ideas of the socio-political order. (*RR* 183)

Of course, the reverse is also true. Socio-political issues can be justified by metaphors from nature and thus particular socio-political systems can come to seem natural. These confusions are complicated by the fact that we forget another “negative” that is unavoidably implicit in language, i.e. that the word “tree” is not the same thing as a tree. Thus, we give our various orders enormous power, regarding them as accurate in ways they cannot be, and expecting them to be maintained without deviation.

In so doing, we forget that some idea of evil is implicit in the idea of “Order,” because ‘Order’ is a polar, or dialectical term, implying the idea of ‘Disorder’ (*RR* 195). Any order created by language necessarily will have its parallel disorder into which practitioners can slide. There may even be alternative orders, which can rise up in competition with the primary order, creating attractive temptations. Even if one deliberately resists sliding into chaos or choosing alternative systems, because the order is not reality itself, but a limited description, it will be impossible to adhere to it perfectly. Something important or necessary will be left out, and that missing element will reemerge as the source of evil. There is no escape from the idea of evil as a given principle in any

thoroughgoing system.²⁵

Deviations from the system are bound to occur, no matter what the system, and these deviations tend to result in guilt and then in the quest for a sacrificial victim, one who can substitute for us, carry guilt for us, and thus redeem us. While vicarious sacrifice does not occur within the creation narrative itself, it appears shortly thereafter in the Genesis text, in the form of animal sacrifice. Finally, in the Christian system, there will be the ultimate redemptive sacrifice of the God-man Jesus. But Burke points out that in the face of continuing violations and guilt, such sacrifices never seem to be quite enough:

For it seems that, even if one believes in the idea of a perfect, supernatural, superpersonal victim, by identification with whose voluntary sacrifice one can be eternally saved, there is still the goad to look for victims here on earth as well, who should be punished for their part, real or imaginary, in blocking the believer's path to felicity, or perhaps in threatening to send him on his heavenly way too soon. (*RR* 223)

When Burke asks in his poem "Who can keep commandments?" he clearly implies that whatever commandments are given, and whatever their source, there will be disjunctions between those commandments and the realities of human life—disjunctions that will lead almost inevitably to guilt, and to some sort of sacrifice, either the ritual mortification of self punishment or the sacrifice of a scapegoat. The more thoroughgoing the system, and

²⁵This discussion is, of course, begging the question of whether some acts deserve to be called evil. Burke's discussion of Hitler, the contempt with which he speaks of economic abuses, and the caustic remarks he makes about the mysticism of warfare certainly would lead the reader to believe that Burke regards some acts as evil. Blake most assuredly does. However, in his discussion in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke is concerned only with a description of how systems function, not whether or not a given system, religious, ethical, or otherwise, is more or less correct. We can be sure that "more or less correct" is the best Burke can expect from a symbolic order, but he still has ethical values that are implicit in his discussion; they are assumed, however, not argued. It is also clear that he regards the evil of violence as, at least in part, the consequence of a kind of perfectionistic worship of specific systems of order. His concern is simply to explain how that perfectionism functions rhetorically.

the more rigid it is, the more likely it is to produce scapegoating. Thus, the purpose of Burke's book is to remind us that, even though we must have systems of order, both cosmic and moral, we must be aware of our tendency to divinize them and thus to sacrifice others to them.

If this is the case, and it is the rigidity of systems that leads us to scapegoat others, it would seem clear that one good method of avoiding scapegoating would be to keep systems flexible, to keep them open. In fact, this is one way in which we can avoid having scapegoats. Burke speaks of this method in terms of transcendence, which is for him a function of dialectic. However, Burke also allows for the catharsis of symbolic sacrifices as a means of averting actual scapegoating. The concept of catharsis is less significant than transcendence in our analysis of Blake, but it is useful to know that both principles are aspects of Burke's thinking about the scapegoat, and to examine why catharsis is less relevant for the study of Blake.²⁶

Burke understands catharsis in an essentially Aristotelian sense, although he adds an emphasis on scapegoating: "Catharsis involves fundamentally purgation by the imitation of victimage . . . (*LASA* 46). The depiction of victims in Greek tragedy, for example, creates a condition in which "rival factions can weep together" (*LASA* 186). This common grief is a socially unifying force that may allay conflict or, in some cases, cause people to accept and adjust to difficult social situations. Portrayals of death in characters who are in

²⁶While Burke discusses both modes throughout his opus, he most directly describes and distinguishes catharsis and transcendence in his essay "I, Eye, Ay—Concerning Emerson's Early Essay on 'Nature,' and the Machinery of Transcendence," published in *Language as Symbolic Action*, pages 186-200.

some respects good, but who have flaws we would like to disavow in our own communities, can result in a purgation or catharsis that has a cohesive social purpose. The symbolic sacrifice of a fictional or mythological figure can prevent the actual scapegoating of our neighbors. The difficulty is that it can also interfere with legitimate denunciation of social evils, thus serving the purpose of reinforcing the status quo and perpetuating long-standing social injustices,²⁷ Burke summarizes this politicized understanding of Aristotelian catharsis late in his career:

And by putting “superior” people (whose “superiority” the *hoi polloi* cannot love them for) in an imaginary situation such that they can be imaginatively pitied, the devices of tragedy allow for the exercising of pity as the surrogate of love. And to that extent, within the conditions of fiction, the harsh realities of civic conflict are symbolically transcended. Hence, tragic purges, twice a year. Such symbolic resolutions must be repeated, since the actual underlying situation is *not* resolved. (DD 14-15)²⁸

Yet Blake’s work relies little on this cathartic effect, insofar as his depictions of violence and death do not in any way attempt to evoke sympathy for the persecutors, at least not in the works of the 1790’s. Furthermore, he would certainly object to defusing social tensions

²⁷I am emphasizing the more negative aspect of what, for Burke, is a dialectical function of catharsis, with both a positive and a negative pole. For a more positive treatment of the role of catharsis in culture, see Jennerman and Rueckert’s *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*. Jennerman’s argument also makes it clear that catharsis and transcendence are interwoven and deeply connected.

²⁸Although Burke treats catharsis as an action best achieved in literature, it should not be assumed that all violent death in literary texts involves scapegoating. In some cases, the violent death of a character is simply the symbolization of a need for change. Insofar as death can symbolize the change, the destruction of the character may not indicate a scapegoating impulse at all, but may simply represent a process of transformation, personal or social. An example of such a case, described at length in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, might be the destruction of Samson at the end of Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. Such destruction symbolizes Milton’s own struggle, his own desire to resist the English Restoration and remain faithful to his own religious and political convictions, despite his blindness and his loss of political power. This particular death is meant to inspire courage to await a coming transformation. It is not, strictly speaking, the representation of a scapegoat (3-6).

in ways that perpetuate injustice. Blake seems more interested in avoiding scapegoating by transforming the structures of order.

When Burke talks about overcoming scapegoating through transcendence, he is using a method that intersects better with Blake's approach. We can transcend the need for anything other than a devil-term, or structural scapegoat, Burke argues, through dialectic, by which diverse objects or diverse ideas are joined together for a common purpose (*LASA* 188-90). At times, such linkages can be made simply by means of rhetorical devices, thus allowing limited perspectives to be transcended. For example, early in his career, Burke uses the term "perspective by incongruity" to describe a process by which normally dissociated terms are linked in order to create a new perspective on an issue. He particularly associates this term with Nietzsche's rhetoric, but offers other specific examples, Thorsten Veblen's term "learned incapacity" for one, T. S. Eliot's phrase "decadent athleticism" for another (*PC* 91).

Generally speaking, however, Burke seeks to create transcendence through linking opposed terms beneath an overarching principle that includes both. While Burke argues that hierarchy and order are an inevitable aspect of symbolic systems, he points out that there is a distinction between purely "dialectical order," which simply arises out of negotiation without any ultimate guiding principles, and an ultimate order based on an ordering god-term. As Burke states it:

The "dialectical" order would leave the competing voices in a jangling relation with one another (a conflict solved *faute de mieux* by "horse-trading"); but the "ultimate" order would place these competing voices themselves in a *hierarchy*, or *sequence*, or *evaluative series*; so that, in some way, we went by a fixed and reasoned progression from one of these

to another, the members of the entire group being arranged *developmentally* with relation to one another. The “ultimate” order of terms would thus differ essentially from the “dialectical” (as we use the term *in this particular connection*) in that there would be a “guiding idea” or “unitary principle” behind the diversity of voices. (*RM* 187)

Furthermore, the movement towards such an ultimate order can cause a “formless parliamentary wrangle” to become “endowed with design.” Even if the political antagonists resist such a design, Burke notes, it may have a “contemplative effect,” transforming the attitudes of the antagonists and giving shape and principle to the necessary compromises that exist wherever dialectical terms clash (*RM* 188).

Since Burke describes ultimate order in almost mystical terms, it is easy to imagine that he is actually arguing for “thoroughgoing modes of persuasion” similar to those he later critiques in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. In fact, however, the kind of hierarchy that Burke suggests is summed up in a term he uses late in his discussion of dialectical and ultimate order, “ultimate dialectic.” If we remember that the term “dialectic” for Burke always suggests the transformational possibilities in language, we will see that Burke means for ultimate terms always to grow out of the tension of dialectical discourse. Terms change continually. Even ultimate terms, or god-terms, are forever being displaced by new god-terms as they engage dialectically with other terms and other systems of order. Thus, when opposing terms, or opposing systems, meet, they will each be transformed by the other, with a new ultimate term emerging in each encounter. The hierarchy created in this way is never seen as absolute; rather it is an aspiration towards an absolute. As such, it takes into account the drive towards perfection inherent in the hierarchical forms of language while allowing for recognition that no symbolic order has attained final

perfection. In a sense, what makes an ultimate dialectic different from a frozen, rigid system is the attitude that its adherents have towards it. The ultimate dialectic order differs from a purely ultimate order because its adherents do not resist, but, instead, consciously employ the transformational processes that all symbolic orders participate in no matter what.

As a rhetorical method the “ultimate dialectic” aims to overcome conflict by breaking up rigid hierarchies and their equally rigid exclusions without resorting to a chaotic and unprincipled scramble. Burke’s books are themselves enactments of this method, as Burke continually attempts to reveal in each thinker that he explicates elements of those positions that the thinkers themselves treat as excluded.²⁹ In so doing, he identifies points of commonality or similarity between opposing ideas. In fact, Burke’s identification of particular instances of scapegoating can be seen as deriving from an inversion of the same method. Instead of connecting two systems so that an ultimate term emerges from conversation between them, Burke begins with his ultimate value (the reduction of scapegoating, or “the purification of war”) and connects opposing systems by identifying their propensity to produce violence. By exposing their common limitations in

²⁹This method bears a superficial resemblance to deconstruction in some respects, and that similarity has been noted by several recent critics, particularly Robert Wess and Barbara Biesecker. However, deconstruction is focused more on the binary pairing itself, while Burke attempts to create a new position ambiguously linked to the other two. Burke’s system can be more properly described as a “constructive” rather than deconstructive, as Peter Otto notes in his Derridean study of Blake, *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction*. Further, David Cratis Williams discusses the peacemaking emphasis of both theorists, while James Chesebro’s article, “Kenneth Burke and Jacques Derrida” provides an excellent discussion of the contrasting relationship between Burke and Derrida, with a description of how historical context and rhetorical situation contribute to those distinctions.

the face of peace, the god-term of the text, Burke opens up the possibility of negotiation between them.

For example, in *A Grammar of Motives*, he describes American capitalism and Soviet Communism as two systems bent on blaming the other for all their difficulties and endangering the planet in the process. Or, in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, he describes the scapegoating potential in Christianity while pointing out that the adherents of ideologies of technological progress, who see themselves as enlightened, engage in rhetorical practices that can produce the same results. In so doing, Burke attempts to persuade his audience to relinquish their certainty about the superiority of their own system and to open up to the possibility of negotiation, thus reducing the psychological need for scapegoating and providing a means of transcending, or at least, purifying, the scapegoating motive.³⁰

³⁰This argument certainly leaves some significant ethical questions unanswered. Even though Burke acknowledges the presence of absolutes in discourse, in the form of god-terms and devil-terms, he does not tell us how we know what such terms should be. In his own text, peace is the god-term and war the devil-term, but even this choice of a god-term is somewhat tentative. At the end of *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke argues for the idea of God (not the existence of God) as god-term, probably because, finally, no one term or doctrine can ever be the absolute, final ultimate. "God," in this sense, does not necessarily mean a specific deity of a specific religion. It could as easily be, and probably is, a placeholder for the idea of the unnameable ultimate for which we strive, knowing we can never attain it.

Even for his tentative god-term of peace, Burke is willing to grant the necessity for casuistry, arguing that at times, a blow may be the closest we can come to peace, insofar as it is not a gunshot (*RM* 155). Yet he does not provide a means for determining when to adhere to compromise or when to shift from a particular god-term to another. He does assert that "a scrupulous man will never abandon a purpose which he considers absolutely good" (*RM* 155). The commitment to ethical action should remain central as we choose our god-terms and our compromises.

Finally, however, a solution to these kinds of arguments is not what Burke seeks. Instead, he is attempting to describe how language works and to look at the ethical implications of thinking about language in particular ways. If we worship a limited system, he suggests, we are likely to create victims defending it, precisely because language is incapable, by nature, of providing the kinds of perfection we want for it. If we try to have no system, we will have one, despite ourselves, as long as we are using language, and our dishonest faith in our perfect system of chaos will have its own victims. But if we have a system about which we maintain some skepticism, we at least allow for the possibility that we can avoid sacrificing others to it, and we are also realistic about what it can or cannot do. This does not mean, however, that we are provided with an absolute ethical command to be flexible. The dialectic does not allow us to say that we should always compromise, anymore than it lets us say that we should always stand fast. We must use casuistry to apply our god-terms in particular limited situations, maintaining a

So, as we have seen, Burke demonstrates that language can be utilized to avoid scapegoating, either through catharsis or through transcendence. In this respect, he offers his reader rhetorical tools for use in their own symbolic interventions. Yet, he also offers tools for analyzing the rhetoric of others, tools for examining the ways in which their symbolic actions either perpetuate or transcend the scapegoating motive, as the following chapters will analyze the symbolic actions of William Blake. In the final section of this chapter, we will examine briefly the ways in which that analysis will proceed, with further attention to the ways in which Burke's and Blake's arguments intersect.

Synthesizing Burke and Blake

As Kenneth Burke is obsessed with the scapegoat, William Blake is similarly obsessed. Sacrificial lambs, crucified figures from Orc and Luvah to Fuzon to Jesus Christ, and Druidical altars where human flesh is burned in sacrifice—such images appear repeatedly in Blake's poetry. And, as Kenneth Burke strives in his writings for "the purification of war," so Blake strives to eliminate Corporeal War, with its sacrificial victims, and replace it with Mental War. The terms are different, but the aims are strikingly similar. Both men ultimately acknowledge that conflict is unavoidable, and both suggest that we aim to use symbolic rather than physical weapons to deal with it.

Furthermore, Blake's effort to transcend "Corporeal War," like Burke's struggle for "the purification of war," approaches the problem of scapegoating in terms of an understanding of language as act. Referring to himself as a prophet, Blake seeks to present a view of the word as something that is active, something that intervenes, as opposed to

dialectic between openness and commitment.

something that simply describes. He criticizes his contemporaries for their view that the prophet is a predictor of future events precisely because this view obliterates the function of the prophet as one who would change things through his utterance:

Prophets in the modern sense of the word have never existed Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense for his prophecy of Ninevah failed Every honest man is a Prophet he utters his opinion both of private & public matters/Thus/If you go on So/the result is So/He never says such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. ("Annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*" E 617)

The same principle is exemplified when Blake writes to a patron, the Rev. D. Trusler, arguing that he prefers expression that is not too explicit, since it is "the fittest for Instruction because it rouzes the faculties to act" (E 702).³¹ The same concept of language as actions goes to further, and even more Burkean lengths, when Blake writes in the margin of Francis Bacon's essay, "Of Great Place," "Thought is Act. Christs Acts were Nothing to Caesars if this is not so" (E 623).³² This concept, in many respects so similar to Burke's ideas about attitude as incipient action, has led Robert N. Essick to argue that Blake essentially abandons a notion of representational language for a performative one, stating that for Blake, "words, whether conceived of as identical to thoughts or as their vehicles, are also actions" (Essick *Language* 102).³³

Further, Blake sees scapegoating as arising from symbolic causes quite similar to

³¹Robert N. Essick discusses this letter to Trusler in some detail. See chapter 2, "In Search of the Motived Sign" in *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (72-73).

³²Again, see chapter 2 of Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam* (102).

³³For a discussion of Blake's performative use of language in terms of modern speech-act theory, see Angela Esterhammer's *Creating States: Studies in the Performative Language of John Milton and William Blake*. Kenneth's Burke's concept of "circumference," as developed in *A Grammar of Motives*, plays an important role in Esterhammer's discussions of *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

those identified by Burke. Throughout his works, Blake shows concern for the problems caused by excessively exclusive and rigid symbolic systems. He exposes and critiques these inflexible systems, using rhetorical strategies, like perspective by incongruity, in ways similar to those described by Burke. Whereas the earliest works tend to critique specific systems of order rather than offer new options for symbolic thought, the mythological works begin to explore alternative ways of thinking about language. As the mythological texts become more abstract, they begin to be very explicit that language is a primary concern, and the possibility of creating new forms of order becomes a central theme. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake creates hierarchies that strongly resemble the ultimate dialectics that Burke describes as a desirable means of combining the quest for transcendent principles with the need for a flexible and changing symbolic system.

In his earliest works, Blake already connects problems of social injustice and human suffering, sometimes described through the language of sacrifice, with the function of symbolic systems. In his early non-mythological texts, Blake reveals patterns of exclusion in the symbolic systems of his culture, specifically Christianity and Lockean empiricism, showing how exclusive devotion to these systems produces excessively limiting terministic screens. The tractates deal with the limits of both of these systems, while *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* exposes what Blake regards as Christianity's fanatical reduction of human motives to only one acceptable standard, obedience to a set moral law. This obedience destroys the antinomian law of liberty, which, Blake suggests, allows for a free development of sexuality and the imaginative powers.

Similar issues appear in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. When published

together, the *Songs* address the reductionist positions of both Christianity and empiricism by exposing the ways in which each of these perspectives limits the vision of its working-class adherents, rendering them passive in the face of oppression and scapegoating.³⁴ In the Chimney Sweeper poems for example, Blake demonstrates the limits of strictly spiritual or strictly empirical world views, showing children whose limited understanding gives them no possibility of changing their situation. Reading the Chimney Sweeper texts from both *Innocence* and *Experience*, Blake's audience can see through both perspectives simultaneously and recognize the strengths and limitations of each. Others of the *Songs*, like "Little Boy Lost," point explicitly to scapegoating as a direct result of devoting oneself to a system. The strategy of perspective by incongruity is relevant to many of these texts, since Blake links empirical and religious systems through formal devices, thus revealing unsuspected connections between them.

The strategy of perspective by incongruity remains important to the study of Blake's early mythological works, the Lambeth Prophecies, *America: A Prophecy* in particular. This highly revolutionary work often use common images to link revolutionary and conservative ideas, apparently in an effort to undercut conservative critiques of revolutionary activity. By using similar images to describe revolutionaries and government officials, Blake reveals the hypocrisy inherent in the conservative rhetoric that accuses revolutionaries of violence. In showing that the government is guilty of the violence of

³⁴The linking of these two terms is not meant to imply that they are synonymous or that one necessarily produces the other. Sometimes oppression does involve a scapegoating motive, but it may also be straightforward exploitation, or it may involve the reification of social structures in ways that have sources other than processes of merger and division or substitutionary atonement. But both elements are described in the poems and related to terministic screens.

which it accuses others, Blake reveals a scapegoating motive in conservative critiques of revolutionary activity.

Furthermore, in the Genesis parodies, particularly *The Book of Urizen*, Blake begins to link sacrificial imagery and images of rigid symbolic orders, including both religious and scientific orders. Urizen, arguably the symbol of order in Blake's mythology, comes to be linked with books, with religious systems, and with scientific calculation, but he also is associated with images of frozenness and immovability. Furthermore, Urizen crucifies of his own son, implying a condemnation of the Christian atonement narrative as a scapegoating device used to hold people in subjection. Close examination of this text will reveal strong connections between Blake's narrative and the discussions of hierarchy, mystery and scapegoating in *A Rhetoric of Motives*.

Yet, these parodic texts also strongly invite logological analysis. On the historical level, *The Book of Urizen*, like all the Lambeth prophecies, is a strongly revolutionary document. In all of these early mythological texts, the defiant figures, like Orc and Fuzon, are superior to the figures associated with the established order. The Urizenic figures are clearly connected with the church/state apparatus as well as with other intellectual enterprises that Blake sees as supporting the status quo. Logological analysis will reveal, however, that despite the antinomian impulses of the Genesis parodies, they do establish their own law, their own hierarchy, in which the revolutionary principles emerge as ultimate while Urizen, the principle of order, becomes the rejected term.

Blake's Biblical parodies, in fact, provide a remarkable point of contrast to Burke's analysis of Genesis in *A Rhetoric of Religion*. As Burke notes, while Genesis

treats God's act of creation and His commandment as good, a creation narrative could assume the opposite, and such a narrative, when analyzed logologically, would make very different claims about language and symbolic action. *The Book of Urizen* is the first of many creation stories offered by William Blake, and it precisely reverses the Biblical Genesis narrative, offering us the inversion of the creation story that Burke mentions. Rather than being a part of a good created order, Urizen's commandments follow his own fall and produce a fallen state in everyone who attempts to obey them. Thus, they appear to offer a perfect narrative description of an antinomian ideal, in which rebellion itself appears to be the only god-term, and all order is condemned as a rigid and productive of a scapegoating motive. These early myths seem to imply that the destruction of the current hierarchy will be enough to resolve the problem of scapegoating. Yet, they establish a hierarchy of their own. One might even argue that Urizenic order has become the scapegoat in *The Book of Urizen*, while possible abuses of revolutionary violence go unnoticed.³⁵

Yet, by the end of *The Four Zoas*, an unfinished work with which Blake struggles for years, he is more willing to create hierarchies that are quite overt, and he also seems more aware of the scapegoating potentials within the revolutionary impulse itself. In this text, Blake seeks to place the sacrificial violence of revolution within an ultimate dialectic. Rebellion is no longer treated as the ultimate term. In fact, in *The Four Zoas*, the revolutionary breakdown of hierarchy and order in the first six nights of the poem

³⁵See Steven Bidlake and William Keach for discussions of the problematic violence found in some of Blake's most revolutionary works.

produces a repetitive cycle of violence and scapegoating. The downward cycle of the scapegoating process is arrested in the seventh night due to a change of attitude in Los. From this point on, an ultimate dialectic is created, with each Zoa temporarily assuming a supreme position in a developmental historical process. Intellectual warfare is exalted as the highest principle at the end of the poem, and peace finally is achieved. Although each conflict is transcended in turn, and violence is ultimately subordinated to a benevolent motive, physical violence nevertheless remains as a necessary part of the process of transformation. Perhaps the most marked change from the *Lambeth Prophecies* to *The Four Zoas* is the transformation of Urizen from a supremely negative figure to one who embodies both positive and negative potentials, as do all of the Zoas. Viewed logologically, this transformation implies a more flexible and positive view of symbolic systems and their possibilities.

The later illuminated works, *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, and *The Ghost of Abel* continue to explore problems of symbolic order and scapegoating, using, as has been mentioned earlier, a number of references to Druidic ritual sacrifices. The interest in creating a more flexible order continues in *Milton*, and takes new directions in *Jerusalem*, both long and intricate works that deal with new issues, both historically and in terms of a rhetoric of order. As was mentioned earlier, these texts will not be included in this study. Here we will focus exclusively on works that Blake produced between 1788 and approximately 1806, the last one having been begun in 1796. What will become clear through the course of this project is that Blake's obsession with scapegoating begins in the texts of the early 1790's, and that, from the beginning, scapegoating is connected to problems stemming

from symbolic order. The obsession with these concerns does not begin with *Milton*, or even with *The Four Zoas*. Furthermore, in *The Four Zoas*, the Blakean view of symbolic order takes on a remarkably Burkean appearance.

Of course, this similarity cannot and does not mean that Burke and Blake are simply saying the same thing. They come from different time periods and hold different beliefs. Blake, for example, always calls himself a Christian, however unconventional his ideas about Christianity may be. Burke is always skeptical about religious dogma, although he is fascinated by the richness of religious language and treats it as paradigmatic. Furthermore, however much Burke strives to prevent an obsession with positivist descriptions of the world, he is far more comfortable with empirical, scientific approaches to language than Blake is.

Even the Burkean and Blakean notions of language as act differ considerably. As Robert Essick makes exquisitely clear in *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, Blake's interest in language as act develops in conversation with empiricism on the one hand and with a post-lapsarian understanding of Christianity on the other. Many of Blake's contemporaries treat the separation of signifier and signified as something that occurred only because of the Fall. Blake develops his view of language as action in conversation with views of language that do not figure at all in Burke's world. Burke takes the separation of "word" and "thing," or in Saussurean parlance "signifier" and "signified," for granted. As Burke himself would tell us, dialectical terms (that is, abstract terms), are always to be understood in relationship to those terms with which they are contrasted. Thus, similar ideas, developed in conversation with very different opponents in a very

different climate of attitudes, cannot be described simply as “the same.”

Nevertheless, as Burke argues, the necessarily historical grounding of language does not prevent our seeing relationships between periods or using the verbal strategies of earlier periods. While arguing, for example, that literature must be understood as a strategy for coping with the issues of its own time and situation, Burke nevertheless points out:

This point of view does not, by any means, vow us to personal or historical subjectivism. The situations are real; the strategies for handling them have public content; and in so far as situations overlap from individual to individual, or from one historical period to another, the strategies possess universal relevance. (*PLF* 1)

Burke’s descriptions of how language works are supported using thinkers from a variety of time periods and cultures, including people from Blake’s own period, like Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. As an analytical tool, Burke’s theory can be used to explore the rhetorical structures of any text. Furthermore, insofar as we are comparing Burke’s metarhetoric with Blake’s, rather than simply analyzing Blake’s rhetoric using Burkean terms, it would be surprising if their projects did not overlap somewhat, considering the antinomian tendencies common to both men. The differences in historical conditions, content, and form enliven the conversation between these two thinkers; they do not in any way lessen the value or the appropriateness of it.

Nevertheless, it is still important to acknowledge that Burke’s is not the only scapegoating theory that could be fruitfully applied to Blake’s work. One of the earliest scapegoating theorists, Blake’s contemporary, Joseph de Maistre, stands in contrast to Blake as an advocate of traditional Christian views of the atonement, and a comparison of

their views on this subject, on the subject of capital punishment, and on the French Revolution could produce a fascinating study in and of itself.

René Girard, probably the most well-known literary commentator on scapegoating would also provide an interesting lens through which to examine Blake's depiction of sacrifice. He regards mimesis as the root of sacrificial violence and sees the opponents in violent conflict as monstrous doubles, who, in the course of their contentions, become indistinguishable from one another. This view has significant parallels in Blake's mythological works, particularly *The Book of Urizen*, and *The Four Zoas*. Furthermore, Girard's reworking of the Christian theological understanding of Jesus' sacrificial death also has strong parallels in Blake's works. For Girard, the traditional doctrine of the atonement has the effect of perpetuating violence, because it treats God as demanding blood in exchange for sin, thus making bloodletting a type of ultimate principle. Instead, Girard asserts, we should see Christianity as offering an alternative vision: "God is not violent, the true God has nothing to do with violence" (*Scapegoat* 189). For Blake, as well, the doctrine of atonement is seen as an invitation to warfare and violence, while, at the same time, the image of Jesus' self-offering is understood to have a redemptive meaning. The parallels are interesting and worth exploring.

However, Girard sees violence as a response to physiologically rooted aggressive impulses, an idea that probably would have seemed reductive to Blake, whose works show an extremely complex and problematic relationship between "soul" and "body." Certainly, Blake grounds his perspective on scapegoating more in language and its power over the mind than in the body. For example, in *The Book of Urizen*, Urizen is not only violent, but

his violence is linked to iron books, rigid systems of language, tools of description and measurement, and religious doctrine—all of these things being related to the realm that Kenneth Burke describes in terms of symbolic action.³⁶ Thus, Burke's theory provides an extremely viable lens through which to view Blake's work, perhaps the best lens for exploring the scapegoating motive.³⁷

Furthermore, this Burkean rhetorical theory has relevance to any number of questions that are pertinent today, not only in our understanding of Blake, but in the ways in which we think about language and violence in our own world. Is all violent action scapegoating? Is there a necessary distinction between the revolutionary violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressor? Are justice and non-violence always compatible values? Does the attempt to use rhetoric in ways that promote flexibility really reduce scapegoating? And finally, is it possible to create symbolic systems, or for that matter, any form of rhetoric, that does not tend to exacerbate the scapegoating motive? Ultimately, my hope is that placing William Blake and Kenneth Burke in conversation with

³⁶Again, the relationship between language and materiality in Burke is of some interest here. Burke acknowledges that our bodies are subject to the laws of motion which exist apart from our own symbolic systems and choices. Thus, an idea of innate aggression would not necessarily be alien to Burke's thought. Yet, he chooses not to emphasize this aspect of violence because he sees it as rhetorically ineffective. Commenting on those who emphasize the competitive, warlike, and "Jungle" heritage from which human beings are thought to have sprung, he argues that they present a view of the world in which "what we were admonished *against* [violence] was just about the only tangible thing there for us to *be*" (GM 332).

³⁷Steven Bidlake offers a Girardian reading of violence in Blake. His study argues that Girard's descriptions of escalating mimetic violence should make us cautious about applauding Blake's revolutionary attitudes. Bidlake's argument suggests another reason for preferring a Burkean methodology in approaching Blake. Girard's theory states that mimetic rivalry, and the violence that results from it, occurs when hierarchies break down. Thus, it is easy to see in Girard an essentially conservative vision, perhaps more so than he really intends. Nevertheless, on the face of it, Burke's Marxist sympathies resonate more fully with Blake's revolutionary concerns. Bidlake's concern about the violence inherent in some of Blake's poetry is nonetheless extremely important and valid.

each other may help to cast new light on these questions and on others like them. At any rate, a conversation between Blake and Burke will, most assuredly, help us to describe both the contributions and the limits of any antinomian rhetoric. In the next chapter, we will begin to explore that conversation in light of texts written between 1788 and 1794, the Tractates, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*. These texts that deal with issues similar to others that Blake begins in the early 1790s, but they lack the mythological histories and characters that appear later in the Lambeth prophecies. Also, their critique focuses less on systems of order in general and more on specific systems of order that Blake finds troubling, specifically, Christianity and Empiricism.

The next chapter will begin with the introduction of a Blakean god-term and devil-term that will remain important throughout our discussion—the terms Act and Hindrance respectively. In chapter 2, as in the rest that follow, close reading of the selected texts will occur, with Burke's theory functioning as a kind of lens, or perhaps a terministic screen, to focus our attention on the relationship between scapegoating and symbolic order. At the end of each chapter, there will be a section that directly analyzes the relationship between these particular Blake texts and relevant aspects of Burke's theories.

Chapter II

Hindrances, the Terministic Screen, and the Scapegoat: The Early Non-Mythological Texts

As we have already seen, one of the many connections between Kenneth Burke and William Blake is that both tend to be antinomian in their approach to established systems. Both men regard symbolic orders as having several negative consequences. These orders can create blinders and limit our ability to see accurately; they can perpetuate oppressive social structures and, finally they can lead to scapegoating. These arguments about symbolic orders can apply to specific systems or they can critique the negative potentials in all systems.

Burke, for example, examines positivist philosophy, Christianity, capitalism, and Marxism in light of his antinomian theories, but he always focuses on his general ideas about language. However, some of Blake's earliest texts, particularly the non-mythological texts of the late 1780's and the early 1790's, are far less focused on systems in general than Kenneth Burke is. In these early texts, the tractates, the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, all of them engraved between 1788 and 1794, Blake examines specific systems—traditional Christianity, Lockean empiricism, and Deism.¹ Although one could read these texts logologically,

¹Dating is based on Joseph Viscomi's extensive bibliographic study, *William Blake and the Idea of the Book*. The dates given are Viscomi's best estimate of the date each work was executed. Blake often produced new printings at different points in his life, and sometimes these involved changes to the work, major or minor, but the execution date tells us when the work was originally conceived and/or engraved. In the case the *Songs*, we know that the individual poems had often been written years before they were engraved, but the execution date tells us when Blake collected the poems into a volume and engraved

Blake's primary purpose is to critique these particular symbolic structures and to examine their practical consequences. Yet the specificity of these early works is extremely important for a Burkean approach to Blake, because, as Blake examines these particular symbolic orders, he demonstrates exactly how terministic screens work to limit human perception. Blake is, of course, far more critical of this limitation than Burke is, because Blake seems to believe that imagination, or Poetic Genius, is able to create an authentic vision, a vision that is not subject to those limitations. This position Burke would never grant. Nevertheless, Blake's critique is in many respects very compatible with the Burkean critique. In these texts, Blake makes it clear that both Christianity and Enlightenment philosophy are capable of limiting one's perspective, perpetuating systems of oppression, and, finally, producing scapegoating behaviors. To preserve the purity of the order and the unity of the self and the community, individuals end up cruelly sacrificing parts of themselves or scapegoating other human beings.

In this chapter, we will examine this process by looking first at the tractates "All Religions Are One" and "There Is No Natural Religion" versions a and b (1788). These texts illustrate the ways in which both Empiricism and Christianity act as terministic screens that prevent their adherents from seeing both a spiritual and a physical dimension to human beings. Then we will explore the practical results of this blindness through an examination of the two "Chimney Sweeper" poems from *Songs of Innocence and*

them. Most of the works would have been conceived and engraved simultaneously. Viscomi dates the texts discussed in this chapter as follows: "There Is No Natural Religion" and "All Religions are One," 1788, with later printing dates; *Songs of Innocence*, 1789; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790; and finally, both *Songs of Experience* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 1794-95. Blake printed *Songs of Experience* as a separate work, but he also published both sets of *Songs* together in one volume. Viscomi's discussions of works from this period in Blake's career are on pages 187-267 of his book.

Experience. In the next section, we will look at scapegoating in two poems from *Songs of Experience*, literal scapegoating of a person in “Little Boy Lost” and the figurative scapegoating of human sexuality in “The Garden of Love.” Discussion of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* will appear at various points throughout all the previous analyses.

Finally, in the final section of this chapter, we will look preview the themes of the next chapter by focusing briefly on “The Tyger,” a song from *Experience* which suggests in figurative language that revolutionary violence is a viable method for breaking up the destructive systems that have become so rigidly embedded in Blake’s culture. Before we begin examining these texts, however, it is important that we briefly consider Blake’s form of antinomianism and build some connections between Blake’s terminology and that of Kenneth Burke.

First, it is important to recognize that, while Kenneth Burke, in the twentieth century, could call himself antinomian simply because he was opposed to rigid systems of symbolic order, in Blake’s time, the term “antinomian” had connotations more specifically religious and more specifically class oriented. Jon Mee defines eighteenth-century antinomianism in terms of a tendency rather than in strict doctrinal terms. He begins, nevertheless, with a definition offered by one of Blake’s contemporaries, John Evans, who describes antinomianism as a Christian heresy in which “the doctrine of imputed righteousness” is exaggerated, such that it denies “the very obligation to moral obedience” (qtd. in Mee 57). For some antinomians, this attitude might entail dramatic transgressions of the law, in order to prove its worthlessness. In other cases, the concept is simply theoretical. But in all cases, the antinomian rejects the law, or at the very least, places an

excessively high value on forgiveness in comparison to more traditional formulations.

These attitudes typically are accompanied by a dislike of religious ceremony and a suspicion of clergy. Naturally, there would be little room for a state religion in such an approach.²

It is no accident that such antinomianism was typically embraced by members of the working and artisan classes. As E. P. Thompson notes, such radical antinomian theology is often yoked to political radicalism: “For the Moral Law is *their* [the rulers’] Law, the law of ‘God & his Priest & King . . .’ while the Gospel is the affirmation, in the face of all the schools and Orthodoxies, of the truths of the pure-in-heart and the oppressed” (*Witness* 14). Thus, as Thompson describes it, the belief in justification by faith rather than works, in its most extreme form, is anti-hegemonic, allowing an individual or group room to challenge the authority of the ruling ideology at a profound level (*Witness* 5).

As early as 1788, William Blake reveals the antinomianism of his ethic when he writes the following annotation at the end of his copy of Johann Caspar Lavater’s

Aphorisms on Man:

Accident is the omission of act in self & the hindering of act in another,
This is Vice but all Act [*<from Individual propensity>*] is Virtue. To hinder
another is not an act it is the contrary it is a restraint on action both in
ourselves & in the person hinderd. for he who hinders another omits his
own duty. at the time

Murder is Hindering Another

Theft is Hindering Another

²For a full discussion, see the chapter “Every Honest Man Is a Prophet” in Mee. See also E. P. Thompson’s *Witness Against the Beast* and Michael Ferber’s discussion on antinomianism in *The Social Vision of William Blake*, pages 116-26.

Backbiting. Undermining C[i]rcumventing & whatever is Negative
is Vice

But the or[i]gin of this mistake in Lavater & his contemporaries, is, They
suppose that Womans Love is Sin. in consequence all the Loves & Graces
with them are Sin (E 601)

In this fascinating criticism of a book that he genuinely respects, Blake cryptically lays out the areas in which his own ethical beliefs both converge and depart from the more traditional thinking of Lavater and others like him. Blake defines Hindrance as Vice and Act as Virtue, and he agrees with Lavater and others in his assessment of certain works as evil, that is, as hindrances. Murder, theft, backbiting, and so on are defined as hindrances, an appraisal with which Lavater would surely have agreed. But throughout this passage, Blake reveals a marked difference between himself and Lavater. This difference comes in his description of Hindrance, or Vice, as the “hindering of act” or the “omission of act.” Thus, Blake redefines evil, so that it is no longer the breaking of a commandment, but rather the unwillingness to act and the tendency to prevent others from acting. Thus, Blake asserts, evil is not part of the true nature of human beings who, because of innate malice, must be controlled with laws. Rather, evil is the failure to live out one’s true nature and act with integrity. This failure can happen precisely as a result of laws.

This problem is what Blake addresses in the final line of the quoted passage. Because Lavater and others like him reject sexual love as sin, they also reject any number of good things along with it—“all the Loves and Graces” of life. Thus, we can see how Blake sees moral law as hindrance, or evil. Killing, theft, backbiting, undermining, and so on do not spring from the true nature of humanity. They are distortions, and one must distinguish between them and other forms of behavior that are called “sin” but which are,

really, positive aspects of human life. In general, murder is hindrance, but sex is act. The one is vice, the other virtue. But neither the good nor the evil of these behaviors can be determined by their relationship to law. The murderer does not do wrong because he disobeys law but because he hinders his desires and the desires of another, thus bringing forth evil fruit.

From this argument, it is a quick step to the claim that law itself is hindrance, since it causes people to focus on the legality of acts rather than on their human authenticity. We begin to worry about whether or not acts are forbidden rather than notice who we really are and what visions or deeds are authentic and thus constitute act for us. Other uses of the terms “hinder” or “hindrance” in Blake’s prose writings make similar claims about other systems of order, and Blake’s use of the term changes little over time. For example, in his *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), written about twenty years after the *Annotations*, Blake describes the painter Rubens in these terms:

Rubens is a most outrageous demon, and by infusing the remembrances of his Pictures, and style of execution, hinders all power of individual thought: so that the man who is possessed by this demon, loses all admiration of any other Artist, but Rubens, and those who were his imitators and journeymen, he causes to the Florentine and Roman Artist fear to execute . . . (E 547)

Rubens is a hinderer, and thus vicious, because he takes over the imagination and causes the artist to forget his own individual vision. Certainly, this concept arises in part from the fact that the influential painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was an exponent of Rubens’ work, and with his power and influence, was able to make his own view of painting in some

sense canonical.³ Undoubtedly, Blake did not like Rubens' work, but if it were not for the canonical quality that Reynolds has given to Rubens, perhaps Blake's condemnation would have been less severe. However, once Rubens' work becomes the accepted model or standard, he becomes a hindrance to the imagination, and his work provokes almost moralistic condemnation from Blake as an evil threat to the imaginative powers—something that creates a symbolic screen through which an individual can no longer see the possibilities of line and color.

Nature as an aesthetic principle receives similar abuse in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, written just one year after the *Catalogue*. This condemnation is also framed in terms of hindrance as vice and act as virtue. Here that condemnation is couched in the language of Gnosticism, which seems, at first glance, to imply a total rejection of the natural world:

Error or Creation will be Burned Up & then & not till then Truth or Eternity will appear It is Burnt up the Moment Men cease to behold it I assert for My self that I do not behold the Outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me. What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it. (E 565-66)

These words appear within a discussion of bad vs. good art, and, although at first it appears to deny the reality of the natural world, we can see at the end of the passage that Blake is not denying the existence of the sun, but rather a literal and Empiricist way of

³See mention of Rubens in Blake's "Annotations to Reynolds" on page 640 of the Erdman text.

looking at it. He is decrying a particular description of the sun as the result of a symbolic system that is accepted by the artistic community at face value, and that, as a result, destroys the ability to engage in what Blake thinks of as imaginative vision. This Empirical view of the sun is hindrance, because it prevents the possibility of a greater vision. In Burkean terms, the Empirical perspective is a terministic screen that deflects attention away from spiritual vision and focuses it on the material appearance of the sun.⁴

The same loss of spiritual vision is denounced by Blake in his *Annotations to Watson*. Watson's defense of the Bible against Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* was deeply offensive to Blake, and he uses the term hindrance, a synonym for vice, to describe Watson's attitude towards miracles, arguing that Watson denies the reality of ordinary, everyday miracles, like the success of Thomas Paine, who "overthrow all the armies of Europe with a small pamphlet" (E 617). Watson's vision of both Christianity and the natural order are also rejected as hindrance, as Blake comments on the devastating results of this particular terministic screen: "Jesus could not do miracles where unbelief hinderd hence we must conclude that the man who holds miracles to be ceased puts it out of his own power to ever witness one" (E 616).

In this case, as in all the cases described above, hindrance, or vice, is associated not with so much with particular evil deeds, but with a way of seeing that prevents action,

⁴This point becomes even clearer if we look again at the *Descriptive Catalogue*, written just a year earlier than the *Vision*. In the *Catalogue*, Blake's critique of Rubens is based, in part, on the sense that Rubens does not see nature properly. He remarks on the inability of Titian and Rubens to paint historical figures: "The flush of health in flesh, exposed to the open air, nourished by the spirits of forests and floods, in that ancient happy period, which history has recorded, cannot be like the sickly daubs of Titian or Rubens" (E 545). Blake implies, a little further down, that imagination is necessary to see true nature, as opposed to "nature, as it now is," (545). It is not nature as such that is rejected, but rather, nature as perceived by the modern person, that is nature as part of a particular symbolic order.

and it is always located in some system of belief that blinds one to more authentic forms of experience. A given act, like murder or theft, can be hindrance (i.e., vice), but it is reinforced, and perhaps even created, by false systems of law, aesthetics, philosophy, or religion. Furthermore, despite his emphasis on the hindrance involved in Christianity's strictures on sex, and despite his defense of the Deist Paine, Blake sees hindrance in Deism and Empiricism as much as he does in Christianity, perhaps even more. Both limit the imaginative vision that Blake sees as authentic, and neither, according to Blake, will lead to real liberation.

This attitude separates Blake from most of the late eighteenth-century intellectual radicals, like Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Priestley, and even Blake's friend, painter Henry Fuseli, whose work Blake deeply admired. All of these thinkers were Deists who would have been uncomfortable with Blake's language, so often echoing the language of religious enthusiasm. For example, in *The Age of Reason*, published in 1794, Paine argues that institutionalized religions, with their doctrines and laws, are simply "human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit" (50). For Paine, the mysteries of religion are a mask for political and economic oppression, and Deism, a religion based on reason, is the only possible solution.⁵

Blake, however, is unwilling to accept Paine's Deist solution, probably for a variety of reasons. As Marilyn Butler suggests "Blake's roots in radical Dissent are deeper and stronger than his connection with the French-type intellectualism of men like

⁵Chapter 2 of Marilyn Butler's book *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* provides an interesting discussion of Blake's relationship to Deism. See especially pages 39-53.

Fuseli . . .” (49). Thus, Butler suggests, Blake may have found himself in a very difficult position as the Deist critiques began to undercut, not only the church and state institutions, but the very foundations upon which Blake’s own imaginative vision was based. According to Butler, “English radicalism had been so deeply involved with Protestant sectarianism for at least two centuries that the development [a split between radicalism and religion] was likely to constitute a crisis for a man like Blake. . . .” (49). First, even as he condemns Watson’s critique of Paine, Blake calls himself a Christian, and he associates Enlightenment Christianity, like John Locke’s, with atheism. Second, Paine’s debunking of Christianity, while gutting its oppressive power, also guts the Utopian possibilities inherent in Christian apocalyptic language—a language which, as Nicholas Williams asserts, provides Blake with a powerful basis for critique, one that is shared by many people in his social class. Finally, as I will argue, Blake was aware of the ways in which Empiricism, Deism, and other philosophies could also be hindrances, limiting the circumference of human awareness and the power to act just as completely as Christianity is capable of doing.

In setting up a fundamentally antinomian ethical system, one that values free and honest action above all else, Blake creates his own hierarchy of values, according to which any hindrance, whether produced by Christianity, Empiricism, Deism, or any other symbolic system, is an absolute negative. Hindrance becomes a devil-term. On the other hand, act becomes a god-term, and symbolic activities are only acts when they express authentic vision and inspire others to authentic acts of expression. Symbolic orders cannot express authentic vision, however, if they keep us from seeing parts of ourselves or our

world. They perform this negative function when they begin to ossify and to claim their superiority to all other systems. In Blake's earliest engraved texts, the Tractates, we will see his first attempt to wrestle with this phenomenon.

Terministic Screens and Poetic Genius: Empiricism and Christianity as Hindrance

Whatever may have been Blake's reservations about Deism and Empiricism, his tractates, engraved in the late 1780's, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, engraved in 1790, make it clear that for Blake, traditional Christianity was equally deserving of criticism. In both of his brief tractates, small illuminated booklets that parody philosophical argument, Blake shows that both Christianity and Lockean Empiricism create partial reflections of reality, and thus, as Kenneth Burke would suggest, they both select aspects of reality to describe and in the process deflect a true vision of reality. Indeed, for Blake, both of these systems ignore the centrality of the Poetic Genius, clearly the god-term of all of these texts. The Poetic Genius is, according to Blake "the true faculty of knowledge," "the faculty that experiences," and it is also "the true Man" (E1). Empiricism, Blake argues, denies the Poetic Genius by focusing attention on the five senses, while Christianity denies it by failing to discern its presence in the body and in the sensory functions. So, each system is, at least in part, a hindrance that can shut out our awareness of the Poetic Genius, or the True Man, and thus lead to negative results.

In some ways Blake's critique of Empiricism may be the more obvious in these early works. Certainly, Blake's "Contempt and Abhorrence" for Locke, Bacon, and Newton are well documented, both in Blake's own writings and in the criticism (E 660). Even Wayne Glusker, whose book *Locke and Blake* attempts to link the two thinkers in

terms of common cultural concerns, comments that Blake usually demonizes Locke (4).⁶

This well-documented animosity leads many critics to read Blake's early tractates as arguments for a religious viewpoint as opposed to an empirical and scientific perspective. William Dennis Horn, for example, compares "There Is No Natural Religion" with the late piece, "The Ghost of Abel," saying that both reveal "the spiritual voice in opposition to nature" (85). Other critics, like J. Middleton Murry, treat Blake as a mystic, arguing that the tractates offer a method of knowing the world that is broader and more expansive than empiricism can ever offer.⁷

While our examination of Christian thought will break down the idea that Blake is trying to advance the spiritual over the physical, it is clear that Blake sees Empiricism as providing an excessively narrow terministic screen. Murry makes this argument by looking at Blake's definition of Reason in the second version of "There is No Natural Religion."⁸

⁶For a typical discussion of Blake's rejection of Locke, see chapter 1 of Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, "The Case Against Locke," pp. 14-24. However, in a recent article, Steve Clark attempts to break down the argument that Blake simply rejects Locke outright, noting that "condemnation. . . can serve as an implicit tribute to intellectual stature" (133).

⁷The critics who see Blake as emphasizing the spiritual over the physical hold a wide diversity of opinions about what that means. George Mills Harper, for example, reads Blake as a Neoplatonist. Leopold Damrosch, Jr. argues that Blake's position is similar to George Berkeley's, although one of Damrosch's central arguments is that Blake's views on dialectical pairings like soul and body tend to be paradoxical.

⁸Any reading of "There Is No Natural Religion" is dependent upon the answers to a variety of bibliographic questions. For this particular tractate, the major difficulty is that Blake did not print one definitive edition. Different pages were included in different texts. Erdman, whom I cite here, splits the plates into two different tractates, offering two distinct arguments, and treating the two parts as two distinct pieces of a whole somewhat like *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. This reading allows us to see how Blake critiques Locke by beginning with two different sets of assumptions, and rendering the Lockean position absurd in both cases. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. argues that the two different printed versions of "There Is No Natural Religion" come from different time periods and reflect actual changes in Blake's beliefs, a movement from an emphasis on the spiritual to a realistic embrace of the material. Yet, this viewpoint does not accord with Viscomi's more recent datings, which show *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, dated 1790, to be much closer to the printing of the original creation of the tractates in 1788

Here, Reason is defined as “the ratio of all we have already known.” Blake further notes that it “is not the same that it shall be when we know more.” (E 2). Commenting on this definition, Murry notes:

The Ratio, in Blake’s language, is the mental abstract: that idea or abstract image of the thing, which serves, in the ordinary commerce of life and thought, for the thing itself. This is . . . a man-made construction which is imposed upon the veritable reality. He who sees it instead of the reality—as we all must, for it is a condition of the practical life that we should—sees himself alone. (15)

Murry sees Blake’s tractates as recommending the visionary experience of the Poetic Genius, which experiences everything, over the construct created by Empiricism or other systems.

In “All Religions Are One,” probably written at nearly same time as “There Is No Natural Religion,” Blake argues directly that “the Poetic Genius,” also called “the Spirit of Prophecy,” is what experiences and knows (E 1). As we have previously seen, prophecy for Blake is active; it provides an intervention in the culture and in the life of the world. The term “Genius,” implies an active and creative power, essential to the nature of a person or thing. All things have Genius, Blake argues, and in human beings, that genius is Poetic, symbolic, capable of creation by means of symbols. For Blake, then, the “faculty which experiences” is a creative faculty, not simply a perceptive one (E 1). While Murry is

than was originally thought. Viscomi argues, rather, that all the plates were produced at the same time, so we should assume that all of the plates are a part of the original conception of the tractate. Eaves, Essick and Viscomi provide a reconstruction of an ideal version based on Viscomi’s arguments in *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (See Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi, pp. 25 and 26 and Viscomi, chapter 22). My argument is based on an acceptance of Viscomi’s dating, which allows all of these early works to be placed in close conversation with each other, despite the fact that the tractates are the only pieces engraved before the French Revolution had even begun. While it is impossible to know exactly what Blake’s intentions were, all reconstructions other than Hirsch’s allow us to see Blake as parodying Locke in an attempt to undermine Empirical arguments. An exact reconstruction is not necessary to form this conclusion.

correct in arguing that Blake wants to affirm a form of knowledge that is beyond the five senses, Blake's primary claim is not that spiritual faculties are more accurate than sensual faculties. He is arguing that human beings are not, properly speaking, designed simply to "see" the truth. They are designed to use their symbolic faculties to act and create.⁹ The Poetic Genius that abides in each of us is "universal," and religions all derive from this universal reality (E 1-2). Furthermore, in "There Is No Natural Religion," Blake suggests that the Poetic Genius allows us to see the Infinite. Thus, Blake asserts, "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio [Reason] only sees himself only" (E 3).

As creative agents, human beings are capable of perceiving and acting in ever new and unpredictable ways, and this capacity allows them to see what Blake describes as the Infinite. Yet, according to Blake, Empiricism dramatically limits the human capacity for creation and perception. Locke argues that there are only two faculties through which

⁹This concept is, of course, not unusual, although it appears perhaps most fully in Esterhammer and Jack William Jacobs, who argue that Blake's prophecy is performative. Jacobs, especially, argues that Blake's language, whether it be performative or constative, is designed to undermine constative language and promote the audience's ability to give up constative language and engage in linguistic performances of their own. My argument resembles his in some respects. I, too, am arguing that Blake is interested in how specific arguments affect his audience's ability to act, and that he is more concerned about this issue than he is with issues of description. Yet, I differ with Jacobs in that I do not see Blake as rejecting all constative language as prescribing "some way things have to be." Such a claim overstates the case. "Every honest man is a prophet," for example, is a constative claim. While it may have a performative effect, there is no reason to believe that Blake did not see it as an accurate description. As Kenneth Burke argues, language, even the language of the chart, has an effect on its audience's actions, and is thus rhetorical; however, this is true of all language. It does not mean that all constative language, and all truth claims, are equally inaccurate or equally destructive. Finally, there is a difference between the claim that no chart is a perfect description, and becomes dangerous when its perfection is assumed, and the claim that all constative claims are dangerous inherently. Such a claim, made inevitably in constative terms, is finally self-contradictory. It is highly possible that, for Blake, the effects of a particular kind of language as performance provides one way of evaluating its truth or falsehood as a constative claim.

human beings understand the world: “These simple Ideas, the Materials of all our Knowledge, are suggested and furnished to the Mind, only by those two ways above mentioned, *viz. Sensation and Reflection*” (II.II.2.1.21-23). Yet, Locke goes on to argue that through these faculties alone, human beings are able to gain knowledge of the immortality of the soul and of the existence of God.

Blake objects to this idea, as is evidenced in his conversations later in life with Henry Crabb Robinson. Robinson, who visited Blake in his last years, between 1825 and 1827, reports that Blake condemned Locke as an atheist, and would not be reassured when Robinson pointed out that Locke was himself a Christian. Finally, Robinson reports, Blake was willing to accept the claim that Locke’s ideas lead to atheism, although Locke did not intend such a connection (308). Years separate Robinson’s Blake from the young man who wrote the tractates, but the reason for Blake’s objection to Locke is already clearly argued in “There Is No Natural Religion,” as Blake parodies Locke’s reasoning, attempting to reduce his argument to absurdity:

- I Man cannot naturally Perceive. but through his natural or bodily organs
- II Man by his reasoning power. can only compare & judge of what he has already perceiv’d.
- III From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements none could deduce a fourth or fifth (E 2)

Blake’s parody of Lockean argument is meant to ask one basic question. If human beings cannot deduce a fourth or fifth sense or element from three, how can they possibly deduce divinity, infinity, or immortality by reasoning from five senses?¹⁰ Put into Burkean terms,

¹⁰Critics disagree as to whether Blake’s argument is really effective. Eaves, Essick, and Visconti assert that Blake pushes Locke’s argument beyond his intent (32). Yet, as Bloom argues, Blake points out

Blake suggests that whatever Locke's intent, his Empirical method will finally create a terministic screen that shuts out all perception other than that defined by the senses themselves.

This critique of empiricism continues in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a significant fact, since this text contains passages that clearly celebrate the body and its capacity for sensory delight. This very real and positive affirmation of the body and its faculties occurs when one of the Devils links spirituality with the Body, its desires, and its energies, arguing that Energy is from the Body, and that Energy is Eternal Delight (pl. 4; E34). Yet, even here, Blake indicates that the body and its perceptions are limited. Even as the speaker of the poem travels "on the abyss of the five senses" (pl. 6; E 35), he observes a devil writing the following question:

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five? (pl. 7; E 35)

While the senses allow for an initial perception of the bird, they also limit what human beings can know and enjoy about the experience of another kind of being. Only a creative faculty, which can imagine beyond the "senses five" can even conceive of such an immense world. For Blake, Empiricism truncates our capacity to see new things or to see old things in new ways. It produces "the same dull round over again," by limiting our perspective to what has already been perceived (E3). At the very best, Empiricism allows us only perceptions of the same kind as those we have seen before. In so doing, it limits our ability to see new possibilities. Thus, it destroys the sense of divinity that, for Blake, should lie at

an inconsistency in Locke's thought. Locke implies a relationship between the senses, reflection, and religious belief "that is impossible after Hume" (*Apocalypse* 25).

the roots of true action. In this sense, Empiricism is a hindrance. Like Rubens' artistic theory, it tells us what to see and so deprives us of our own imaginative powers.

Having attacked Empiricism in the tractates and, to a lesser degree, in *The Marriage*, Blake does not spare Christianity either. Although Christianity includes a language of Eternity or Infinity that might be supposed to support true action, for Blake, orthodox religion also denies the active powers of the Poetic Genius. It does so, however, in ways that are radically different from Empiricism. First, Blake suggests, Christianity denies the importance and the goodness of the body. In its emphasis on the soul, it creates a terministic screen that deflects our ability to recognize the Poetic Genius in the body and in its capacity for sensation. Second, Christianity freezes the symbolic structures created previously by the Poetic Genius, making one particular expression of this Genius more important than the faculty itself.

Looking first at Blake's treatment of soul and body, we find him insisting that "the outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius" ("All Religions Are One" E 1). Thus, the Poetic Genius is higher than the body, insofar as it is the source of the body, and thus, in some sense, it transcends the body. Nevertheless, the body is not a separate entity, nor is it in some way inferior to the Soul in moral worth. In "All Religions Are One," the body is part and parcel of the Soul's divinity. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake's affirmation of the body is carried much further, and it is placed in more specifically Christian terms:

- All Bibles or sacred codes. have been the causes of the following Errors.
 I.. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.
 2. That Energy calld Evil. is alone from the Body. & that Reason. calld

Good. is alone from the Soul.

3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True

1 Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this age

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

3 Energy is Eternal Delight (pl.4; E 34)

In this passage, Blake objects to the condemnation of the body and its energies by pointing out the way in which the body has been moralized. It is the source of evil; thus its energies are forbidden. Yet, in the second half of the plate, Blake argues that one part of the human being cannot be the source of evil because the body and the soul are one.

Certainly, the actual relationship between body and soul is somewhat unclear here. The body is part of the soul, thus making it seem at some level inferior or subordinate. Yet Energy comes from the body; thus, the body at some level seems greater than the soul. As a literal description of the human being, this passage might be confusing, but its paradoxical nature works well to break through a terministic screen that asks us to split ourselves in two and then reject a part of ourselves. In many respects, this rejection is a kind of scapegoating of the body that occurs through the creation of a rigid soul/body hierarchy, as opposed to a genuine dialectic between the two. Blake aims to restore that dialectic by describing soul and body in terms that look paradoxical only because we expect one term to dominate the other. Blake suggests instead that the two are interdependent. The soul transcends and sustains the body, allowing it an infinite vision, while the body provides energy for the soul.

In the next plate, Blake makes it clear that the energy which he is most concerned

about repressing is sexual desire. He indicates that the restraint of desire renders it “passive till it is only the shadow of desire” (pl.5; E 34). Throughout *The Marriage*, the sexual energies of the body are celebrated and affirmed. Blake affirms “the lust of the goat,” the purely bodily desire of animals. He also praises “the nakedness of woman” as “the work of God” (pl.8; E 36). Thus, he contradicts the privileging of soul over body that makes all bodily energy, including the sexual, appear to be dangerous and evil.

So we can see that in both the tractates and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake criticizes the terministic screens produced by Empiricism and Christianity—screens that prevent their adherents from seeing in important ways. While Empiricism overemphasizes the senses, Christianity overemphasizes the soul. Blake argues that both leave out important aspects of humanity. Furthermore, both the tractates and *The Marriage* demonstrate that any system that is exalted above the Poetic Genius itself becomes even more frozen and destructive. If any system claims to be the sole revelation or the sole description of truth, it has been divinized and placed above the Poetic Genius in stature and importance.

This problem, Blake implies, is particularly prominent in religious thought. Blake argues this point first in “All Religions Are One:”

No man can think write or speak from his heart, but he must intend truth.
Thus all sects of Philosophy are from the Poetic Genius adapted to the
weaknesses of every individual” (E 1).

This claim includes both Empiricism and Christianity. Of course, this need not mean that every system is equally true or equally helpful. Perhaps different people have different levels of weakness to which the Poetic Genius must adapt. Yet Burke insists that each

system is one manifestation of Poetic Genius, and that no system can claim an identification with the universal Poetic Genius mentioned in Principle 4 of “All Religions Are One.” For this reason, the freezing of systems is terribly destructive. If the system is absolutized, it takes on a divinized role which it does not properly deserve. Its terministic screens become absolutely fixed, and its adherents can no longer recognize new information when it appears. This critique is especially applicable to Christianity. Empiricism, at least, will allow for a change in belief when new physical evidence appears. Christianity, on the other hand, has defined itself as the absolute revelation, and places itself above all other religions and philosophies in the world. “All Religions Are One” directly attacks that assumption, affirming the inspiration of Christianity, but insisting that other religions and philosophies may also be inspired.

Looking at the critiques of specific symbolic orders in the tractates and *The Marriage*, we can gain a fuller sense of how symbolic orders function as hindrances for Blake. First, the terministic screens that these systems produce create limited vision, preventing the Poetic Genius from creating new wisdom and new perspectives. Furthermore, aspects of the human personality can be permanently demonized, as when the body becomes the devil-term in Christianity as Blake describes it.

These perceptual limitations also have social consequences. The stagnation of an unchanging order can cause the preservation of destructive social hierarchies. The status quo, no matter how terrible, is justified and maintained when the system is seen as absolute and unchanging. Finally, the deification of a system of order, as in Christianity, can lead to the actual scapegoating of real human beings, who are unjustly blamed for

problems they did not cause or for characteristics that they share with their persecutors. In the next two sections, we will examine some of these practical problems with symbolic order by looking at their social results as depicted *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

The Chimney Sweepers of Innocence and Experience: Terministic Screens, Mortification, and Passivity

The primary dialectic of the *Songs* is, of course, innocence and experience, not body and soul, or Empiricism and Christianity. Blake criticism abounds with attempts to produce an exact description of innocence and experience, what each state entails, which state is to be preferred, and so on. Some argue that innocence, while pastoral and beautiful on the surface, is, in fact, a negative state. Jacobs, for example, believes that Blake is arguing against a “logic of innocence” in the *Songs*. This “logic of innocence” is the belief that there is “some way things have to be” to which human beings must resign themselves, a logic which, for Jacobs, prevents a full recognition of human responsibility and creativity. Thus, for Jacobs, a state of experience is to be preferred, because liberation is associated with this less idyllic, but more responsible, mode of perception. Hirsch sees Innocence as a state of otherworldly religious vision, while Experience embraces the world, and he argues that Blake himself was in a state of innocence when he wrote the earlier *Songs of Innocence*. Probably the most traditional stance, and the most common one, is to be found in Frye’s *Fearful Symmetry* and Bloom’s *Blake’s Apocalypse*. Innocence is one state, experience another. Each view is limited unless it can be transcended by a third, more mature position.

Frye's and Bloom's readings emphasize an important fact about the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Neither innocence nor experience offers a simple reflection of Blake's own attitudes. As Heather Glen describes in her discussion of the *Songs*, most of the poems in both *Innocence* and *Experience* contain subtle critique. Many of the personae in *Songs of Innocence* are capable of joy and hope, but they are often blind to the ways in which others exploit these very characteristics. On the other hand, the experienced characters recognize the darker aspects of human society, but they are often unable to perceive potential avenues for liberation.

In Burkean terms, the states of Innocence and Experience can be related to terministic screens. By setting the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* side by side in a single volume, Blake achieves in his audience a kind of transcendent perspective that allows it to explore the limits of both perspectives without losing awareness of the special strength each perspective offers. A variety of different dichotomies, such as heaven and earth, soul and body, child and adult, are explored under the broader heading of "Innocence" or "Experience." In each case, Blake is examining a different example of what Burke would call a terministic screen.

In the chimney sweeper poems, Blake sets up a contrast between a vision of the world based on Christianity and a vision that is based on an Empiricist perspective. The religious perspective enables exploited children to find hope and relationship to one another at the expense of a realistic appraisal of their physical experience. On the other hand, empirical observation, and reflection on it, gives the second chimney sweeper a realistic perception of his physical misery and its causes, but this awareness is bought at

the cost of hope and a sense of relationship. In both cases, the chimney sweepers' perspectives limit their ability to respond to their own oppression without hindrance. Yet, at the same time, each offers a form of awareness that would be necessary if the individual's situation, or the society, were to be genuinely transformed. Here, Blake's treatment of traditional Christianity, its promise of heaven, and its language of divinity is balanced with an accurate empirical and social demystification which is, nevertheless, inadequate by itself to produce social action. Rather than stating a clear third perspective, Blake links the two dialectically, insisting on the need for the language of both body and soul in the improvement of the chimney sweepers' condition. Thus he refuses entirely to confirm or renounce the philosophical and religious positions that the two boys exemplify. This rhetorical move resembles Burke's move in describing human beings as symbol-using animals. It avoids defining human substance in terms of either spirit or body, insisting on the necessity for both.¹¹

In the "Chimney Sweeper" of *Innocence*, there are clear hints of ritual sacrifice in the language. In referring to little Tom Dacre as having hair like a lamb, Blake emphasizes the child's innocence, but this term also links the boy substantially with Christ, himself a

¹¹Until Viscomi's 1993 study, it was believed that *Songs of Innocence* was published separately at times, but that *Experience* had never stood alone. Viscomi's research invalidates this presumption. *Innocence* was published separately in 1789, then the combined *Songs of Innocence and Experience* were published in 1794. Afterwards, Blake usually printed the two as a pair, with the frontispiece designed for the combined text. Yet, there were copies of *Innocence* published separately after 1794, and separately published editions of *Experience* (Viscomi 272-75). This fact makes claims about the dialectical relationship between the texts, including discussions like this one, somewhat suspect. In response to this suspicion, however, I would make two arguments. The first is that Blake did make clear allusions to *Innocence* in *Experience*. Therefore, they are related, however he chose to publish the two at any given time. Second, the combined edition of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* can be described as having a particular rhetorical effect, apart from the fact that Blake chose to present other rhetorical effects, through separate publications, on other occasions. This analysis focuses on the effects of the combined edition, or on the separate editions insofar as they can be placed in conversation with one another.

victim who is not personally guilty. Yet this child is not a scapegoat in the usual sense. The poem does not suggest that he acts as the charismatic vicar who purges anyone else's guilt. There is no voice in the text that implies that he is guilty, or other, or in any way associated with sin. In fact, he is a model of submission. When Tom is shown the vision of a heaven that will receive him after his work in the chimneys kills him, he accepts this vision completely, surrenders to it, and acts as a "good boy" who does his work with joy so that God will be his father. He is a model of a trusting religious faith, and his suffering is solely the result of economic forces; there is no clear sense that anyone is using him for purgative purposes.

Yet, there are scapegoating implications in the argument of the poem, ones that become clear when we compare the poem to other discussions of class and injustice in the period. We get a hint of these discussions in Glen's provocative account of the ways in which chimney sweepers are typically described in eighteenth-century texts; these children are seen as lazy, as beggars, as thieves, and as bad seeds, the offspring of persons just as disreputable as they are themselves. At times, chimney sweepers are depicted as symbols of political subversion (100). Such attitudes, of course, make it easier to exploit these children, since they are seen as the kind of people who would come to no good, no matter how well they are treated. Painting his sweep as a model of submission, Blake undercuts a kind of scapegoating rhetoric that was typical of the period and denies his readers the opportunity to blame the little chimney sweeper for his situation.

Furthermore, Blake refuses to offer the audience an easy cathartic release or an easy rhetorical charm that would create consubstantiation between social classes without

the need for a real social changes. Symbolic scapegoating as a means of creating consubstantiation between the classes is common enough in the late eighteenth century, making dramatic appearances in the works of a number of writers, among them, Edmund Burke and Hannah More. Although Burke's "A Treatise on Scarcity" and Hannah More's "Patient Joe; or the Newcastle Collier" first appear in the 1790's, well after the engraving of *Songs of Innocence* in 1789, they express attitudes that are certainly present in the 1780's, although a less volatile political situation prevented their being discussed quite so often or openly.

Burke, for example, in "A Treatise on Scarcity" asserts that physical prosperity is not possible for the vast number of the poor, and that "cant" about "the labouring poor" is thus "base and wicked" (196). The working poor should not be encouraged to reflect upon their poverty and long for impossible prosperity. Rather, they should be encouraged in "[p]atience, labour, sobriety, frugality, and religion All the rest is *fraud*" (196). Burke makes this assertion within a broader claim that the interests of rich and poor are, in fact identical. Therefore, he admonishes:

The consideration of this [the fact that there is no famine] ought to bind us all, rich and poor together, against those wicked writers of the newspapers, who would inflame the poor against their friends, guardians, patrons, and protectors. (210)

This argument sets up a scapegoat, the newspaperman, who acts as a common enemy against whom rich and poor can unite. Further, it encourages the farm laborer to focus on religious and philosophical happiness rather than material prosperity, since "Philosophical happiness is to want little" (196). The notion that things are as good as they can be, and

that those who say otherwise are “the enemy,” distracts from the examination of changes that might be possible.

Hannah More’s “Patient Joe, or the Newcastle Collier,” released with the *Cheap Repository Tracts* of 1795, makes a somewhat different argument, one that is more dependent on religion. More’s “Patient Joe” sees God’s will and submits to it, however negative his situation. More has those who taunt Joe’s beliefs in Providence oppose it to “chance” or “luck” (217). The possibility that neither Providence, nor luck, nor chance, but rather changeable social and economic conditions might be the cause of want or illness is never suggested. This omission becomes particularly marked when one of Joe’s taunters, Tim Jenkins, is killed in a mine collapse, while Joe escapes. The implication is that Joe is spared because he is good and faithful, while Tim’s death is a result of God’s judgment. The notion that, perhaps, the mine need not have collapsed at all, that perhaps human carelessness or stinginess had created unsafe working conditions, is not even considered.

Edmund Burke dismisses those who call the poor uninformed and attempts to create consubstantiality between rich and poor by identifying a common enemy of “wicked newspapermen” who try to stir up problems. In contrast, More’s scapegoating of the taunting collier is designed to create consubstantiation between rich and poor by allowing a cathartic purging of both. The rich can ignore their complicity in creating unsafe working conditions while condemning the disgruntled worker, who dies, not because the mine is unsafe, but because God has punished his blasphemous mockery of patient Joe. Likewise, the poor can purge their own resentments, heaping the guilt for their inner rebellions and

doubts onto Tim Jenkins, and attaining consubstantiation with patient Joe, God, and the ruling classes, all in one sweeping gesture.

In the “Chimney Sweeper” though, Blake protests both of these scapegoating patterns. He does not spare the reader an awareness of his or her complicity in this unjust suffering, having the older chimney sweeper who narrates the poem say, innocently, “So **your** chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep” (Emphasis mine), thus arousing an uncomfortable awareness of complicity in the audience (l. 4; E 10).¹² Further, he indicates the process of mortification these young children must go through to become the models of patient endurance they are asked to be.

In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke describes mortification as the ritual process by which one submits oneself to a symbolic order, “a systematic way of saying no to Disorder, or obediently saying yes to Order” (190). Such a system involves, to a greater or lesser degree, a victimage of the self, as the individual kills “any motive that for ‘doctrinal’ reasons, one thinks of as unruly” (196). Since no individual system can perfectly fulfill all the potentials within any human being, something must *always* be sacrificed simply for the preservation of the system. Such sacrifices may be quite conscious, and may not be, properly speaking, scapegoating. Yet they can involve a destructive form of sacrifice made in exchange for a sense of consubstantiality with others in the system. A part of the self is cast off as negative, so that one’s own identity can become one with the symbolic system and submit to it.

¹²This particular point has been made many times, but, for a particularly rich discussion, see Glen, p. 96.

In little Tom Dacre's case, the initial mortification occurs when his curly blonde hair is shaved. On the master's part, this action is simply practical, designed to prevent the child's hair from catching fire if soot is smoldering in the chimney where he works (Leader 45). For Tom, something more is at stake; he cries at the loss of his hair, demonstrating that the loss is significant to his identity. As Nurmi points out, the act of shaving is common to many initiatory rituals, those required upon entrance to prison, or the army, or, I might add, to a religious order ("Fact and Symbol" 17). All of these ritual shavings are intended to alter the identity of individuals and make them consubstantial with a new group of people with whom their identity now lies. In this case, Tom undergoes this transformation of his identity with the assistance of the poem's speaker, an older child who is also a chimney sweep.

The poem's speaker comforts Tom with the words, "Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare,/ You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair" (l. 6-7; E 10). The older child's words are an attempt at consolation, and they work, but the consolation requires of Tom an attitude of sacrifice and mortification. These consoling words also harbor a remarkable paradox. The older child suggests that Tom can somehow preserve his lost hair, keeping it "unspoiled," by sacrificing it, a term reminiscent of the Biblical claim that one saves one's life by losing it (Pagliario 23). Tom's acquiescence to this argument eliminates his tears and makes him happier, but it also requires him to mortify that part of himself that recognizes his loss. The process of submitting to the narrator's consolations prepares him for another act of submission, this one more

encompassing than the first.¹³

As Kenneth Burke says, mortification, as a submission to the social order, is always associated with ideas about death, as the sacrifices made in the realm of the socio-political order slide over into our ideas about the natural order. In this case, however, the slippage is literally true, since for Tom and his friends, submission to the socio-political order, in this case the apprenticeship laws, will in all likelihood lead to physical death. At some level, Tom knows this. His dream of coffins that resemble both the chimneys in which the children work and the actual coffins to which their labors will lead them show his awareness of his negative situation. But, like his tears, this awareness is undone by his submission to a divinity who will be his father “if [he’ll] be a good boy” (l. 18; E 10). In the final stanza of the poem, Tom arises happily to do his work, making his final acquiescence to an economic system by means of theological language. Since the Christian vision is socially approved, it allows him to soften the awareness of impending death while becoming consubstantial with his social world at the same time. Through the power of symbolic action, a shaven, abandoned, and cold child has unspoiled hair, is happy, and is warm. He has mortified his physical awareness almost out of existence.

There is no question that these two children find in the Christian system and its vision of heaven a powerful strategy for psychic survival. In fact, they find even more, a

¹³Of course, this idea that one saves the hair by losing it as been noted many times, although the Biblical allusion does not always appear. Wicksteed points out this connection, suggesting that it leads to Tom’s dream of liberation, and that it is precisely this kind of dreaming to which Blake is calling the reader (109-110). This purely spiritual reading ignores the ironies of the poem, which appear most fully when one reads it in relation to the “Chimney Sweeper” of *Experience*, but which also are implied by the split between the author and the naive narrator, an older child than Tom, but still a child. Both Wicksteed and Leader argue that Tom’s vision comes from the words of the older child (45-46), but he is less sanguine than Wicksteed about the effects of that vision.

means of building genuine community. The chimney sweepers in Tom's dream of heaven are all called by name, and the speaker calls Tom by name. Further, there is no evidence that the older boy encourages Tom to stop crying for his hair out of any motive other than benevolence. The vision of heaven gives Tom, not only hope, but a sense of being able to create his own destiny. One might even argue that the boys are using their faculty of Poetic Genius to cope with a difficult situation. Their symbolic acts are not in themselves vice or hindrance. They allow the boys to engage in real relationships with each other and to maintain a sense of safety and worth in an extremely harsh situation.

Yet the symbolic system of Christianity hinders the children by encouraging their surrender to a destructive economic system through the mortification of very real parts of themselves. Further, it prevents their recognizing that their physical situation could be improved now. Tom's initial tears at the loss of his hair is an authentic response to a real loss. When he suppresses his tears and goes happily to bed, he also suppresses awareness. It is as if the symbolic vision of heaven replaces Tom's ability to use his five senses in order to evaluate and respond to his situation. Thus, the "energies of the body," located in his tears, his grief at his own impending death, his experience of the cold, are denied. Tom has no scapegoat, but in a real sense, he submits himself to a process of mortification to such an extent that he makes a scapegoat of the part of himself that could have remembered how to protest. In so doing, he allows himself to make a premature peace with those who would willingly sacrifice him in order to maintain the peace and the status quo.

There is no evidence that Blake faults the child for his submission, however. In

fact, the tone of the fourth stanza is celebratory. When the chimney sweepers are released from their coffins and run down the plain and “shine in the Sun,” they are doing precisely what they should be doing, what they are meant to do (l. 16; E 10). The pleasures here are active and profoundly corporeal, but the problem is that they are deferred. Blake’s judgment is reserved for those who use the boys’ innocence and religious vision to withhold these pleasures in the present world. As is so often observed, the last line of the poem is a judgement against those who consent to that deferral: “So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm”(l. 24; E 10). As Glen puts it, “In parroting the precept he has learned, this child [the poem’s speaker] is not merely laying the pretensions of his instructors open to question, but also their whole way of conceiving and ordering experience” (102). He is naively and innocently pointing to the absurdity of a social and symbolic order that would “save” someone by literally working him to death.

Thus, we might expect that the chimney sweeper of experience would be affirmed as the ideal, because he recognizes his situation, and his protest is open and honest. In fact, the chimney sweeper in *Experience* embodies the kind of critique recommended by Thomas Paine and others, a critique that uses the terms “God and Priest and King” to link an exploitative, oppressive government with a state church and thus demystify its power. Yet, as Glen observes, this child’s stance is equally problematic. The second chimney sweeper, who sees his condition clearly, nevertheless can discover no clear way out of the social situation that he so accurately perceives.

Therefore, the “Chimney Sweeper” of *Experience* is best understood when read dialectically in relationship to the earlier poem. While *Innocence* minimizes the bodily facts

of the chimney sweeper's situation, these facts are continually highlighted in *Experience*. As Lincoln's commentary suggests, even the illumination highlights the physical realities of the situation—the child's black clothing, his pack, the blackness of his world, and the dirty snow ("Notes" 182). The initial speaker in the poem, the adult who questions the child, notices the child's color, his woeful cry, but he also refers to the child as a thing. This word heightens our sense of the child's materiality, but it also diminishes the child. This speaker, aware of the child's material condition, does not demonstrate equal awareness of his personhood.

The child, also, is intensely aware of his physical situation and of the broken relationships that have placed him there. He knows that his clothes are "clothes of death," a phrase that refers not merely to their funereal color, but to the actual physical death that awaits him as a result of his labor (l. 7; E23). He knows that the "notes of woe" were taught to him by other people (l. 8; E 23). He is further aware that his situation is the result of exploitation, realizing that his parents chose to clothe him in these garments and place him in this vulnerable situation. He is conscious also of the intricate social network of exploitation that extends far beyond his parents. His parents do what they do in homage to a system far greater than themselves, a system like the one to which little Tom Dacre submits himself in the earlier poem, as the idea of God becomes the accomplice of an oppressive social system. This child, like little Tom Dacre, has times of happiness, but, unlike Tom, he is aware that he has been injured, and that his happiness is not an excuse for those who cause him to suffer.

Yet, the awareness in and of itself is not enough. The child sees his situation

accurately enough, but there is no vision, no hope, no sense of connection to which he can turn, no vision of deliverance. The pastoral elements that appear in Tom Dacre's dream are, for this child, clearly left behind in the past, when he was "happy upon the heath" (l. 5; E 22). The God who becomes a father to little Tom Dacre is allied with the priest and the king in oppressing the child. So, this chimney sweeper's empirically accurate vision offers the clear perspective that demystification provides, but it is also "the same dull round over again" (E 3). No imaginative vision accompanies the awareness of exploitation, and there is no suggestion of how that exploitation could be overcome. As Alicia Ostriker points out in her discussion of the relationship between *Imnocence* and *Experience*: "The rationalist, materialist outlook was no less sentimental, because no less limited, than blind adoration of the child or the savage" (48), or, for that matter, of eighteenth-century Christianity. The "rationalist, materialist outlook" provides insight into one's condition, but simple insight into the present state of things does not necessarily create the ability to change it, and Blake wants his readers to recognize this fact. The terministic screen of both speakers in the second "Chimney Sweeper" cuts off the Utopian vision that Christianity provides in the first poem.

Thus, these chimney sweepers present a living model of the results of both Christianity and Empiricism as terministic screens. Each child sees through a lens that allows him to see some things, while blinding him to others. In both cases, the child becomes unable to act on his own behalf, precisely because his vision is limited. Blake reveals that both screens can contribute to vice, since they hinder positive action and produce passivity. Yet, both perspectives also could contribute to virtue insofar as they

create forms of awareness that would be necessary for transformation to occur, that is, if they could both exist concurrently. Putting the two poems side by side allows Blake to reveal to his audience the strengths and limitations of both systems. The blinders that the systems create act as a way of perpetuating the status quo, that is, an unjust social system.¹⁴

The maintenance of the status quo is not, however, the sole negative social consequence that terministic screens can create. There is also the possibility of divinizing and freezing the system. When this occurs, one may readily scapegoat others to preserve the symbolic structure. Or, one may perform scapegoating acts in order to transfer guilt or to prevent the awareness that one is in violation of the commandments implied by a particular system. In these early Blake poems, the most virulent forms of scapegoating, whether they be violent or non-violent, tend to be depicted as a consequence of religion. In the following section, we will examine some implications of scapegoating as it appears in a particular song, “Little Boy Lost,” and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In all of these cases, Christianity is the symbolic order to which victims are sacrificed, although, in *The Marriage*, we begin to see the kinds of generalized, mythic depictions of scapegoating that will be more typical of the Lambeth prophecies and other later mythological texts.

Scapegoating and Hindrance—“Little Boy Lost” and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

In “A Little Boy Lost” from *Songs of Experience* and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake sees traditional Christianity as a symbolic system that is based on

¹⁴The reader should bear in mind that, in terms of Burke’s thought, there is nothing wrong with a terministic screen *per se*. The problem is with the inability to recognize that one is looking through such a screen, and with the tendency to naively assume that one is simply seeing what is so.

hindering the natural powers of its adherents. In doing so, it creates in these same adherents the tendency to hinder the actions of others. Further, it blinds these adherents to their own inability to conform to the thoroughgoing system that they profess, thus causing them to scapegoat others. The scapegoating depicted in these texts corresponds to Kenneth Burke's definition for scapegoating, as well as his emphasis on the importance of symbolic systems, like religious and theological doctrines, in perpetuating it. As we have seen, for Burke, the scapegoat "is profoundly consubstantial with those who, looking upon it as a chosen vessel, would ritualistically cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it. Thus, the scapegoat represents the principle of division in that its persecutors would alienate from themselves to it their own uncleannesses" (*GM* 406). This definition does not imply, however, that the consubstantiality between the persecutor and his or her victim is conscious. At times, the persecutor is conscious only of his or her separation from a victim who is believed to be absolutely other.

"A Little Boy Lost" exemplifies this principle perfectly, and, in the process, expresses Blake's distrust of priests and religious authorities. The child in the poem separates himself from the Priest and his religious hierarchy in two ways. First, he denies that it is possible to obey Christ's commandment to love the neighbor as the self. Second, he denies the possibility of conceiving a divinity greater than himself. In the first stanza of the poem, the child speaks philosophically. He does not sound like a young boy at all:

Nought loves another as itself
 Nor venerates another so.
 Nor is it possible to Thought
 A greater than itself to know:" (l. 1-4; E 28)

Yet, in the second stanza, the child suddenly takes on an air of innocence, as he tells his father that he cannot love more than he does: "I love you like the little bird/That picks up crumbs around the door" (l. 8; E 28). The bird imagery emphasizes the child's harmlessness. Further, the image is reminiscent of Jesus' words: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26). The rhetorical power of the allusion is heightened by the fact that the child sees himself as a bird picking up crumbs at his **Father's** door; thus, it becomes difficult to tell whether the father addressed is earthly or heavenly. This oblique reference leads the audience to the idea that even birds, who have no duty to perform, and no complex theological understanding of love or divinity, are loved and fed by God. The implication is that those who are truly consubstantial with the Jesus they claim to follow would hear this echo and recognize their duty to love and nurture the child, however unorthodox. Even if seen as a beast, he would deserve ordinary care and kindness, and in terms of Blake's Lavater annotation, failing to nurture him would be the omission of their own duty at the time.¹⁵

In Blake's terms, however, this child is not a beast at all, and perhaps he is even a prophet, insofar as "Every honest man is a Prophet" (*Annotations to An Apology for the Bible* E 617). The boy is virtuous simply because he speaks the truth from his heart. In fact, the second half of his statement echoes Blake's own teaching in "There Is No Natural Religion," where he argues that empiricism leads to atheism by saying, "Man, by his reasoning power, can only compare & judge of what he has already perceived" (E 2).

¹⁵My word choice here is reminiscent of Blake's. See Erdman, p. 601 for the original wording.

Blake does not directly claim that nothing higher than the self exists, merely that systematic reasoning cannot attain knowledge of it. The boy's claim is similar.

The rigidity of the priest's thinking is revealed in his assumption that the child's argument is based on reason. There are the holy mysteries and there is reason. One is right, one is wrong, and there are no other possibilities. He responds to the child's honest heresy with absolute ferocity, seizing the child by his hair, dragging him by his clothes, condemning him as a fiend before the community, and finally, burning him to death in a "holy place,/Where many had been burn'd before" (l. 21-22; E 29). Although the pious crowd admiringly describes this ferocity as "Priestly care" (l. 12; E 28), it is clear that the priest cares for nothing except the purity of his doctrine. While he may feel some abstract concern for the child's "soul" (and the audience is not allowed to see any such concern), there is no care for the child's physical life or for his family. Blake highlights the family's suffering through the repetition of one line and one line only, "The weeping parents wept in vain" (l. 23; E 29). This repeated line emphasizes both the priest's callousness and the bonds of love that unite the condemned boy and his parents.

The word "care," contrasted with this callous act, also offers a key to the scapegoating motive as it functions in this poem. When the crowd describes the priest's action in terms of "care," the lovelessness of his action is masked. But the priest never mentions love, speaking only of "holy mystery" defiled by Reason.¹⁶ His lovelessness is

¹⁶Zachary Leader argues at length that the child's Deism is a negative that the rhetoric of the poem leads its audience to ignore. According to Leader, Blake's bard heavilyhandedly condemns the Priest, but his sympathy for the injustice done the child causes us to ignore the falsehood of his beliefs, or to assume that the blame belongs with those who taught him to accept Deistical ideas. In other words, Leader is accusing Blake of a one-sided heavy-handedness here. (170-71). While Leader is correct that Blake rejects Deism, it is unclear, as I have already argued, whether the child is as Deistic as Leader

clear enough to the reader, however, who can quickly see that the child, despite his doubts about a particular theology of love, does love in the common, human sense of the term, and is bound in love to parents who mourn his death. As the child is stripped, chained, and executed by religious authorities, the reader is reminded of Jesus, who was also executed by religious authorities, and whom the Priest supposedly serves. The child and Christ become consubstantial for the reader. The Priest, however, is unable to see that consubstantiality. That failure makes him and his followers faithless as well as loveless, precisely the religious crimes for which they condemn the boy. For them, the child becomes the loveless and faithless one, the “charismatic vicar” who must be burned in order to purify a community which neither sees nor acknowledges its own failings.

As Andrew Lincoln points out, the literal actions described in this poem would have seemed barbaric to Blake’s contemporaries, but the poem’s final rhetorical question, “Are such things done on Albions shore,” using the present tense, invites Blake’s audience to recognize their own consubstantiality with the Priest’s followers (Lincoln, “Notes” 198; l. 24; E 29). Citing a related poem by Isaac Watts, part of Watts’ popular collection of hymns for children, Lincoln points out that the spiritual language of eighteenth century English Christianity resembles the violence of the Priest’s language in Blake’s poem (“Notes” 198):

What if his [God’s] dreadful anger burn,

assumes. The bird imagery is a key to undercutting the apparent Deism of the opening lines. In any case, we are meant to be appalled by the child’s murder, whether or not he is a Deist. Furthermore, if the purpose of the poem is to denounce scapegoating as an activity performed by Christians, the reader need not be concerned that Blake has been insufficiently hard on Deists in this particular text. For a good discussion of Blake’s attitude towards Deism, see Bloom, *Blake’s Apocalypse*, 24-28.

While I refuse his offer'd grace,
 And all his love to fury turn,
 And strike me dead upon the place?

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God!
 His power and vengeance none can tell!
 One stroke of his almighty rod
 Shall send young sinners quick to hell

Then 'twill for ever be in vain
 To cry for pardon and for grace. (Watts 229)¹⁷

If the late eighteenth-century child is not threatened with literal fire, he is threatened with eternal fire, by a god who, like the priest, ignores cries of desperation and exacts vengeance when others fail to acknowledge him. Such a god could be described as the ultimate scapegoater, who punishes others for lovelessness when he is himself loveless, or at least unfaithful, turning away in fickle and jealous rage the moment his love is rejected. The closing line of Blake's poem directly addresses the audience, asking them to confess that such things *are* done on Albion's shore, symbolically if not physically. Further, he invites his audience to renounce their consubstantiality with the priest and, instead, to identify with the tortured child, thus making the move from hindrance, or vice, to action, or virtue.

As a symbolic action, the poem is designed to break up its audience's identification with a religious hierarchy that Blake regards as inhuman. Furthermore, it demonstrates the

¹⁷Zachary Leader points out that some, like John Wesley, criticize Watts for excessively moderating his language in order to speak to children in a manner appropriate to their years (8). Leader himself mentions "the gentle kindliness" of Watts' voice, and his difficulty reconciling that gentleness with a severity he saw as a necessary part of his message—an interesting criticism in light of this particular text (16-17). For further discussion of the relationship between Blake's songs and eighteenth-century children's literature, see Leader's full discussion and chapter 1 of Glen's *Vision and Disenchantment: Blake's Songs and Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads*, "Poetic 'Simplicity': Blake's Songs and Eighteenth-Century Children's Verse, pp. 8-32.

consubstantiality that in the Burkean model accompanies the relationship between the persecuting community and the scapegoat, who symbolically carries the traits that the community rejects in itself. By showing the hypocrisy of the persecutors and the innocence of the child, it critiques the kind of rigid symbolic order, in this case an institutional order, that could create such scapegoating.

Angela Esterhammer says of this poem that it treats language as performative, applauding the performative language of individuals like the lost boy, and condemning the performative language of institutions like the church.¹⁸ In his *Annotations to Lavater*, Blake initially appears to argue that actions from “individual propensity” are bound to be good, but he evidently thinks better of this phrase and deletes it. Rather, his emphasis is on the distinction between action and hindrance. When one individual hinders another, this deed is vice. The priest’s action, both as an individual and as the agent of an institution, is vice. The child’s free expression of his ideas and experiences is virtuous, whether or not his ideas are, strictly speaking, true, and whether or not his ideas happen to be held by others within a social community. But since institutions so often bear the burden of restraining and hindering action, it is difficult to see how any institution could be virtuous

¹⁸Esterhammer uses Burke’s concept of circumference to set up her argument. By circumference, Burke means to the range which a particular perspective offers. Esterhammer argues that circumference for Burke has to do with the “different conclusions we make about the motives of human behavior . . . depending on whether we adopt a circumference that includes the idea of a creating God or one limited to a controlling Nature (77-78). Esterhammer argues that for Blake another distinction is primary. The difference is between two kinds of language, language in which there is a direct relationship between “address and reply and between language and action” and another type of language in which communication is “oblique, interrupted, and generally ineffectual” (125). Of course, the concept of creation is important in both of these distinctions, as is the concept of language as active and effectual. Yet, Esterhammer’s emphasis focuses more on the relationship between institutional and personal language. My own discussion will focus, instead, on the distinction between creation and control.

in the antinomian ethic of Blake's early work. The institutional limit on behavior, enforced by the "Thou Shalt Not" (the hortatory negative which, Burke as argues, "moralizes" humanity), becomes the vice that Blake wants to uproot (*LASA* 16).

In another song from *Experience*, "The Garden of Love," this concern with institutional limits is highlighted. A priest is shown in another act, or perhaps we should call it a non-act, of restraint, binding up sexual desire with "Thou-shalt-not's and thorns and briars, strangling the vitality of a flower garden. Thus, the speaker of the poem tells us, there are "tomb-stones where flowers should be"(l. 10; E 26). Hindrance produces death at a number of levels, literal and metaphorical, because it is precisely this binding that leads to the need to kill and harm. In "The Garden of Love," hindrance of the self creates the need to restrict others' sexual joys. In "A Little Boy Lost," the Priest's hindrance of his own power to think independently produces the institutional murder of the child. The often quoted proverb of hell, "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires" is best understood in this light (*MHH* pl. 10, l. 69; E 38). The hindering and binding of authentic desire, including sexual desire and honest questioning, are precisely what produces the impulse to strangle the innocent.¹⁹ Such an overt and final hindering of the life of another is simply the outward expression of the internal strangulation of innocent desire through rigid adherence to an unbending system.

Blake continues to explore the unbending quality of Christian orthodoxy and the

¹⁹It is also arguable that Blake is directly criticizing an ethic of celibacy here. If one is celibate, one does not produce children. There is no new life. So, in a sense, Blake implies, one has already murdered new life in the cradle through the refusal of sexual activity.

scapegoating it produces in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.²⁰ As a number of critics note, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* parodies Swedenborgianism specifically, with direct references to phrases and doctrines treated in Swedenborg's books.²¹ Although Blake admired Swedenborg during the 1780's, by the time he wrote *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he had turned against both Swedenborg and the Swedenborgian New Church in London, with which he had at least a passing connection in the 1780's. Blake's annotations to *Divine Providence* (1790) reveal his opinion that Swedenborg is a predestinarian. As Paley points out, this description is not entirely accurate. Swedenborg did not believe in predestination; he thought that everyone had the opportunity for salvation but that some rejected it. This rejection, however, is finalized at death (Paley "New Heaven" 70).

The doctrine of eternal salvation or damnation, conceived as a destiny assigned permanently at death, is what Blake objects to in Swedenborg and is the reason why he calls Swedenborg a predestinarian. For Blake, the belief in eternal damnation was the final

²⁰Including *The Marriage* in a discussion of non-mythological texts may appear somewhat inaccurate, since the opening "Argument" features mythological characters, like Rintrah, who will appear in the later mythological texts. Furthermore, there are certainly mythological elements in Blake's treatment of devils and angels. Yet, *The Marriage* is a mix of forms, as contrasted with the later works that are mythological from start to finish, and based throughout on characters of Blake's own invention. Early in Blake's career, he experiments with a variety of forms, like the tractates, the *Songs*, and the formally diverse *Marriage*, sometimes seen as an anatomy. For a full discussion of the form of the marriage, see Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi's Introduction to the Blake trust edition of the early illuminated texts.

²¹A variety of discussions exist that place Blake within his Swedenborgian context. A good general discussion can be found in the Introduction to the Blake trust edition of the early illuminated texts, edited by Essick, Viscomi, and Eaves. These scholars put much emphasis on how specific allusions to Swedenborg in *The Marriage* create a rhetorical effect on the audience. The historical background for this piece relies strongly on Morton Paley's "A New Heaven Is Begun." For a debate concerning the possible audience for *The Marriage*, see Howard's "An Audience for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*" and Scrivener's "A Swedenborgian Visionary and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*."

end-stop of human creativity, the ultimate foreclosure of the Act. The belief in eternal destiny, determined upon death, is also, as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* demonstrates, an act of scapegoating, based upon the projection of guilt onto another in order to conform to a rigid system. Despite the fact that *The Marriage* is a critique and a parody of Swedenborg's writings, it is also a condemnation of orthodox Christianity in all its forms. If Blake is particularly hard on Swedenborg, it is because he had hoped that Swedenborg was something other than a traditional Christian.

Blake's rejection of the doctrine of eternal damnation is congruent with his treatment of Act as the god-term, with Hindrance as the devil-term. The Memorable Fancy beginning on plate 12 describes the process by which true prophecy can degenerate into hindrance. Here the young prophet who is the primary speaker of the work dines with the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah says that he was "perswaded. & confirm'd; that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God" (pl. 12; E 38).²² The young prophet, concerned that he will wrongly impose his ideas upon others, thus hindering them, asks whether a firm perswasion [sic] makes a thing so, and Isaiah replies that it does. All poets believe that this is so. Then Ezekiel argues that the Poetic Genius is the first and primary principle. This is possible because, as Blake writes elsewhere, "No man can think write or speak from his heart, but he must intend truth" ("All Religions Are One E 1") and "Every honest man is a Prophet" (*Annotations to An Apology for the Bible* E 617). Truth here is

²²In referring to the speaker of *The Marriage* as a "young prophet," I am following John Howard's argument that the piece is about the formation of a young prophet's character and vocation. See Howard's *Infernal Poetics*, pages 61-96. An earlier version of this argument appears in Nurmi (1957).

not an accurate chart of a state of affairs, but an honest symbolic action from the mind, mouth, or pen of an honest human being. Thus “opposition is true friendship,” since honestly spoken visions create progression, change, and growth, even when they are opposed, just like “Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate” and all the Contraries (pl. 3; E 34).

But when such honest perception and expression are passed along to others in a culture and passively accepted, they develop into a rigid and frozen system in which there is no further progression, just a static hierarchy. In *The Marriage*, this is the fate of Christianity and Judaism. As Ezekiel asserts, the vulgar believed “that all nations would at last be subject to the jews” (E 39). This subjection has occurred, he points out, because all nations are now subject to the jews’ God. Such a subjection, insofar as it is a subjection to another’s vision, is not good but rather, a suppression of the Poetic Genius in those who believe without benefit of vision.

What such frozen systems do, according to Blake, is to create a totalized system, placing the Devourers (or submitters) in a permanent position of privilege, while the Prolific, or Visionaries, become perceived as insane, tormented, and eternally damned. Christianity unites these two groups by creating a system which includes both only by creating a rigid hierarchy in which one group is valued and the other group devalued. The *Marriage* regards the two groups, those who passively receive and those who actively create, as separate, but necessary. Both must remain if creation and transformation are to continue. For Blake, the doctrine of a permanent heaven and a permanent hell is the result of a scapegoating motive which occurs in those who are passively receptive and who wish

to condemn the creative in order to hold on to a rigid and orthodox system of hierarchies and classifications.

Both the violence and the scapegoating motive behind it become clear in the third memorable fancy. When the angel sees the young prophet, he makes no attempt to engage in conversation but leaps directly into condemnation, telling the prophet:

O pitiable foolish young man! O horrible! O dreadful state! consider the hot burning dungeon thou art preparing for thyself to all eternity, to which thou art going in such career (pl. 17; E 41).

The angel is trying to limit the prophet's activities, because he is fully convinced of the accuracy of the hell he describes. He believes that he simply describes things as they are when he reveals his hellish perception to the young prophet, but he is clearly wrong since the fire and the Leviathan disappear as soon as he does. For the prophet, the dangerous raging Leviathan of hell is created by the mind of the Angel which is "like standing water" because he "never alters his opinion" (pl. 19; E 42). As the prophet points out on plate 21, angels see themselves as "the only wise" because they have a "confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning" (pl. 21; E 42).²³

Thus, the prophet's vision of the angel's world is in fact the reverse image of the world that the angel has revealed to the prophet. While the angel's metaphysic produces a vision of the Leviathan bursting forth to devour the sinful prophet in a fiery world, the prophet's vision shows the angels as chained monkeys who devour one another, with the strong raping and persecuting the weak and then eating them alive. The prophet is trying

²³Note that, having begun with a critique of Swedenborgian Christianity, Blake moves on to describe angels in terms that could apply to the adherents of any systematic symbolic order.

to show the angel that he, the prophet, is not devouring anyone or threatening anyone, that the devourers are the angels themselves. The vision of the Leviathan, born of the angel's rigid symbolic system, is a persecutor's vision. The angel runs from it, because he sees it as other than himself. In fact, his own need to devour produces the image of the devouring monsters of hell. In the "eternal state" that the prophet sees as representing the angelic frame of perception, the only devourers are the angels themselves, who are not really "the only wise" they believe themselves to be, but simply monkeys, who imitate the convictions of others while enchained in rigid systems of belief. In fact, the prophet is describing how the angels look to him in light of eternity.

The angel's scapegoating motive is further revealed when he protests the prophet's vision of the violence by calling it an imposition of the prophet. Yet, as the prophet tells him, each of them imposes upon the other. The fact that each has a metaphysic which he shows the other and, to some extent, imposes upon the other, is unavoidable. But this particular angel experiences the imposition **simply** as imposition, because he refuses to engage in conversation with the prophet. This angel wants only to express his own view and have the prophet immediately accept it in its totality, and this intellectually aggressive attitude is directly related to his static view of language.

The prophet blames the angel's recalcitrance on Aristotle's *Analytics*, and at this point, he expands the critique beyond the Christian system by attacking the principle of systematic reasoning at its root. As Peter Fisher points out in his discussion of this passage, Aristotle's *Analytics* sets forth his system of classification by means of genus and species. This system of generalization, which classifies people as either "redeemed" or

“damned,” reduces human beings to a mere “skeleton” of their full-bodied selves (Fisher *Valley* 90). Blake’s use of the skeleton image here is telling. Not only is the skeleton of definition a mere fraction of the total person; it is, furthermore, the most rigid and unyielding part of the person, devoid of heart, flesh, muscle, and warmth. Any perception of another human being which reduces them to a skeleton effectively diminishes them beyond recognition. This particular angel, trapped in an unyielding system of classification and hierarchy, is unable to see the prophet as anything but an unregenerate and pitiable creature. Thus, he cannot respond to the message at the bottom of this same plate “Opposition is true Friendship” (pl. 20; E 42). He is unable to hear the prophet and in fact, he cannot speak honestly, because he is not at liberty to engage in a process of change and progression.

This passage, however, exposes logical difficulties that will haunt Blake for the rest of his career. The difficulty is that the prophet is also engaged, unavoidably, in a process of classification. He calls some beings angels, some devils. Certainly, in light of his later works, it is possible to argue that, for Blake, the angels are not actually doomed to their cannibalistic condition eternally, as the angel believes the prophet to be. In fact, much later, in his nineteenth-century text, *Milton*, Blake will say clearly that states are eternal, but that people can move from one state to another. At this point, however, there is no clear definition of “eternal,” simply an ironic tone on the part of the prophet, who does not seem to take his own threats as seriously as the angel takes his. If, in fact, the prophet is describing, not the eternal future of the angels, but rather, how they look to him in light of his vision of eternity, he is not predicting their eternal futures, but, rather, providing them

with an opportunity for conversation and transformation. Such a change does occur in the final memorable fancy. Here, Blake depicts an angel who, despite his anger at the devil's discourse, listens to the devil's antinomian message and is transformed into the prophet Elijah.

Yet, as Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. suggests, Blake is not entirely successful in his attempt to distinguish between the imposition of the poem's persona on the angel, which is an act of prophecy, and the imposition of the angel on the prophet, which is an act of scapegoating. As Wittreich puts it “. . .the Angel is an incidental figure in the prophecy—one not acting but being acted upon. . .” (198). If this is so, Blake's devils and prophets both hinder and scapegoat just as much as do the angels. For this reason, it is possible to argue that the poem sets up an endless spiral of irony, where everyone is parodied. This is Dan Miller's argument. He questions whether there is any voice in the text which can be relied upon, and finally argues that “There is no voice to be believed in *The Marriage* other than an angelic or diabolic voice” (506). Harold Bloom, who treats the text's ironies with less insistence, nevertheless notes that the dialectic of this work is never really transcended, despite the fact that heaven and hell are described as “married” (“Dialectic”). Yet this parallelism of the angels and devils does not imply that Blake wants us to suspect devils as fully as we suspect angels. Rather, he suggests that the demonic power of prophecy can harden into doctrine, as did Ezekiel's teaching, and become the stuff of angelic systematics. By revealing that the prophet imposes upon the angel, Blake makes the audience just suspicious enough of the prophet to prevent this mistake from occurring.

Furthermore, Blake heightens the differences, if not between devils and angels, between prophets and angels, by demonstrating in angels a lack of both awareness and honesty. Prior to his transformation, engaging in a hypocritical effort to pretend he is not angry, the angel turns himself from blue, to yellow, to “white pink & smiling” (pl. 23; E 43). This lack of honesty is necessitated by the fact that the angel’s moral code does not allow him to acknowledge his own anger. Thus, his arguments are not true acts, in Blake’s sense of the term. They are symbolic hindrances laid upon both the self and the other. The fact that the prophet knows and is open about the fact that he is imposing his personal vision upon others separates him from the angels, who simply perceive their own visions as true and then force themselves and others into conformity. Thus, it is the prophet’s irony that makes his accusations something other than scapegoating. It is his irony that leads us to believe that his vision of monkeys eating one another is a description of the spiritual state of angels, not a threat of a hell to which they will be condemned.

Yet irony can only go so far in creating actual social change, particularly if one wants, not simply a peace based on a mutual grudging tolerance, but peace with justice, and Blake seriously desires justice however ironic his self-presentation in *The Marriage*. As we will see, it is clear that the early Blake even supports revolutionary violence as a path to justice, a difficult position to sustain if one argues that one can tell the difference between active devils and hindering angels primarily by the irony of the devils. It is difficult to sustain irony and revolution simultaneously. The more earnest formulation, that we discern the difference between act and hindrance by seeking authenticity through honesty and inspiration, is equally difficult to use as a measure of oneself and one’s enemy.

How is one to discern who is honest and who is not? How is one to know which activities are inspired? How, indeed, is one to avoid lying to oneself about one's own motives? We will close this chapter by examining one of the *Songs of Experience*, "The Tyger," a revolutionary poem that asks its audience to rethink the terministic screens with which it associates Christianity, and to embrace the idea of revolution. In looking at this poem, we must keep in mind, however, that the readiness for violence implied in the text might well be interpreted as scapegoating, depending upon who looks at it. Reading this poem, particularly in light of our discussion of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, allows us to see the difficulties involved in discerning the difference between scapegoating and justifiable revolutionary violence—violence based upon the legitimate moral denunciation of a corrupt authority.

Christian Rhetoric and the Recovery of Anger in "The Tyger:": Revolution as Act

In the 1790's, Blake's references to the active evil of Revolution often take the form of questioning just how evil revolution really is. As Martin Nurmi points out, the Leviathan in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* points directly to Revolutionary France, "three degrees east of London" (*Blake's Marriage* 51). To the angel, revolution appears as a fearsome beast, but to the prophet, there is no beast, just a bard singing, a sign of creativity and the Utopian harmony that is to come. The angel, whose scapegoating propensities have already been discussed, is terrified by the fiery wrath with which he has threatened the prophet. Although the prophet asserts that the angel sees the Leviathan because his inflexibility creates "reptiles of the mind," the revolutionary wrath is nevertheless a reality, but it is only a threat to those who wish to avoid changes in the

symbolic order. This true wrath, the wrath that threatens the scapegoating angels, might well be seen as the creation of God, as the Biblical Leviathan, in all its monstrosity, is the creation of God.

Although Blake does not pursue this approach to the Leviathan, this is precisely the argument that drives “The Tyger.” As Paley argues in what remains one of the most effective discussions of this poem, the text’s contemporary audience would, most certainly, have recognized both a religious and a secular dimension to Blake’s rhetoric. On the one hand are the many Biblical references to God’s wrath in terms of various beasts of prey. On the other hand, there are the references in the popular press to the French revolutionaries as tigers and other wild beasts, with the purpose of condemning the revolutionaries and placing them in sub-human status. In pulling both of these meanings together under the one image of the tyger, Blake connects the French Revolution and the wrath of God.²⁴

Such a use of tiger imagery makes a specific claim, certainly about the French Revolution. But in Blake’s own time, it is also an attempt to reclaim Christian rhetoric as a tool for dissent, and to do so in a way that moves beyond sectarian divisions and beyond otherworldly hope. For those who reject traditional Christianity, the tyger can still be celebrated as a powerful image of creativity and revolutionary indignation. Further, when the speaker asks, “Did he who made the lamb make thee?,” such reader would be

²⁴For a full discussion of this issue, see “Tyger of Wrath,” the second chapter of Morton Paley’s *Energy and Imagination*, pp. 29-60. Paley provides numerous examples of the use of the term “tiger” to condemn revolutionaries, as well as Biblical comparisons between God’s wrath and the tiger or the lion. Paley’s argument is further filled out by his discussion of Jacob Boehme’s treatment of God’s wrath, an important reference, in light of Boehme’s well-known influence on Blake.

reminded that as agents of Poetic Genius, they can never allow themselves to embrace the tyger alone. The lamb is still an essential symbol of human creativity—the creativity of connection and tenderness. But when the tyger of revolution forces the nobility to throw down their spears, as the stars in the poem do, then it should not be rejected, but embraced as one of humanity’s greatest and most creative capacities.²⁵ Both the capacity for harmonious gentleness and the capacity for rebellion can be harnessed for human creativity. This is true even for those who, like Paine, reject the Christian symbol of the lamb as a means of atonement.

For readers who are traditional Christians, however, the question, “Did he who made the lamb make thee?” forces a reevaluation of the tendency to reject the tyger and call it evil, whether we speak of real tygers or of revolutionary tygers. If the question is answered with a no, these readers are forced to surrender a belief in God as the sole creator. If they take that stance, they lose their ability to argue that their position is inherently better than any other, or that it should have complete dominance. Thus, those who support the tyger have a greatly enhanced position. On the other hand, if the traditionalists answer the question with a yes, as orthodoxy demands, they are placed in a position where they must recognize that the tyger is part of a good creation, even though it is frightening and can be dangerous. The church’s tendency to see only submission and gentleness as good and only rebellion and ferocity as evil is political at the source, not

²⁵This parallel between the stars and nobility is based upon an argument of David V. Erdman, who bases this equation upon a similar phrase that appears in *The French Revolution*. In this early unfinished text, Blake directly and literally identifies the stars throwing down their spears with the ruling classes, especially kings and nobles. For a full discussion, see Erdman’s *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* p. 194.

theological. The connection between passivity and Christian virtue is broken down. In any case, room is made for both the beast of prey and the lamb, for both activity and passivity, and, it would appear, for both violence and tenderness. In "The Tyger," Blake makes a revolutionary argument that is compatible with any number of different religious or philosophical assumptions, but he does not leave room for us simply to reject either the tyger or the lamb as straightforwardly evil or good.

Bidlake observes that Blake critics often try to downplay Blake's willingness to accept violent revolution as a means to social ends. One sees this tendency in Erdman, who writes about Blake's tyger and lamb in these terms: "The creator must have smiled at Yorktown and at Valmy, not because his people were warlike, but because they seemed ready to coexist with the Lamb, the wrath of the Tiger having done its work" (196). Thus, Erdman sees the "wrath of the Tiger" as necessary, while arguing that for Blake, the lamb, the innocent state, is somehow more important, more fundamental. Clearly, the lamb is an important symbol for Blake. As Leader argues, "The Lamb" of *Innocence* vividly portrays a relationship of harmony and connection (87-91). At this point, however, the two figures stand side by side, and it is difficult to see that one is more important than the other. While the tyger performs no violent act in the course of the poem, the potential is always present, and, had Blake wished to repudiate the possibility of violence, it is unlikely he would have included this poem in a work that he engraved between 1793 and 1794, when the execution of the French king had already occurred, and the Terror was in progress.²⁶

²⁶See Viscomi's *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, chapter 28, pp. 267-75 for his arguments about the correct dating of *Songs of Experience*.

While there is no question of Blake's desiring violence for its own sake, it appears that, at this stage, he was willing to accept that the violence of wrath might well be a necessary function of action, be it transcendent or human. If the act is to be possible in a world governed largely by hindrance, then violent release from hindrance may be a necessity.

The difficulty is in determining the difference between murder as hindrance and revolutionary violence as action. Murder is clearly a hindrance of another, as Blake says. So are laws against murder, yet they are designed to prevent people from hindering others. Does not revolutionary action also hinder, and, one might argue, does it not hinder institutions that are necessary in order to avoid worse forms of hindrance? Surely, some might argue, the violent actions that occurred in France between 1793 and 1794 "hindered" many people, particularly those who were unjustly executed. The question arises as to whether it is even possible to avoid hindrance. In terms of symbolic hindrance, Blake himself addresses this issue in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, when he portrays the speaker of the poem conversing with the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel about how they speak without imposing upon others. Here, honesty appears to provide a large part of the distinction between prophets, like the poem's speakers, whose words impose to some extent, while falling short of the scapegoating activity of the angels, who deny that their words involve any imposition.

The difference between revolutionary violence and the violence of scapegoating and oppression is less clear. There are hints that Blake draws the distinguishing line in terms of who is hurt by the violence and who is protected. In "Little Girl Lost" for example, the beasts of prey protect the lost child, whereas the priest in "A Little Boy

Lost” protects only the institution. Furthermore, there is the issue of honesty. The beasts of prey are openly capable of violence, but they do not use it against the innocent. The priest claims to be simply the agent of order, but he commits violence against an innocent person.

This distinction is made, however, only by bringing in values that go beyond the contrast between act and hindrance that Blake embraces in his antinomian ethic. In these non-mythological works that refer so directly to symbolic systems like Christianity or Lockean philosophy, this difficulty is somewhat mitigated by the fact that we can directly associate these specific systems with particular social practices that Blake describes as oppressive. The discussion of hindrance as the ultimate evil can be seen as an overstatement adopted for the purpose of emphasizing the evil of particular forms of hindrance practiced by the social institutions of the day. Yet, as Blake moves on to use mythological forms exclusively, the equation of order and hindrance takes on a more generalizing form, and it becomes more difficult to distinguish between the oppressive hindrances produced by systems of order and the potential hindrances enacted by those who rebel. In the *Lambeth Prophecies*, where Blake’s rhetoric often involves a linkage of some kind between the representatives of the established order and the revolutionaries, the problem of how their moral difference is to be defined becomes ever more acute.

Synthesizing Burke and Blake

The difficulties that we will see discerning the difference between scapegoating revolutionary violence take a somewhat different shape when we look at Kenneth Burke’s arguments, and before moving on, we must stop and examine how, exactly, Burke’s

argument and Blake's agree and disagree at this point in Blake's career. Perhaps, the primary distinction lies in the fact that for Burke, at least the Burke of the Cold War era, avoiding violence is his primary aim, and his analysis of symbolic systems exists primarily to purify War. While Burke does critique specific political and economic language that, in his view, leads to economic injustice, his critique of language throughout most of the texts we have examined is aimed primarily at the elimination of violent activity spurred on through the freezing of social orders. Peace is his god-term. For the early Blake, however, Poetic Genius is his god-term, and the liberation of that Genius is the most important thing, since its liberation will allow us to fight injustice and warfare as we fully express our divine humanity. The poem, "The Tyger" suggests that if violence is necessary to serve this end, so be it, for the Poetic Genius itself can be violent.

While Blake will alter his position later, at this point, this difference in god-terms makes for an enormous difference between him and Burke. It also affects, in a somewhat dizzying way, the logical structure of Blake's arguments about hindrance and act. When Blake suggests that hindrance is a devil-term, and act is a god-term (assuming that act derives from the Poetic Genius), then we have here a very rigid hierarchy. Hindrance is bad and act is good, but, apart from a pure vision that arises spontaneously from the Poetic Genius, we have little sense of how we are to get from one position to the other. There is a hint that Blake himself recognizes that this structure is too rigid. In the *Annotations to Lavater*, Blake remarks that Lavater is good, even though, a few lines later, he condemns Lavater's attitudes about sexuality, associating them with hindrance (E 600-01). Furthermore, earlier in his *Annotations*, he praises Lavater's concern that one

would do better to look weak, even if good and strong, than to do evil in order to look strong. Agreeing, Blake nevertheless adds, "Active Evil is better than Passive Good" (E 592). Here Blake sets up a more complex hierarchy, one that might grant that the violence of the tyger is an active evil, better than a passive good, but not necessarily better than an active good.

Such a hierarchy moves Blake in the direction of a Burkean view of order, one that acknowledges the necessity for a hierarchy, that describes order in terms of degrees of goodness and evil, and one that offers the possibility of change in stages. But these early works, while they hint at this possibility developing later in Blake's career, nevertheless focus almost entirely on the need to eliminate the hindrances imposed by the symbolic orders of his period along with the terministic screens these orders produce, even if violence is required to do so. Criticizing terministic screens with a thoroughness that Burke would never engage in, Blake makes it difficult to find a mode of change that would be anything other than sudden, revolutionary (in the modern sense of the term), and violent. In his mythological texts, this fairly one-sided perspective on symbolic order and on the use of violence to overthrow systems of order, will be seriously tested and finally found wanting. This transition in attitude will be the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter III

Order as Scapegoat: The Role of Urizen in the Lambeth Prophecies

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the antinomianism of the early Blake sets up a dialectic between the virtue of Action, as associated with the divinely inspired and honest human being, and the hindrance imposed by the devotees of systems of law and restraint. The scapegoating practices in these early texts are propagated by hinderers, people who are agents of tyrannical law, and scapegoating is only one of the negative effects of hindrance. Another effect is that those who submit themselves to a system of hindrance become complicit in their own sacrifice by mortifying their physical energy and awareness. Thus, in works like “The Tyger” and “Little Girl Lost,” the rebels who are capable of violence on behalf of the poor are portrayed as true agents of divinity. Blake grants rebels, in their role as protector, the right at least to threaten violence, while he condemns those who, like the priest in “Little Boy Lost,” exercise violence in defense of the dominant symbolic order.

Yet the attitude towards the poor is not the trait that Blake ordinarily uses to distinguish between agents and hinderers. Rather, he sets up a distinction based on honesty and inspiration as opposed to duplicity and false law. By this standard, however, it is often difficult to discern what the difference is between the acts of Blake’s revolutionary figures and the hindrances imposed by counter-revolutionaries. Their effects are often the same: Both frequently cause death, impose upon others, and place limits upon others, thus

hindering them. Blake asserts that one group does so out of honesty and inspiration, while the other is duplicitous and dominated by false law, but how he determines others' motives is less easy to discover.

To some extent, this pattern also appears in the so-called Lambeth prophecies, mythological works that Blake illuminated between 1793-1795, while he was living and working in the Hercules Buildings in Lambeth. In these texts, Blake's obsession with the relationships between symbolic order, hindrance, and scapegoating is embodied in the mythological figure of Urizen, the bearded character whose name refers both to "Reason" and to the Greek term for "Horizon," the boundary of human perception.¹ While these texts all portray Urizen differently, the presentations are almost universally negative, although, as we will see, some reflect a certain amount of ambivalence on Blake's part. In *America: A Prophecy* (1793), Urizen lowers threateningly in the clouds, and he works on behalf of Albion's prince and Albion's angel, not very subtle references to the British crown and the church/state apparatus. In the frontispiece of *Europe: A Prophecy*, Urizen appears in what Erdman calls "his finest hour," measuring the cosmos with a compass in a pose of great dignity and strength (*Illuminated* 155). Yet, as Damrosch points out, this remarkably beautiful picture also holds "negative implications of mathematical constriction" (264). In using a compass to measure and set boundaries on his creation, Urizen is also binding and limiting it. In *The Book of Urizen*, the bearded old man appears

¹See S. Foster Damon's *A Blake Dictionary* for a discussion on the merits of these differing perceptions on the origins of Urizen's name. Damon prefers to see the name as deriving on a pun for "Your Reason," since such punning is a typical Blakean strategy. But he credits Kathleen Raine with the equally suggestive argument that Urizen is a play on the Greek term for "horizon," (419). Both are puns on terms that Blake often uses pejoratively, and, it seems likely, both are implied.

in his visually most disturbing forms. At times, he is cramped and frozen, writing furiously on tablets of law reminiscent of the stone tablets of the Decalogue. In other illuminations, he is weeping in chains, or ensnared in webs that he himself has created. In *The Book of Ahania*, the visual representations are infrequent, but Urizen's actions drive the narrative, as his son rebels against him, and as he, in turn, becomes the crucifier of that same son.

Los's female counterpart, Enitharmon, is actually the central oppressive figure in *Europe* (and thus *Europe* will not receive further attention in this chapter), but in these other Lambeth texts Urizen is portrayed as the primary destructive force, associated at every level with hindrance, violence, and scapegoating. In *America*, he is associated with the political power of king and bishop, and he holds back the forces of revolution when no human power can. In *The Book of Urizen*, he is the cause of the Fall. Furthermore, he is symbolically linked with practically every major institution or intellectual system in late eighteenth-century English culture. As has long been noted, but as Tannenbaum demonstrates most thoroughly, the Urizen of *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania* is a parody of the Biblical God and serves to critique mainstream eighteenth-century Christianity.² But Urizen is also akin to eighteenth-century philosophers and scientists. He is obsessed with mathematics, with machinery, with reason, and with books. As Robert Essick effectively demonstrates, *Urizen* and *Ahania* even criticize the teachings of thinkers like Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, with whom Blake was often in sympathy politically.

Thus, when we look at the variety of institutions and schools of thought grouped

²Fuller discussion of these various critical perspectives will take place later in the chapter.

together in the figure of Urizen, we see how easy it is to associate Urizen with the idea of order itself. In fact, a number of critics identify in *The Book of Urizen* a critique of linguistic order as a fallen mode of communication. Urizen is continually seen writing and reading, and his fall in *The Book of Urizen* is linked to the emergence of language as division and difference.

It may be for this reason that Kenneth Burke subtly and ironically connects Blake's Urizen with his own antinomian critique of language and symbolic order. The final section of Kenneth Burke's 1961 text, *The Rhetoric of Religion*, entitled "Epilogue: Prologue in Heaven," consists of a facetious discussion between "The Lord," as representative of "Logos," or the word as the basis of a rational order, and "Satan," who represents the principle of the negative in language. The most direct allusion here is to the "Prologue in Heaven," which appears at the beginning of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*.³ Yet Burke's "Lord" is clearly a function of language. Both he and Satan blink out of existence when, at the end of the text, human beings, as symbol-using animals, disappear. Set up as a play, this lively discussion of problems of language, naming, and order includes a set of stage directions in which "The Lord" is described as a "Blakean bearded patriarch" (276). The most likely candidate for the "Blakean bearded patriarch" to whom Burke refers is Urizen, and the Urizen reference is echoed elsewhere in *The Rhetoric of Religion*. The book opens with a poem that describes symbolic order in terms of an "iron laws" of

³Goethe's prologue connects with Burke's in one specific way, the genial relationship between God and the Devil. Goethe's Lord needs Mephisto, one of the "spirits that negate," to prevent his creatures from sinking into "uninterrupted rest" (ll. 338 & 342). By keeping the human being stirred up, The Lord suggests, Mephisto will help to create the one he tempts, in this case, Faust.

history, echoing Blake's term for describing Urizen's laws (*RR* 4-5; *BU* Ch. VIII, pl.23, l.26, E 81). Furthermore, *The Rhetoric of Religion* consists largely of a critique of the Christian system, based in a discussion of the first three chapters of Genesis, the same chapters that Blake uses to set up his Biblical parody, *The Book of Urizen*.

Burke's analogy between his vision of symbolic order and Blake's Urizen is certainly apt. Blake's Urizen is universally recognized as a symbol of reason and systematic ordering. Yet as apt as the comparison is, the references have a clearly ironic function. The differences between Burke's "Lord" and Blake's bearded patriarch are marked. Burke's character is aware of his own limitations, and he shrewdly notes that "where the Earth-People are concerned, any terminology is suspect to the extent that it does not allow for the progressive criticism of itself" (*RR* 303). Yet he also observes that "the resources of the negative being what they are, authorities will continually arise which would say No definitively to any further questioning" (303).

Blake's Urizen is the figure of such a negative authority, associated with the characteristics of the Bible, the church, the state, empirical science, Deism, and even the arts, insofar as these serve to reinforce the established order. In *The Book of Urizen*, Urizen, the bearded "Lord" to whom Burke makes reference, is the cause of the fall, a fall which occurs because he separates himself from the rest of the eternals and sets himself up as "the eternal priest" and lawgiver. He attempts to establish "a joy without pain," and "a solid without fluctuation" (*BU* ch.2, pl.4, l10-11; E 71). Further, he creates a world of "solid obstruction" by taming the wind and the waves, and then he creates laws, written in metal books, and he establishes these laws as all-encompassing and final:

Laws of peace, of love, of unity:
 Of pity, compassion, forgiveness.
 Let each chuse one habitation:
 His ancient infinite mansion:
 One command, one joy, one desire,
 One curse, one weight, one measure
 One King, one God, one Law. (*BU* ch.2, pl.4, l.34-40; E 72)

While Burke's Lord of language may be, like Urizen, "a Blakean bearded patriarch," his personality is, nevertheless, the exact opposite of Urizen, or at least he is the opposite of the Urizen of the Lambeth prophecies. In fact, in these early appearances, Blake's Urizen is the Burkean concept of a god-term transformed into a principle of the demonic, as if the very tendency to organize the world into rational systems were itself the principle of evil, or, in Blake's own terms, hindrance.

Yet, as Burke would be quick to point out, such a position is very difficult to sustain. In fact, Blake is unable to sustain it over time. In the earliest Lambeth prophecies, like *America*, revolutionary agents and counter-revolutionary hinderers may share characteristics, but Blake clearly differentiates between the two groups, while associating Urizen exclusively with the latter. In *The Book of Urizen* (1794), Blake continues to treat Urizen as the master hinderer, and he implies that Urizen's son Fuzon may be able to lead the rest of Urizen's children out of bondage in Egypt. Finally, in *The Book of Ahania* (1795), Fuzon returns as a highly ambiguous figure, whose moral superiority to Urizen is far from clear. Furthermore, Fuzon's attempts to overthrow his father simply result in his own appropriation by Urizenic order. In this text, Blake appears to be questioning whether it is actually possible to get rid of the bearded patriarch altogether.

This questioning may emerge, in part, because of events in France, where the

Revolutionary government justified the Terror of 1793 and 1794 as a defense of the revolution, and where Robespierre, the revolutionary leader and instigator of Terror, was guillotined in July of 1794.⁴ The figure of Robespierre—revolutionary, tyrant, and victim all rolled into one—presents plenty of grounds for the argument that it is difficult to determine who are the agents of positive change and who are the “hinderers,” those who scapegoat others simply to defend their own systems. As a rebel against established order, a radical like Blake might expect Robespierre to be one of the tygers or lions affirmed in the *Songs*. However, in the Revolutionary government, Robespierre often takes on a strongly Urizenic role. He is, in fact, a mixture of act and hindrance, good and evil.

Although Urizen remains an evil figure in Blake’s Biblical parodies, *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and *The Book of Ahania* (1795), these texts begin to interrogate and to complicate Blake’s position, giving Urizen a quality of complexity that more closely resembles the complexity of real human beings. These works also acknowledge more openly the logical problems involved in an attempt to describe order itself in negative terms. In *Urizen* and *Ahania*, readers find themselves in a world where, at first glance, Hindrance, in the form of Urizen, appears to be impossibly evil, and revolutionary action seems good and necessary. However, a second look reveals that Act and Hindrance are

⁴The relationship between dates and historical events is extremely interesting here. Viscomi assigns the dates listed here: *America: A Prophecy* (1793); *The Book of Urizen* (1794); and *The Book of Ahania* (1795). In *America*, Blake uses the term “Terror” to describe Orc, whose activities he approves in this prophecy. See the discussion of *America* later in this chapter for more details. If Viscomi’s dating is accurate, we have some indication that Blake approves of revolutionary events in France at this stage. *The Book of Urizen* (1794) is more hesitant, and by the time he completes *The Book of Ahania*, Blake has an entirely new attitude about what is going on in France. These events may have also affected Blake’s thinking about symbolic order itself. See Viscomi, chapter 29, pp. 276-88 for bibliographic arguments concerning these and other Lambeth prophecies.

almost indistinguishable. Action becomes entangled in Hindrance, and, at times, Hindrance appears to be the only kind of action available. Furthermore, efforts towards revolution are co-opted by the very systems they set out to oppose. The question of who is the scapegoater and who the scapegoat also becomes much more complicated.

In these two books, Blake attempts to retain the absolute rejection of system and law that he proposes earlier, but is unable to do so. His changing portrayals of hindrance, and its relationship to the scapegoating process, hint at a changing attitude towards law and its relationship to both hindrance and sacrificial violence. If, as I said earlier, religious language is important to Blake in part because of its emphasis on creativity as Act, in the *Urizen* books, Blake must find a way to come to terms with the fact that it matters enormously **what** one creates, that creativity and hindrance are deeply intertwined, and that even honest actions may be grounded in hindrance. In *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, Urizen is the primary cause of hindrance and the primary scapegoater; yet, at times, Blake implies that the more positive characters, both the Eternals and the rebels, are themselves deeply involved in hindrance, and, thus, in the scapegoating process as well. Ultimately, dealing with these issues leads Blake to a kind of dead end—a dead end that forces him in *The Four Zoas* to transform the way he portrays his characters and the way he structures his rhetoric about violence, rebellion, and sacrifice.

This transformation occurs, in part, because, in these texts, the sense of ambiguity about who are the hinderers and who the hindered is based in problems inherent in the very language forms that Blake uses. As Stephen Cox observes, “Blake’s logic is a parody of that which it would oppose” (121). Urizen’s crime is hindering others by setting limits

upon them. Yet Blake also sets limits, upon both himself and others:

But Blake needs his own fences, his own limited priorities, his own conceptual horizons: and one reason why he needs them is that he insists on the self's unlimited freedom. If the self's possibilities are to be considered "infinite," at least one possibility ought to be excluded—the possibility of self-limitation. (Cox 121-22).

The refusal of self-limitation extends to others besides Blake himself, and in setting that limit, Blake could be seen as hindering the decision-making powers of others. He will at least be attempting to hinder others' desire to hinder. Thus, there is an apparent contradiction in Blake's condemnation of Urizen as a hinderer who sets boundaries and Blake's own need for horizons and boundaries of his own. As he works with the Urizenic Biblical parodies, Blake seems to be increasingly aware of these problems, and his attitudes about language, order, and scapegoating move a little closer to a Burkean position, where dialectical opposites are always understood to imply and contain one another. But this is where the Lambeth prophecies end up, not where they begin. In his first appearance, Urizen is simply a hinderer, interfering with the inspired forces of revolution, and supporting the scapegoating practices of the British ruling class

America: A Prophecy—Orc, Urizen, and the Dialectic of Act and Hindrance

Although Urizen is briefly mentioned in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*,⁵ his first appearance in a text comes in the final plate of *America: A Prophecy*, when he arises

⁵ According to Viscomi, *Visions* was probably the first text that Blake produced in the year 1793 (262-66). The sexually liberated Oothoon invokes Urizen at the beginning of her final speech of the poem, calling him "Creator," and "mistaken Demon of heaven" (*VDA* pl.5, l.4; E 48). Later, as her protest against sexual prohibitions draws to a close, she calls him the "Father of Jealousy" (*VDA* pl.7, l.12; E 50). Appearing in the same year as *America: A Prophecy*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* depicts Urizen as the same oppressive figure that we see in *America*. But in the earlier piece, Urizen is simply addressed by the protagonist; he does not participate in the action as he does in *America*.

with “his leprous head” to quell the fires of Revolution with “stored snows” and “icy magazines” (Pl. 16, ll 4-5; E 57) and to defend the oppressive reign of Albion’s Prince, i.e., King George III of England. The bearded patriarch emerges just as Albion’s pestilence turns back against himself, and the flames of Orc, the spirit of rebellion, spread into England itself, opening the doors of marriage and “Leaving the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth” (Pl. 15 ll 19-22; E 57). Urizen’s snows freeze over the fires of rebellion and hide Orc in “clouds & cold mists from the earth” (Pl. 16, l. 13; E 57), allowing the weak to regain control over the strong. There is little question that in this context Urizen is equivalent to Hindrance, particularly since fiery sexual liberation immediately precedes his chilly appearance. He comes in order to turn back the revolutionary forces that have led to breaches of his law and aroused his jealousy (Pl. 16, l. 6; E 57). But Urizen’s triumph over liberation is to be short-lived. Twelve years later, Orc’s light comes to France, the Guardians of a “law-built heaven” are unable to resist Orc further (Pl. 16, l. 19; E 58), and their gates are destroyed.

While there is little question that Urizen and his allies, the Prince and Angel of Albion, are destructive agents of law, the role of the fiery rebel, Orc, is less clear to many. Since the Preludium of *America: A Prophecy* begins with Orc’s rape of the shadowy female, and since Orc is associated with snake imagery and with violence, critics differ in their approach to him. Some, like John Howard, ignore the relationship between revolution and physical violence, arguing that Orc is a totally positive figure who sets out “to destroy the delusive and restrictive law of the Decalogue” (*Infernal* 110). Others who, like Howard, regard Orc favorably give considerably more attention to Orc’s violence.

For example, Christopher Z. Hobson acknowledges the violence of Blake's position in a way that Howard does not, arguing that Blake places a positive value on revolutionary violence and that modern critics should approve his ardor. David Aers agrees with Hobson that Blake is celebrating Orc's violence, but, in contrast, he criticizes Blake for glossing over its negative aspects. Aers suggests that Orc and Urizen are both, equally, the emblems of destructive masculine forms of power, a fact that Blake overlooks (254). Paley differs with all of these critics, because he emphasizes the ambiguities in Blake's treatment of Orc. *America*, Paley argues, maintains "a double perspective." Orc's energy is neither good nor bad. Rather, it "hovers between redemptive potentiality and the will to power" (*Energy* 61).

While I cannot share Paley's belief that we are to read Orc as an ambiguous figure in *America: A Prophecy*, Paley's argument is correct in one regard. In this text, Orc is associated with both positive and negative terminology. For example, he is continually described as a Terror.⁶ Yet he is also identified with Jesus; Orc rises from the sea like Jesus rising from the tomb. Furthermore, some of the imagery surrounding Orc is itself ambiguous. He is fiery, an image that could be associated both with hell and with the purifying fires of the divine. Although we know that the Blake of 1793 was, generally

⁶Several studies provide background information and analysis regarding the term "Terror" in Britain during the 1790's. See Robert M. Maniquis for discussion of the variety of associations with the term, including the tendency to turn it back against the British authorities (375). In "Blake, Violence, and Visionary Politics," William Keach discusses at length the use of the word "terror" in *America*. He accurately points out that Blake uses the term to describe actions of both counter-revolutionaries and revolutionaries, so he does not regard "terror" as a term that is uniformly typical of one group or the other. See also Michael Phillips, "Blake and the Terror, 1792-1793" for a discussion of the ways in the which the term "terror" was being used to describe revolutionaries and then turned back against the oppressive silencing of dissent under Pitt's leadership.

speaking, a political radical, this ambiguous use of language may, at first glance, cause us to question whether he was still a supporter of violent revolution when he engraved *America: A Prophecy*.⁷

Yet, as William Richey argues, this ambiguity becomes more understandable if we treat *America: A Prophecy* as a rhetorical response to the hypocritical language and actions of counter-revolutionaries, who are themselves violent, but who represent themselves as peaceful agents of order and revolutionaries as madmen, highwaymen, and murderers.⁸ Orc and his revolutionaries are violent, but, as Richey asserts, Blake presents Orc's violence as less ferocious than that of the ruling authorities. In addition, Orc's violence is necessary in order to prevent further violence. As Richey puts it, since "monarchies are unalterably wedded to war and conquest, the only way to put an end to bloodshed and violence is through political revolution" (198). The bloodiness of the American Revolution is undeniable. Washington and the other American rebels are "warlike men" (pl.3, l.3; E 52), but Blake plays down their violence while emphasizing the violence of George III (Richey 199).

When we place Richey's rhetorical argument in the context of Blake's ideas of act and hindrance, we see that Orc and Albion both engage in a certain amount of hindrance,

⁷ Although *Songs of Experience* appears in the previous chapter, chronologically it follows *America: A Prophecy*. According to Viscomi, *America* is produced in 1793, after *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. *Songs of Experience*, including "The Tyger," is printed in 1794. All of these works present ideas that are politically and morally radical.

⁸ These are, of course, just examples of a few of the terms that could be chosen. These comparisons, however, can actually be found in Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, page 417. See Steven Blakemore for an outstanding discussion about how, for Edmund Burke, the battle against radical politics was largely a battle for control of language and the terms used for given institutions and for those who protest against those institutions.

but that Orc's ultimate aim is to liberate, not to hinder. Thus, he is the honest and inspired agent, similar to the prophet in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, who unavoidably imposes his views upon others, but does so openly, honestly, and with positive intent. On the other hand, the Prince of Albion and Urizen want only to sustain a rigid order, and thus they resemble the monkeys that Blake depicts in *The Marriage*. They end up devouring everything that is weaker than themselves. Rhetorically, Blake highlights Orc's honesty by giving him the destructive qualities that the counter-revolutionaries accuse him of, and then using the same imagery, to an even greater degree, to describe the accusers themselves. For example, in *America*, Orc rises in flame, but Albion's guardian "burns in his nightly tent" from the beginning (Pl.3, l.1; E52). Even though Washington, Franklin, Paine, and the other American revolutionaries are "warlike" (Pl.3, l.4; E 52), the blood with which they glow is "from Albions fiery Prince" (Pl. 3, l.5; E52). Similarly, Orc is a cross between a human being and a snake, a frightening and disturbing image, but Albion's Prince is a dragon, a much larger and even more frightening reptile. Nevertheless, when Albion's Angel calls Orc a snake, he ignores the fact that his own prince is also reptilian. Orc, however, willingly acknowledges his snake-like qualities.

The rhetorical method Blake uses here resembles a method that Kenneth Burke calls "perspective by incongruity," the linking of terms ordinarily seen as utterly different in order to reveal the similarities between diverse terms (*P & C* 89-92). Burke sees this type of rhetoric as a way of revealing the similarities between apparent opposites for the purposes of creating change. While, for Burke, this procedure usually has to do with the actual linkage of two normally incongruous words, a similar effect can certainly be

achieved by describing a highly valued system in terms one normally uses to describe a supposedly inferior order.⁹

Blake makes this kind of move here. Much public rhetoric describes radicalism as violent, dangerous, irreligious, and irreverent. Blake retains these images in his depiction of revolutionary forces, but then connects them to the conservatives as well, thus revealing the honesty of radicals and the hypocrisy of revolutionaries. Further, this linkage of terms reveals a scapegoating motive in the counter-revolutionary position, since their accusations of violence and evil could just as easily apply to themselves. The language of Albion's Prince and Albion's Angel is the language of scapegoating, a displacement of their own negative attitudes and behaviors onto Orc, through the use of dyslogistic terminology that would apply even more aptly to their own actions. Orc and the British hierarchy are alike, Blake argues. They are both violent. But they are also different, because Orc and the American revolutionaries do not begin the chain of violence, nor do they lie about the moral ambiguity of their own acts of hindrance. Therefore, Orc can be seen as an honest and inspired prophet, while the counter-revolutionaries are violent and dishonest. Their accusations scapegoat the revolutionaries by portraying them as the initiators of a violence that is, in fact, characteristic of the social order itself.

The representatives of the conservative social order also claim for themselves the

⁹Kenneth Burke does something similar in *The Rhetoric of Religion* when he speaks of needing "a calculus that keeps us always aware of technology's possible relation to theology's vast motivational Cathedrals" (171). He incongruously links the idea of calculus, usually associated with science, mathematics, and technology, and links it to theology. Then he reconnects theology and technology, arguing that both can become thoroughgoing systems that demand sacrificial victims. Thus, he critiques technology, which, in the 1960's, he regarded as the privileged perspective, supposedly free of all mystification.

language of divinity. Their agents are called Angels, and Orc is called a demon. But Blake also gives to Orc the marks of divine inspiration that characterize Action while Albion's Angel represents the Hindrance embodied in rigid religious law. Orc's appearance as he rises from the sea is associated with images of Jesus' resurrection, demonstrating that even if apocalyptic violence is part of the process of transformation, Orc's real purpose is to overcome death and destruction. When Orc appears, "the grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up" (Pl.6, l.2; E 53). These images markedly contrast with the accusations of Albion's angel, who argues that Orc is the Antichrist. Yet Albion's Angel ends up harming his own position with his attacks, because he attempts to prove his accusations against Orc by calling him a "hater of Dignities" and a "transgressor of Gods Law" (Pl.7, ll.5-6; E 53-54), both traits for which Jesus' enemies condemn him in the Gospel narratives. Although Orc readily admits his desire to overcome Urizen's laws, he argues that the commandments are but a perversion of the "fiery joy" that is, in reality, the source of life and holiness (Pl.8, l.3 E 54). While this view is strikingly antinomian and certainly unconventional, it is clearly meant to evoke an image of Orc, not as Antichrist, but as a reflection of a true Christ who delivers others from a false religion, restoring human freedom and dignity, especially to those, like prostitutes, who are condemned by established religious authority.

From these few examples—only a sampling of a number of similar instances—it is clear that Blake employs ambiguous language not because he objects in any way to Orc's revolutionary violence, which he sees as justified, but because he wishes to turn his opponents' own rhetoric against them. There are similarities between the agents and the

hinderers in *America*, but these similarities are merely superficial. Albion's Angel and Prince, along with the bearded patriarch Urizen, are hinderers because they are liars to the core, adherents of a rigid system that they have come to confuse with divinity. On the other hand, Orc is the true agent, the one who tells the truth and who acts out of his deepest divine energies. The hinderers, the agents of state and church power, hypocritically imagine themselves to be virtuous, while scapegoating Orc by accusing him of their own most heinous crimes. In this text, the absolute hierarchy of Act and Hindrance remains intact. Ultimately, what we find Blake depicting in *America* is the same kind of clear division between Act and Hindrance that we find in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. As in *The Marriage*, the two poles are differentiated, at least in part, by the characteristics of honesty and inspiration.

Yet, as John R. Harrison notes, *America: A Prophecy*, is also rife with "vituperative language" (21). King George III is thoroughly demonized, called "A dragon form clashing his scales" (Pl.3, l.15; E 52), and this is only the beginning:

In Blake's poem he [George III] is not only Guardian and Pharaoh but a gaoler, an oppressor, a wrathful prince, a slave-owner, an Emperor, a war-god with punishing demons, a devil of medieval proportions, a plague-carrier, literally a howling, shuddering, quivering madman . . . (Harrison 21)

While Harrison focuses on Blake's treatment of the King, Blake is no gentler with other representatives of state power. Blake heightens his judgment on the British government by his satirical, and highly comic, portrayal of the thirteen colonial governors fleeing Orc's terrors, "Shaking their mental chains," and groveling on the beaches of America (Pl.13, ll.3-5; E 56).

Insofar as Blake's rhetoric is harsh in its defense of the genuinely oppressed, it is difficult not to feel sympathy with his position; nevertheless, it could legitimately be argued that Blake himself is engaging in a rhetoric of scapegoating. He places all blame for social conflict on the conservatives, who are uniformly depicted as bloody, as dragons, and as sources of plague and pestilence. He minimizes the reader's awareness of the actual physical violence of revolution, treating it primarily as a mental conflict, a war of words, while the bloody realities of revolutionary action are passed over lightly. Human agents, like King George III, actually calls his armies into battle, while the American revolutionaries, called bloody men, do little but stand around the shore and watch the battle: "In the flames stood & view'd the armies drawn out in the sky/Washington Franklin Paine & Warren Allen Gates & Lee" (p.14, l.1-2; E 56). Furthermore, despite the fact that Urizen is seen as the source of stony laws and frozen immobility, one could also argue that Blake's symbolic system is equally rigid, treating anything that is ordered, structured, or traditional as hindrance. The idea that anything within the established system could be used to enhance human agency appears to receives no consideration whatsoever.

This portrayal of the powers of symbolic order as radically evil is problematic enough when it is related quite specifically to particular systems of order, like the British monarchy. While it is easy enough to portray all supporters of any given position as uniformly bad, the facts will seldom support such a simplistic description. Yet the problem becomes even more difficult when Blake begins to speak in more general terms about order and rebellion. This generalizing quality is an often unacknowledged aspect of Blake's mythological method, and it becomes more intense in the radical works that

follow *America: A Prophecy*. In Blake's earlier radical poem, *The French Revolution*, historical characters appear and are called by name, with little if any reference to mythological figures. Earlier mythological works, *Tiriel* and *The Book of Thel*, are not as closely tied to identifiable historical events. Something new occurs in *America: A Prophecy*—the mingling of historically identifiable people and places with mythological figures. Often, these mythological figures determine historical outcomes just as much as, if not more than, the actual human beings who participate in the events. For example, in *America*, it is Urizen, not Albion's Guardian, who delays Orc's successful rebellion by bringing in a cosmic snow and frost that freezes the process of revolutionary transformation. Likewise, Washington, Paine, and Franklin participate in the action primarily as observers who watch and listen while Orc rises up in fury.

From this point on, Blake will write about mythological characters whom he himself creates, and he will have these characters intersect with actual people, places, and events in history, sometimes more obviously than others. Yet increasingly his attempts to change society consist, in part, in an attempt to understand how individual people and incidents are a part of a larger pattern, what D. W. Dörnbacher refers to as a "transhistorical" pattern. In doing so, Blake inevitably makes more general claims about Urizenic order and Orcan rebellion, claims that can be connected to, but also are generalizable beyond, specific events. In fact, the capacity of a mythical figure like Urizen to represent specific social institutions and individuals while, at the same time, making broader claims about language and order may have been one reason why mythical

prophecies were so appealing to Blake as a form of communication.¹⁰ As Dörrebecher asserts, Blake's myths demonstrate not just how power works for William Pitt, but how it works for Adolf Hitler as well:

And it is this aspect not of a transcendental but a transhistorical validity that must have fostered Blake's interest in the 'prophetical' mode as a means of analyzing poetically the complex psychosocial machinery of social and political oppression which he saw as having been merely refined and redefined over the centuries. (Dörrebecher 147)

Dörrebecher uses these words to describe Blake's mythological opus as a whole, although his specific discussion focuses on *Europe*. But even *Europe* and *America* lack the level of generalizing thought that we will see in *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, and Dörrebecher's remarks take on even greater cogency when linked to these later texts. Despite the fact that, in *America*, the mythological figures are somewhat generalizable, they also have a quality of concreteness, through which mythic actions are directly linked to specific events, people, and institutions. Thus, symbolic order as such does not cause scapegoating in *America: A Prophecy*. The scapegoating in this text is performed by the agents of a particular system who abuse their power over the symbolic

¹⁰Clearly, I would not want to assert that there was only one reason for Blake's use of myth. One of the most frequent explanations is that Blake was attempting to escape persecution by writing in apocalyptic forms that were difficult to understand, and that may well be part of the reason for his choices. This position is taken by some of the first critics to look at Blake from the perspective of social context. Jacob Bronkowsky, for example, argues that Blake adopts a "vague" and "mazy" style of writing because "his world urged him there" (85). Yet recent historical research makes it seem very unlikely that this vagueness and mazziness alone would have offered Blake much protection. Michael Phillips's "Blake and the Terror: 1792-1793" makes it clear how active anti-radical societies, like the London Corresponding Society, were in Blake's neighborhood. In fact, residents and shopkeepers were asked to sign loyalty statements, and Phillips identifies particular neighbors who were engaged in reporting dissidents. In this environment, *America's* mythic form would have provided Blake with little protection if it were publicly displayed in his shop. (Phillips suggests that it probably was not.) Worrall also provides strong evidence that Biblical critiques, like those in *The Book of Urizen* or *The Book of Ahania*, would have been readily recognized as radically political documents within their own rhetorical context. See Worrall, pp. 19-26.

order; there is no critique of symbolic systems in general. Certainly the rigidity of the British government and church/state apparatus plays a part in causing such scapegoating, and Urizen's snows and frosts are symbolically linked to this kind of rigidity. Thus, Blake's argument in *America: A Prophecy* is consistent with the Burkean idea that rigid systems perpetuate scapegoating by creating the need to project one's unavoidable guilt somewhere else. But the emphasis in this text is still on particular systems, not systems in general. However antinomian *America* may be, the figure of Urizen is linked very clearly to the church/state apparatus of England and, somewhat less directly, of France.

But as Blake begins to rely on mythological characters more and more, it becomes almost inevitable that figures like Orc and Urizen become associated with claims about rebellion and order as such, or to use Dörrbecher's term, with claims about rebellion and order as "transhistorical" phenomena. The rhetorical functions of order and the relationship between symbolic order and scapegoating take on a more universal focus. As Urizen begins to represent a greater variety of symbolic orders, the claim that order leads almost inevitably to rigidity, guilt, and then to scapegoating becomes a claim about symbolic systems as such. Order, as such, takes on the qualities of hindrance. The rigidity that hinders us and persuades us to feel guilt for our imperfection and changability becomes characteristic of all symbolic order. On the other hand, rebellion, as such, takes on the qualities of action—spontaneous, honest, virtuous. However, insofar as rebellion itself must depend on symbolic arrangements, such a strict dialectic becomes a logical impossibility, since any order used by the radical revolutionary will hold within itself the seeds of Urizenic hindrance and scapegoating.

In *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, Blake begins to explore the idea that all language, including his own, is systematic, and may participate in the processes of hindrance that he has attributed to the specific systems of Christianity, Empiricism, and the British government. The question of his own complicity in scapegoating, and the complicity of other radical and revolutionary forces, also becomes more urgent and begins to permeate texts that are filled with ambiguous uses of language in acts of commanding, naming, and writing.

This extension almost immediately reveals the fault lines in Blake's radically antinomian thought, although Blake tries, unsuccessfully, to continue his rejection of Urizenic order throughout *The Book of Urizen* and, to a lesser degree, in *The Book of Ahania*. While such efforts fail, the outlines are clearly discernible in a first look at both of these texts, since, in both, Urizen is the initial cause, if not the final agent, of hindrance and the scapegoating practices that always accompany it. Particularly in *The Book of Urizen*, Blake continues to associate scapegoating and hindrance with established authority, maintained through the rhetorical power of equally established symbolic systems, but the distinction between established symbolic order and the symbolic performances of rebellion also begin to become less distinct. In the following section, we will examine how this paradox functions in *The Book of Urizen*. Although Blake's softer judgment on Urizen is already beginning to emerge in this text, we will begin with an initial reading that highlights Blake's antinomian condemnation of Urizen and symbolic order as absolute evils. Then we will move on to examine how this harsh judgment begins to be undercut within the text itself.

Order, Hindrance and Scapegoating in *The Book of Urizen*

As we have already seen, Kenneth Burke's "Lord" makes the argument that human beings as "word people" can use language safely only if they progressively criticize their own symbolic frameworks. The transformation this criticism would entail is precisely what Urizen, Blake's bearded patriarch, wants to avoid, at least the Urizen of 1793, 1794, and 1795. In *America: A Prophecy*, Urizen tries to limit transformation by freezing Orc's revolutionary fires. In *The Book of Urizen*, the rigidity of Urizen's symbolic world is heightened by images of "his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains/ Of hail & ice" (Ch. 1, pl.3, ll.32-33; E 71). Continually associated with ice, snow, and stone, Urizen is the image of an unchanging and unyielding rational order. The action of *The Book of Urizen* begins when Urizen separates himself from the unified yet fiery and ever-changing world of the Eternals, because he wishes to attain "a joy without pain,/ For a solid without fluctuation" (Ch.2, pl.4, ll.10-11; E 71). He also wants unity, of course, but his idea of unity is bound up in the idea of solitary and bounded selves, each living in "one habitation:/His ancient infinite mansion" (Ch.2, pl.4, l.40; E 72). Once a mansion is chosen, it cannot be abandoned, because one's place within the system cannot change. Furthermore, each Eternal is to obey absolutely "One King, one God, one Law" (Ch.2, pl.4, ll.36-37; E 72).¹¹ While we know little of the Eternals from whom Urizen has separated himself, we know that he sees them as his opposite. They live in "unquenchable burnings," which he

¹¹The heavy use of this particular plate, plate 4, in my discussion of *The Book of Urizen* requires some discussion, since this plate appears in only two of the six printings of the text. This issue will be more fully addressed later in this chapter. For the moment, it suffices to say that plate 4 was clearly part of the original vision of the poem, according to Viscomi's analysis.

experiences as torment, but which appear to represent an ideal state, an everchanging form of order that arises naturally from the life of the Eternals.¹² In fact, Urizen's separation from the other Eternals and his arrogant declaration of the power of his one Law are the source of evil. In *The Book of Urizen*, the creation of the symbolic order is equivalent to fallenness, or evil. It marks a departure from an ideal good found in an indescribable Eternal realm.

What is perhaps most remarkable about this particular depiction of order in the person of Urizen is its all-encompassing quality. Previously, Blake has criticized Christianity, or Empiricism, or the state, and he has explored relationships between them, but there is, nevertheless, a separate and specific treatment of each. Now, in *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, all of these forms of order are conflated in the image of Urizen, and all are treated as symbolic actions which have devastating effects, one of them being scapegoating.

The symbolic system that Blake attacks most blatantly is traditional Christianity. At least as long ago as J. Middleton Murry, it has been recognized that both *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania* are parodies of the Bible, most specifically the books of Genesis and Exodus (Murry 129). Formally, Blake goes so far as to divide these books into chapters and verses, and to line the text up in columns like those in Bibles. Thus, he makes the connection more explicit. Critics identify a variety of different religious critiques

¹²Paul Cantor makes an interesting observation about the nature of fire and form in a brief comment on Blake's *The French Revolution*. Cantor notes: "Fire would seem to be an excellent symbol for the supposedly uncontainable and uncontrollable force of the passions. Yet flames do assume a definite outline of their own: it is just that the particular shape of a given fire is everchanging according to the law of its inner nature" (34). Thus, Blake, in *The French Revolution*, can say that "fire delights in its form" (l.189; E 294).

appearing in this text. One of the most important is Blake's criticism of the character of God as he is portrayed in traditional interpretations of the Old Testament. Mee, for example, focuses on Blake's antinomian rejection of the idea of God as lawgiver and judge, one who writes laws on stone tablets, as Urizen does.¹³ This law, understood by the tradition as righteous blessing, is nevertheless associated for Urizen, always, with cursing. When Urizen first declares his "Laws of peace" (Ch.II,pl.4, l.34; E 72), he also declares the crucial importance of "one curse" as well as "one Law" (Ch.II,pl.4, ll.39-40; E 72). Tannenbaum emphasizes the jealous character of the Old Testament divinity as parodied in the character of Urizen.¹⁴ Urizen's jealousy corrupts everything and everyone he touches, especially Los, who is sent by the other Eternals to contain Urizen's fall. As Tannenbaum also points out, Blake's narrative includes two creative divinities, or demiurges, Urizen and Los, thus following the Gnostic tradition of two creators. In doing so, Blake claims that "the God of Creation is self-divided" (Tannenbaum 204), and that at least one aspect of this divided divinity is evil.¹⁵

In turning to the Gnostic tradition and treating the two creators as separate beings, Blake heightens the readers' sense of multiple traditions and perspectives on the nature of

¹³For a full discussion, see Mee, chapter 4, "Blake, the Bible, and its Critics in the 1790's," pp. 161-213.

¹⁴See Tannenbaum, chapter VIII and IX, pp. 201-50.

¹⁵W. J. T. Mitchell argues that *The Book of Urizen* is a commentary on the Genesis narrative as revised by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*. See Mitchell, pp. 122-37. Certainly, there is clear evidence that Blake is looking to Milton, but he also looks to the Bible itself. If McGann is correct, Blake was aware that God is called by two names in Genesis, and he notices and even accentuates the differences between the two. Blake makes direct references to the Bible, and, as Mitchell demonstrates, he also directly cites Milton. Clearly, we need not decide that Blake is alluding to either the Miltonic text or the Biblical one. He refers to both.

creation and divinity, as opposed to the traditional Christian idea that there is one God and one true revelation. In addition to attacking the character of the Old Testament divinity, Blake subverts the sense that the Bible offers a unified, and thus finally authoritative, tradition which is carried on by the church. In a similar vein, numerous critics have noted that each printed version of *The Book of Urizen* is ordered differently in each different copy, with various plates omitted from several copies.¹⁶ Jerome McGann argues that this variable text is, for Blake, a deliberate reference to the Biblical scholarship of Dr.

Alexander Geddes, some of whose works were published by Blake's employer Joseph Johnson. Geddes was an early proponent of the view that the Pentateuch, far from being a single authoritative text handed down directly from the hands of Moses, is a conglomerate document that combines a variety of oral traditions.¹⁷ In making his Bible of Hell a variable document, McGann argues, Blake supports Geddes' controversial claims and makes a forceful attack on the idea of a unified tradition upon which the church can establish its authority.

McGann's argument is not without its difficulties, one of the primary ones being the fact that Blake's productions would inevitably be sold to different buyers, none of whom would know that other copies of *The Book of Urizen* had been printed differently from their own. Thus, such a rearrangement of plates would scarcely seem to be a

¹⁶For a full discussion of the differences between these different sources, see Viscomi, chapter 29. Worrall provides an excellent visual resource for tracking differences between printings, using Copy D as a copy text, as well as the Keynes/Erdman numberings based on an ideal, reconstructed text. Throughout this discussion, Erdman's numbering is used.

¹⁷For a full discussion, see McGann, "The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake's Bible of Hell and Dr. Alexander Geddes" in *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (1986): 303-24.

rhetorically effective method of presenting an argument. Nevertheless, McGann's article does accurately suggest that Blake saw his own text as variable, and that he prefers the idea of a variable creation myth. Such a preference does imply a critique of traditional Biblical authority, whether or not Blake meant to communicate anything to readers by printing different versions of his work in different ways. Indeed, whether one sees Blake as drawing upon Geddes, as McGann does, or as dependent upon Gnostic traditions, as Tannenbaum suggests, what is clear is that *The Book of Urizen* undercuts the idea of a unified and absolutely authoritative tradition. As we will see shortly, there are clearly political reasons for such an argument. But there are also strong ethical and theological reasons for Blake to undercut such a unified tradition. Blake's ideas about action and hindrance as ethical categories cannot be supported if there is one system that is absolutely authoritative and that can absolutely define which specific ideas and behaviors are virtuous. Nor can one discover the divine truth in one's own Poetic Genius if everything has been laid out in advance.

In fact, within the text itself, this stifling of individual vision and action is depicted as an effect of the rhetorical power of religion as a symbolic system. Blake's bard calls Urizen the "primeval Priests" and the founder of a religion that is "spurn'd back" by the Eternals (Pl.2, ll. 1-2; E 70). Yet, his Biblical language makes it clear that this false religion is the Christian religion of Blake's own culture. Those who follow it develop a narrow, rigid way of looking at the world:

Six days they shrunk up from existence
 And on the seventh day they rested
 And they bless'd the seventh day in sick hope:

And forgot their eternal life (ChIX,pl.25,ll.39-42; E 83).

To follow Urizen's religion is to lose one's true identity as an eternal being. One becomes small, reptilian in form, and "bound down/To earth by . . . narrowing perceptions" (Ch.IX,pl.25,l.46-47; E 83). The rhetorical effect of Christian theology and morals, once they become Urizenic law, is utterly disastrous, a hindrance to the full development of vision and human agency.

Furthermore, these critiques of religion directly implicate political and state power, making the argument that religious orthodoxy serves primarily to uphold these dominant sources of power and the hindrances they impose. The passage just cited indicts the economic order as it indicts the religious. The six days of labor kill the soul and shrink the human imagination. Yet, even before the development of the modern economic system, in the initial establishment of Urizen's religion, Blake sees the functioning of state power. When Urizen assumes power and declares himself a priest, he also commands that there will be "One King, one God, one Law," in that order (Ch.II,pl.4,l.40; E 72). Since the king is listed first, then we must assume that the other concepts are subordinate to him. The idea of one God and one Law are designed to support the idea of one king. The divine is no longer associated with "the Poetic Genius," or "the Soul," but rather with a symbolic order that exists to establish hierarchical political power and to enforce laws that are ultimately hindrances.

Jon Mee further establishes these connections between religion and political radicalism by looking beyond the text to the historical context. Making reference to Thomas Paine and to Alexander Geddes, Mee demonstrates that both radicals and

conservatives saw a relationship between one's views of the Bible and one's political convictions. In *The Age of Reason*, Paine criticizes the Bible not simply because he finds it theologically objectionable (which he does), but because he sees such a critique as necessary for political liberation. For this reason, it was important for Paine, as it was for Blake, to establish that prophecy had never functioned as a form of historical prediction as the church maintained: "The invention of modern conceptions of prophecy was part of a political conspiracy for Paine. Ancient poetry had been manufactured into scripture to serve the ends of a manipulative priestcraft" (Mee 169). That Blake shares this attitude with Paine is clear in his annotations to Richard Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*. Watson was actually a fairly liberal bishop in the Anglican Church. But when Watson attacks Paine, Blake refers to him as a "State trickster," one who puts forth his views simply to support established power (E 612).¹⁸

When Alexander Geddes, who was far less radical than either Paine or Blake, published his translation of the Bible, he was accused of being a follower of Paine and found it necessary to publish a statement denying that he was a "Paineist" or a "Jacobine." As Mee puts it, "They [Geddes' writings] were operating in one of the key domains of that establishment. The Bible was the ultimate sacred text of the state, it was as essential a part of the hegemony of the ruling classes as the vaunted constitutional liberties of the free-born Englishman" (170). Blake's *Urizen* embodies this link between religious power and state power as part of one oppressive symbolic order. By the end of the poem, most of *Urizen's* children are ensnared in a "Net of Religion" (Ch. VIII, pl. 25, l. 22; E 82). The last

¹⁸See Sandler for a full discussion of Blake's annotations of Watson.

illuminated plate shows Urizen ensnared as well.

Yet Urizen also ensnares himself and others by means of scientific method and Enlightenment thought. While Enlightenment thinking was often seen by thinkers like Paine and Geddes as a means of liberation from superstition and, thus, from oppressive forms of social authority, Blake treats it as another form of rigid symbolic order. Linking the characteristics of religion and the characteristics of the scientist in one figure, Blake implies that science is like religion, in that it establishes laws and ensnares human perception and divine inspiration. When Urizen establishes one King and one God, he also establishes one weight and one measure, allowing for the development of empirical science. When Urizen awakens after the binding of Orc, he engages in scientific activity, “Explor[es] his dens around” and sets about measuring and weighing the physical world (Ch. VII, pl.20,l.32; E 80). The weighing, the measuring, and the creation of tools of measurement like compasses and quadrants all accompany the development of religion; the two cultural developments are essentially alike as they involve symbolic systems based in the assumption of a fixed and unchanging order. The notion of uniformity and regularity is as offensive to Blake in scientific thought as it is in religious belief. Such absolute orders would hinder vision and creative action as much as any religious law.

Critics identify a variety of parodic connections between *The Book of Urizen* and Enlightenment thought. Harald A. Kittel, for example, finds close relationships between Blake’s language in this text and the writings of John Locke.¹⁹ Donald Ault thoroughly discusses Blake’s critique of Newtonian science in *The Book of Urizen* and elsewhere in

¹⁹For a full discussion, see Kittel’s “*The Book of Urizen and An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*” in Michael Phillips’ *Interpreting Blake*, pp. 111-44.

the Blake opus.²⁰ Robert Essick identifies within *The Book of Urizen* critiques of the Deist religion established in France under Robespierre, critiques of the mathematical work of Condorcet, as well as critiques of contemporary medical science as depicted in Los's creation of Urizen's body through all the stages of embryonic development.²¹

Perhaps most important for the present discussion are Essick's arguments about Blake's portrayal of the family in *The Book of Urizen*, since, as we will see shortly, the family is the predominant site for scapegoating activity in the text. Essick comments upon Los's sacrifice of his only son Orc, arguing that this depiction of family conflict offers a critique of Thomas Paine's and Mary Wollstonecraft's idealization of the family as the true and natural center of human society. For Paine and Wollstonecraft, problems within the family occur because the aristocratic rules of primogeniture create an artificial social system. Both argue that this system of inheritance is unnatural, since it treats only the firstborn son as a real member of the family. Other children are born to be cast off or devoured. If this system were destroyed, there would be a natural family system that would reemerge. People would again nurture all of their children, according to the natural order of things.

However, as Essick points out, in Blake's prophecy, Los, who has the first family, chains his firstborn son, Orc, to the top of a mountain. Thus, Blake places the corruption of the family unit at the heart of the creation narrative. From the beginning, the family is

²⁰See Ault's *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton*, especially pp. 98-99, 129-33, and 166-68.

²¹For full discussion, see Essick's "William Blake, Thomas Paine, and Biblical Revolution" in *Studies in Romanticism* 30 (1991): 189-212.

corrupted. There is no trustworthy nature undergirding it which would ensure a non-tyrannical system (Essick “Blake, Paine” 202-03). Paine’s and Wollstonecraft’s belief in a natural order for the family or for any other social unit is itself “an ideological configuration that tyrannizes over man” (Essick “Blake, Paine” 201). When Paine and Wollstonecraft describe a particular family order as natural, they make Enlightenment assumptions about natural law and natural religion as opposed to mystified religious and social structures. For Blake, this natural law is as tyrannical as the religious law it intends to displace.

While in his article, Essick makes Blake’s rejection of Enlightenment notions of rationality and law very clear, he does not discuss in this context why the family system is tyrannical and corrupt from the start. However, in his analysis of *The Book of Urizen* in *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, an answer is suggested, although the family is not specifically discussed. In this text, which focuses on Blake’s ideas about language, Essick argues that Urizen’s separation from the other Eternals is the “primal act” in the text: “This event immediately constitutes, and is constituted by *difference* as the fundamental ontological category” (149). This process of differentiation is a departure from the, for us, almost unimaginable unity of the Eternals, and it is central to the formation of language itself, or at least, “the language described by the rationalist tradition of sign theory from the seventeenth-century grammarians through Derrida” (Essick, *Language of Adam* 149-50). Language is based on a sign system that classifies objects according to similarities and differences. Furthermore, in Burke’s rhetorical theory language is only necessary because of the separation of one person from the other. Were

we totally identified with one another, we would need neither language nor rhetoric. All of our experiences and impressions would be shared from the beginning.²²

Thus, the family as a structure appears only after Urizen is differentiated from the Eternals, and after Los has furthered the process of creation and separation by creating a body for Urizen. Binding and pitying Urizen causes Los to divide into separate male and female beings, and that separation, be it understood as an actual physical transformation or simply as a change in perception, is the source of the family as a symbolic order. It is part of the separated and fallen world created by the Urizenic law of difference, which is “the one law . . . that separates everyone” (Essick *Language of Adam* 153), even as it governs everyone. In practical terms, it does not matter who creates a specific familial order or how it is constituted. The differentiation of gender, generation, and function between family members is all part of a symbolic order, and in *The Book of Urizen*, all such order is the result of Urizen’s arrogant separation from the Eternals in order to establish his religion and his laws. For Blake, the family is not a natural structure, but a symbolic structure, in which each person or thing must be accorded a permanent “mansion” or “habitation,” or as Essick suggests, a fixed place in a semiotic system, by which it can be differentiated from other persons or things. To put all this into Burkean terms, the family is unavoidably a symbolic order; thus, our ways of ordering our sexual and family lives have rhetorical effects upon our selves and others which can tend towards hierarchy,

²²Certainly, not everyone would share Burke’s view on this issue. Some, like Wittgenstein, argue that individuals need language simply to think. Burke, however, is concerned primarily with how language functions in the social order.

rigidity, alienation, guilt, and scapegoating.²³

Indeed, the family is a central site of of the scapegoating in both *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*. The scapegoating action of these texts lies in the torment of sons by their fathers and, on occasion, of wives by their husbands. Fathers are the ones who represent an order of power and control, which extends symbolically in a chain that includes the father of the family, as well as the king as the father of the nation, the priest as the father of the church, God as the divine father, and even the Enlightenment intellectual as the father of the less educated masses.²⁴ Fathers are the symbolic seat of power at all levels. They establish or buy into rules that they themselves cannot keep, and when they cannot cope with their pain, they make sacrificial victims of their families. Their behavior fits the model of scapegoating we have seen so far. Rigid systems of order create guilt; then dyslogistic language, enforced restraint, or ritual sacrifice are used to transfer that guilt to another party, one who is separate from, and yet consubstantial with, the enforcer of the system, in this case, his own divided image as found in his spouse or child.

Urizen's scapegoating actions, which appear near the end of *The Book of Urizen*,

²³In order to move on to a discussion of scapegoating, a full examination of language in *The Book of Urizen* is not offered here. See the last section of this chapter for a fuller discussion of the role of language in *The Book of Urizen*, particularly as it relates to Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory.

²⁴Mee offers a considerable discussion in which he demonstrates how radical millenarians and other visionaries, like Richard Brothers, the self-styled "Nephew of God" use the idea of inspiration to overcome the claim that only the learned can truly understand the Bible. Blake's reliance, and that of others interested in the language of prophecy and inspiration, is certainly, in part, an attempt to shake off this idea that those who are university educated somehow have a monopoly on awareness or a place in public discourse. Even the attempt to use education and reasoning to assist the poor might well be insulting to those who have not had the opportunity to receive such education and still wanted the right to speak on their own behalf. Many enthusiasts would argue that the poor and uneducated were far better able to interpret Scripture, for example, than were the educated persons on whom the poor were supposedly dependent.

fit the pattern almost perfectly. When his sons and daughters, “His eternal creations,” begin to appear, he sickens at the sight (Ch.VIII,pl.23,ll.8-9; E 81). Then he looks upon his own sons and daughters and curses them “for he saw/That no flesh nor spirit could keep/His iron laws one moment” (Ch.VIII,pl.23,ll.24-26; E 81). Yet Urizen is no more able to keep his own iron laws than are his children. To create change is to violate Urizen’s most basic principle, which is to find a “solid without fluctuation” (Ch.II,pl.4,l.11; E 71). Urizen’s laws are utterly inflexible and immovable, but to procreate is to create change. The generation of offspring is the essence of change, since it creates new beings who will inevitably create more changes of their own. Furthermore, this law is not the only one that Urizen fails to obey.

In creating his religion, Urizen argues that his path is the only way to escape death. When he first establishes his law, he entreats the Eternals to accept his religion, asking, “Why will you die O Eternals?/Why live in unquenchable burnings?” (Ch.II,pl.4,ll.12-13; E 71). Yet in the end, he finds himself in a world where death is necessary if life is to besustained:

For he saw that life liv’d upon death
The Ox in the slaughter house moans
The Dog at the wintry door
And he wept, & he called it Pity
And his tears flowed down on the winds (ChVIII;pl.23,l.7-
pl.25,ll.1-4; E 81-82).

This is the world that his desire for a solid without fluctuation, and a joy without pain has created. But his supposed Pity for this painful world immediately follows his curse of the children whom he has placed in it. Urizen’s verbal assault on his children allows him to notice their failure to live up to his laws, but not his own failure, and his

response to his feelings of pity is to pile more and more laws upon them, in a further attempt to correct them. It is at this point in the narrative that he creates the Net of Religion which diminishes his children's life yet further, causing their "Nerves" to change into "Marrow," creating disease, and a level of vision so obscure that they cannot recognize to what extent the web that encloses them is a "woven hypocrisy" (Ch.IX,pl.25,l.32; E 82).

Urizen the lawgiver is the most straightforward practitioner of scapegoating in *The Book of Urizen*, in part because it is his own law that he defends. Unable to acknowledge that his laws simply do not work, he tries to enforce them with increasing rigor. He is both god and priest in his own text, and he is fully convinced of his rightness. On the other hand, Los is caught up in a system of order for which he is not ultimately responsible and, thus, he lives a divided life "Beneath Urizens deathful shadow" (Ch.VII,pl.20,l.25; E 80). This situation causes Los to have a complex and ambivalent relationship to the symbolic orders that he and Urizen have jointly created. Los does not desire the process of differentiation that Urizen began. Urizen is torn from his side, becoming alien and frightening, and Los is devastated by the loss. Then Los is sent to Urizen by the other Eternals so that he can contain Urizen. Frightened by Urizen's formless state, Los creates a body for him; in doing so he binds his fellow Eternal yet further, and involves himself in a highly Urizenic process of hindrance and limitation. Finally, as a result of his pity for Urizen's state, Los himself is divided, creating Enitharmon, the first woman, and Orc, the first child begotten by a man and woman.²⁵ As W. J. T. Mitchell suggests, Los's pity for

²⁵In contrast to Los, who splits into male and female portions prior to reproduction, Urizen's children spring from his solitary musings. Only after the rebellion of Fuzon in *The Book of Ahania* does

Urizen may divide him because Los feels torn between his loyalty to Urizen and his loyalty to the other Eternals, who spurn Urizen and ask that he be confined (120). Even after the creation of the family structure, Los remains a divided being, one who is torn between his own fiery nature as an eternal prophet and the petrified Urizenic world of which he is now a part. His scapegoating activities reflect that divided identity.

When he becomes ensnared in the Urizenic system, Los's role as imaginative prophet also becomes ensnared and distorted. As Mitchell asserts:

Once he is enclosed in Urizen's world he [Los] begins to act the part of Urizenic prophet, foreseeing nothing but the usurpation of his own power. Thus he imitates the actions of those whose 'inspiration' serves only as a jealous, fearful (and futile) attempt to ward off the future, adopting the role of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Jupiter chaining down Prometheus, or Laius exposing Oedipus. (121)

Under the "deathful shadow" of Urizen, Los scapegoats his son, placing his son in a bind in an attempt to escape his own.

Los's binding of his son Orc with a chain of jealousy—a chain that grows from his own breast—is the most obvious act of scapegoating in the text. This binding and exposure of Orc is often referred to in terms of the Freudian Oedipal conflict, yet what Blake describes is actually something rather different. We know nothing about Orc's initial feelings for his mother Enitharmon except that he clings to her, as we see on plate 21b.²⁶ We know even less about Orc's feelings for his father Los. Los's conflict, not Orc's, is at the center of the narrative. Los resents Orc's attachment to Enitharmon, so he chains his

Urizen divide from his female emanation.

²⁶I am using here the plate order as given by Erdman in *The Illuminated Blake* to identify the plates that do not have written text. Erdman's ordering is taken from Keynes. See *The Illuminated Blake*, p. 182 and 203.

son's "young limbs to the rock/With the Chain of Jealousy/Beneath Urizens deathful shadow" (Ch. VII, Pl. 20, ll. 22-25; E 80). As Diana Hume George points out, Freud's Oedipal complex involves a "description of mental process in the boy child" (117).

However, *The Book of Urizen* has a different focus:

In Blake's story the original process takes place, then, in the mind of the father as well as in the mind of the son—*perhaps, even, in the mind of the father instead of in the mind of the son* [Italics mine]. It is true that Orc will grow into a principle of revolutionary energy, but that development may be largely determined by the father's behavior toward him (George 118).

Los's chaining of Orc does not resemble the Oedipal complex as described by Freud so much as it evokes René Girard's description of the same process in *Violence and the Sacred*. For Girard, the Oedipal complex, which could be equated to the chain of jealousy that ensnares Orc, is not based upon a child's desire to usurp his father. Rather, the child is placed in a double bind by a father who responds with hostility when the child, in the process of learning to desire by imitation (the only means available to him), demonstrates an interest in the father's goods, among them the mother. Since the child has no choice but to imitate his father's desires, he becomes entangled in a painful double bind (170-79). While Blake does not entirely prefigure Girard's mimetic understanding of the Oedipal conflict, he does develop the story of Los and Orc along Girardian lines, insofar as Los's jealousy is the source of the conflict, not Orc's; thus, Orc becomes the scapegoat for Los's jealousy and hostility.

As Mitchell suggests in the quotation cited above, at least part of this hostility has to do with usurpation. Just as Laius fears usurpation by Oedipus, Los fears usurpation by Orc. Los is already in the "deathful shadow" of Urizen who set up this process of symbolic

differentiation by assuming a priestly power not truly his own. The eternal prophet has now created his own system of order, characterized, like Urizen's order, by the binding effects of differentiation, with all of its fixed habitations and its ultimately hindering effects. His family, the first family, is one of these differentiated orders. Los is living under the shadow of an authority who is himself a usurper, and he has now assumed paternal powers of his own. It is no surprise then that Los, dwelling in Urizen's shadow, would anticipate usurpation by his own son. Blake's depiction of Oedipal struggle has to do with symbolic order because it has to do with the preservation of the "habitations" assigned to any individual within that order. This quest for preservation has at least two prongs. First, those who hold authority within these systems want to continue to hold on to their authority, and they do so, Blake asserts, by creating laws that help justify their power. But once a symbolic order is established, it also develops a persuasive power of its own that makes its adherents want to protect it against the new. As has already been suggested in our discussion of Urizen, the arrival of the child sets in process an almost endless potential for change.

But Los's jealousy also has something to do with commandments and with guilt about the defiance of commandments as much as it has to do with the fear of change and usurpation that is related to hierarchical structures. To be under the "deathful shadow" of Urizen is to be haunted by a myriad of laws, as suggested by the frontispiece of *The Book of Urizen*. Here Urizen sits in front of Mosaic tablets of law, tablets that, not incidentally, also strongly resemble tombstones. Thus, Blake suggests, in typical antinomian fashion, a

link between law and death.²⁷ The death-dealing quality of law, and its relationship to jealousy and scapegoating, become apparent as we explore the Abraham/Isaac and Jupiter/Prometheus parallels in the binding of Orc.

The close connection between *The Book of Urizen* and Genesis clearly invite us to see a connection between Los and Abraham. As Nelson Hilton points out, Los, like Abraham, binds his son on top of a mountain. (196). In the Biblical account, Abraham's is a reluctant sacrifice made in order to prove his fidelity to God. Likewise, Los "sacrific[es] the joys of energy [as represented by his son Orc] in an assent to Urizen's concept of sin" (Tannenbaum 214), in this case, the sin of sexual desire. As we have already seen in *America: A Prophecy*, sexual desire is bound by Urizen's laws, and Urizen's response to breaches of that law is jealousy, precisely because maintenance of his law sustains his own place in the hierarchy. For Urizen, sexual desire threatens his authority as the priest of his religion.

For Los, the issue is more complicated. The burning quality of desire is akin to Los's nature as an Eternal, and it is retained in his son, the fiery boy Orc. Yet, insofar as Los dwells beneath Urizen's shadow, he lives in a world in which Urizen is the ultimate authority. In the world of Urizen, sexual desire is forbidden, and Los has already succumbed to his desire for Enitharmon. While that desire is itself connected to the fires of Eternity, once it is entangled with Urizenic law, it becomes the source of guilt and rigid

²⁷Worrall also suggests that these Mosaic tablets strongly resemble tombstones, but he understands this image in terms of a radical politics of equality rather than as a statement about the nature of law. See Worrall, page 26. David Erdman, in *The Illuminated Blake*, does not make any direct observation about grave-like appearance of the stone tablets, but he does see a connection between the illumination and the Eternals' observation that Urizen is death (183).

control by laws and systems of order, and it places Los in potential conflict with Urizen. Certainly Los, like Urizen, is jealous in protecting his own place, and he resents Orc's threatening his place in the family order. But, in becoming part of Urizen's system, Los has also been bound by Urizen's jealousy, the jealousy that has created the laws that bind Los himself. As Los reacts violently to the early signs of desire in his son, he attempts to rid himself of the chain of his own jealousy and Urizen's, by making a sacrifice to atone for his own sin of desire. In offering up Orc, Los obeys Urizen as Abraham obeys his God.

But for the divided Los, the scapegoating process is only partially successful. This fact becomes clear when we examine the chain of jealousy itself in light of the Jupiter/Prometheus narrative. One of the primary changes in Blake's account is that the tortures that Jupiter inflicts on Prometheus are actually divided between Los and Orc. In the Jupiter/Prometheus narrative, Jupiter punishes Prometheus for his defiance by chaining him to a mountain, where his liver is plucked out nightly only to grow again in the morning. In Blake's narrative, the Promethean role is divided between Los and Orc. At first, Los is the one tortured, because the chain of jealousy grows out of his own chest and ensnares him. Each day he breaks free of this unnatural addition to his body, only to have it grow anew. The jealousy is his punishment for sexual desire within the Urizenic system, which allows no room for desire. Los rids himself of this Promethean torture by using the chain to bind his son, as Prometheus is bound, to a rock. Orc is bound like Prometheus but, unlike Prometheus, he is not being punished for any known violation of law. He has committed no act of defiance; rather, he has crossed a paternal boundary of which he was unaware. In binding his son, Los attempts to transfer his own guilt and anxiety about

sexual law onto the boy. Los rids himself of the physical chain, and he surely produces jealousy within his son. But his own jealousy continues. Thus he walls in his wife Enitharmon so that no other male can see her, not even his helplessly bound son or the “divine” Urizen for whom the boy was sacrificed (Ch.7,pl.20,l.44; E 81). The binding of Orc does not take away Los’s forbidden desire either. “Encircled,” and thus hidden, by the “fires of Prophecy,” Enitharmon gives birth to “an enormous race” (Ch.VII,pl.20,ll.42-45; E 81), the fruit of Los’s continuing desire and jealousy, and it might be added, an entire race of children who will each, in their turn, probably prove a threat to their anxious father.

As we have seen, both of these cases of scapegoating deal with the cruelty of fathers towards their children, and all of them have to do with Urizen’s character as lawgiver. So far, our examination of order, hindrance, and scapegoating suggests that Urizen, as the creator of a symbolic order based on differentiation, is the source of binding, of hindrance, and finally, of the scapegoating mentality that systems of order ultimately create in their adherents. The sheer fact of naming functions as a kind of commandment that fixes an object into its place within the system, and it is Urizen who sets that order into place initially.

Los, in his attempt to limit Urizen’s fall, creates his body, but the body he creates simply perpetuates the process of division, differentiation, naming, and assigning of places. Thus, Los’s creation parodies the “good” process of creation in Genesis. He forms Urizen over a period of seven Ages, as God forms the world in seven days, and this alternative creation narrative is punctuated by the repeated expression, “And a first Age passed

over,/And a state of dismal woe,” with the ages counted and evaluated, as they are in the Biblical account of creation, but evaluated in the opposite way (Ch.4b,pl.10,ll.42-43; E 75). This process of ordering is dismal and painful rather than positive, just as Urizen’s actions were dismal and negative, even as he proclaims his intention of producing “Laws of peace, of love, of unity:/Of pity, compassion, forgiveness” (Ch.II,pl.5,ll.33-34; E 72). In *The Book of Urizen*, Blake portrays a world in which it is almost inconceivable what kind of system of order might possibly be beneficial rather than harmful.

This pessimism is heightened by the Eternals’ apparent complicity in the process of binding and hindrance. Esterhammer goes so far as to suggest that the Eternals themselves significantly contribute to the process of fallenness in the text, because some of them are the first to use a name to describe the “abominable void” that appears at the beginning of the poem: “It is Urizen” (Ch.I,pl.3.ll.4 and 6; E 70). Furthermore, the Eternals describe Urizen as “Death” and as “a clod of clay,” and the narrator later reveals to us that this is exactly what Urizen has become (Ch.III,pl.6,ll.9-10; E 74). Thus, Esterhammer suggests, “. . . we begin to wonder what effect metaphors have in permanently imposing attributes on their objects” (155).

In the same vein, Mitchell points out that the Eternals try to act like “an unfallen remnant of the prelapsarian condition. All their efforts are directed at avoiding any contact with the detestable . . . Urizen” (115). The Eternals call upon Los to confine Urizen, which as Mitchell suggests, seems excessive since Urizen has already confined himself (115-16). Then they abandon Los, because he too becomes ensnared in Urizen’s world. Thus, Mitchell points out:

It is very difficult to know what to make of these actions, whether to see them as attempts to preserve a last bastion of the original visionary perfection, or as frightened reactions which do nothing to heal the “wrenching apart” of the eternal order, and which may even worsen the schism by ratifying and imitating Urizen’s initial act of withdrawal. (115)

If the Eternals themselves are unable to heal the breach, to marry their heaven with Urizen’s hell, so to speak, then it is hard to imagine what kind of action would heal it. Furthermore, if the Eternals in some sense seal both Urizen and Los into a place into which they unwittingly fell, is not their hostility towards the two possibly a kind of scapegoating activity in its own right? Urizen somehow falls and becomes a void, and then the Eternals name him and set him permanently into place, blaming him for being in the place where they have affixed him. The same is true for Los. The Eternals send him to contain Urizen, but shrink away in horror and cover Los, Enitharmon and Orc once Los’s closeness to the Urizen causes him to divide and fall. They desire not to see him because they want to protect themselves, and there is no sign that they accept any responsibility for putting Los in danger. What is more, their reaction is described in Urizenic terms. They are “petrified,” or turned to stone, by the sight of Enitharmon, and by the strong emotions that sight produces for them (Ch.V,pl.18,l.15; E 78). Thus, they put up a “Tent of Science” to separate themselves from Los and his family (Ch.V,pl.19,ll.1-9; E 78).

Since the narrator makes a point of telling us that Urizen is an “eternal name,” it is unlikely the Eternals’ naming is meant to be as destructive as Urizen’s symbolic order (Ch.IVb,pl.10,l.12; E 75). Still, at best, it is as if Urizen’s separation, his assumption of priestly power, as the Preludium calls it, sets up a situation in which any attempt to act in response to Urizen automatically becomes caught up in the process of hindrance that he

has enacted through his creation of boundaries and limits. The Eternals respond to the separation of Urizen, or to his pronouncement of his laws, depending on which copy one examines, with violent cataracts of “Rage, fury, [and] intense indignation” (Ch.III, pl.4,l.45; E 72), thus creating a more complete separation. Also, Los’s prophetic powers are hindered and damaged by their exposure to Urizenic boundaries.

As critics often suggest, even Blake’s own prophecies are implicated in this condemnation of symbolic order as the source of hindrance. Like Blake, Urizen writes his “secrets of wisdom” in “books formd of metals” (Ch.II,pl.4,ll.24-25; E 72). Although Blake uses copper plates, while Urizen’s are brass, the connection is hard not to make. Mee suggests that the connection is inappropriate because Urizen’s plates are fixed, while Blake’s text, as we have seen, is variable (106). This difference is, however, a difference in degree, not in kind. While the Urizen text does vary considerably from copy to copy, each copy nevertheless creates its own order, and each plate is itself an order that remains relatively fixed, with only minor adjustments possible once the engraving is complete.²⁸ Furthermore, the differences between copies are clearly differences between various versions of similar, if not identical, arguments.

In fact, the different versions may involve changing emphases, but changes in the overall argument are slight, as we can see by looking closely at one textual variant that is especially important for this particular discussion of *The Book of Urizen*. Plate 4, which figures heavily in my previous discussion of *The Book of Urizen*, appears in only two of

²⁸Viscomi mentions changes in headings, as well as adjustments to the figures printed in the illuminated plates. Plate 25, for example, has an additional face, while plate 16 has a beard in copy A, and no beard in copy B (282-86). Textual changes within plates tend to be minor.

the six printings of the text. This plate, the only one in which Urizen speaks, contains the references to Urizen's desire for solidity, his one law, and his metal books, and is constantly quoted in discussions of *The Book of Urizen*, including this one. According to Viscomi, plate 4 is part of the original engraving of the text. Thus, it was part of Blake's original vision for the work, but his choice about whether or not to collate the plate into the bound copies is erratic. He continued to print it, and then, in many cases, chose to leave it out. It is omitted from copy G, the last printing, which was made in 1815 at the earliest, although we know that he printed plate 4 for this copy and did not include it because of a technical error.²⁹ He did, however, include plate 4 in copy A, which Viscomi suggests was printed first, before the other 1794 copies, but collated last, after the three other 1794 printings that did not include this plate (279-83). Thus, we cannot say for sure that at some clear moment in time, Blake decided that the plate did not belong. Since this is the case, using this portion of *The Book of Urizen* to discover the character of Urizen could be considered problematic, particularly since we cannot be sure why he left it out of so many copies.

There are a variety of critical perspectives on why the plate is so often missing. Based on a study of copy G, Essick suggests that the reasons may be largely technical (For citation information, see the last footnote). Viscomi maintains that plate 4 makes Urizen look too heroic, because it gives so much attention to his speech and allows us to see his

²⁹See Robert N. Essick's "Variation, Accident, and Intention in William Blake's *The Book of Urizen*" in *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 230-34. Looking at copy G and at a loose copy of plate 4 that was omitted from this copy, Essick argues that plate 4 was left out of copy G because of a technical problem. Viscomi agrees (413). However, as McGann points out, this does not necessarily explain the omission of plate 4 from copies printed in the 1790's (323).

mixed motives: peace, love, unity, pity, compassion, and forgiveness, as well as desire to establish an unchanging order (283). John H. Jones, on the other hand, argues that the omission of plate 4 makes the reason for Urizen's fall less clear, thus casting doubt on whether Urizen is fully responsible for the fall (83). Similarly, Helen Ellis points out that the omission of plate 4 gives Los's role in the poem more weight and Urizen's less.³⁰

While I would agree with Jones and Ellis that Urizen's character changes when plate 4 is omitted, the change is less marked than it might seem. It is true that without his self-aggrandizing remarks on plate 4, Urizen is a more pathetic figure, one who falls away from his life as an Eternal for reasons that are decidedly unclear. Without plate 4, the bounded world appears to be far less exclusively his responsibility, while Los and the Eternals seem to be more equally co-contributors to the problems of rigid symbolic order. Yet, as Michael Ferber suggests, even with plate 4, there is no clear evidence as to how and why Urizen falls. The separation from the Eternals is basically mysterious (*Social* 47). My own tendency is to read plate 4 as the explanation for the fall, at least in part, and Ferber hints that it may be his tendency as well. Yet such a connection is never explicitly stated, and Urizen's words on plate 4 could be the justification of his isolation from the other Eternals created after the fact, after he has attempted to make sense of his struggle with chaos as a fallen being.

³⁰Robert Essick even argues that the reasons for the omission of plate 4 could have been largely technical. A print of this plate, matching copy G, is defective, being improperly aligned on the page. Thus, Essick argues, Blake could have omitted the plate because he tended to have printing problems with it. (See Essick, "Variation, Accident, and Intention in William Blake's *The Book of Urizen*," 1986. I have not included this argument in my full discussion, because it predates Viscomi's exhaustive analysis of all copies of the text, as well as individual prints. In fact, there are several prints of plate 4 that match earlier copies and that were not included. Viscomi does not mention that these prints are in any way misaligned. Evidently, the only plate 4 which was omitted for aesthetic reasons was the one prepared for copy G.

If we do not blame Urizen for his own fall, we have more room to emphasize the complicity of the Eternals, including Los, in the disaster that follows. But they are complicit in any case. Also, in any case, Urizen is, the first of the Eternals to form a separate, differentiated existence, and his basically negative character as lawmaker remains in all versions of the text. Without plate 4, Urizen is still surrounded by Mosaic tablets of law, his laws are still “iron,” and he still scapegoats and harms his children. Thus, I would suggest that Blake’s vacillations about including this plate suggest only a very slight vacillation in his attitude about Urizen. While he rejects Urizenic order in all versions of *The Book of Urizen*, perhaps he is hesitating to claim that Urizenic order is the entire problem with the human condition. So he vacillates between presenting a text in which Urizen is the sole cause of the fall and presenting one in which Urizen is the predominant problem in a mysteriously fallen world. Either way, Urizen is a destructive figure, and one whom it is almost impossible to fight on his own ground, that is, the ground of symbolic order and limitation. Blake’s own symbolic actions would, necessarily, fall within Urizen’s territory and thus would always be, at some level, complicit in Urizen’s systems.

At the end of *The Book of Urizen*, however, Blake does leave a faint glimmer of hope. Urizen’s son Fuzon performs a new act of naming as the text closes. He calls together all of his brothers and sisters who can still see how hypocritical and oppressive their father really is. They look at “the pendulous earth,” the joint creation of Urizen and Los, they call it Egypt, and they leave it (Ch. IX, pl. 28, ll. 22; E 83). Here we see a new if undefined possibility. Whereas the Eternals respond to Urizen with rage, and Los tries to contain him, Fuzon and his siblings simply go away. Blake suggests the possibility of

creating something new simply by leaving Urizen behind, rather than reacting to him or trying to change him, but Blake is unable to define what this other place might be like. In fact, to define it would subject it to Urizenic processes of order and thus ruin it. But he nevertheless leaves open the possibility that an Exodus from the old order might well be possible. In another year, however, by the time Blake engraves *The Book of Ahania* in 1795, he has abandoned this idea altogether.

Order, Hindrance, and Scapegoating in The Book of Ahania

Although at the end of *The Book of Urizen*, Fuzon is leading a remnant of Urizen's children out of bondage in their father's Egypt, the first lines of *The Book of Ahania* reveal him returning to his father's country, determined to engage in combat with Urizen. After rising like flame in his chariot, Fuzon assaults his father with a fiery globe, formed from his own wrath. This globe strikes Urizen in the loins, causing him to divide from his female counterpart, Ahania, and call her sin. Believing that he has killed his father, Fuzon declares himself a god, and then is immediately shot down by his father. Urizen then crucifies his defiant son, who hangs, "[a] pale living Corse," for forty years (Ch.4,pl.4,l.10; E 87).

How we understand this transformation in Fuzon's behavior may be determined in part by the relationship we see between *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*. Is *Ahania* a sequel to *Urizen*, or are they entirely separate meditations on similar themes? Essick, for example, argues the latter, noting that Blake printed *Urizen* and *Ahania* in different styles (Essick *Language* 140). On the other hand, Viscomi points out that "the double columns of text in *Book of Ahania* and *Book of Los* visually connect these works to *Urizen*, despite their different sizes, lengths, and techniques. Thematically the works are

also connected” (287).³¹ The fact that these works are the only ones printed in two columns with chapters and verse numbers, like the Bible, surely indicates a connection between them. Further, it might be added that *Ahania* clearly takes place after *Urizen*. When the narrator discusses events concerning Urizen’s initial separation from the Eternals, he treats these events as past actions that occurred prior to the events in *Ahania*. According to *The Book of Ahania*, The Tree of Mystery upon which Fuzon is crucified has its origins in these earlier events, despite the fact that this tree does not appear in the narrative portion of *The Book of Urizen*. Yet, as Mitchell notes, the final plate in *Urizen* portrays the bearded patriarch entangled in a net that looks something like roots or stems. Although the plate is often described as a portrayal of Urizen entangled in his own Net of Religion, Mitchell points out that no such event is ever described in *The Book of Urizen*. There, Urizen stays well above his net, casting it down upon others. However, *The Book of Ahania* describes Urizen becoming entangled in a forest of stems that spring up from the roots of the Tree of Mystery soon after the creation (141). Thus, this final visual image links the two works, as does Fuzon, whose actions end the narrative of one poem and begin the other.

Although Fuzon’s actions at the beginning of *Ahania* appear to contradict his behavior at the end of *Urizen*, as we will see, Urizen’s character and behavior remain similar in both poems. For example, he is still associated with language and with books.

³¹While *The Book of Los* will be referred to again later in this chapter, it is excluded from discussion because it does not include any portrayals of scapegoating *per se*. It does retell the story of creation from Los’s perspective, and emphasizes the restrictive quality of Los’s binding of Urizen. Dated 1795 like *The Book of Ahania*, *Los* is part of the Bible of Hell. Like *Urizen* and *Ahania*, it includes a Biblical layout, complete with chapters and verses.

He sits beneath his Tree of Mystery and writes in a book of iron. The references to language and law are not as fully developed in *Ahania* as they are in *Urizen*, but the allusions to Urizen's books, particularly his metal book, resonate with the critique of language and symbolic order already established in the earlier work. In *Ahania*, Urizen also demonstrates his obsession with law through his extreme concern for sexuality and its repression. Since, as has already been argued, *Ahania* shows clear signs of being linked to *Urizen* almost as a sequel, we can, to a certain extent, transfer our awareness of Urizen's role as lawmaker, and use it to explain the sexual phenomena that appear in the later work.

The issue leads back to the question of whether Fuzon really changes in the transition between the two texts. Some critics argue that Fuzon's identification with Moses at the end of *The Book of Urizen* implies that he, like his father, is a lawgiver. But Urizen could just as easily embody the legalistic aspects of Moses while Fuzon embodies the liberating aspects of this same figure. Thus, if we had only *The Book of Urizen* we could see Fuzon's departure as a simple reversal or parody of the Pentateuch. Obedience to the divinity does not liberate, as it does in Exodus; rather, true liberation comes from turning one's back on commandments and supposedly divine systems of order.³²

However, Fuzon's actions at the beginning of *The Book of Ahania* indicate that he was either unable or unwilling to turn away completely from Urizen's systemizing. Instead of leaving Urizen behind, he comes back and proceeds to take up arms against him. The nature of this rebellion is variously understood by different critics. This is not surprising, for, as Paley effectively demonstrates, Fuzon's appearances are surrounded by allusions

³²For a full discussion of this idea, see Mee, page 190.

that suggest any number of diverse figures: Moses, Satan, Absalom, Prometheus, Jesus, St. Sebastian, Odin, Adonis, and Robespierre (81).³³ If the figure of Orc is somewhat ambiguous in *America: A Prophecy*, Fuzon in *The Book of Ahania* is even more so. Yet determining his character is very important, because analyzing the scapegoating patterns in the text requires us to discern who is scapegoating whom. Who are the victims? Who is displacing guilt onto others? Is Fuzon's violence against his father justified, or is it scapegoating? Is Urizen's violence against Fuzon a justified act of self-defense, or is it scapegoating?

Most frequently, Fuzon is seen as a rebel who is himself Urizenic, a usurper like his father, and, as such, he represents Blake's attitudes about the French Revolution. Christopher Z. Hobson points out that Fuzon is tyrannical, because unlike the true revolutionary, he attempts to usurp his father's power, not simply to break free of it. Because Los's son Orc is still bound at the time of Fuzon's rebellion, we are not to see Fuzon as a true apocalyptic rebel. According to Hobson, Blake uses Fuzon to represent the failed French Revolution in order to avoid a condemnation of Orc, leaving open the possibility for some other superior type of revolutionary action in the future (140-44). For Paley, Fuzon is a more ambiguous figure than the failed revolutionary that Hobson describes. He is fiery and beautiful, which are signs of his superiority to his father, but in his attempt to fight his father, he, too, becomes a tyrant (*Energy* 81-83). Erdman, who, like Paley, sees Fuzon as ambiguous, notes that his chariot is like the chariot driven by Christ in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and he regards this image as negative. Yet Erdman also

³³Full evidence for this argument can be found in Paley's *Energy and Imagination*, pp. 81-86.

argues that Fuzon is a positive figure, insofar as he wants to defy Urizen. Fuzon is a sympathetic, if flawed, revolutionary, and in him, Erdman sees Blake's commentary on Robespierre (*Prophet* 315). Mee very persuasively argues that we should expect Fuzon to be a failed rebel from the beginning of *The Book of Ahania*. He is, after all, Urizen's son, and, furthermore, his chariot is "iron-wing'd" (Ch. 1, pl. 2, l. 1; E 84). Urizen rules with iron laws and writes in an iron book. Thus, the substance of Fuzon's chariot reflects his kinship with his father. Furthermore, the fiery globe with which he attacks his father is compared to a "thunder-stone" (Ch. 1, pl. 2, l. 7; E 84), something that while hot, like Los's fires, is also hard, like Urizen's rock and ice (Mee 190-93). Even the tygers of wrath which Fuzon releases before his death, and which many commentators see as evidence of his oppressive nature, are open to various interpretations. There is no strong reason to see these animals as particularly negative. As we have already seen, for Blake, tygers are often the wrathful liberators from tyranny and the protectors of the vulnerable. They play an important function in the transformation of a fallen world. The imagery surrounding Fuzon is clearly mixed.

So, perhaps, are his motives in assaulting his father. Critics come up with a variety of reasons for the attack. Worrall argues that Fuzon's intention is to kill his father, a notion that appears to be validated by Fuzon's glee when he believes Urizen to be dead (153). In an interesting psychological argument, Howard asserts that Fuzon is castrating his father in a kind of reversed Oedipal conflict. He wishes to do to his father what his father's laws have done to him (*Infernal* 188-98). Bloom, on the other hand, claims that Fuzon simply wants to arouse Urizen (*Apocalypse* 177), an argument that has

considerable validity, since Urizen's loins are described as cold, and his immediate response to being struck by Fuzon's beam is to groan because his Lust shrieks within him (Ch. 1., pl. 2, ll. 30-31; E 84)). It is as if Fuzon wants his father to become warm and breathing again, not an "abstract non-entity" or a "cloudy God" (Ch. 1., pl. 2, ll. 11-12; E 84). In this reading, Fuzon wants to humanize Urizen, a role that fits well with Fuzon's link to Jesus later in the text, since Jesus represents the divine humanity, the one who gives God human form. Any one of these claims is viable and matches the textual evidence. The one thing that is absolutely clear is that Fuzon finds himself unable to go away and leave his father's world behind. The indeterminacy of the text, as regards the quality of Fuzon's character, makes a fairly determinate argument, that Fuzon, whatever his character and whatever his motives, will ultimately be unable to set limits upon his father without getting appropriated or sacrificed by Urizenic forms of order.

Finally, many of the claims that Fuzon's motives are tyrannical, like his father's, are based on his declaration of his own divinity, another piece of evidence that turns out to be ambiguous. When he believes that he has killed Urizen, Fuzon cries out, "I am God . . . eldest of things" (Ch. II, pl. 3, l. 38; E 86). This claim is almost universally treated as a demonstration of Fuzon's tyranny. Indeed, the claim is both inaccurate and arrogant. Inaccurate, because the bard in *The Book of Urizen* reports that Fuzon is the first begotten and last born of Urizen's children.³⁴ Arrogant, because it seems to place Fuzon above others, a move that Blake's description of him carefully avoids. The bard in *Urizen* carefully balances the ways in which Fuzon is first with those in which he is last, whereas

³⁴This image may suggest that, while rebellion against repressive order is late to appear in the public realm, it is inevitable from the very beginning.

Fuzon sees himself only as “the eldest.”

Yet, even in this moment of failure, Fuzon is an ambiguous rather than an evil figure. Blake himself declares earlier, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, that there is no God to be found except in great men: “All deities reside in the human breast” (Pl. 11; E 38). Later in life, he holds this same position, telling Henry Crabb Robinson that Jesus Christ “is the only God. But then . . . and so am I, and so are you” (Robinson 303). It is hard to understand why a claim of divinity would necessarily be negative in a character whose creator held such views about the divine nature of human beings. Those who condemn Fuzon simply for claiming to be God rely upon far more conventional understandings of divinity than those held by Blake. Within Blake’s perspective, Fuzon’s declaration of his own divinity is, in fact, correct. Yet, his pretension to be the first-born when he is not shows him to be aggrandizing himself as his father did. He is ensnared in the principle of hierarchy that is characteristic of Urizenic order. Insofar as he represents rebellion, he is guilty of celebrating his own rebellion as the ultimate source and aim of all things.

Nevertheless, despite this failure, in every other respect, Fuzon compares favorably with Urizen. Fuzon calls Urizen a “Demon of smoke.” (Ch.I, pl.2, l.10; E 84). This language echoes the Eternals of *The Book of Urizen*, who call Urizen a demon when they see the void he has created by separating himself from them. In opposition to his father, who is all winter, Fuzon is fiery, hot, and bright. Thus, Fuzon is also like the Eternals in substance. They, too, are fiery and associated with a process of fluctuation and movement, while Urizen’s wintriness associates him with frozenness and immobility. Images of winter, rock,

and poison characterize Urizen throughout both *Urizen* and *Ahania*. Nowhere does Urizen receive sympathetic treatment by the narrator. On the other hand, Fuzon is described as having “[a] beautiful visage,” and “tresses,/That gave light to the mornings of heaven” (Ch.II,pl.3,l.40; E 86). These images are offered precisely after Fuzon receives a fatal wound from his father’s poisoned rock, and they immediately precede images of his fall and deformation. While it is only fair to note that this beauty, particularly the beauty of Fuzon’s hair, associate him with King David’s son, Absalom, himself a usurper, the juxtaposition of these images of beauty and deformity heighten the sense that Fuzon is, at least in some ways, originally superior to that which ultimately destroys him.

Finally, Fuzon’s weapons are less destructive than Urizen’s. The fiery beam with which Fuzon wounds his father becomes “a pillar of fire” that acts a guide to those wandering in Egypt (Ch.I,pl.2,ll.45-46; E 85). Eventually, Los “beat in a mass/ With the body of the sun,” a confusing image, but one which most likely means that Fuzon’s weapon becomes, through Los’s efforts, a positive emblem of the fiery world of the Eternals set within the sky of the bound created realm (Ch.I,pl.2.ll.47-48; E 85). On the other hand, Urizen’s weapon falls to the earth and become Mount Sinai, the place of lawgiving.

While many see the reference to Fuzon as a Moses figure at the end of *The Book of Urizen* as a sign that Fuzon is also engaged in the oppressive lawmaking which for Blake is characteristic of Mount Sinai, there is no scene in which Fuzon oppresses anyone, no scene in which he is violent towards anyone except Urizen, no portrayals of him hunched over stone tablets, in fact, no evidence at all that he is possessed by his father’s

desire for control. When we look closely at the evidence, Fuzon is, at worst, a beautiful but flawed figure who is tragically destroyed because he tries to resist his father using his father's own methods of hindrance, and because he is caught up in his father's hierarchical systems. At best, he is a Christ-figure who attempts to restore his father's vitality and pays for it with his life.

In any case, the ambiguity of Fuzon's character heightens the reader's sense that it scarcely matters what a rebel's motives are. The outcomes tend to be the same. The rebel's actions are ineffectual. When Fuzon's globe strikes Urizen's genitals, Urizen's awakening desire causes him to turn against his emanation Ahania. He calls her Sin, puts her away from him, hides her, and then holds and kisses her in possessive jealousy even though he now abhors her. He kisses her and weeps over her because he both desires her and hates her, and the effects on her are disastrous. She becomes a mere shadow of herself, and, further, she becomes a "mother of Pestilence" (Ch.I,pl.2.1.43; E 85). No longer able to see her sexuality as something positive, she becomes incapable of real fruitfulness, and her reproductive powers become the source of destruction. Thus, Fuzon's efforts fail. Instead of overthrowing Urizen, Fuzon actually incites his father to become more oppressive. Urizen now scapegoats his female counterpart, making her responsible for his sexual desire. He divides himself because he continues to embrace his laws, even when they lead to self-hatred, and he jealously clings to and hides his wife even when his desire for her leads to guilt. So Ahania is made to pay for Urizen's internal conflict.

Urizen's next action, after scapegoating Ahania, is to punish Fuzon for his rebellion. While Urizen's treatment of Ahania clearly has a scapegoating motive, because

she has done no harm, the punishment of Fuzon could easily be read as self-defense, particularly in light of Fuzon's glee when he believes his father is dead. Surely self-defense is what Urizen would call it, just as the British counter-revolutionaries would describe their war against France and their suppression of radicals at home as self-defense. In fact, we might avoid seeing any scapegoating motive in the punishment of Fuzon if Urizen had responded to Fuzon's attack with undiluted anger or an unequivocal and calm call for justice. But Urizen's response is not anger, but, rather, anguish, tears, and "bitter contrition" (Ch.II,pl.3,ll.1-4; E 85). If he feels contrition now, it could be for his sexual guilt, his treatment of Ahania, his past treatment of Fuzon, or, perhaps even for the action he is planning against his son. Contrition is a motive associated with guilt, not self-defense, but as Howard points out, Urizen's response to contrition is to punish someone else (*Infernal* 192). Feeling guilty, he does not change himself; he weeps with regret and continues in the same path, killing Fuzon, and then hanging the body on a tree where it can serve as a warning to other rebels against Urizen's authority. As Fuzon's corpse hangs on the tree, it becomes pale and living, simultaneously dead and resurrected. In this condition, Fuzon's influence is altogether harmful. Pestilence flies around his living corpse, and he groans for years while Urizen's other children "reptilize upon the Earth" (Ch.IV,pl.4,l.43; E 88).

As has often been noted, there is an obvious connection between Fuzon's crucifixion and the crucifixion of Jesus, and several critics make persuasive arguments about the relationships between late eighteenth-century critiques of the Christian doctrine of the Atonement and Blake's critique of this same doctrine in *The Book of Ahania*. In this

text, Blake enters into a conversation about the Atonement in which Paine, Joseph Priestley, Jacob Bryant, and others are already participating. According to Tannenbaum, Blake treats the Jewish sacrificial system and the Christian doctrine of the Atonement as offshoots of Canaanite sacrificial rites (236). Mee makes an argument similar to Tannenbaum's, while extending the pagan sacrifice analogy to include druid sacrificial practices, and suggesting links between Blake's critique of the Atonement doctrine and that of other thinkers of the time, among them Thomas Paine (100).³⁵

While endless connections can be made between Blake and other late eighteenth-century discussions of the Atonement, Paine's remarks in *The Age of Reason* are particularly relevant. This highly controversial work was published in 1794, one year before the printing of *Ahania*, and Blake's Annotations to Watson, cited earlier, were written in response to Watson's attack on the Paine text. In this Deist examination of the Bible, Paine makes several scathing remarks about the Atonement doctrine, one of which is his initial reaction when, as a child, he first heard it preached:

I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man who killed His son when he could not revenge Himself in any other way, and, as I was sure a man would be hanged who did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. (Paine 83)

Paine goes on to suggest that "any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system" (83).

³⁵Mee offers an excellent description of the way in which Blake inverts the relationship that Jacob Bryant establishes between ancient sacrificial rites and Jewish and Christian understandings of sacrifice. In his book, *A New System*, which Blake had worked on as an engraver, Bryant saw pagan practices as distortions of the original concept of sacrifice, lost at the time of the flood. But Blake inverts this idea, arguing that Jewish and Christian views on sacrifice actually have their roots in pagan practices (Mee 132-34).

Blake's comment on the doctrine of atonement is like Paine's critique insofar as Urizen is exactly like the angry man that Paine imagines. Yet Blake's critique is even more radical than Paine's, because it treats Fuzon's death as a result, not of one false system, but of system-building as such. We have already seen how Urizen represents a diversity of systems, and how he himself cannot conform to the systems he creates. Furthermore, we have examined how his punishment of his son reflects his own guilt and his anxiety about maintaining the hierarchical order he has created. But the connection between symbolic order and sacrificial crucifixion is also reflected in Blake's treatment of the Tree of Mystery itself. The tree upon which Fuzon is crucified grows out of a rock made of Urizen's "petrified" fancies; then the tree is watered by his tears (Ch.III,pl.3,ll.54-64). In other words, the tree is unrelated to any true eternal vision. It grows out of the petrification of Urizen's thought processes into a frozen systematic form, and from his sorrow when he is isolated from the other Eternals through a process of symbolic differentiation..

This association is further developed by the description of the Tree of Mystery growing behind Urizen, who sits beneath it writing in his iron book, that is, his book of law. There is an inevitable association between this tree, as the instrument of sacrifice, and the laws that made the sacrifice necessary. Even if, at some level, Urizen's destruction of his son is "punishment" rather than "sacrifice," it is clear that, for Blake, death, administered as punishment, is always a kind of human sacrifice made in homage to the dominant symbolic order, a destructive sacrifice for which mainstream Christianity is largely responsible.

The rebellion and defiance which Urizen punishes is also an inevitable fruit of the law and its Tree of Mystery. In *The Book of Urizen*, Fuzon is Urizen's first-begotten and last-born child. Insofar as Fuzon represents rebellion, he is the first-begotten because rebellion is the inevitable outgrowth of all law, and he is last born only because, in the public sphere, it may take a very long time before such defiance appears. Defiance is, however, as necessarily bound to law as is sacrifice. The three are implicitly linked to one another.

Thus, when Fuzon's corpse undergoes its mock resurrection and lives on for years, groaning on the tree, Blake is able to portray the effects of the cycle of law, rebellion, and sacrifice upon Urizen's other children. Fuzon is still alive because the public spectacle of his death is a symbolic action that has long-lasting effects on the perceptions and actions of a community. Worrall suggests that Urizen actually writes the story of Fuzon's death in his iron book after hanging Fuzon on the tree, thus reinterpreting events in his own terms (155). This reading does not seem to reflect accurately the order of events in the text; it ignores the fact that Blake mentions the nailing of Fuzon to the tree before and after the narrative in which the Tree of Mystery grows and Urizen writes in his iron book. The creation of the tree and the writing of the iron book are clearly parenthetical references to a time earlier than the current action of Fuzon's rebellion and punishment. Nevertheless, Worrall makes an important point. *The Book of Ahania* does imply that the traditional Christian narrative is the victor's narrative, the narrative as told by the representatives of the dominant symbolic order.

Whereas the Christian narrative sees Jesus's death as a sacrificial offering that

liberates others from sin, Blake's narrative treats a similar death as an act of scapegoating perpetrated by a tyrant determined to preserve his power. In doing this, *The Book of Ahania* suggests that as rhetoric that creates and maintains community attitudes and beliefs, the mainstream Christian account of Jesus' death is perpetuating a continual cycle of sacrifices. The church retains power and the leaders of the dominant system can mask their own tyranny by teaching that Jesus' death was not a brutal act of tyranny perpetuated in the name of a tyrannical God and social order, but a sacrificial offering to the benevolent Urizenic divinity in order to atone for the defiance and rebellion of the faithful. Such a narrative makes the faithful themselves scapegoats for the tyrannical authority of those at the top of the hierarchy. Their sins caused Jesus' death, not the sins of the Urizenic rulers and their Urizenic divinities. The scapegoating process becomes interminable.

As Tannenbaum points out, this endless process of sacrifice takes place within the text as well. *The Book of Ahania* ends with Ahania's lament, where she speaks of a blissful world before the fall, where she and Urizen loved passionately, and where she happily suckled their children. Now she speaks of "bones of beasts" "strown/On the bleak and snowy mountains/Where bones from the birth are buried/Before they see the light" (Ch.5, pl.5, l.44-47; E 90). As Tannenbaum points out, in this passage, Ahania describes both animal and human sacrifice as a process that continues after the sacrifice of her son Fuzon. His crucifixion is simply the beginning of a long history of sacrifices, sacrifices that have taken the place of sexual love and fruitfulness. In linking Fuzon and Jesus, Blake implies that Christianity has turned Jesus' death into an excuse for further sacrifices. As

Blake writes in the margins of his *Four Zoas* manuscript, “Christ[s] Crucifix shall be made an excuse for Executing Criminals” (E 697). One could just as easily argue that the crucifix has become an excuse for warfare, and that all of these sacrifices are directly linked to religious and legal prohibitions of sexual expression and other forms of vital human energy.

As it turns out, what is most troubling about this argument in *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania* is that rigid symbolic orders and scapegoating both appear to be almost unavoidable. *The Book of Urizen* clearly indicates that, while Urizen resembles the Old Testament deity, he represents a large range of systematic thought. Likewise, Fuzon represents more than the New Testament Christ or any one particular rebel. In the imagery surrounding Fuzon’s death, critics have identified references to sacrificial victims from all kinds of different cultures.³⁶ Once Urizen creates his differentiated and hierarchical symbolic orders, whatever they might be, even the Eternals and Los, Urizen’s peers in Eternity, are unable to restore the *primaeva* unity. Their actions involve binding, separating, confining and so on—all acts of hindrance, involving the restraint of others.

Those who come after Urizen in the order of creation are also subject to his laws, whether they are benevolent visionaries like Jesus, self-seeking usurpers like Absalom, or revolutionaries like Robespierre. Their efforts tend to be ensnared by Urizenic law or appropriated, and they themselves are either corrupted or sacrificed or both. Cycles of scapegoating, violent and otherwise, follow attempts at liberation. The carnage depicted

³⁶ Chapters 2 and 3 of Mee’s *Dangerous Enthusiasm* contain useful accounts of some of the different sacrificial images to be found in *Ahania*. See Worrall’s notes in the Blake Trust edition of the Urizen books for a briefer account of some of these sources.

on the final plate of *Ahania*, complete with decapitated bodies, clearly points to the sacrifices that were currently being enacted in France, where cycles of violence begot more and more violence. The dismembered corpses on the last plate of *Ahania* leave us with the sense that Blake was sickened by the carnage of the French Revolution and longed for some other less violent and less sacrificial method of transformation.

What that transformation would produce is not absolutely clear, but we catch a hint of it in the Eternals' unified but fiery and ever changing life and in Ahania's impassioned description of both sexual and maternal love. The last of the six Lambeth books, *The Book of Los*, leaves no doubt about the freedom that Blake sees as the ultimate paradisaal existence.

3: O Times remote!
When Love & Joy were adoration:
And none impure were deem'd.
Not Eyeless Covet
Nor Thin-lip'd Envy
Nor Bristled Wrath
Nor Curled Wantonness

4: But Covet was poured full:
Envy fed with fat of lambs:
Wrath with lions gore:
Wantonness lulld to sleep
Or sated with her love.

5: Till Covet broke his locks & bars,
And slept with open doors:
Envy sung at the rich mans feast:
Wrath was follow'd up and down
By a little ewe lamb
And Wantonness on his own true love
Begot a giant race . . . (Ch.I,pl.3,l.7-26; E 90-91)

Here, much of what is called evil exists only because human beings have denied and

forbidden fulfillment to human desire and, thus, corrupted it. Satisfied desire does no one any harm. The Law that forbids the satisfaction of desire is the source of sin. Blake is as antinomian as ever; he despises Urizenic law, sees it as the source of evil, and believes we would be better off without it.

Yet the problem remains as to how to return to a state, not of violent and chaotic anarchy, but of positive antinomian lawlessness. While Blake continues to condemn the scapegoating behavior of Urizenic law, he finds himself unable to recommend revolution straightforwardly as he had done in *America: A Prophecy*. *The Book of Urizen*, standing alone, seems to point to a hope that it will be possible simply to leave Urizen's fallen world behind, but *The Book of Ahania* dashes that hope, and leaves us with a lament for lost sexual bliss, lost motherhood, and lost children. Ultimately, Blake's treatment of language in *The Book of Urizen* seems to open up the question of whether there is a way out of hindrance and sacrifice once the process of law and hindrance enter the world. If the roots of hindrance are entangled in the nature of language itself, then Blake's own language is inevitably complicit, and so are the symbolic orders created by any revolutionary force. There is an element of hopelessness in these poems, as Paley recognizes when he describes these particular prophecies in terms of "heroic fatality."³⁷ The idea that there can be a distinct line drawn between Action and Hindrance as dialectical opposites, one good and one evil, seems to have been untenable, both in theoretical and historical terms. A brief examination of *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania* in terms of Kenneth Burke's logological theory in *The Rhetoric of Religion* will

³⁷"Heroic fatality" is the title of chapter three of Paley's *Energy and Imagination*.

make it extremely clear why this impasse occurs, as well as provide a look at how another essentially antinomian thinker deals with the same issues in his own analysis of Genesis 1-3 and its place in the Christian tradition.

Symbolic Order as the Source of the Scapegoating Motive: Urizen, Ahania, and the Burkean Model

As we saw at the beginning of the chapter, Burke offers subtle but unmistakable allusions to Blake's Urizen in *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*, a text that, like Blake's Urizen books, places the first three chapters of Genesis in conversation with the Christian system of creation, fall, sacrifice, and redemption. Although there have been a number of studies of Blake texts, especially *The Book of Urizen*, that deal with language, remarkably, none of them has specifically applied Burke's logological method.³⁸ Since Burke explicitly links his text to Blake's, and since both men are antinomian thinkers, such an analysis can yield important insights into the logic of Blake's argument.

Burke defines logology as "studies in words about words" (vi), and he suggests that religious language, as language about the ultimate, provides an outstanding framework for studying the nature of words. Religious language, Burke claims, is

³⁸Language critiques of *The Book of Urizen* and other Blake texts are commonplace. Robert Gleckner's article, "Most Holy Forms of Thought," makes the argument that Blake's works can be understood as arguments about the nature of language. Mann offers a deconstructive reading of *The Book of Urizen*, as does Kathleen Lundeen in her discussion of "Blake's Quaking Word." Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam* and Angela Esterhammer's *Creating States* have already been discussed earlier in the chapter and are the most relevant to this study. Not coincidentally, both make reference to the works of Kenneth Burke. In arguing that Urizen creates a language based on differentiation, Essick discusses the idea that such language is predicated on a concept of the negative: This is not that. In a footnote, he points out the similarity of his own description of the negative to Burke's. Esterhammer makes significant references to Burke throughout her book, but most important for the purpose of this discussion is her reference to *The Rhetoric of Religion* as an alternative approach to the first three chapters of Genesis. However, neither of these critics actually examines the relationship between Blake's narrative critique of the Genesis creation story and Burke's logological critique.

particularly thoroughgoing in its nature:

[I]nsofar as religious doctrine is verbal, it will necessarily exemplify its nature as verbalization; and insofar as religious doctrine is thorough, its ways of exemplifying verbal principles should be correspondingly thorough

Hence, it should be possible to analyze remarks about the “nature of ‘God,’” like remarks about “the nature of ‘Reason,’” in their sheer formality as observations about the nature of language. And such a correspondence between the theological and “logological” realms should be there, whether or not “God” actually *exists*. For regardless of whether the entity named “God” exists outside his nature sheerly as key term in a system of terms, words ‘about him’ must reveal their nature as words. (1-2 RR)

When understood logologically, the concept of God is analogous to those terms, called god-terms, that sum up or pull together a variety of subordinate terms into one broad framework, transcending them and holding them together into some kind of systematic order. Thus, logology could provide a way of looking at Blake’s mythological works, since Blake’s use of religious language, or a language of the ultimate, can be so analyzed even in texts that do not explicitly claim to be about language, or even by a critic who understands Blake’s creation myths to be an expression of faith in some kind of alternative Gnostic creation narrative rather than as commentaries about language.³⁹

³⁹Critics debate the extent to which Blake is actually attempting to describe a creation event in *The Book of Urizen*. Some critics are confident that Blake is arguing for an alternative understanding of the actual physical creation of the world, a Gnostic creation by two demiurges or a physical creation caused by fallen human perception. In his conversations with Henry Crabb Robinson late in his life, Blake describes his view of creation in markedly Gnostic terms, saying that “nature is the work of the devil” (310). Kathleen Raine provides a fairly full discussion of possible sources where Blake could have learned about such Gnostic forms of thought (v.2, 12-16). A number of critics, argue that for Blake the physical world is a result of fallen human perception. As Horn succinctly puts it, in Blake’s writing, the physical world is “the result of reason’s reification (Blake’s word is ‘abstraction’) of the entire sensory and intellectual world into static forms” (81). Other critics, like Paul Cantor, suggest that Blake merely means to demonstrate how perception becomes fallen. It is not the physical world is problematic, Cantor argues, but that human perception makes us perceive the world as monstrous (46-47). These points need not be resolved, however, in a Burkean analysis, because logology does not require that we know whether or not a religious myth is true or false. Its claim is simply that religious language, language about ultimate order, will reveal insights about language and how it works.

Logology attempts to discover what religious language can tell us about language, not whether or not a particular religious language in fact describes ultimate reality accurately. The term “God” functions a certain way linguistically, Burke would argue, whether or not such a God actually exists.

The analysis of Blake’s prophecies provided earlier in this chapter offers close reading of the text placed within the broad theoretical framework of Burke’s claims about order and sacrifice, claims that we have already discussed in the opening chapter, but that can best be summed up by the Burke poem that is included in the Introduction to *The Rhetoric of Religion* and mentioned also in the introduction to this text:

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice:

Order leads go Guilt
(For who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption

(for who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs Redeemer
(which is to say, a Victim!).

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(Hence: Cult of the Kill). . . (RR 4-5)

The previous sections of this chapter have shown how this process occurs narratively within the text. Urizen’s iron laws cannot be kept; thus Order leads to Guilt for Urizen and Los, who have each, in varying degrees accepted the force of these laws. Guilt requires redemption, so some form of scapegoating is the final result, although we do not see the cult of the kill in full operation until we reach the end of *The Book of Ahania* and discover

the dismembered bodies that represent the cult of the kill as it was enacted in France. A direct relationship is established between order, commandment, violation, and scapegoating, such that scapegoating will in fact occur within history, because of the fact that systems of order function as rhetoric to persuade us of their ultimacy and then produce guilt and the need for redemption or expiation when we cannot live up to them. The iron law of history is the enactment of this process in the world.

However, Burke would argue that it is impossible to avoid having systems of order in some form or another. Even Blake, who in the *Urizen* books seems to reject Order altogether, is creating such a system himself. While there will not be room in the present discussion to thoroughly examine Burke's logological theory or to fully explicate a logological reading of *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, this section will briefly explore some central terms in Burke's reading of the book of Genesis, explaining how Burke analyzes these terms, and how a similar analysis would affect our understanding of Blake's arguments about language and order.

In narrative terms, God is a personification of the power to create through language, the fact of "symbol-using" as a "distinctive ingredient of 'personality'" (RR 203), and God is positively associated with the idea of order. A major component of Burke's analysis of Genesis lies in his identification of dialectical pairs of opposites that structure the systems of order the text represents. One of these terms is generally associated with positively valued terms like order, goodness, blessing, and so on, while the opposite is a cluster of negative terms like disorder, evil, cursing, and the like. A hierarchy

is necessarily implied from the beginning.⁴⁰

Burke also argues that the idea of order in Genesis contains two specific concepts, both of them related to the negative in language. The first is the idea of order as in the natural order, the world of things that we describe and put in order, and the second is the socio-political and moral order, having to do with commandments. In Genesis, both have their source in God; the two kinds of order are merged and connected, such that God is the author of both and both are infused with the idea of commandment. Implicit in the idea of order is the idea of disorder, or chaos, its opposite. Further, both obedience and disobedience are implicit in the idea of commandment:

The word-using animal not only understands a thou-shalt-not; it can carry the principle of the negative a step further, and answer the thou-shalt-not with a disobedient No. In this sense, moral disobedience is “doctrinal.” Like faith, it is grounded in language. (Burke *RR* 187)

Thus, we have in the Biblical narrative an affirmation of order as a positive good, a gift from God, and both forms of order are seen as good, the natural order and the moral order. Both are also seen as having the same source. If we compare this analysis to Blake’s narrative, we find points of agreement and disagreement. Urizen is like the creator God in Genesis, but he does not create order; he creates disorder through his creation of the world and through the creation of law. Blake offers the paradoxical idea that what is usually called order is, in reality, chaos. Further, he implies that what is usually called goodness, the commandment of God as recorded in the Bible, for example, is, in the actual view of Eternity, evil. The terms are reversed. Nevertheless, an implied hierarchy of good

⁴⁰Burke presents this information visually in a chart that can be found in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, p. 184.

and evil are still present. The original state of the Eternals is good, and the order of Urizen is bad, but the state of the Eternals, Los, and Fuzon after the fall is mixed. These characters are torn between Urizen's framework and the old world of the Eternals. Thus, Blake implies that Urizenic order is the demonic opposite of the Eternals' world of flux, "Eternity" being the only real god-term in the text. The Eternals' world is, however completely unavailable, so Urizen's antagonists are actually not his dialectical opposites, but mixtures of Eternal and Urizenic characteristics who could perhaps be placed in some kind of hierarchy between Urizen, at the bottom of the chain, and the unattainable Eternal state at the top. Urizen's true opposite lies outside the system in the text, but it is part of the symbolic order created by it, undescrivable but nevertheless present as an ideal. Thus, a bounded, hierarchical order exists within the work, an order that is every bit as bounded and hierarchical as Urizen's. Structurally, Blake's order is like Urizen's, even as he seeks freedom from such structures. Blake finds himself in a kind of contradiction that Burke escapes because he does not reject a Urizenic order outright.

Burke's idea that the dialectical terms imply one another also match some of Blake's arguments in the Urizen texts. For example, creation is one of the terms associated with order in the Genesis cosmology. Creation is seen as a positive good. Its opposite is the Fall, the transformation of a good creation into an evil or destructive world. Yet, Burke points out, the idea of a Fall is actually implied already in the idea of creation. If one imagines an original unity, the creation would be a fall into division and classification, a breakup of an original wholeness. In fact, Burke argues, mythic narrative often involves classification in narrative form. The story will say that the sky was formed

at one time, the sea at another, animals at another, and so on. Such narrative distinctions are a narrative way of explaining what the different classes and orders of beings are, and how they are related to one another. This process of classification is possible because of the process of differentiation implied in creation, and in language as the tool of human creativity.

This is similar to Blake's approach to the idea of creation. Fallenness for Blake is implied in the idea of creation because of the differentiation and classification that separates one entity from the other in a created world. For Burke, though, this claim about linguistic differentiation is simply a neutral description of the way in which language works, whereas for Blake, the fall implied really is a negative. Urizen and Los are Blake's creators, with Urizen originating the process. However, while both of the fallen Eternals' processes are negative, they are not negative in the same degree. Urizen is the one who actually rends the original eternal unity, being torn from Los's side. Then he produces chaos, a hand, a foot, differentiated but unrelated parts, and abstractions, words, tools for making abstract measurements, and so on. Los, still connected to the Eternals at some level, creates an order, like the Genesis order of seven days, that is at least coherent and particular. But it does involve a process of breaking apart the human form and classifying it into parts, treating it as separate pieces. The created order of the Biblical narrative is not something to celebrate, Blake suggests, whether it is understood literally, or as a metaphor for the creation of human perception through language.

Neither is the moral order that proceeds from Urizen's laws. Consistent obedience to them is impossible. Those who try become limited and shrunken. Those who, like

Fuzon, rebel, end up being destroyed, sacrificed to the legal order and appropriated into its system of punishment. Some, like Los, find themselves torn, obedient and disobedient simultaneously, and thus, engaged in the process of scapegoating others to seek absolution. Once creation and commandment appear in the Urizen texts, blessing becomes impossible. The obedient and the disobedient all become subject to a curse. This may be Blake's most severe indictment of the Biblical narrative, and it is far more severe than Burke's. As Burke describes it, blessing and cursing are implicit in the idea of commandments in Genesis. Obedience brings God's blessing, while disobedience brings a curse. But Blake's parody totally denies that blessing is even possible in a world where commandments are given. While Burke makes no claims whatsoever about the possibility or impossibility of blessing, he does indicate that disobedience is inevitable once there are commandments. Thus Fuzon, the rebel, really is the first-begotten of Urizen's children. Once Urizen said "Thou shalt not" it was inevitable that someone would say to him in kind "Thou shalt not make that commandment." Once a "No" is spoken, it is available to anyone, whatever their place in the hierarchy, so disobedience becomes almost inevitable.

Thus, there is the attempt at redemption through sacrifice. The Bible implies that such redemption is possible; the suffering of Christ makes redemption possible. Burke relates the idea of redemption to economics. In this sense, he shares an attitude towards redemption like Paine's, who objected that the doctrine of Atonement made morality a manner of monetary exchange, with forgiveness purchasable. For Burke, however, such substitutionary thinking is, again, built into the language. The movement to sacrifice is easily made, since language itself involves the substitution of one thing for another; a word is a

symbol for an actual object or perception from the world. Monetary exchange is one example of this kind of symbolic process; a particular amount of money is equivalent to a particular item and one can be exchanged for another. Similarly, Orc can be equivalent to his father and die in his stead, or Ahania can be equivalent to her husband and be cast out for his sake. Ultimately, Burke, argues, these sacrifices do not provide a permanent solution to the problem of guilt:

For it seems that, even if one believes in the idea of a perfect, supernatural, superpersonal victim, by identification with whose voluntary sacrifice one can be eternally saved, there is still the goad to look for victims here on earth as well, who should be punished for their part, real or imaginary, in blocking the believer's path to felicity, or perhaps threatening to send him on his heavenly way too soon. (*RR* 223)

Blake's presentation of sacrifice is not as concerned with economic parallels as Burke's, at least not in these particular texts. He seems more interested in the actual consubstantiality of the victim with the one for whom he or she suffers. Perhaps because of his intense focus on the primal unity that Urizen's creation destroyed, Blake focuses on the sacrifice of a man's wife or children, those who are most deeply consubstantial with him. But Blake and Burke do agree on the fundamental idea that the scapegoating cycle, once begun, is interminable. Not only, Burke argues, are the faithful, themselves redeemed through sacrifice, likely to continue to sacrifice others, their very theology includes a permanent sacrifice enacted in hell. Without reference to continuing suffering in the afterlife, Blake portrays the movement from the private scapegoating of a family member, to the crucifixion of Fuzon which becomes the basis for religious practice, and finally to the actual historical cycle of carnage depicted in the final plate of *Ahania*.

Thus, we see in Blake a thoroughgoing condemnation of the principle of Order as

described in the Biblical narrative. Like Burke, Blake implies that the Christian system is a model for all systems, as he associates Urizen with systems of all kinds, while placing him within a Biblical parody. Also, like Burke, Blake argues that the ordering system is more complex than the Biblical text grants. In the fallen world, the good and the bad are not as separable as the Bible attempts to make them. But Blake's attitude towards Order differs from Burke's in at least two crucial ways. In the Urizen books, Blake rejects order at some level, while Burke never does so. He simply tries to keep the bearded patriarch forever in a process of transition. Second, Blake tries to find a way to circumvent differentiated systems of order, to escape them. For him, the opposite of order is the counter-order of eternity, but finally, there is no way to get there. Logically, there is no way to get there because, in the *Urizen* texts, Blake treats hindrance, or limitation, as an absolute opposite of action, and he treats order as hindrance. Once the Eternals try to separate themselves from Urizen's fall, they become involved in hindrance. The same is true for Los and Fuzon. As Burke shows in his logological analysis of Genesis, dialectical terms imply one another. If we act, we only do so by hindering another action. If we hinder, we must do something in order to hinder. Hindrance itself implies action. They are no more separate than creation and fall are separate, no more separate than obedience or disobedience are separate.

In treating action as a pure god-term and hindrance as a pure devil-term, Blake has set up his own Urizenic order. Hindrance is forbidden and action is commanded. But who can keep commandments? Blake's own iron law cannot be obeyed anymore than Urizen's, because Blake himself must set up a hierarchy and a system of order to produce his text.

Urizen can readily become his scapegoat, because he is blamed for doing what Blake himself is doing, creating a separate ordered world. Again, the rebellion of Fuzon and the last page of *Ahania* with its dismembered corpses say it all. Commandments have entered the world, and are embodied in the very structure of the language we use. Even the Eternals cannot escape the cycle. Rejecting Urizenic order becomes a simple inversion, where Fuzon and his rebellion become “God, the eldest of all things.” When this happens, a new hierarchy is created, one that is either as oppressive as the old one was, or, one that simply makes a god-term of chaos and rejects order. This rejection would not lead to liberation, but to a brutal anarchy. The partial solutions provided by the Eternals, or Los, seem unsatisfactory as well, since they partake of Urizenic binding, as does Blake’s own use of language. Blake’s simple dialectic between action and hindrance, and his identification of order and hindrance, has placed him at a dead end.

Burke’s “bearded patriarch” offers a different solution, however. He recommends, not the rejection of the boundedness of order, or a simple breaking of bounds, but the acceptance of an order that it, itself, perpetually self-critiquing and transforming: “[A]ny terminology is suspect to the extent that it does not allow for the progressive criticism of itself” (RR 303). This is not a solution to all human problems or all problems with language use, since “the resources of the negative being what they are, authorities will continually arise which would say No definitively to any further questioning” (303). Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction. While a term can be denied the status of a god-term, no term must be absolutely rejected in each and every conceivable situation. Terms must be placed in an order that is flexible. The ways in which opposites imply one

another must be recognized and respected. And all systems, even a system that would reject the tyranny of order, must recognize the impossibility of doing without it. The problem with order is not its existence, but its intransigence. As we will see in the following chapter, for Burke, the commitment to an ever-changing order, one that is always involved in a process of self-critique, requires a considerable level of skepticism and irony.

After *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, Blake begins to move, in some respects, towards a Burkean position. Urizen will never again receive such harsh treatment. These two Biblical parodies represent the turning point, the place where Blake's equation of symbolic systems, law, and hindrance is finally revealed as untenable. In fact, it is not only untenable, but it is itself an act of symbolic scapegoating, making order itself the cause of all evil, and, in doing so, making it logically impossible to improve the human situation for as long as language exists.

Blake will struggle again, in *The Four Zoas*, to justify an apocalyptic understanding of violence and to portray revolution as part of the path to a better world. Yet never again will he attempt to explain that transformation in terms of a simple hierarchical relationship between Urizenic order as hindrance and Orcan revolution as inspired divine act, as he did in *America*, for example. Henceforth, like Burke, Blake will attempt to produce a complex rhetoric of order that consists in a perpetual transformation of terms, established in a shifting, but nevertheless hierarchical relationship with one another. In its form, *The Four Zoas* presents a kind of absolute dialectical order, a perpetual play of terms that, nevertheless, reaches towards and aspires to an ultimate

ethical end. Like Burke's Lord, Blake's Urizen will become a figure capable of transformation. But, unlike Burke's Lord, he will not be at the center of Blake's vision. Nor will irony or comic resignation become central for Blake as it does for Burke, however rich Blake's own ironies may be. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake remains as Utopian as ever, and more serious than ever about the quest for a more just order.

Chapter IV
The Four Zoas:
Ultimate Dialectic and the Transformation of Sacrifice

In the last chapter, we saw that in *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, Blake begins to interrogate his own perspective on Act and Hindrance. Once Urizen becomes associated with reason, order, and language in all its forms, it becomes evident that action without hindrance, or limitation, is impossible. Further, it becomes clear that the extreme rejection of Urizen, or rational order, can result in scapegoating activities as severe and as distressing as those forms of scapegoating pursued by counter-revolutionary forces. *The Book of Ahania*, in particular, reveals a dead-end in Blake's thinking about act and hindrance, a paradox that can only be overcome through serious readjustments in his ideas. It is not that the concepts of act and hindrance cease to be significant for Blake. In fact, these terms appear in *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, a document that is dated 1810, and the earlier valuation of Hindrance as vice and Act as virtue clearly remains in this text.¹ Thus it still makes perfectly good sense to use the terms Act and Hindrance when thinking about *The Four Zoas*, which, most scholars agree, Blake finally set aside in about 1806, having worked on it since 1796.

¹In *A Vision of the Last Judgement*, Blake says that "I assert for My self that I do not behold the Outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me" (E 565). He is clearly using the same definition of "Hindrance" as vice and "Action" as virtue that he employs earlier, but he is claiming that an emphasis on the reality of the outer world is hindrance. While in some respects this appears to be a Gnostic denial of the body, it can also be seen as a way of understanding our thinking about the physical world, a symbolic order which places physical objects above the imaginative ones on a hierarchical scale.

Still, *The Four Zoas* portrays Hindrance and Act in a way that is strikingly different from his depiction of these same ideas in the earlier Urizen texts. Instead of identifying hindrance with order, as he does in *Urizen* and *Ahania*, Blake differentiates between different kinds of order, some of which are associated with Hindrance and some of which support Act. Furthermore, he allows for intermediate stages that can provide a transition between absolutely positive Acts and utterly destructive Hindrances. In fact, one of the main functions of *The Four Zoas* is to help us to see the possibility of moving away from destructive forms of symbolic action that hinder us, and towards forms that are life-giving and conducive to truly visionary human action, action that releases the positive values of universal humanity and peace.

This chapter will argue that Blake makes this shift in four distinct ways, each of which pulls him just a little closer to the Burkean description of the relationship between order and sacrifice. The first shift involves a transformation of Urizen's role. In *The Book of Urizen*, Urizen is associated with books and with structures of order in a way that suggests that he should be identified with order as such, and of course, with those persons and institutions who represent the dominant orders. Orc and Fuzon, particularly Fuzon, seem to represent rebellion as such, while Los's role is frankly somewhat confusing, if not interpreted in light of documents that had not yet appeared when the Urizen books were engraved. All that we really know about Los is that he was sent by the Eternals and remains connected both to them and to Urizen.

In *The Four Zoas*, Fuzon no longer appears, while the roles of Urizen and Orc change enormously and the role of Los is clarified. These characters begin to function as

faculties within the human being, as well as representatives of patterns of action in the world. In addition, a new figure, Tharmas, is introduced, and each of these male characters is given a female consort, or Emanation. Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson provide a succinct statement of the traditional critical consensus concerning the nature of each Zoa. Urizen is Reason, Los/Urthona is imagination, Luvah/Orc, the passions, and Tharmas is instinct,² while Albion, or the Universal Man, is the whole of which each of these faculties is only a part (xviii).³ Thus, Urizen is no longer functioning as symbolic order *per se*. He is, instead, reason, one of the faculties by which human beings process their experience and order their existence.⁴

In his role as Reason, Urizen is no longer exclusively responsible for the fall.

Throughout the text, fall narratives appear, with characters attempting to interpret and

²Bloom suggests that Tharmas is the body, or "the body's instinctual energy" (*Apocalypse* 95). This idea actually creates an interesting connection to Lockean thought, which divides human experience into two primary forms, sensation and reflection. (See Locke, Book II, chapter I, paragraph 3). The traditional four faculties were reason (or understanding), imagination, passion, and will. The power to determine the direction towards unity, or wholeness, does not seem to lie in Tharmas more than any other Zoa, and, when things begin to be restored to their right place, Albion has awakened and is determining which faculties are to predominate at any moment; thus, will, for Blake, insofar as it has any meaning for him at all, would appear to be a function of the total person, operating as a unity. Tharmas, the fourth Zoa, thus departs from the traditional eighteenth-century description of the faculties, which always treated the Will, not the senses, as the fourth faculty.

³Los is the name of the fallen Urthona, while Orc is the name of Luvah once he reappears in the form of Los's and Enitharmon's son.

⁴Of course, this identification with the Zoas as faculties is not agreed upon by all. Damrosch makes an excellent point when he argues that "The Zoas are not faculties, and certainly not discrete beings; they are an ever-shifting system of relationships within the self" (128). Damrosch is certainly correct that these faculties are not rigidly differentiated. Yet it is also true that each Zoa does have characteristic patterns of behavior that fit reasonably well with the idea of faculties. Moreover, Blake treats these faculties as mythic, not as real discrete entities within the self. Thus, in a sense, the rigidity the shifts that Damrosch describes do not really contradict the connection of the Zoas with faculties, if the faculties are understood as mythic descriptions of scarcely understood divisions within the self and the social order.

understand their sense of being separated and fallen; Urizen is only one of the characters involved in this mythic fall event. Furthermore, Urizen is only one of the characters who responds negatively to the alienated situation that occurs after the fall. Almost all of the characters respond to separation, suffering, or the fear of death by blaming others, making rigid rules to hinder others, or scapegoating others to preserve their own status or safety.

Second, order is no longer associated exclusively with Urizen; all the characters show a pressing need for order throughout the text, and whenever chaos ensues, characters engage in frantic efforts to overcome it, either by creating structures themselves or by demanding that others do it for them. These new social and intellectual orders are accompanied by a kind of scapegoating that is not really apparent in the Lambeth prophecies--scapegoating that exists more for the purpose of creating consubstantiation than it does for the relief or disguising of guilt. This form of scapegoating is an important part of Burkean theory, but it receives little attention in Blake's mythological work before now. In *The Four Zoas*, however, scapegoating appears as a founding event, one that makes it possible to cooperate in the creation of an order. It also works to hold the order together once increasing levels of differentiation and diversification threaten it. Still, at every stage in the development of symbolic order, scapegoating remains as a means of dealing with guilt, just as it did in Blake's earlier texts.⁵

⁵One of the most interesting points of distinction between Kenneth Burke's theory of sacrifice and that of René Girard lies at the point of guilt. Burke and Girard both acknowledge in their theories the sacrificial element involved in the creation of community. What Burke describes as the creation of consubstantiation through sacrifice, Girard discusses in terms of a founding event, a sacrifice that stops conflict by deflecting hostility onto a victim. There is a difference in emphasis even here, but the basic principle is similar. Scapegoating can be used to create community in times of conflict or confusion. Burke, however, believes that the violation of order does create a sense of guilt which is also dealt with through scapegoating and sacrifice. For Girard, guilt is really not the issue, and the expiatory function of

Thus, we have a very complex situation, in which excessive chaos can function as a hindrance that prevents creative action and leads to excessively rigid forms of order. Despite this fact, chaos nevertheless inspires the creation of new forms of order, however imperfect. Furthermore, destructive forms of order that lead to scapegoating can be reinterpreted and transformed so that they lead to action as much as to hindrance. Even scapegoating itself can function ambiguously as a source of both hindrance and act, allowing for the creation of structures that, while imperfect, may be better than no structure at all.

There is a marked contrast here from the earlier *Urizen* texts, where Blake's antinomian solution to the problem of order, scapegoating and Hindrance was the elimination of order in the hope that when it collapsed, something better would emerge. As we have seen, this position is finally untenable. So the third change in Blake's presentation of symbolic order and its relationship to scapegoating is a shift in his conception of how symbolic order is transformed. His vision remains apocalyptic. Ultimately, there is a kind of sudden and absolute transformation. However, this Apocalypse is only possible because of a series of changes that occur throughout the

sacrifice is a distraction: "There is no question of 'expiation.' Rather, society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a 'sacrificeable' victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented upon its own members, the people it most desires to protect" (4). Girard's theory works in one direction, while Burke's works in two. Girard sees sacrifice as something that people use to create communities and hold them together to prevent widespread violence. Burke's claim that sacrificial scapegoating can create consubstantiation is parallel to Girard's belief that the scapegoat keeps a community together by becoming the target of corporate violence and thus binding everyone else together. Burke, however, sees the scapegoat as a means of expiation as well, since order produces guilt. So for Burke, both chaos and order can lead to scapegoating, for the purpose of creating consubstantiation or expiating guilt. The common element of these two forms of scapegoating is that both are rooted in the characteristics of language and symbolic orders.

poem—changes in the ways in which particular symbolic orders are understood and used in the culture. As *The Four Zoas* progresses, Blake sets up a distinction between different kinds of order and different kinds of chaos. He seeks to strike a balance between chaos and the rigid forms of order that he has generally associated with Urizen.

That balance is best described in terms of a distinction between closed orders, somewhat more characteristic of Urizen, and open orders, somewhat more characteristic of Los. However, in order to have a truly workable order, elements of both must be present. Early in the text, we catch these differences in Los's ability to repent of his own scapegoating acts—a position that is much more difficult for Urizen. Then we see a further development in Los's ability to derive a different interpretation of a cultural model from the one propagated by Urizen. In illustrating how the same cultural trope, in this case, the story of Jesus's crucifixion, can be differently understood and applied, Blake shows that it is possible to transform contemporary symbolic orders, retaining them and using them for rhetorically new purposes.

Fourth and finally, in the *Apocalypse in Night the Ninth*, Blake sets up what can aptly be described as a Burkean “ultimate dialectic.” Such a dialectic is a moving and flexible order, one that contains both fixed and mobile terms and that pursues absolute values by a variety of means, allowing the different terms within the system to assume primacy at different times. As circumstances change, different terms may assume primacy, yet the overall aim, which Blake refers to as “intellectual war” and “Sweet Science,” remains stable. While these orders may require sacrifices, these sacrifices need not involve scapegoating at all and may require a lesser degree of Hindrance than more fixedly

hierarchical orders do. Finally, such an ultimate dialectic is both Losian and Urizenic, open and closed, with both the possibility of change and with real limits and boundaries.

Certainly to suggest that the antinomian Blake in any way supports limit is somewhat paradoxical, and may seem heretical to some. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Blake's aesthetic is based upon the clear line, a boundary or limit that must exist for the work of art to exist.⁶ As Christine Gallant notes in *William Blake and the Assimilation of Chaos*, Blake is no worshiper of chaos. If, like Frye, we treat Urizen as a representative of boundedness,⁷ Blake's own art has a Urizenic aspect, found in the creation of the clear line which allows the work of art to be something other than a formless mass. In fact, Gallant identifies two kinds of chaos in Blake's work. In the Lambeth prophecies, Blake describes chaos in terms of "the primeval Void from whose undifferentiated elements the cosmos was formed," but he also depicts a kind of "entropy, manifested in an overly systematic poetry as well as a sealed-off attitude to life" (Gallant 9-10). On the one hand, there is the positive bounding line that protects us from formlessness, and, on the other, there is the relentlessly rigid boundary that produces the equally rigid system, and which could easily be described as a chaos masquerading as order. Thus, in *The Four Zoas*, Blake takes on the complex task of attempting to

⁶One of the few times Blake ever affirms Sir Joshua Reynolds' language about painting takes place when Reynolds says that "A firm and determined outline is one of the characteristics of the great style in painting." Blake responds "A Noble Sentence Here is a Sentence Which overthrows all his Book" (E 649).

⁷For Frye, "The whole four represent more or less the four aspects of God's imaginative energy, Urthona being his creative fertility, which reappears in the fallen world as Los; Tharmas his power to bring what he creates into complete existence, the first privilege lost to man at the Fall; Luvah his capacity for love and joy; and Urizen his wisdom and sense of form" (294).

differentiate between good order and bad order, or between order as act and order as hindrance, just as there must be a distinction between a chaos that hinders and an opening out, or boundary breaking, that allows for action.

The order that Blake affirms, however, cannot exist as a unity if some parts of the whole are perpetually elevated above others, while other faculties within the individual human body and mind, or while some groups within the social body are perpetually dominated or scapegoated within a frozen and rigid system. Thus, in the absolute dialectic of *The Four Zoas*, each function has its own ruling hour, both within the process of the fall and the process of redemption. There is certainly a hierarchy. In fact, there must be, in terms of the language of the poem, since it is impossible to say everything at once. However, the hierarchy that Blake creates is flexible and mobile. Different functions assume ascendancy at different times for different purposes. This rotating hierarchy is depicted throughout *The Four Zoas*, and ideas that are far from Blake's ideal are given a worthwhile place within the order. In depicting this process, Blake distinguishes between the partial good of those forces and attitudes which he criticizes and the absolute good toward which he strives, as well as the absolute evil which he deplors.

This absolute good involves intellectual rather than physical conflict and the brotherhood of all as opposed to a hierarchy based on exclusion and scapegoating. Nevertheless, despite his criticism of physical warfare, Blake grants revolutionary violence a purifying and cleansing place within a process of transformation, and within the hierarchical framework of the text as a whole. In fact, even the absolute good towards which he strives, "intellectual warfare" or "sweet Science," is itself a dialectical system of

discourse that is forever in a process of transformation. Thus, the maintenance of difference and conflict, even within unity, is necessary if the continuing process of transformation is to take place.

The closed element of such a dialectical order has to do with the god-terms and devil-terms that structure the discourse. The devil-term of *The Four Zoas*, is "Mystery," the rigid form of religious thought that ensnares human beings, unites itself with the political order, and inspires sacrificial violence and warfare. Here the old Blakean idea of hindrance is given full expression, but in a form that is significantly subtler than the earlier depictions of Hindrance. Largely, this subtlety occurs because Mystery as Hindrance is contrasted with a variety of opposites: rebellion, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, and violent revolution are all partial solutions. Finally, intellectual warfare and sweet Science are absolute expressions of Brotherhood, the god-terms that function as the absolute opposite of Mystery. Intellectual warfare and sweet Science are both typical of a world of action; they do not hinder.

Yet both Mystery and Intellectual Warfare are actually forms of rhetoric. Both are symbolic orders, one demonic and one ideal, one leading to Hindrance and the other to Act. The contrast between the two replaces the rejection of symbolic order that occurs within *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*. The religious rhetoric of Mystery exists within the framework of a fallen world and perpetuates social injustice as well as scapegoating. In fact, it could even be argued that it ~~perpetuates social injustice~~ as one form of scapegoating. Intellectual warfare and does not exist in purity within the world as we know it, but it is the ideal image of symbolic order to which we aspire, and they

perpetuate the forms of “Brotherhood” that Blake, in *The Four Zoas*, envisions in the Council of God, and finally, in the apocalyptic conclusion of the poem. At the same time, other forms of symbolic order, partaking of both Mystery and Intellectual Warfare; the two exist side by side in the world as we know it.

For both William Blake and Kenneth Burke, the final goal of the ultimate dialectic has to do with peace, that is, with the elimination, or at least the reduction, of warfare, which both men treat as the ultimate form of scapegoating. To express his goal, Burke chooses the terms peace and “the purification of war.” Blake, on the other hand, speaks of “unity” and “intellectual war.” But their ethical commitments are very similar. To attain an understanding of Blake’s aims, however, and the ways in which they connect to Burke’s aims, we must go back to the beginning, back to a more detailed discussion of the concept of order that appears in *The Four Zoas*. Furthermore, to explore any of these issues reliably, it will be necessary first to examine the critics’ quest for order within an infamously disordered manuscript.

The Text of The Four Zoas

Blake never printed *The Four Zoas*, and it exists only in manuscript form, a fact that has been, and continues to be, the subject of much discussion, and with good reason, since the unpublished manuscript has been so heavily emended as to be at times almost unreadable, as in sections of the first seven pages of the text.⁸ In other sections, the

⁸In the textual notes of his 1982 edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, Erdman thoroughly discusses the difficulties with the manuscript. See his general discussion on pages 816-18, as well as the more specific discussion of the opening lines of Night the First, all of which are written over significant amounts of erasure (819).

material has been edited extensively enough to make it almost impossible to tell what Blake meant to include and what he meant to omit. Perhaps the most important textual problem is the existence of two versions of *Night the Seventh*. There has been considerable debate as to which of these versions should be regarded as the real seventh *Night*, or whether Blake intended to include them both.⁹ Finally, it is not always possible to tell what additions and emendations were done when, which makes even the most carefully researched interpretation somewhat speculative, if it is based in any way upon the ordering of the text or upon the dating of individual layers of text. *The Four Zoas* is clearly a heavily edited palimpsest text, written over a period of years. Since it was never engraved, bibliographers cannot readily establish an accurate copy text upon which to base critical analysis.

Thus, critics have disagreed vehemently about whether or not *The Four Zoas* is an ordered work, in some sense complete, or at least having a clear and discernible architecture that sets forth an orderly, if unconventional narrative. Early critics see its disorderly aspects as signs of poor editing or as marks of incompleteness. Some contemporary critics recognize an order within the text, but believe that the poem is, nevertheless, an attempt to expose the undecidability of language and the impossibility of discovering a world beneath language. This is the position of Donald R. Ault, who argues that “The presence of an implied world behind the text is progressively obliterated by *The Four Zoas*” (4). However, a number of recent critics like Jackie DiSalvo, George Anthony

⁹Bibliographic analysis of *Night the Seventh* will appear in more detail in the section of this chapter sub-titled “The Tree of Mystery and the Lamb of God.”

Rosso, Jr., Andrew Lincoln, and Peter Otto have focused on the order that shines through the labyrinth of textual revisions.⁹ They believe that *The Four Zoas* makes arguments about a real world that is assumed to exist beyond the text itself. Lincoln's analysis in his book *Spiritual History* goes so far as to build a layered reading, which aims to track the argument of the text through its many different versions and revisions and to suggest a philosophy of history behind each.

Despite the remarkable and spectacularly detailed postmodern analysis performed by Ault in *Narrative Unbound*, the more recent scholarship of Rosso, Lincoln, and Otto, as well as my own careful attention to the poem, lead me to begin with the assumption that the text is aiming towards an orderly attempt to say something about an historical world that the reader is to assume really exists behind the text, and about the equally real inner lives of human beings who must find ways to describe and order the world they experience.¹⁰ This working assumption is justifiable despite the fact that this order is difficult to find beneath the apocalyptic imagery and the often ambiguous editorial changes

⁹In this chapter all citations to Andrew Lincoln refer to his book *Spiritual History*, unless expressly noted. Similarly, references to Peter Otto in this chapter are based on his 2001 text, *Blake's Critique of Transcendence*. Finally, references to Donald Ault are directing the reader to the book *Narrative Unbound*.

¹⁰This chapter owes a debt to these three critics as well as to several others, among them Jackie DiSalvo, Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, and Harold Bloom. All of these critics have contributed far more to this study than can be referenced in footnotes or citations. First, DiSalvo, Rosso, and Lincoln all offer viable historical readings, none of which are incompatible with the assumptions of this study, and all of which reinforce the view that Blake saw structures of language and systems of order, in the church, in poetry, or in other kinds of writing, as forming history in an active way. Otto's close examination of the visual material in *The Four Zoas* is invaluable both for its thoroughness and its depth of insight. While I do not agree entirely with Otto's conclusions, as will become apparent later in this argument, they are extremely provocative. In addition, Wilkie's and Johnson's older study, which is the first full-length book on *The Four Zoas*, is still extremely interesting and useful. This work and Harold Bloom's briefer examination of *The Four Zoas* in *Blake's Apocalypse* (195-283) were most essential to the process of simply making sense of this difficult text through the first several readings.

in the text. While the details can at times be terribly puzzling and subject to a wide range of interpretations, the overall plot structure is clear. *The Four Zoas* describes first the experience of fallenness and fragmentation; then Urizen's assumption of power; his fall, followed by the ascendancy of Tharmas, Los, and the Spectre of Urthona; Urizen's resurgence and his appropriation of Orc in the establishment of Mystery as a full-blown pattern of domination; the transformation of Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre; the death of Jesus; and, finally, the Apocalyptic conclusion of the work. Thus, this study is developed with the assumption that most of the poem can be integrated into a meaningful analysis, although there are passages that are not fully integrated with one another because of the text's evolution over such a long period of time.¹¹

Furthermore, like Otto's study, this discussion will rest on the assumption that Erdman's third edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* is "the best approximation to the 'final state' of the poem," in part as a matter of convenient reference (Otto, *Blake's Critique* 9), but also because the critical consensus seems to support this conclusion, albeit with significant dissent.¹² Because of the uncertainties, where relevant to

¹¹As mentioned in the first pages of this chapter, *The Four Zoas* was written over a period of approximately ten years. Erdman reports that the title is dated 1797, but work on the original manuscript, entitled *Vala*, may have begun in 1796. He estimates that Blake ceased working on *The Four Zoas* in 1807 ("Textual Notes" 817). However, Erdman and his co-editor, Cettino Tramontano Magno suggest that Blake may have made small changes in the manuscript up until the time it was given to John Linnell about 25 years after it was begun. It is simply impossible to tell exactly when Blake put *The Four Zoas* aside for good (13-14).

¹²Lincoln's appendix on bibliography in *Spiritual History* affirms this to be the modern consensus, although Lincoln points out that "there are no signs that Blake himself intended such an arrangement" (298). *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, devotes an entire issue to this topic of discussion. See volume 12, 1978. See also the introduction to Otto's *Blake's Critique of Transcendence*. Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson suggest that readers should try a variety of different arrangements, especially of chapter 7 (273).

the discussion, bibliographic issues will be addressed within the text or within footnotes, particularly as regards Nights I and VII. Fortunately, an examination of the relationship between the rhetoric of order and the role of sacrifice in *The Four Zoas* is mostly dependent upon the broad framework of the text, and on particular incidents within it, rather than on intricate relationships between segments of the work. Blake's struggle towards an order that is not the order of the fallen Urizen is clear enough, as is his effort to demonstrate that his earlier attempts to blame Urizenic order for all the problems of the human condition were too narrowly focused. In fact, the very concept of identifying one particular individual, group, or faculty as the cause of a fallen situation is treated as problematic in *The Four Zoas*.

This problem is evidenced by the confusion of the characters themselves. None of them agrees fully on the cause of their fragmented condition, and the reader has little means of discerning whom to trust. As Blake portrays his characters' struggle for understanding, he shows them telling each other stories about the fall, and in doing so, he interrogates the uses of creation/fall narratives, which throughout the text function as an agency for blame. The narratives of the fall refer to the loss of an earlier ideal state, but at times, they also function as a kind of law. Although the first of these narratives comes before the reign of Urizen, and they are not necessarily Urizenic, they perpetuate the process of scapegoating that goes on throughout the text, even as they also serve to point towards a possibly ideal order. In that sense, they function as both Hindrance and Act. They limit and blame, while they also keep alive the sense that a better order is possible. As we examine the first narrative that is a part of the main plot of the poem, and as we

examine the stories of creation and fall that function as myths within the larger myth of the *The Four Zoas*, it will become clear almost immediately how much Blake's idea of order has changed since the earlier Lambeth prophecies. In the following section, we will explore the ways in which Blake reframes order in *The Four Zoas*, transforming and revising both his condemnation of order and his wholesale condemnation of Urizen.

The Myths of the Fall: Fragmentation, Accusation, and the Rehabilitation of Urizen

In *The Book of Urizen*, as we have seen, order is essentially bound up in Urizen's decision to separate himself from the rest of the Eternals. Differentiation itself is a fundamental cause of fallenness in these early texts. In contrast, *The Four Zoas* assumes, admittedly with some ambiguity, that differentiation is an inherent aspect of reality, even in Eternity. As the Aged Mother sings at the beginning of the poem:

Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity . . .
 Cannot Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden . . .
 The Universal Man. To Whom be Glory Evermore Amen (p.3, ll.3-5; E
 300-01).¹³

Urizen, Los, and the other Zoas exist in every person. Yet they exist also in the "Universal Man," the "Universal Brotherhood" that comprises all humankind.¹⁴ From the whole, that is through attention to and action on behalf of the whole, they are all held in a perfect unity. Their division is the source of both the creation and fall, just as Urizen's separation from the other Eternals is the source of creation and fall in *The Book of Urizen*.

¹³It should be noted that in the original manuscript, line 4-11, which includes two of the lines quoted above, were written over erased material (Erdman, "Textual Notes" 819).

¹⁴For discussion of the use of gender specific language, see the note on page 204.

Yet that division is not caused by a single Zoa, and it cannot be resolved by any one Zoa acting alone. The whole must be transformed, although what happens to the whole affects the part, and vice versa.

Yet the division between the Zoas is acted out on the stage of history as well as within the individual, just as it is in the Urizen texts. The Zoas' separation from one another is a kind of disorder that exists within and between all of them, and it is manifested both within the individual and within the human community as a whole. As the fallen Los maintains in his prophecy in *Night the First*, he is able to see the coming bloodshed, "the swords & spears of futurity/Tho in the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves" (p.11, ll.14-15; E 306). Unity within and unity without are connected, and so are strife within and strife without. While the Zoas live within the Human Brain, their battles are acted out on the stage of history, where physical blood is shed. In a sense, this physical blood is the unavoidable outgrowth of the symbolic blood that is shed within the individual, as the different pieces of the self fight with one another. The implication is that were unity attained within every person, unity would be attained in the world as well. Yet changes in the external world can also produces changes within the individual.

This reciprocity is possible because the Zoas are all a part of one another, but each Zoa still has specific traits that are characteristic of him specifically. These traits are recognizable within individual human beings and within broader social movements. Nevertheless, even though Blake gives each Zoa a name, and associates each one with patterns of behavior that are familiar to us, he also makes it clear in the poem's invocation that, in fact, the truth about the makeup of the human soul, and the Universal man, is

unknowable and inexpressible in terms of our fallen language:

[*What*] are the Natures of those Living Creatures the Heavenly Father only
[*Knoweth*] no Individual [*Knoweth nor*] Can Know in all Eternity. (p.3, ll. 7-8; E 300-01)¹⁵

The various faculties are one way of talking about the mysterious inner forces that work within human beings and within their social orders.

Yet to talk about these beings, Blake must name them, and, as Kenneth Burke makes so clear in both *The Rhetoric of Motives* and *The Rhetoric of Religion*, all language exists by division and classification, simply because language must classify in order to name. So, of course, the Zoas in their full unity are “unknowable” in human terms, because “unnameable.” At the same time, unless one returns to a pre-verbal state, one must strive to create an order that comes as close as possible to allowing for unity—unity within diversity, wholeness within a framework of naming. So at least part of the work of *The Four Zoas* is to describe the problems of ordering an unnameable, ineffable human identity that has “fallen” into the divisions of language, allowing the divided self to move closer and closer to unity, peace, and universal brotherhood.¹⁶

At the beginning of the poem’s action, fragmentation is overtaking unity. The process appears to be relatively new, because the characters do not know what is happening to them, and they are desperately trying to figure out what happened and what

¹⁵These lines were written over erased material. See footnote on previous page.

¹⁶Despite problems of sexist language, the term “brotherhood” is chosen deliberately. The characters who remain at the end of *The Four Zoas* are all male. Since gender is such an issue in this text and the later prophecies, it seems necessary to honor the changes that occur in Blake’s treatment of gender. Here, brotherhood truly appears to be the final aim of the text. In Blake’s later illuminated works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, the relationship between the genders is somewhat more complicated.

to do about it. From the beginning of the actual narrative it is clear, however, that Urizen is not the exclusive author of the confusion. As the scene opens, Urizen is nowhere in sight, but Tharmas and his Emanation Enion are in the midst of a conflict that has to do with sin and judgment. Tharmas has hidden Jerusalem and other Emanations in his bosom, and Enion is jealous and accuses him of sin, saying she has found it in the “Dark recesses” of his soul (p.4,l.24; E 301). Tharmas acknowledges that he has sinned and that his “Emanations are become harlots” (p.4,l.36; E 302), but then he goes on to accuse Enion: “O Enion thou art thyself a root growing in hell/Tho thus heavenly beautiful to draw me to destruction (p.4,ll.39-40; E 302). He has come to see his desire, even for his own Emanation, as sinful. Ultimately, this process of mutual recrimination leads to Enion’s weaving Tharmas’s Spectre, a monstrous, deformed being who arises to condemn her, saying that he is “pure and unpolluted” and will “bring her to rigid strict account” for her wrongdoings (p.6,ll.10-11; E 303). His language reminds us of the kinds of judgments typical of Urizen in the Lambeth prophecies.

Yet as Wilkie and Johnson point out, some of Tharmas’s first words in this passage have to do with his experience of himself and Enion as “a Victim”¹⁷ and his sense of contrition at having hidden away Albion’s Emanation Jerusalem in his bosom, thus pointing to the themes of destructive atonement that are pursued throughout most of the poem (22) Furthermore, Enion, only a few lines later, refers to Tharmas in terms

¹⁷Note the singular noun form. Despite the conflict that has emerged between them, Tharmas still sees himself and Enion as one being. The text referred to here can be found in *The Four Zoas*, p.3, l.8; 301).

reminiscent of the Biblical God, pointing out that she cannot look upon him and live.¹⁸

Closely connected is her concern that “All Love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love/And stern demands of Right & Duty instead of Liberty” (p.4, ll. 18-19; E 301). At one level, this is very familiar Blakean material: law, sin, guilt, and sexual frustration all bound together, along with dyslogistic naming as a form of scapegoating. In the earlier works, however, Urizen is clearly the source of law, whereas in this text, law and sin become issues before Urizen has even made an appearance.¹⁹

Since Enion identifies Tharmas with the God of Exodus, it is possible to see Tharmas as the Urizenic figure in this passage. In fact, Guinn Batten makes this claim directly, saying that Tharmas is “merely a more nostalgic, and morose, version of Urizen” (105). On the other hand, Ault suggests that Urizen and Tharmas “are inversions of each other” (*Narrative* 158), a somewhat more subtle and inviting expression of a similar idea, since Tharmas is not a promising lawmaker. Throughout most of the poem, he is indeed as controlling and problematic as the old Urizen of the Lambeth prophecies, but, as we will see, so are all the Zoas. Besides, Tharmas is soft where Urizen is hard, watery where Urizen is solid and rocky, and chaotic where Urizen is orderly. When Tharmas becomes the reigning power after the fall of Urizen, he is incapable of structuring experience in the manner required of a lawgiver; in fact, he is incapable of organizing anything, including his

¹⁸In Exodus 33:23, God allows Moses, who is both liberator and lawgiver to his people, a glimpse of his back, because no one can look at God’s face and live.

¹⁹This point is debatable, since *Night the Second*, which begins with Urizen’s assumption of power at Albion’s behest, was the original *Night the First*. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, Blake’s choice to move *Night 2* is clearly marked.

own thoughts. When he wants his kingdom ordered in Night IV, he must force Los and the Spectre of Urthona to do it for him.

To account for this problem, we might assume, as some do, that Urizen is still the lawmaker in this text, and thus argue that Tharmas and Enion are already under Urizen's control. However, Urizen's actions later in the chapter, when he lures Los into a league against Luvah, indicate that Urizen has not yet consolidated his power during Night the First.²⁰ In fact, Albion, the Universal Man, relinquishes his scepter to Urizen at the beginning of Night the Second, in direct response to Enion's lament that appears at the end of Night the First. Textual evidence indicates that Blake actually moved Night the Second out of its original position as the opening night, thus indicating clearly that he did not want to begin the poem with Urizen's assumption of control.²¹ The ambiguous source of law, sin, and guilt at the beginning of the poem is basic to its structure, despite concerns about textual problems in Night the First. In this passage, law is already functioning as hindrance with all the accompanying difficulties of guilt and scapegoating, and without the presence of Urizen as lawgiver.

²⁰As Lincoln points out, the early copperplate version of the text does not include this passage (30). It begins with the sexual union of Enion and the Spectre of Tharmas and the birth of Los and Enitharmon as a result of this union. The lines in the Erdman edition are written over erasures of an earlier version ("Textual Notes" 819). Nevertheless, it makes sense to treat this narrative as part of the final version of the poem. The earlier material was erased, and the narrative, obscure already, becomes nonsensical if it simply begins with a union between the Spectre and Enion, without any indication of what a Spectre is or where it came from.

²¹Night the Second is not given a number in the heading on the manuscript. The original title was Night the Third, which was erased. Then Night the First appears to have been written twice and erased. At the end of this Night, Blake has written "End of the Second Night." All of these marks were erased. The title heading was never rewritten, but Night the First and Night the Third are both clearly marked. Erdman concludes that night the Second "was evidently twice tried and rejected as First" ("Textual Notes" 828).

Wilkie and Johnson explain the guilt of Tharmas and Enion by means of a distinction between moral and psychological guilt (24).²² Yet this move finally explains relatively little. “Moral” and “psychological” are not terms Blake himself uses, so “moral” could refer to Urizenic law, or to a state more akin to the prior realm of Eternity or Eden. Yet what we normally mean by “moral” would probably fit, within Blake’s context, with the idea of Urizenic law and sexual repression. In Blake’s writings up to this point, moral law, functioning as hindrance, is the source of the psychological experience of guilt. Thus, Wilkie’s and Johnson’s distinction would seem artificial.

The narrative simply does not tell us the source of Tharmas and Enion’s guilt. The implication is that both Tharmas and Enion believe that emanations are to remain with their own Zoas, that the male figures are not to hide other males’ emanations in their bosoms, and that emanations are not to “Examine every little fibre” of their Zoas’ souls, as Enion has done (p.4, l.29; E 302). Yet it is unclear where these ideas, or laws, come from, or whether they are “true laws.” The characters believe that a boundary has been broken, but the reader cannot tell whether Tharmas and Enion simply found the world in this fragmented condition, whether they somehow assisted in its fall, or whether others caused a fall into fragmentation and Tharmas and Enion are to some extent victims of others’ choices. In fact, this fragmentation could even be part of a natural growth process, a movement into the realm of language and individuation. Fragmentation is just the

²²Usually, this issue is not addressed, perhaps because a number of critics, Bloom and Lincoln among them, see the fall as beginning with Tharmas. The body is the first to fall, while Urizen falls later. However, this view does not match the narratives told by the characters themselves (Bloom, *Apocalypse* 195; Lincoln 72-76).

condition in which the characters find themselves. Yet the fact that the characters believe that a primal order has been violated is enormously significant for their actions, in a sense that points to a kind of truth in Batten's claim that Tharmas is a watery Urizen.

Once Tharmas and Enion believe that their feeling of fragmentation is caused by violation of a primal order, then their suffering leads to guilt, as they struggle to understand the cause of the suffering. Then their guilt leads to the creation of rigid boundaries and laws. Tharmas and Enion make a desperate attempt to regain some kind of order or control, that is, to establish in their minds precisely what law they have broken to cause their pain so that they can now obey that law, or punish the guilty, or make atonement so as to revise their situation. Their mutual recriminations are an attempt to repair their situation by placing blame somewhere. Both alternate between taking it upon themselves and finding it in the other.²³

At one level, Tharmas knows that he and Enion are the Victim of others' choices or of some kind of process that they did not initiate themselves.²⁴ On the other hand, he

²³This way of coping with chaos and suffering is entirely compatible with Kenneth Burke's thinking about how "symbol-using animals" make meaning out of their experience. This exact scenario does not appear in Kenneth Burke's discussions of order, guilt, and scapegoating, yet is it a logical outgrowth of Burkean rhetoric. If language contains within it the principle of commandment—of yes and no—then the tendency to create moral constructs is present in all human beings once they begin using language, as is the tendency to see events as the results of one's own moral successes or failures. In *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke discusses in detail the way in which symbol-users conflate moral and natural orders, so that death comes to be seen as punishment for violations of order (201-12). Other forms of suffering can readily take on the same kind of meaning. Burke also argues that the idea works in reverse. One can see moral failure and then look for punishment, or one can see suffering and begin to look for moral failure. Tharmas and Enion engage in a process of this kind. It is arguable that, as language-users, they experience themselves as morally responsible. Thus, their incomprehensible suffering tends to be seen as punishment, whether or not they are aware of any wrongdoing. Self-recrimination, mutual recrimination, and, finally, scapegoating, occur as a result.

²⁴As we will later learn, the division of the Zoas is apparently the result of choices made by Urizen, Luvah, and, most importantly, Albion, the Universal Man himself, unless, as Ault suggests,

feels contrition. While he personally did not make the choices that led to the chaos around him, to the flight of the emanations of other Zoas to him, and to the conflicts between himself and Enion, he, nevertheless participates in the continued destruction of the primal unity, simply by responding to the new circumstances. The fear and conflict produced by the fall into a chaotic and boundless state causes the Emanations of other Zoas to begin running to Tharmas, as the parent power, for shelter. It causes Tharmas, with the best of motives, to feel the need to enclose these Emanations, to create artificial boundaries for them. When this act creates jealousy in Enion, he then desires to enclose her, in a misguided attempt at appeasement. Enion, in her turn, desires to control Tharmas, and in the process weaves his Spectre, who after a brief initial period of smiling infancy, becomes even less biddable than Tharmas himself. This kind of boundary building is a desperate response to the experience of fragmentation, but it also involves the attempt to control and thus hinder the self and the other. Ultimately, the entire process is fraught with contrition, accusation, a sense of victimization, and finally, the actual scapegoating of one another. As John B. Pierce suggests, Tharmas is a victim who becomes a tyrant as a result of his victimization, and often because he is trying to repair his world (490-92).

Thus, Tharmas is a victim **and** he is contrite, because he cannot stop himself from violating his own sense of how things ought to be based upon the old "order" of unfallen primal oneness, an order that necessarily has its own shape and boundaries. Throughout

the narratives are simply methods of evading current problems by focusing on the source of those difficulties in an illusory fall event.

the text, Tharmas desperately seeks for order, on the assumption that perhaps some kind of symbolic order might restore Enion to him, and in the process he becomes a controlling Urizenic figure, although he is a pitifully ineffective one. The episode reveals Urizenic behavior on the part of a Zoa other than Urizen, and it also reveals the necessity for some kind of boundaries, which even the boundless Tharmas will try, ineffectually, to create for himself if there is no other ordering power, like Urizen or Los, available to him.

Yet Tharmas's efforts create an even more fallen situation. He and Enion are completely separated. He becomes a formless chaos and all that remains of him is the Spectre. Then the mating of the Spectre and Enion causes the fall of Urthona, who is divided into two fragmented beings, the male Los and the female Enitharmon, both of whom are born of the union between Enion and the Spectre of Tharmas. Eventually, Enion will become a desolate wanderer while Tharmas will move in and out of shapelessness, all the while crying for his lost Enion. This episode, placed at the opening of the poem, sets up the sense of a fallen and fragmented world, the source of which is as unclear to the reader as it is to the characters.

As the text progresses, however, the characters begin to tell each other stories of the fall, in an attempt to explain what has happened to them and who is responsible. However, because the fall narrative is told in different versions by so many different characters, it is never entirely clear what causes the fragmented condition that exists when the narrative opens. Eight of the nine nights present narratives of the fall as it is perceived by the characters, and all of the narrators are more or less unreliable. These speakers are limited in their perception of how the fall occurred, in part because, as fallen beings, they

have only a limited perspective, and in part because their own personal desires and machinations skew their narratives.

There are a variety of critical responses to the differing fall narratives in *The Four Zoas*, including that of Donald Ault, who maintains that “The central event of the ‘fall’ has no structure or content other than serving as a pretext for setting incommensurable perspectives in motion” (11). By offering these different accounts, Ault asserts, Blake undermines “Newtonian narrative” which “presupposes that behind the text lies a single unified field (*ur*-narrative, privileged originating event, state of consciousness, and so on) whose essential features do not irreconcilably and incommensurably conflict with one another and can (in theory at least) be fully captured through systematic analytic explanation” (3).

Of course, it is impossible to know for sure what state existed before the creation/fall events described in the narrative; they are outside the text, and Blake does not allow us a clear vision of what an original, primal condition might have been. Certainly, it is possible that the characters have created this past paradise as a response to their chaotic condition in the present. However, as Otto suggests when he discusses the differing narratives concerning the birth of Los, “the reader nonetheless gains the impression that they [the storytellers within the text] are attempting to describe a common world,” and I would add, a common experience of some kind, despite their different versions of the story (*Critique* 107). All of the characters agree that a fall has taken place, and the recurring and varied accounts all have basic features. Even if the fall narratives offer inaccurate memories based on nostalgia, and it is impossible to tell whether this is so or

not, they all share a few basic perspectives on the events that led them to where they are.

Rosso maintains that the fall narratives contain “two basic, but interrelated, perspectives: that of Albion ‘falling’ for Vala and/or of Albion abdicating power because of a Urizen-Luvah conspiracy” (65).²⁵ As we will see, neither of these basic plot elements supports the idea that Urizen is the sole cause of the fall, that all “Urizenic” order is the province of Urizen, or that all order is Urizenic. These concepts have been left behind with the Lambeth prophecies. Indeed, the basic fall narratives assume an ideal order in which there is an appropriate sense of what is the part and what is the whole, an order that involves boundaries but without law, and form but without the imposition of form from above. They also reveal, however, a tendency towards self-justification, and sometimes even scapegoating, in response, not to a rigid order, but to a condition of fragmentation. In a sense, they reiterate the feelings and behavior exhibited by Tharmas and Enion, who yearn for unity, yet respond to fragmentation by mutual recrimination and a desire for power over one another, thus undermining their own desire for reunion.

This desire for mutual recrimination and for power over others is certainly evident in the first creation narrative told by anyone other than the narrator. In *Night the First*, Enitharmon relates this version of the story to Los:²⁶

²⁵Rosso’s claim here does account for most of the stories, and it accounts for all of the characters who appear in fall narratives. However, in some of the Urizen/Luvah narratives, it is unclear that there was any conspiracy between these two Zoas. At times they are portrayed in conflict with one another, without a clear reference to a plot to overthrow Albion.

²⁶One could argue that the first narrative in *The Four Zoas*, the story of Tharmas and Enion just discussed above, is a fall narrative. In fact, Rosso treats it as such in this chapter entitled “Plotting the Fall” (64–68). In a sense, Rosso is correct, but it is important to differentiate between the fall narratives told by the narrator and those related by the characters themselves. In this particular segment of the chapter, I am choosing to consider only those fall narratives presented by the characters themselves, in

The Fallen Man takes his repose: Urizen sleeps in the porch
 Luvah and Vala woke & flew up from the Human Heart
 Into the Brain; from thence upon the pillow Vala slumber'd.
 And Luvah siez'd the Horses of Light, & rose into the Chariot of Day
 (p.10,ll.10-13; E 305)

In this account, Urizen and Albion are both victims of a usurpation plotted by Luvah and Vala and executed while its victims are asleep. Urizen is clearly not at fault, and neither is Albion, at least not initially. Luvah and Vala engage in a violation of the original order at two levels. Vala, often named as Nature by Blake interpreters, is also the Emanation of Luvah, and, as such, a part of Albion. Thus, her seduction of Albion is the seduction of the whole by a fragment, which, if successful, would ensnare him in an attachment to a part of himself. Such an attachment would necessarily lead to imbalance and disorder, at both the personal and the social level. Falling in love with Vala would distract Albion from a vision of the whole Human Form Divine, causing him to gaze with enamored delight upon one part of his own being.²⁷

Luvah, on the other hand, attempts to usurp the place of another Zoa, Urizen. In doing so, he violates the order of equality among the Zoas. As Damrosch points out, Luvah's main error here is in assuming that Urizen's place and possessions are better than his own or that "Urizen is supreme" (135). In making that assumption, Luvah assumes a

order to evaluate how their stories clarify Blake's use of myth and his ideas about symbolic order. Nevertheless, it is valuable to consider whether this may, in fact, be the beginning of the actual fall, for which the others are purely and simply a coverup.

²⁷ Otto has already explored this whole/part connection, albeit to a somewhat different purpose. In describing Albion's behavior in the spectre's account, Otto writes: "Albion's desire is no longer for others but for a portion of himself. In fainting against the breast of Vala, he narcissistically attempts to embrace a portion of his own being . . . [T]his activity of the entire Man reproduces the same event in his members" (*Critique* 110).

hierarchical reality and thus creates it. So in this narrative, Luvah, not Urizen, is the author of what we have come to think of as Urizenic order, initiated not by the creation of law, but by the violation of a *primaeval* harmony. This particular fall narrative describes a fall that is not Urizen's fault.

This tale cannot be accepted at face value, however, for three reasons. First, as Victoria Myers points out, Enitharmon likes this story because she likes to identify herself with Vala and to see herself as the one who breaches the boundaries of her world and becomes the lover of the Universal Man (230). Second, Enitharmon tells this story to make Los jealous, and succeeds royally; he becomes so enraged that he violently assaults her. Finally, in telling the story in this way, she is currying favor with Urizen, whose help she calls upon when Los strikes her, and whom she evidently sees as her potential pathway to glory. In addition, Enitharmon has been born into this fallen creation. She does not have a clear perspective on how it came into being. Thus, we cannot entirely trust Enitharmon's suggestion that Urizen is an innocent victim of Luvah's treachery.²⁸

While Vala's role is most significant to Enitharmon, later in *Night the First*, the daughters of Beulah, who preside over a kind of middle space between Eden and the Fallen World, offer another much longer version, and their account omits Vala from the narrative altogether. In this version, Urizen suggests to Luvah that the two should conspire together against Albion and each seize a kingdom. He goes on to offer Luvah his horses of light, suggesting that he, Urizen, will remain in the human brain and take

²⁸This particular conflict between Los and Enitharmon will be discussed again in greater detail later in the chapter.

possession of Jerusalem, her children, Urizen's children and Luvah's children, while Luvah flees to another kingdom with Urizen's steeds. Luvah, on the other hand, tells Urizen, "Dictate to thy Equals. am not I/The Prince of all the hosts of Men nor Equal know [sic] in Heaven. . . (p.22,ll.36-37; E 311). Luvah, wanting ascendancy himself, refuses to cooperate, believing that Urizen intends to take control and leave him out altogether. He wishes to overthrow Albion and then make war on Urizen. Both Zoas speak in a voice that, in earlier texts would have been associated with Urizen alone. Urizen claims that once he takes control of Albion's Emanation Jerusalem, her children, Los's children, and Urizen's own children, then he will "lay [his] scepter" on them and his "strong command shall be obeyd" (p.21,ll. 30 & 33; E 311). Luvah, in like manner, says that he does not want to leave Urizen behind, asking ". . . wilt thou not rebel to my laws remain/In darkness building thy strong throne. . ." (p.22,ll.5-6; E 311). The ensuing battle between them causes the fall of all the Zoas.

In this account, Albion's only fault is sleeping, but Urizen and Luvah are each every bit as destructive as the other, struggling to gain ascendancy over one another and over Albion himself.²⁹ Both Zoas are Urizenic law-givers, both are tyrants, and both are guilty of trying to take on the role of Albion, of whom each of them is only a part (p.21, l.13-22, & l.40 and p.19,ll.1-5; E 311-12). Their attempt at usurpation is a violation of an original hierarchy, and it is, for both of them, an attempt to establish what, in the Lambeth

²⁹Whether or not Albion's sleep is innocent is another question. Rosso, for one, asserts that Albion's sleeping is negligent, part of a pattern of male indolence and inactivity that affects Albion as well as other characters. See Rosso, page 75, for a discussion of Albion's indolence in the course of Ahania's fall narrative.

prophecies, we would have seen as Urizenic order.

However, this account is also biased. The messengers of Beulah are concerned for the well-being of the sick Albion and his Emanation Jerusalem. Their report is meant to inspire the Council of God to “Gird on thy Sword . . . Destroy these oppressors of Jerusalem & those who ruin Shiloh” (p.19, ll.4-5; E 312). Their narrative denies any culpability to Albion himself, focusing instead on the two obvious malefactors who could readily be punished. At this moment in the text, these generally gentle and benevolent creatures are seeking someone to punish in order to assuage their own terror at what is happening.

This tendency to use creation/fall narratives in order to promote schemes of vengeance or personal aggrandizement is typical of most of the narratives. In Night the Seventh, the Shadow of Enitharmon tells a story designed to denigrate Urizen, who now holds her and her son Orc in thrall, and to bring down Vala whom she envies. Immediately afterwards, the Spectre of Urthona, a character who rejects the flesh even as he attempts the seduction of the Shadow, blames the fall on the emergence of the female characters. In so doing, he reaffirms both his desire for a “reunion” with Enitharmon and his repugance towards sexuality, all at the same time.

Even those characters who blame themselves for the fall tend to do so in a tone of self-aggrandizement. The only narrative which names Urizen as the sole author of the fall is Urizen’s own, a story which he tells only to himself in Night the Fifth when he awakens to find his golden world destroyed and himself reduced to the form given him by Los. Here Urizen takes total responsibility for the fall, a gesture that appears at first glance to

be positive. Yet, as Lincoln suggests, Urizen seems to have significant gaps in his memory (125). It might be further noted that those gaps produce an argument that upon close examination is as full of self-aggrandizement as it is self-pity. The self-pity appears first: Ah how shall Urizen the King submit to this dark mansion/Ah how is this! Once on the heights I stretchd my throne sublime” (p.63;ll.24-25; E 343). Then Urizen offers a litany of his failings: he withheld his horses from Albion; he forgot that Albion was king; he refused to go and seek out Tharmas as Albion had commanded; finally, he caused the fall.

At this point, his story becomes completely inconsistent. First he says that he fell when he disobeyed Albion, pulling Urthona down with him, then seizing Luvah and bringing him down, as well. Yet a few lines later, his explanation changes:

Because thou [Luvah] gavest Urizen the wine of the Almighty
For steeds of Light that they might run in they golden chariot of pride
I gave to thee the Steeds I pourd the stolen wine
And drunken with the immortal draught fell from my throne sublime
(p.65, ll.5-8; E 344)

When he begins to talk about the fall of Luvah, Urizen’s account is incoherent. He says at first that he pulls Luvah down. Then he acknowledges an interaction with Luvah that involves some sort of a plot between them, thus implying that Luvah is at least partially responsible. Yet he still blames himself for Luvah’s fall, regretting that Luvah, whose feet were “too pure for other feet” and whose locks were “fair,” is now “faded” and “bound” (p.64,l.28; p.65,ll.1-4; E 344). Urizen sees himself as having caused everything. But nowhere does he acknowledge that he built a kingdom by sacrificing this same Luvah, events that have happened within the main line of the narrative. He takes the blame in ways that do not make sense while ignoring the ways in which he clearly is to blame.

Predictably, Urizen is echoed in Night the Seventh by Orc, the fallen Luvah, who bound down and tormented, nevertheless claims to have stolen Urizen's steeds and his fire, thus causing Urizen to be in the abstracted and cold condition in which he exists in Night the Seventh. These narratives, in balancing one another, show both Urizen and Luvah still determined to defeat and best one another, if only by taking full credit for the disaster in which they have jointly participated, and by which they have both been so horribly reduced in grandeur and power.

Each of these narratives may or may not have a basis in a primal experience of an unfallen world that all the Zoas once shared. As myths, they function to describe three aspects of the Zoas' present situation. The stories express the fragmentation of Albion. They describe the fruitless and painful quest for hierarchical supremacy that exists between the different pieces of him, the different elements of society, and even between systems of order themselves. Finally, they express the terrible sexual anxiety that perpetually tortures the relationships between Zoa and Emanation in a fragmented world. Each of these stories also functions as rhetoric designed to further the interests of a given character at a given moment. Yet none of them allow us to turn Urizen into the prime mover of all evil, as he was in *The Book of Urizen*³⁰.

Instead, the stories we have examined so far all reflect a desire for vengeance, flattery, or self-aggrandizement in some form, and these destructive desires belong to all

³⁰My argument here is, in part, anticipated by Dora Czikós, who uses the analysis of language surrounding Urizen and psychological theory to track changes in Urizen's personality and significance. She suggests that Urizen's character is transformed between *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, and then again between *Ahania* and *The Four Zoas*. In *The Four Zoas*, Czikós sees both "regressive and progressive sides" to Urizen (131).

the Zoas. One fall narrative, however, the story told by Ahania, Urizen's Emanation, comes closer than any other to offering a fall narrative that is driven by positive motivations. Ahania certainly has her own agenda, and it affects her perception of how the fall narrative should be presented. Nevertheless, hers is the one story that places the primary responsibility for fragmentation upon Albion, the whole human being,³¹ and that also gives the first suggestion as to how the Zoas and their Emanations might overcome their fragmented condition.

Ahania's story is presented in Night the Third, after she has heard the lament of Enion, wandering alone and mourning for the suffering which persists despite, and perhaps because of, the glory of Urizen's golden world. Ahania is speaking to Urizen, responding to his anxiety about the future rebirth of Luvah and the potential loss of his own kingdom, and her rhetorical aim is to get Urizen to renounce his position as King and return to his role as Prince of Light, restoring responsibility for the future to Albion, the Universal Man. She describes the fall as an act of religious idolatry perpetrated by the Universal Man. The fall begins when the Man walks with Vala as his consort, thus, as we have previously seen, setting up a narcissistic devotion to a fragment of his own being. Urizen is sleeping and Luvah is dwelling in a cloud above the Man and Vala, and the Man goes on to make his second mistake.

In his anxiety about his attachment to Vala, he begins to worship another part of himself. The description is ambiguous, however:

³¹One might just as well say "upon the Universal Man, the whole human community."

. . . Luvah dwelt in the cloud

Then Man ascended mourning into the splendors of his palace
Above him rose a Shadow from his wearied intellect
Of living gold, pure, perfect, holy; in white linen pure he hover'd
A sweet entrancing self delusion, a watry vision of Man
Soft exulting in existence all the Man absorbing

Man fell upon his face prostrate before the watry shadow
Saying O Lord whence is this change thou knowest I am nothing
And Vala trembled & coverd her face, & her locks. were spread on the
pavement

I heard astonishd at the Vision & my heart trembled within me
I heard the voice of the Slumberous Man & thus he spoke
Idolatrous to his own Shadow word of Eternity uttering

O I am nothing when I enter into judgment with thee (p.40,ll.1-13; E 327).

As Bloom points out, this last line, along with the five lines that follow it, allude to Psalm 149 ("Commentary" 949). Essentially, the Ancient Man Albion kneels before a piece of himself and declares himself to be nothing in comparison to it—fragmentation at its most basic and divisive. Such a reversal would, in effect, completely invert the appropriate hierarchical relationship between part and whole. It subjects Albion's will, the will of the total being, to one piece of himself, thus isolating other parts and setting up a hierarchical struggle between the different Zoas.

What is more, the narrative makes it unclear exactly which Zoa Albion is worshipping. Since the vision that he worships is watery, and Luvah is dwelling in a watery cloud, it could well be Luvah. In fact, Lincoln argues that it is Luvah, and if this is so, the Man's worship of Luvah reflects a kind of obsession with the passions born of a narcissistic investment in Vala (64). Immediately after this speech is made, Luvah

descends from the cloud and strikes the Man down, causing his illness, and thus making that illness appear to be a punishment for the sin of adultery.

On the other hand, Rosso argues that Albion is bowing before Urizen, also a logical choice that fits some aspects of the textual evidence (74). Luvah has hidden Los and Enitharmon in a cloud, and he himself is in that same cloud; thus, one might assume that he too is hidden. Further, the Shadow that the Man worships rises “from his wearied intellect.” The intellect is Urizen’s realm, and Urizen is sleeping at the time. Thus the man could be, in a sense, beholding Urizen’s dreams, his “sweet entrancing self delusion.” If this is the case, Luvah’s descent to smite Albion is most likely an act of jealousy for Albion’s involvement with Vala and his exaltation of Urizen into a position higher than Luvah’s. However, if this is the case, Urizen’s dream of himself “soft exulting in existence all the Man absorbing” is a Luvah-like dream, a passionate, ardent vision of self-enhancement. In any case, it is simply impossible to determine with certainty which Zoa Albion is worshiping. In either case, it is clear that Albion has set up conflict between parts of himself by glorifying some parts over others and setting up a hierarchical order between them. In fact, if this were an accurate story of the origins of the fall, it could be that the confusion about whom Albion is worshiping is at the root of Urizen’s and Luvah’s struggle for power.

In her article on the fall narratives in *The Four Zoas*, Myers suggests that this particular narrative is the one we should accept as accurate, because Ahania’s intentions in telling the story are unselfish (234). Ahania has heard the mourning of Enion in her fragmented condition, and she also recognizes that Urizen’s godlike position of deity,

bestowed upon him by Albion, is not good for him or her. Myers suggests that Ahania's fall narrative is the only one that is not dominated by a sense of self-protectiveness and a spirit of domination. In a sense, Myers is correct. Ahania's motives are more unselfish than those of the other Zoas and Emanations who offer narratives of the fall. However, Ahania also has rhetorical purposes of her own. She is risking criticism of Urizen, and must placate him throughout her speech. Judith Lee even suggests that we should read Ahania's story as an excessively submissive fabrication designed to divert his wrath. This argument is unlikely, given that Ahania's words anger Urizen, not because Ahania is submissive to Urizen, but because she asks Urizen to surrender his power to Albion. Nevertheless, in claiming that Ahania's account is also affected by self-interest, Lee makes an important point (135-36).

In its totality, Ahania's story cannot be taken as entirely correct any more than the other fall narratives. Nevertheless, one aspect of her version is particularly pertinent to this discussion. Ahania is aware that the part cannot overthrow or depose the whole without consent from the whole. Urizen cannot be the villain that he was in the Lambeth prophecies, because he could not have power if it were not given him by the Universal Man. Her story accurately reflects the substance of the narrative at the beginning of Night the Second, when Albion hands over his sceptre to Urizen. Albion deliberately turns dominion of his inner life over to a fragment of himself, while blaming another fragment of himself, Luvah, for his illness. Yet Luvah could not have made Albion sick had Albion not fallen in love with and worshipped fragmentary bits of his own being. Furthermore, Albion makes the decision to give all his power to Urizen despite the fact that he knows, at some

level, that Urizen and Luvah have quarreled and that the two are jointly responsible for his suffering:

Rising upon his Couch of Death Albion beheld his Sons
 Turning his Eyes outward to Self. losing the Divine Vision
 Albion call'd Urizen & said. Behold these sickning Spheres
 Whence is this Voice of Enion that soundeth in my Porches
 Take thou possession! take this Scepter! go forth in my might
 For I am weary, & must sleep in the dark sleep of Death
 Thy brother Luvah hath smitten me but pity thou his youth
 Tho thou hast not pitied my Age O Urizen Prince of Light (P.23,ll. 1-8; E
 313)

Luvah is the one who smites Albion, but Albion himself admits that Urizen has also mistreated the Universal Man and may not be entirely trustworthy. Urizen receives power only because Albion does not realize that his illness is his own doing, the result of “Turning his Eyes outward to Self, losing the Divine Vision” by glorifying parts of himself and forgetting his own divine life.

Thus, it is up to Albion to find a way to turn his eyes back inward, to focus on the whole Human Form Divine. Yet he assumes that his fragmented pieces actually have power over him and acts accordingly. Although Albion begs Urizen to have mercy on Luvah, he himself is scapegoating Luvah, blaming him completely for Albion’s sufferings and choosing another guilty party to reign over Luvah and contain him. Throughout the rest of the poem, Urizen will make the choice to scapegoat Luvah, because Albion has already done so. Albion’s choice in this situation drives all the action from Night the Second onward. This choice, along with the story of the fragmentation of Tharmas and Enion and the birth of Los and Enitharmon, can be seen as part of the central myth of *The Four Zoas*. These narratives describe what happens in the world of the poem. The creation

tales are myths within a myth. They tell the characters' stories about what has brought them to where they are. They also say something about where the characters ought to be, but the ideal order their stories imply is usually contradicted by their own purposes in telling the story. The characters' creation myths imply an ideal order in which the parts dwell in harmony, in which male and female are somehow united, and in which the whole maintains an integrity greater than that of the parts. In a sense, these parts come into existence in the process of being named, and should never take priority over the fullness of the Divine Form itself. However, except for Ahania, the characters use the stories in an effort to attain supremacy for themselves, as fragments, or for the supremacy of other fragments with whom they are allied. All such efforts are, finally, plots against Albion himself.

In setting up these myths within myths, Blake implicates his own mythmaking as well. He describes his own mythic efforts to explain the broken state of the world and to find solutions for it. Furthermore, he recognizes that the order he establishes in his mythmaking describes his ideal from his limited perspective as a storyteller. Even as a prophet and man of vision, he cannot know the true and full nature of the inner life of the individual human being, much less of the Universal Man, which "no Individual [*Knoweth nor*] Can know in all Eternity" (p.3,1.8; E 301). In commenting on the nature of myth, Blake also makes it clear that the purpose of a myth is to function as prophecy, not to accurately predict the future or even to describe the past, but to "rouzes the faculties to act" in history (E 702). The purpose is not to describe the world accurately, but to live in it accurately. However, one's descriptions of reality can and will affect the way in which

one lives. It is for that reason that Blake had critiqued the Genesis narrative in the Lambeth prophecies. He wanted to show how his contemporaries use the creation story, and other Biblical narratives, as a way to oppress others.

Now, in *The Four Zoas*, Blake moves on to revise the myths he created in these earlier texts. Just as the Zoas and Emanations use their creation narratives to serve narrow ends, or to blame particular characters, Blake himself had done the same in his previous Urizen texts. Now he examines the limited aims of the earlier texts that scapegoat Urizen by implying that the bearded patriarch is the source of all division in the world and that his elimination will make redemption possible. However, Blake has discovered that this pattern of thinking reaches a dead-end, logically and historically. It allows no possibility for further movement. So he rehabilitates Urizen in *The Four Zoas*. The Urizen of *The Four Zoas* is not the sole cause of the fall, nor is he unredeemably evil. As Lincoln suggests in his discussion of the early copperplate version of the poem:

The treatment of the idea of creation in the copperplate text is much more complex than that in *Urizen*, not only in structure but also in tone. The golden feast and the Golden World are described in a language that reveals simultaneously their limitations and their genuinely seductive appeal, while Urizen himself at times is allowed an almost tragic dignity. (66-67)

In *The Four Zoas*, Urizen ceases to be a “demon of smoke” and becomes, instead, a kind of fallen angel, possessed of a genuinely creative and valuable intellectual power.

Even in the later nights, when Urizen’s role is more exclusively negative, the importance of Urizen as a limit-setting faculty is reiterated. Near the end of *The Four Zoas*, in Night the Ninth, Albion recovers and arises to claim his authority, and one of his first acts is to call for the repentance and redemption of Urizen, whom he calls

“Schoolmaster of souls,” and who, he suggests, should be dwelling in the villages where children will “play around [his] feet in gentle awe/Fearing [his] frown loving [his] smile” (p. 120, ll. 24-25; E 389).³² Urizen’s role as limit and teacher is necessary, and even in his semi-fallen condition early in the poem, he prevents Los and Enitharmon from murdering one another and creates a kingdom that provides a beautiful dwelling-place for many of those who have fallen.

Nevertheless, Blake’s rehabilitation of Urizen is only partial, and for most of the poem, he is extremely destructive. In part, this destructiveness has to do with something essential to Urizen’s nature, something that is good unless it is made supreme. Frye calls Urizen God’s “wisdom and sense of form” (274). Form is necessary, and it can only exist where there is a bounding line, that line that was, for Blake, so important to his art. But when he has sovereign power, Urizen’s creation of boundaries becomes rigidity and an unwillingness to forgive. Rigidity and vengefulness become the source of Urizen’s law, a source of error, both religious and political.

Ahania’s plea to Urizen to renounce his anxious sovereignty and yield up his power suggests that, if at any point in the process of the fall, there could have been a mutual yielding between adversaries, a mutual forgiveness, rather than scapegoating and recrimination, the disaster could have been reversed. However, in placing Urizen, or reason, in the position of sovereignty, Albion makes the ideas of limit, boundary, and

³²Of course, not everyone reads this moment in the text as a real affirmation of Urizen’s value. For example, Otto argues that the Eternal Man has been asleep and is “unaware that Urizen’s dragon form is the culmination of his attempts to arise” and obey the kinds of commands the Eternal Man is now making (291). However, the success of Albion’s speech at reminding Urizen of his humanity belies the idea that his affirmation is simply inaccurate.

abstract rule the most important principles. In so doing, he locks out the possibility of a ready yielding or a ready forgiveness. Law, in the negative, antinomian sense, becomes supreme, and scapegoating follows in its wake.

For Blake, Urizen's fallen world is certainly a representation of an eighteenth-century culture that has made reason and abstraction supreme over all other human faculties, something that has been recognized in Blake studies for some time. Yet Blake is also making a transhistorical claim about a certain kind of symbolic order and its rhetorical effects in history, especially when that order is accompanied by the quest for hierarchical supremacy and self-justification. A good portion of *The Four Zoas* is given to the depiction of the historical effects of the reign of Urizenic law, as well as to the kinds of chaos that ensue in its wake when it collapses. In Nights 1-5, we see that scapegoating is a central act of Urizen's reign from the very beginning. It is his way of establishing order and maintaining it. But we also see that when other characters, like Los, engage in a battle for supremacy, they can also create destructive orders built on scapegoating, orders every bit as destructive as Urizen's. In the next section, we will examine the ways in which scapegoating serves as a foundation for Urizenic and Losian forms of order, even as the qualities of fixity and openness that differentiate the two forms of order begin to appear.

The Scapegoat as a Function of Urizenic and Losian Order in Nights One through Five

If we had only the first five nights of *The Four Zoas*, we would have a text that is every bit as pessimistic and dark as *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*.

Although Urizen has been somewhat rehabilitated, scapegoating is ubiquitous, and most of

the characters participate in it to some degree, especially Urizen and Los, who bear the principle responsibility for ordering reality. The scapegoating activities within the text take a variety of forms. At the level of physical violence, there is personal assault. There is the violence normally associated with the powers of the monarchy or the state, warfare, for instance, and judicially authorized execution. There is the violence of ritual sacrifice associated with religion in almost all of its institutional forms, including but not limited to Druidism and the doctrine of atonement as it appears in Christianity. Moving away from literal, physical violence, there is the kind of dyslogistic naming and mutual recrimination that we have already seen in Tharmas and Enion. Finally, there is the psychic violence enacted between the generations, the force by which one generation binds its offspring into submission to it. While such binding does not necessarily imply the use of physical force, Blake describes it in these terms, and with the use of strongly sacrificial imagery. All of those activities are for Blake forms of human sacrifice, and all proceed from motives that connect to Burkean ideas about symbolic order, consubstantiation, and scapegoating.

In times of chaos, scapegoating usually serves as a means to create consubstantiation. The characters use sacrifice as a means to bind themselves to others and to create a social order to replace the one that is lost. On the other hand, once order has been established, sacrifices continue, both to recreate the ever fragile bonds that tie the characters together and to relieve guilt. Yet, in a sense, most of these sacrifices also have to do with the displacement of either guilt or suffering from the self to another. As we have seen, the need for sacrificial activity grows from the characters' sense of fallenness and fragmentation, because these unpleasant realities are seen as consequences of a violated

order. The mutual recrimination apparent in the dialogue between Tharmas and Enion are an early example of scapegoating by means of dyslogistic language. The same tendency appears in the ways the various characters use creation/fall narratives to assign blame and to establish power and hierarchy as principles which enhance their own aims over those of others. Guilt and its displacement through mutual recrimination occur because there is chaos. Sacrificial activity creates consubstantiation and restores order. Then order begets transgression, creating its own guilt and the need for more sacrifices to redeem the violators. These forms of scapegoating obviously involve hindering others in order to advance one's own end. But, such scapegoating also involves an element of action, as new structures, however faulty and partial, replace the chaos of total fragmentation.

As we have already seen, this process begins with Tharmas and Enion. Before Night the First ends, their children, Los and Enitharmon, join forces with Urizen to scapegoat Luvah and Vala as a means of creating consubstantiation between themselves and Urizen, thus establishing a new order. Urizen establishes his power, in part, because he is able to use Luvah as a common enemy to unite himself with Los and Enitharmon, both to prevent their mutual murder and to draw upon their imaginative powers for his own purposes. This possibility is available to Urizen, because Los and Enitharmon have inherited the pattern of mutual hatred, accusations, and verbal recrimination from their parents, Enion and the Spectre of Tharmas. Yet their destructiveness surpasses that of their parents because it escalates into violence. Recriminations alone are enough to destroy Tharmas and Enion, but their offspring, are only able to save themselves from actual physical murder by joining forces with Urizen and turning against Luvah.

In Night the First, Los's physical assault of Enitharmon is provoked by his jealous response to her fall narrative, in which she celebrates Vala's romance with Albion while envying Vala's role in the story. Furious, Los knocks Enitharmon down, and lays the blame for the fall of Albion on her and Vala. Furthermore, he accuses her of returning hostility for devotion: "I have refusd to look upon the Universal Vision/And wilt thou slay with death him who devotes himself to thee" (p.10,ll.23-24; E 306). Identifying himself with Albion abandoned by the unfaithful Vala, the prophetic Los accurately perceives a vision of warfare coming in "a shower of blood" along with "the swords & spears of futurity" (p.11,l.13; E 306). Inaccurately, and as a result of his rage, he predicts that this disaster will overtake Enitharmon specifically. She follows with recriminations of her own. Since Los physically assaults one who has merely threatened him verbally, and since both he and Enitharmon have been engaging in a game of withholding sexual favors while chasing away other suitors, his attack contains a strong scapegoating element. That element is accentuated by Los's willingness to blame Enitharmon for his own choice to focus on her rather than on the Eternal vision.

Enitharmon escalates the quarrel to an even higher pitch. Invoking the aid of Urizen with violent language, she threatens Los with punishment and with the destruction of "Human Nature" through "War & Princedom & Victory & Blood" (p.11,l.24; E 306). Urizen's descent at this time, declaring himself to be an eternal God, establishes his ambiguous role in the first half of the text. On the one hand, he comes with the purpose of putting together a tenuous alliance between Los and Enitharmon because he needs Los's support in his battle with Luvah, and he needs Los's imaginative powers as a foundation

for his own order.³³ On the other, his nature as boundary and limit-setter is necessary in this fallen situation, “the one must have murdered the other if he had not descended” (p.12,l.6; E 306). Urizen’s presence and his bargain with Los sets a limit to the couple’s mutual hostility, and the two are married under Urizen’s auspices.

Yet the joining of these two ambivalent beings creates a union, or a state of consubstantiation, based upon further violence. Urizen, Los, and Enitharmon join together in opposition to Luvah and Vala. This alliance is celebrated with a primitive form of mystery, founded upon Urizen’s claims of divinity and upon the anticipated sacrifice of Luvah and the many victims of the coming warfare. Los’s and Enitharmon’s marriage rites begin with what Bloom calls a “demonic” communion of “fleshly bread” and “nervous wine” that leaves Luvah and Vala on the outside “forsaken in fierce jealousy” and “suspended in blood”(“Commentary” 950; p.13,ll.4-5; E 308), while the “Elemental Gods” sing wedding songs about warfare, violence, and slaughter. The wedding feast ends with a prophecy of Luvah and Vala being melted and cut into wedges, a vision which will be fulfilled in Night the Second.

These images make it clear that the union of Los and Enitharmon is sustained sacrificially. The sacrifices link them to Urizen in a common rejection of Luvah. Furthermore, ritual sacrifices satisfy Urizen’s desire to punish Luvah continually and repeatedly for the supposed theft of Urizen’s horses, or for whatever breach has occurred

³³My reading here is heavily dependent upon Lindoln, pages 77-79. In fact, in his *Spiritual History*, Lincoln emphasizes repeatedly how Urizen and Los each need the other. Furthermore, Lincoln also argues on page 79 that Urizen comes to Los and Enitharmon offering both love and law, but his is a love that is soft, tender, and pitying, devoid of the passions that have their source in Luvah.

in the relationship between the two Zoas. The one marriage in the poem, the one sexual relationship based upon formal symbolic rites, is linked at its inception with slaughter and violence, and it leads to no long-term satisfaction for the couple. Rather they are perpetually “discontent. . . /Craving the more the more enjoying” (p. 16, l. 18-19; E 310). Arguably, they continue to crave more sex as well as more violence, and at this point the two are always linked for them, since in their rage and ambivalence towards one another, they can only unite as lovers through the ritual sacrifice of Luvah, Vala, and the other victims of Urizen’s wars. Ironically, Luvah is generally understood to represent the faculty of passion, so Los’s and Enitharmon’s marriage is based upon the sacrifice of passion itself, a strong commentary on Urizenic marriage.

The sacrifice of Luvah envisioned in Night the First becomes an actuality in Night the Second, as Luvah is melted down in a furnace at the instigation of Urizen’s sons. This time, the sacrifice of Luvah occurs precisely because the sick and dying Albion relinquishes control of his warring members, turning everything over to Urizen and simply requesting that Urizen be merciful to Luvah, a request that Urizen, with his obsession with avenging the violation of his boundaries, has no interest in respecting. Furthermore, Albion’s plea for mercy is particularly ineffective when he himself is scapegoating Luvah for his own and Urizen’s actions, even as he speaks.

However, Luvah’s sacrifice is not the first to take place in Night the Second. In this Night, sacrifice continues to move beyond the personal desire to reduce guilt and transfer it to the other and becomes linked to the creation and preservation of a new symbolic order. The creation of this order requires consubstantiation, so sacrifice

continues, in part, to create the bonds that will allow Urizen and his “bands” to unite in the task of creation. The sacrificial nature of this creation is nevertheless determined in part by the attitudes which drive Urizen to the process of creation. When Urizen takes control at Albion’s behest, his first act is to have his sons build the Mundane Shell. Yet Urizen’s command is not simply a spontaneous act of creativity on his part. Rather, Urizen begins this action because Albion’s weakened condition and relinquishment of control causes Urizen to become conscious of a Void opening up beneath him:

Terrific Urizen strode above, in fear & pale dismay
He saw the indefinite space beneath & his soul shrunk with horror
His feet upon the verge of Non Existence; his voice went forth

Luvah & Vala trembling & shrinking, beheld the great
Work master
And heard his Word! Divide ye bands influence by influence
Build we a Bower for heavens darling in the grizly deep. . . (p.24, ll.2-7; E 314)

Urizen is terrified of Non Existence, or death, so he attempts to save Albion, and thus himself, by creating a world as a “Bower” for Albion. As Bloom suggests, “Urizen thinks he is establishing a merciful limit beyond which reality cannot contract. . .”(*Apocalypse* 212). The problem is that this creation is a defensive act designed simply to hold death at bay, Albion’s death and his own. Since Urizen falsely identifies Albion’s interests with his own, and vice versa, Urizen automatically assumes that those who are his enemies are Albion’s enemies. Thus, his world is built upon exclusion of other parts of Albion, Luvah and Vala in particular and, by extension, many others. Yet all of these excluded fragments are actually necessary to Albion’s continued survival and healing.

Thus, whatever his intention, Urizen is creating hindrance, although it is, like the

hindrances enacted by Fuzon in *The Book of Ahania*, intended to protect against evil. This good intention, however, does not prevent it from becoming a further step in the process of the fall. Once Urizen's leopards, tygers, and lions, along with all the Sons of Heaven, begin to create the implements needed for weaving, agriculture, measurement (and thus trade) and metalwork, they also stand around their master, "Petrifying all the Human Imagination into rock & sand" (p.25, l.6; E 314). This petrification is a direct result both of Urizen's fear of death and of the fixing of cultural forms. In other words, once the Human Imagination is petrified with fear, symbolic systems become stony, frozen and locked, in a futile attempt to hold the fragmented world steady.

Predictably, from a Burkean standpoint, sacrifices begin immediately after this petrification, within one line in fact. Once a rigid system is in place, violations will inevitably occur, and, in Urizen's order, they will require expiation. Tyburn, the place of execution in Blake's own time, and the Druid Temples, where human sacrifice was supposedly performed in ancient Britain, both begin to reverberate with the sounds of human groans. Yet the groans of those individuals who are sacrificed, either through state execution or through ritual means, contribute to the death throes of Albion or the Universal Man:

Groans ran along Tyburns brook and along the River of Oxford
Among the Druid Temples. Albion groand on Tyburns brook
Albion gave his loud death groan . . . (p.25, ll7-9; E 314)

While in many way's Urizen's Mundane Shell is beautiful, the sacrifices that sustain it are simply destructive. Sacrificing parts of Albion's being to preserve his life only hastens his death. Blake implies a particular process of degeneration in the use of images of judicial

execution. First there is the loss of spiritual vision in the fragmentation of human faculties and human culture. Then there is the creation of a false order based upon hierarchy and designed to set up a rigid boundary against death. This order is founded upon a sacrificial vision in the first place, and as it continues, it further requires the necessity for the ritual sacrifice of those who violate it. Thus the order ends up causing and perpetuating the death that supposedly it was designed to protect against. Finally, Urizen himself becomes directly involved in sacrifice, dwelling “on Salisbury plain among the druid stones,” that is, Stonehenge, a place believed by many of Blake’s contemporaries to be the earliest site of human sacrifices (p.25,l.33; E 317).³⁴

This series of sacrifices culminates in the sacrifice of Urizen’s arch-rival Luvah. In Urizen’s judgment, the Non-Existence that he fears (in fact, an unreality in Blake’s terms) has become a possibility because of Luvah’s actions. Thus, Luvah is offered up as a sacrifice to the violated boundary itself, as if such expiation could hold death at bay and protect Urizen from his own potential Non-Existence. If Luvah is entirely guilty of the violation, and is sacrificed, perhaps neither Death nor Despair will claim Urizen:

Luvah was cast into the Furnaces of affliction & sealed
And Vala fed in cruel delight, the furnaces with fire

³⁴For discussion of Blake and Druidism, see the final chapter of A. L. Owen’s *The Famous Druids*. See also Peter F. Fisher’s article “Blake and the Druids,” as well as two chapter of Jon Mee’s *Dangerous Enthusiasm*. The most recent discussion appears in Jason Whittaker’s *William Blake and the Myths of Britain*, particularly the chapter entitled “Druids, Deism, and Patriarchy” (141-51). Generally, Blake uses Druids in his depictions of sacrifice to link Old Testament religion and the roots of English history. While many of his contemporaries see a link between the Druids and Old Testament Judaism, and treat the similarity as a cause for national pride, Blake judges Old Testament religion, eighteenth-century Christianity, and British statecraft, and finds them all lacking, precisely in those dimensions which he considers to be Druidical. Druids play the largest role in the later illuminated works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

Stern Urizen beheld urg'd by necessity to keep
 The evil day afar, & if perchance with iron power
 He might avert his own despair. . . (p.25, ll.40-44; E 317).

Luvah's death, believed by Urizen to be an eternal death, will supposedly avert Urizen's own despair, fear of death, and ultimately death itself.

As a scapegoat, Luvah serves all three scapegoating functions. At the most basic level, Luvah's death is scapegoating simply because, it is supposed to prevent Urizen's death. Furthermore, like the mutual recriminations of Tharmas and Enion, it relieves the guilt and anxiety that arise simply from the condition of fragmentation. As Burke notes, once there is an idea of a primal order that can be broken through disobedience, willfulness, or pride, the guilt such transgressions of order produce is almost inevitably linked with the idea of death as punishment (*RR* 201-12). If there is death, it is possible to reason backwards and to assume that there must have been a crime for which that death is punishment. If the criminal is sacrificed, perhaps others will be saved.

Such a method becomes even more necessary, if, as in Urizen's case, the executioner, through neglect (sleep), an error in judgment (handing over the reins) or direct collusion (plotting with Luvah against Albion) is complicit in the original crime. In this case the sacrifice of the other party to the crime is seen as a path out of both judgment and death, and the second scapegoating function becomes active. The sacrifice of Luvah relieves Urizen from the awareness of, and, presumably, from the consequences of guilt.

Finally, Luvah's death becomes a catalyst for even more civilizing activity. As the lava from his furnace flows down, more system building occurs. Luvah's death binds other members of the community together and creates a flurry of activity, busy if blind. Some

attend to families, others buy and sell, others create schools, and yet others engage in scientific study. One reason for this flurry of activity is that Luvah's sacrificial death creates consubstantiation between other members of the community. He is the enemy, others are bound together against him, and their energies are revitalized by his destruction. As Otto suggests, the continued vitality of Urizen's world is dependent upon this sacrifice of Luvah, as enacted in the marriage feast of Night the First: "Consumption of the victim provides the energy that allows Urizen and his priests to maintain the purity of their world" (*Critique* 89).³⁵ The maintenance of an elaborate system of order in the face of a internal fragmentation requires a kind of purification of vision that is in fact a symbolic denial of substantial portions of reality. By enacting and reenacting the sacrificial event, the members of Urizen's community are enabled to maintain their tenuous connection to one another and to sustain their vast project of building and activity, ignoring conflicts that might exist between them, and ignoring those elements of reality that do not fit their system. Yet all of these deeds involve an increasing engagement with greater and greater

³⁵ As mentioned in an earlier note, Otto's argument in *Blake's Critique of Transcendence* has strongly influenced my own reading. Otto maintains that the drive for transcendence, expressed in this quotation as a drive for purity, leads to the rejection of the body, as expressed in the suffering of Luvah. Thus, Blake critiques transcendence in order to focus on the needs of the suffering and rejected body. This argument has difficulties, I would suggest, because it divides the ideas of "transcendence" and "body" in a way that I do not believe Blake would accept. In the earlier texts, like *The Marriage*, the body is clearly meant to function as means of transcendence; furthermore, throughout his life, Blake talks about the passage of the spirit into a different realm after death. Thus, there are real problems with the claim that Blake sets up an impassable gulf between transcendence and the body, rejecting the one and affirming the other. Despite this point of disagreement with Otto, I believe that his argument points to something crucial about the role of transcendence in *The Four Zoas*, something that is strongly linked to sacrificial thinking. While Blake may not reject transcendence *per se*, he does reject those forms of transcendence that require the sacrifice of the body, or of another person, for their fulfillment. Bypassing the body does not bring transcendence, nor does the evasion of one's own suffering in a vain attempt to pass it on to someone else.

levels of symbolic differentiation and systemetization, and thus, in all probability, to further petrification of imagination and further sacrifices.

Such differentiation is apparent at the most basic level in Night the Third when Urizen separates from "His Shadowy Female Semblance," Ahania (P.29, l.23; E 319). After the creation of the Mundane Shell, Ahania is partially separated from Urizen. She is still a part of him, but she has a shadowy separate substance, and she cannot tolerate the movement of the relationship, either in terms of Urizen's changing moods from smiling to frowning, or in his comings and goings. Without him she trembles and grows "cold in paling fears" (pl.30, l.28; E 320), in all likelihood, because she fears her husband's rejection, since Urizen is becoming more and more abstracted. The sacrifice and denial of Albion's passionate dimension as manifested in Luvah would have cooled Urizen's sexual desires considerably. These fears, and, in all probability, Urizen's classification of Ahania as something other than himself, petrify her, since her limbs must be revived by fire when Urizen is gone; ultimately this petrification of Ahania's separate female identity causes her sons to sacrifice "Victims sacrificed upon an altar of brass," animals as well as birds (p.30,l.36; E 320). These burnt offerings warm and preserve her, because they involve a "relation between the vanished fires of Luvah/Vala and those Urizen refuses his female" (Ault 126). These sacrifices give Ahania a certain cohesion within herself as well as a kind of consubstantiation with Urizen, but they are also associated with yet further differentiation between them.

When Urizen returns, he finds her to be entirely separate from himself, completely differentiated. At a symbolic level, such a change involves a complete separation between

those categories of being that he would describe as male and those he would describe as female, and vice versa. This break between Urizen and Ahanian is symptomatic of the kinds of problems that occur when a highly differentiated symbolic order is purified to the point of excluding crucial elements of human reality. Luvah's exclusion has created consubstantiation between some characters, but only by eliminating the passion that had bound others together. Urizen was able to connect with Los only by sacrificing the kinds of passions that had linked him to Ahanian.

Urizen has sacrificed Luvah in part because this sacrifice created consubstantiation with Los. Sadly, this sacrifice ultimately is ineffectual. Los was necessary to Urizen's creation of the Mundane Shell, because the reasoning power with its bounding line can only be creative if imagination provides a new vision of the world that reason can structure. Now Los's imagination has been petrified by the rigidity of Urizenic order. As has already been noted, the alliance between Urizen, Los, and Enitharmon was highly tenuous to begin with. Now Los and Enitharmon, their prophetic power reduced by the petrification of imagination in Urizen's golden world, feel envious and desire power for themselves. Thus, they bring Enion's song of suffering to Ahanian's pillow and make Ahanian aware of the suffering and exclusion fostered by Urizen's system. Speaking of those who, like Urizen, have sacrificed others to gain prosperity, Enion cries out:

Then the groan & the dolor are quite forgotten & the slave grinding at the
mill

And the captive in chains & the poor in the prison, & the soldier in the field
When the shattered bone hath laid him groaning among the happier dead

It is an easy thing to rejoice in the tents of prosperity

Thus could I sing & thus rejoice, but it is not so with me! (p.36, ll.9-13; E

325)

The separation of Urizen and Ahania becomes complete when, moved by the lament of Enion that Enitharmon and Los have spirited to her pillow, Ahania, using the fall narrative that was discussed previously, tells Urizen that perhaps his power and divinity are unreal. She is, in fact, right about this; at least she is correct that Urizen does not have a unique divinity of the kind he pretends to. However, her receptiveness to this truth is seen by Urizen as passivity. Rejecting this receptive and vulnerable side of his own being, as projected upon Ahania, Urizen scapegoats her by casting her down, while blaming her for every negative aspect of his life, both in the present and the past, and comparing her to Vala, who causes the fall of her consort, Luvah, by casting him down:

. . . Art thou also become like Vala. thus I cast thee out
 Shall the feminine indolent bliss. the indulgent self of weariness
 The passive idle sleep the enormous night & darkness of Death
 Set herself up to give her laws to the active masculine virtue
 Thou little diminutive portion that darst be a counterpart
 Thy passivity thy laws of obedience & insincerity
 Are my abhorrence. Wherefore hast thou taken that fair form
 Whence is this power given to thee! once thou wast in my breast
 A sluggish current of dim waters. on whose verdant margin
 A cavern shaggd with horrid shades. dark cool & deadly. where
 I laid my head in the hot noon after the broken clods
 Had wearied me. there I laid my plow & there my horses fed
 And thou hast risen with thy moist locks into a watry image
 Reflecting all my indolence my weakness & my death
 To weigh me down beneath the grave into non Entity (p.43,ll.5-19;
 E 328-29)

Urizen understands Ahania to be saying that the watery figure that Albion worships is a projection of Urizen. The idea is so intolerable to him that he must object, claiming that any watery image projected and floating above him is Ahania herself. She has projected

this image with her “moist locks” and her indolence and weakness. This accusation is followed by the rhetorical questions: “Am I not God” and “Who is Equal to me” (p.42,l.19; E 328). He denies his status as Albion’s regent altogether and claims an eternal reign for himself.

Following this speech, he casts her down, and it is that act that precipitates the fall of his kingdom, thus demonstrating that it was not her passivity that was dangerous to him, but his own aggressive desire for divinity and dominance. Because she asserts that he is less than divine, absolute, and complete, he blames her for being diminutive, passive, and partial. However, it is the loss of those very qualities that leads to his own destruction. In scapegoating Ahania and casting her away, he casts off the part of himself that is capable of reuniting with the other Zoas and restoring the health of Albion.

What Blake makes clear in these early nights is that scapegoating activity may initially produce a tentative consubstantiation between different parties and between divergent and conflicting parts of ourselves, the kinds of consubstantiation that Burke describes as following from scapegoating. Los and Enitharmon, at their wedding, are made consubstantial with each other and with Urizen through the warsongs and violence celebrated at the wedding feast and perpetrated shortly thereafter against Luvah. Urizen’s sons gain consubstantiation with their king and with one another when they melt Luvah in the furnace, and that consubstantiation produces all the marks of civilization. Nevertheless, the social order built upon victimage produces further division, more classification, and further solidification of differences, thus producing a need for more victims to maintain cohesion, as in the offerings presented to warm the increasingly solid

and isolated Ahania. Finally, this order produces the permanently fixed sufferings of those whose tortures are lamented by Enion at the end of Night the Second. Enion, herself an exile and wanderer who has no place in Urizen's order, bemoans the tortures of "captives in chains," and "the poor in the prison" (p.6,l.10; E 325). The suffering bodies of the slave, the captive, the prisoner, and the soldier are an inevitable off-scouring of the kind of kingdom that Urizen has built—one that is based upon sacrifice and scapegoating at a number of levels.

Of course, among these sacrifices are those that fit the usual framework that we have been discussing, sacrifices that produce social unity, or that transfer one's guilt onto another for the purpose of redemption. These sacrifices sometimes take the form of religious rituals, like the Druid rites or the sacrifices on Ahania's altar, or of government actions, like judicial executions. Some of the sacrifices are less violent, involving only verbal scapegoating and projection. Yet the song of Enion indicates that there is another kind of scapegoating implicit in the retention of power through the petrification of symbolic structures, since, whether or not those at the margins of the order redeem anyone from a sense of guilt, they redeem the person or persons at the top of the hierarchy from death. Death here can be understood in several different senses. First, Urizen, the kingly figure, is spared the symbolic death, or transformation, that would accommodate a more mobile structure. Second, he is literally able to "buy" his own survival through the suffering of others, who bear the bodily risks of heavy labor and warfare. But all of these scapegoating strategies are based upon lies of various kinds, lies that turn back against Urizen through the agency of Ahania, technically a part of himself.

The problem is that Ahania knows both that these sacrifices are ultimately destructive. She recognizes, first, that the human suffering lamented by Enion is wrong, and that it is intrinsically bound up in Urizen's kingdom. Second, she realizes that Urizen's kingdom cannot be permanently insured. Luvah's sacrifice was not permanent, and Luvah is returning in the person of Orc. She asks Urizen to cease his attempts to control such a return. Finally, she recognizes that the righteousness and divinity which Urizen has bought for himself through the destruction of Luvah is fallacious. Urizen has become a god through the idolotry of Albion. He should not be the king; he has exceeded his own proper boundaries just as surely as Luvah did when he stole the horses from the unfallen Urizen, the Prince of Light. The fear which Urizen felt when Albion, the whole human being, renounced his rightful authority and turned everything over to Urizen, a mere fragment of himself, was a reasonable response to an out of control situation. This fact did not change with the scapegoating of Luvah. What did change was Urizen's perception of himself. Once Urizen sees himself as righteous and kingly, he can no longer tolerate hearing the truth, but rather tells Ahania that she is the source of everything negative. This final act of scapegoating produces one division too many. There is no one left with whom Urizen can create consubstantiation through his scapegoating practices, so his kingdom crashes down.

This fall occurs because the creation of one rigid boundary after another to protect or avenge an original violated boundary creates more and more exclusion, more and more guilt, more and more scapegoating, and finally, the loss of the very "kingdom" that all the boundaries and the victimage were intended to protect. This process involves Los, the imaginative faculty, as assuredly as it does the rational faculty, Urizen. When we consider

the earlier Lambeth prophecies, it is no surprise that Urizen is involved in a cycle of creation, fall, and scapegoating. Nor is it surprising that Los would be sucked into such a cycle once Urizen initiated it. However, in *The Four Zoas*, Los's involvement does not really have its source in Urizen. Here Los's involvement in what we would once have called Urizenic behavior is far more his own choice, and it is far more centered in his own quest for personal dominance or revenge.

Yet Los's responses are also distinctly differentiated from Urizen's in a way that was not present in Blake's earlier works. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake uses the characters of Urizen and Los in a way that involves a strong dialectical tension. First, he makes it clear that Los, the imaginative faculty, can be just as destructive as the rational one. Both faculties have the potential for act and hindrance. Second, he argues that each faculty needs the other. Finally, he demonstrates why the eighteenth-century tendency to glorify reason as the foundation for order is so dangerous. Despite their basic equality, reason without imagination is particularly deadly, because imagination is the faculty of openness and transformation. It is what makes both change and forgiveness possible. Thus, it is absolutely necessary if one is to move beyond hindrance to action.

Initially, however, Los with his self-seeking and concern for hierarchical superiority is only marginally different from Urizen. As we have already seen, having fallen through the union of Enion and the Spectre of Tharmas, Los and his emanation Enitharmon embody the mutual recriminations, the sexual guilt, and the tendency to bind themselves sexually that we have already seen in their parents. We have seen further that Los and Enitharmon engage in mutual scapegoating, each accusing the other of behaviors

engaged in by both. Even after they have been married in a ceremony overseen by Urizen and allied themselves with him, they continue to resent Urizen and conspire against him, setting up the division between Ahania and Urizen by carrying Enion's song to Ahania's pillow and, thus, transforming Ahania's awareness and producing Urizen's fall. Los's desire at this point is to elevate himself to the position of deity and the king. He renounces his true father, Tharmas, calling him "weak father of worms & clay" and claims that he is Urizen's true heir: ". . . Los remains God over all" (p.48, l.18; E 332).

Yet the result of Urizen's fall is a return, not to Los, but to Tharmas, the parent power, as the primary force. Tharmas is, at some level, both the greatest of the Zoas, being "the parent power," the source, and the weakest (p.4,l.6; E 301). He desires simplicity and he desires his partner, the fulfillment of his sexual being. Such desires fit coherently with the identification of Tharmas with the body, the originary power, but one that remains in chaos without the ordering structure of the symbolic as represented by Urizen and Los. Los, the prophet in his embodied form, is in fact, the son of Tharmas. That is, he represents in narrative form the direct relationship of imaginative power to the power and wisdom of the body which is its source, the Energies of the body that Blake celebrated earlier in his career.

However, when Los makes his somewhat sullen alliance with Urizen, he subordinates his own powers to Urizen's. As a result, he denies his filial relationship with Tharmas, and he also further divides himself. When Los threatens Tharmas after Urizen's fall, Tharmas recognizes this internal division. He completes the break between Los and Enitharmon by ripping her from Los's side, and he conspires with The Spectre of Urthona,

like Los and Enitharmon a split-off part of the original Zoa Urthona, to force Los to obey Tharmas.

Thus, Los finds himself in the role of having to bind Urizen, because Tharmas has commanded it. Tharmas's command is in part positive, because it arises from the recognition that Luvah and Urizen have both brought about difficulties through "foul ambition." (p.51,1.24; E 334). This command also detaches Los from his false servility to Urizen. Finally, it allows Los to borrow Urizen's boundary function so that a new world can be created and structured by the Imagination. Nevertheless, in making this command, Tharmas involves Los in a process of hindrance. Binding Urizen and limiting him by force involves Los in a negative process of creation that, combined with Los's hatred of Urizen and desire for power over him, ultimately binds and limits the imaginative powers of the prophet himself.

This binding, like the binding of Urizen in *The Book of Urizen*, can be seen as a second creation narrative, just as the J and E narratives in the Genesis texts are separate creation narratives. Urizen creates, in the Mundane Shell, a cosmos, whereas Los creates a body, and as the creation of the body takes place over seven ages, the Biblical text is again echoed, as it was in *Urizen*: "And a seventh age passed over & a state of dismal woe" (p.55,1.9; E 337). Whereas some critics see Los's binding of Urizen in *The Book of Urizen* as positive, at least in its intention, here Los's actions are clearly done with malice. While he forms chains for Urizen's body at the behest of Tharmas, Los thoroughly enjoys the process, even though it means that he also chains his own emanation, Enitharmon:

But Enitharmon wrapd in clouds waild loud. for as Los beat

The anvils of Urthona link by link the chains of sorrow
 Warping upon the winds & whirling round in the dark deep
 Lashd on the limbs of Enitharmon & the sulphur fires
 Belchd from the furnaces wreathd round her. chaind in ceaseless fire
 The lovely female howld & Urizen beneath deep groand
 Deadly between the hammers beating grateful to the Ears
 Of Los. absorbed in dire revenge he drank with joy the cries
 Of Enitharmon & the groans of Urizen fuel for his wrath
 And for his pity secret feeding on thoughts of cruelty. . . (p.53, ll. 5-14; E
 335-36)

Having become involved in Hindrance to this extent, Los takes on the character of the hinderer in earnest. As Rosso puts it, "Indeed, when Los binds Urizen he takes on those qualities of the priest that he seeks to humanize" (119).

In malice, Los uses his prophetic and imaginative power to enslave Urizen in a particular vision of the body, but then he himself becomes that vision:

Pale terror siezd the Eyes of Los as he beat round
 The hurtling Demon. terrifid at the shapes
 Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld
 He became what he was doing he was himself transformd (p.55,
 ll.20-23; E 338)

As a result of this transformation, almost immediately after the binding of Urizen, Los's "features stonify" (p.57; l.2; E 338), amd Enitharmon is also transformed, her "immortal limbs freeze stiffning pale inflexible" (p.57; l.6; E 339). Los becomes enslaved by his own creation. He becomes even more like Urizen than he already was, both in his desire to dominate and in his need to freeze his own symbolic order.

Certainly, some of Los's imaginative mobility remains insofar as he is able to engage in the art of dance, but his dance is mad, jerky, and mechanical, caught up as it is in the process of hindrance:

The bones of Urizen hurtle on the wind the bones of Los
Twinge & his iron sinews bend like lead & fold
Into unusual forms dancing & howling stamping the Abyss (p.55 second
portion, ll.33-35; E 338)

While Los can still bend, he is hard and metallic, iron, like Urizenic law, and his prophecy appears to have degenerated into madness.

It is only after Los becomes petrified in his own symbolic order, the order of the body and sexuality, that he and Enitharmon join together to conceive their son Orc, a reemodiment of Luvah in a form of rage and flame. Again, like the binding of Urizen, the story of the binding of Orc in *The Four Zoas* takes on rather different dimensions from those it contained in *The Book of Urizen*. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake becomes explicit that Los's fear of his son derives from a fear of death. When the child is born, Los comes to fear "Eternal Death & uttermost Extinction" (p.60,l.2; E 340). Like Urizen, he builds a city, not because he wishes to clothe, house, or protect others, nor because he wants to express a meaningful vision, but because he is trying desperately to overcome death. The birth of the child carries the mark of death because it necessarily involves transformation. The "stonification" that Los undergoes when he creates the chains of Urizen and becomes like what he beholds creates in him an inability to tolerate the process of change that is implied by generation and birth. By the time Orc is fourteen years old, Los perceives the child to be plotting to destroy the father and he develops a "bloody cord" growing out of his chest (p.60,l.11; E 340), like the girdle that grows from Los's bosom in *The Book of Urizen*.

In *The Four Zoas*, the Oedipal overtones are more marked than they are in the

earlier work, because Blake makes it clear that Los sees death in Orc's eyes. Nevertheless, as Diana George points out, it is just as difficult to tell whether or not this intention is really in Orc, or whether Los perceives it because of his own jealousy and his fear of transformation (118). We also know that Los himself desired to destroy his own father, Tharmas, and his adopted "father" and god Urizen. Thus, his perception that this is his son's intention may be accurate, or it may be a projection of the guilt that Los feels based upon his own parricidal impulses.

Yet, despite the Oedipal overtones, it is still somewhat unclear what role sexual jealousy plays in this episode, because the "Chain of Jealousy" is Enitharmon's name for what she sees in her husband, and her perceptions may well be twisted by her own anxiety about sexuality and by her feelings towards her son, which she guiltily imagines to be perceived by her husband. In any case, the one motive that Blake clearly identifies is the fear of murder by the son, and Los is willing to go to any length to avoid that possibility. He binds his son so that parricide cannot occur, and transfers the chain that afflicts him to his son, along with whatever sexual anxieties, parricidal desires, and other torments accompany it. The binding of Orc still includes a strong sacrificial element, by which Los buys his own peace of mind at the expense of his son, and transfers his own conflicts onto the adolescent boy.

The sacrificial imagery connected with Orc's binding is, in fact, decidedly more marked than in *The Book of Urizen*, because Los actually nails his son down before binding him with the chain of jealousy. Thus, Orc is not simply bound, but he is crucified as well, on an "iron mountains top" (p.60,l.26; E 341). As we have seen, iron is associated

with Urizen throughout *The Book of Urizen*, and in *The Four Zoas*, it is again associated with Urizenic law (p.60, l.2; E 353). Thus, while the “shadow of Urizen” is not mentioned here as it is in *The Book of Urizen*, we clearly hear the echo of Urizenic law in Los’s action, and we recognize sacrifice, not merely as a means of appeasing guilt, but also as a method of warding off death and retaining power in an unchanging order.

Yet, we also see another vital change in this narrative from its earlier appearance in *The Book of Urizen*, one that is crucial in understanding the role of the imagination in the creation of a sane order. In the earlier text, there is no mention that Los has regrets, but in *The Four Zoas*, Los is so grieved by the suffering of his wife and son that he goes back to the mountain to release Orc, because

. . . he thought to give to Enitharmon
Her son in tenfold joy & to compensate for her tears
Even if his own death resulted so much pity him paid (p.62, ll. 18-
20; E 342)

The fact that Orc has become physically linked to his chains is a part of the continuing process of falling that goes on through the first six nights of the poem, but Los’s repentance is still real. Furthermore it is not Los’s first moment of remorse, and it reflects an important distinction that Blake makes between Urizen’s systematizing and Los’s.

This distinction is reflected in Bloom’s remark that throughout the text, Los appears to be less culpably fallen than the other Zoas, being “engendered in the fallen world” without ever falling of his own accord (*Apocalypse* 200). Certainly, Los is in no way involved in the narratives of the fall that are told throughout the work. Urthona is always described as having been pulled down by the other falling Zoas. However, by Night

the Fourth, Los's fallen condition is clear. He seeks dominance, vengeance, and the securing of his own position by any means necessary. Still there is a major difference between Los and Urizen. Los tends to back away from and to regret his own scapegoating activities, not through the kinds of pity that are typical of Urizen, who weeps with tender sympathy and then responds to his own tears by abusing someone else, but by actual attempts to reverse the harm he has done. This was true when Los injured Enitharmon in Night the Second, and it is equally true when Los repents from binding Orc. This failure, however, does not negate Los's sincerity in wanting to make it happen.

This characteristic of Los, which will figure so prominently in the Apocalyptic redemption that occurs later in the poem, is, I would argue, actually a result of his identification with the faculty of imagination. Just as reason involves the creation of a kind of systematic order that makes judgments and creates boundaries, imagination entails an ordering process that expresses visions that have not been seen before. Blake recognizes the necessity for the boundary-setting functions of Urizen. Los needs to borrow Urizen's functions in order to create his own world. Yet Urizenic reason is also associated with the tendency to close off boundaries and possibilities. It is easier for the Urizenic functions, when isolated from other functions within the individual or within the society, to petrify, to become rigid, and, therefore, to become judgmental. The function of law, as a boundary function, readily becomes the inability to bend or forgive in Blake's antinomian model.

For the imagination, however, the creation of newness is a necessary part of the faculty's function. Thus, a certain openness is inherent in imagination. Blake associates this openness, at a moral level, with the tendency to forgive, to yield, and to open out

boundaries. This does not mean that imagination cannot be petrified. When Urizen's lions and tigers create the Mundane Shell, they "petrify" the human imagination. When Los binds Urizen, he becomes like what he beholds and begins to stonify, thus becoming, like Urizen, afraid of change, and determined to freeze and solidify the symbolic structure of his own family by binding his son. By the time we have finished reading *Night the Fifth*, we have seen Los scapegoat Enitharmon and Orc, blaming both for actions and feelings no different from his own and projecting his own negative attitudes and feelings upon them. In each of these cases, he is refusing to forgive, and his own imaginative functions are, to one degree or another, "stonified."

Yet, in every case, Los cannot sustain the process of scapegoating for long. He again opens out, and in that process of opening out, he develops an active sense of remorse that causes him to change his conduct in serious ways. This willingness marks the difference for Blake between different kinds of creation and different kinds of sacrifices. This difference becomes particularly clear when we compare Urizen's sacrifice of Luvah with the death of Jesus, who willingly wears "Luvah's robes of blood," so that Luvah will not fall into eternal death. For Urizen, Jesus is simply another Luvah to be sacrificed, and the Christian narrative simply becomes another form of rhetoric by means of which Urizen can consolidate power. For Los, Jesus' story can be differently understood, in light of Los's own suffering, his infliction of suffering on others, his regret, and his imaginative openness to new forms of experience. For Los, Jesus' story is a form of symbolic action that can lead to the destruction of Urizen's systems and the transformation of all the Zoas.

Thus, as we will see in the next section of this chapter, Los is capable of reworking

a narrative or a symbolic order and changing its meaning. This possibility is exemplified in Los's transformation of the ideas of sacrifice and redemption in Night the Seventh. Furthermore, Los's interpretation of the Jesus narrative suggests the possibility of transforming all kinds of symbolic orders so that their purposes can be differently understood. When this event takes place, we can see how it is possible for the same symbolic order to create either act or hindrance. The contrast between Urizen's and Los's understanding of sacrifice, and the relationship of both perspectives to Christianity, will be the subject of the next section. Through this comparison, we will see how it is possible, through a change of attitude, to transform the meaning of a particular symbolic order.

The Tree of Mystery and the Lamb of God: Sacrifice as Hindrance and Act in Nights 6-8

According to Lincoln's analysis of the layers of composition in *The Four Zoas*, all of the material related to Jesus was added late in Blake's revision of the text.³⁶ For a variety of reasons, the role of this late material about Jesus is hotly debated. Bloom feels that Jesus and the Council of God are a "saving remnant" incorporated into *The Four Zoas* "because his [Blake's] fable needs them, but his fable has no room for them." They are, Bloom suggests, an "afterthought" (205-06). Other critics, like Sugnet and Dawson, suggest that Jesus, along with the Council of God, should be understood as representing a real transcendent form of divinity, albeit a somewhat unorthodox one, a form of divinity that is intrinsic to the meaning of the poem. Sugnet describes Jesus as the point of intersection between time and eternity, the one "who bridges the gap between the two"

³⁶See Lincoln, pages 1-27 for his summary of the different layers of the text. See pages 222-26 for his basic description of the Christian layer which he reads as a late addition.

(175). Alternatively, as Dawson suggests, the council of God and Jesus could be understood as Albion's peers in eternity, living in the state from which Albion has fallen and attempting to draw him back. This transcendent realm is necessary, in Dawson's reading, for there to be any way out of ensnarement for Albion. Hobson, on the other hand, suggests that Jesus's descent is precipitated by Enitharmon's actions and that Jesus is a marker for "collective human action" (176). Just as the relationship of soul and body is difficult to untangle in the tractates, the role of Jesus is difficult to untangle in *The Four Zoas*. Is he a symbol of a common humanity or is he actually a divine presence in human form, a mediator between divinity and humanity who makes it possible for human beings to rediscover their divine nature?

This study will not attempt to answer these questions, important as they are, because, in either case, the figure of Jesus plays a rhetorical role in the poem, and that role retains its validity and importance whatever religious beliefs Blake may have wished to communicate. Furthermore, if we examine Jesus as a cultural trope, so to speak, we can skirt some of the problems of agency that many, Hobson among them, suggest as central to the poem. In other words, Jesus's story is a form of symbolic action that can be reinterpreted in order to change and repair the damaged world that Blake describes in *The Four Zoas* (156). Understood in this way, the Gospel narrative becomes a cultural agency, an already present resource that Blake and his contemporaries can use to rethink their cultural perspectives on law, symbolic order, and violence. At the level of history, *The Four Zoas*, when amended to include Jesus as a significant figure, functions in part as a kind of argument between Blake and the state church concerning the rhetorical purposes

for which Jesus' life and death are to be used within the culture.

Furthermore, when we look at *The Four Zoas* through the lens of Kenneth Burke's logological theory, we must consider how the religious language of the text makes claims that could be applicable to all kinds of symbolic orders. While Blake examines how the story of Jesus's death functions culturally, he is also exploring the relationship of Christianity, as a thoroughgoing system of order, to sacrifice. This argument could apply equally well to Deism or other doctrines that might be applied in a thoroughgoing way.

We have already seen one critique of the eighteenth-century understanding of Atonement in *The Book of Ahania*. There, when Urizen crucifies his rebellious son Fuzon, Fuzon hangs for years, "a pale living Corse" on the Tree of Mystery, creating pestilence and deepening Urizen's power (Ch.IV, 1.36; E 88). By implication, Jesus's death functions in the same way for the church, deepening its Urizenic hold over both the minds and the bodies of individuals, and enslaving them in manacles that are both mind-forged and material. In *Ahania*, Blake portrays Jesus as the victim of rigid law and as a sacrifice to a cruel God, or to a tyrannical social order masquerading as divine. In *The Four Zoas*, the Jesus figure is murdered by the powers that be, who reframe his murder by calling it sacrificial atonement. Thus, the power of the ruling authorities is reinforced through the guilt of those who see Jesus as a sacrifice for their own sins, not a scapegoat who is slaughtered to cover up the sins of the ruling classes. If Blake's critique stopped here, with *The Book of Ahania*, it would match very closely with Thomas Paine's critique of the Atonement, in which Paine claims that this doctrine simply treats both human moral obligation and forgiveness as commodities that can be bought and sold. Thus, of course,

they remain a commodity that will ultimately be controlled by the dominant wealthy classes.

For Paine, Deism is the alternative world view that makes change possible. For Paine, what is necessary is to let go of Christianity as a religion of Mystery and the miraculous, and to let go of the divinity of Christ, honoring him instead as a great man and a great moral teacher. Then one will be free to use Reason in order to discover the truth and to create a rational social order. As we have seen, this solution is totally unsatisfactory for Blake. For him, reason is as objectionable a limitation on imaginative vision as is religious dogma, and the idea of inspiration that Deists like Paine would reject as superstitious remains a crucial and positive reality. But if Blake rejects both Deism and the Christian narrative, he leaves himself in the position of having few rhetorical resources left with which to move his readers from where they are to where he wants them to go. Even if Blake sees his ultimate aim as something other than the rhetorics of order available in his culture, he cannot weave this system from whole cloth. He must move his readers by means of something that they know. Blake attempts to achieve his aims by offering in Nights 7 and 8 at least two different perspectives on sacrifice in general and on the sacrifice of Jesus in particular, hoping to make available an understanding of Jesus and his death on the cross that will provide a viable alternative to the narrative offered by the state church. In doing so, he accepts an essentially Burkean rhetorical principle—that connecting human beings by means of a symbolic order does involve some kind of sacrifice, but that this sacrifice need not involve the scapegoating of others.

The multiple sacrifices of Nights 7 and 8 take place in the context of two rival

systems of order. One of these systems is embodied in Golgonooza, Los's city of art, originally built to ward off death, but transformed during Nights 7 and 8. The other is manifested in Urizen's system of Vortexes, Sciences, and books, and, finally, in his Web of Religion, all of them created after Urizen has awakened to find himself in a universe ruled by Tharmas and Los. In Night the Fifth, when Urizen awakens to discover himself in a position of essential powerlessness, he enters into a state something like repentance. As we have already seen, he regrets withholding his horses from Albion and he feels responsible that Luvah has fallen and lost his beauty; yet his concerns exist within a context of self-pity and a kind of inverted self-aggrandizement. He treats the fall as entirely his own responsibility in a way that suggests that he once wielded infinite power. But he also goes to seek Luvah, now embodied in the form of the bound Orc, in hopes that "love shall shew its root in deepest Hell" (p.65,l.12; E 344).

Once he begins to explore, however, and discovers that his own children are in the service of Tharmas and that he himself is even more powerless than he had realized, Urizen begins to reassert his efforts towards dominance:

So he began to dig form[ing] of gold silver & iron
And brass vast instruments to measure out the immense & fix
The whole into another world better suited to obey
His will where none should dare oppose his will himself being King
Of All & all futurity be bound in his vast chain (p.73,ll.16-20; E 350).

Urizen's method of gaining control will be to gain power over Luvah, now in the form of Los's son Orc, and thus ally with him against Los, just as he made an alliance with Los earlier in order to gain power over Luvah.

After Urizen begins to reassert his power, Night the Seventh begins, and along

with it a massive number of textual difficulties. There are, in fact, two versions of Night the Seventh. The critical consensus is that the version normally referred to as 7b was probably written first. 7b, which appears in pages 91-98, tells of Urizen's construction of a temple in the shape of a human heart, that is, in the shape of Luvah's original domain. This temple is dedicated to warfare and secret sexual rituals, thus establishing a relationship between sexuality and the need for violence. Warfare becomes a new form of sacrifice that perpetuates the system of order, and it involves all the Zoas, including Los. In addition to the sacrifice of warriors in combat, Night 7b also contains two brief references to crucifixion, both of them linked to Luvah/Orc. One of these is the crucifixion of Luvah, in which lots are cast for his clothing as they were cast for the clothing of Christ. Another is the more oblique crucifixion of Orc, who is entwined around (not nailed to) the tree of Mystery in the form of a snake, an idea that is more fully developed in 7a. In fact, the source of this tree would be difficult to discern if one had access only to Night 7b. Evidently, Blake saw difficulties with this version himself, because he tampered with it considerably, making notes to shift pages 95 -97 so as to precede pages 91-94.³⁷

Night 7a, according to most critics, is a later version. This text develops in fuller narrative detail some of the themes of 7b, but the story line is significantly different. In 7a Urizen alternately bullies and courts Orc in order to gain his submission. Furthermore, in 7a, Blake depicts the growth of the Tree of Mystery as a result of Urizen's envy of Orc. Orc's crucifixion on the tree of mystery is fully described, as is a destructive courtship

³⁷Page 98 simply marks the end of Night 7, so it naturally does not change position, but remains at the end of any version of this night, no matter what version or edition.

between the Shadow of Enitharmon and the Spectre of Urthona. This courtship results in a disastrous union that leads to the rebirth of Vala. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Night 7a portrays a transformation in Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre that prepares for a distinction between Urizen's and Los's response to Jesus's appearance.

Critical opinion about the proper inclusion and ordering of these two versions of Night 7 varies considerably. Erdman, in his 1982 edition of Blake's complete works, includes both versions of Night 7. This edition uses Blake's marginal notes to reorder Night 7b, and it places this rearranged version between two sections of 7a. This is only one arrangement, however, and different choices abound. Wilkie and Johnson, for example, offer a reading based upon 7a alone, treating that version of the narrative as definitive (140).³⁸

Of course, it is impossible to determine Blake's intentions precisely, since he left no final directions for the relationship between the two versions. Yet both include material that is necessary if Nights 8 and 9 are to make sense. Without 7a, for example, the work of Los and Enitharmon in Night 8, or the references to the destruction of Mystery in Night 9, simply would not make sense. Furthermore, the appearance of warfare, only described

³⁸Wilkie and Johnson suggest that serious students of *The Four Zoas* try five possible orderings. One of these involves the omission of 7a, while another would leave out 7b. Early in his career, Erdman supported the latter of these options. Other possibilities include various arrangements of the different parts of 7a and 7b. For a full discussion of these, see Wilkie and Johnson, page 272 as well as Erdman's "Textual Notes," page 836. See also the articles published by Erdman, Lincoln, Mark Lefebvre, and John Kilgore in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, volume 12, 1978. It should be observed that Erdman changed his view on the correct ordering of Night VII between 1978 and the completion of his 1982 edition of the *Collected Works*. In this edition, Erdman uses Lefebvre's ordering, putting 7b between two halves of 7a, and transposing the two sections of 7b according to marginal instructions left by Blake. My argument, as previously stated, relies upon the 1982 Erdman edition, but, in fact, it depends upon the content of the two segments more than upon any particular ordering of them.

in 7b, is also assumed later in the poem. Thus, both versions appear to be necessary to the plot. Nevertheless, some elements of 7a and 7b are repetitive; for example, Orc's crucifixion in 7b is a faint shadow of the fully developed version in 7a. It seems likely that Blake simply did not finish this segment of the poem, and that the complete relationship between all the parts was not ever finally worked out.

However, both versions provide contrasts between sacrificial activity as practiced by Urizen and his denizens and the sacrifice of Jesus as understood by Los and Enitharmon. 7a also offers a perspective on how Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre of Urthona become prepared to see Jesus's activity in a way that Urizen cannot. Thus, we will look first at the actual sacrificial events of Urizenic warfare and crucifixion as they appear in both versions of Night 7, showing how they prepare and create Urizen's response to Jesus in Night 8. Then we will examine the experiences of Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre of Urthona in Nights 7a and 8, delineating the differences in their perceptions of Jesus's death as compared to Urizen's. As Wilkie and Johnson suggest, Luvah/Orc's crucifixions are a "debasement," representing an understanding of Jesus's death as submission to Urizenic sacrifice. Jesus, on the other hand, engages in an act of "heroic self-sacrifice" (142). In this study, we will examine how this often-noted contrast offers both an intervention in Blake's own culture and a comment on the way symbolic order and sacrifice connect with one another in any symbolic order.

The sacrificial material in Night 7b, the earlier version, is fairly straightforward. Urizen creates a temple in the shape of the human heart and dedicated to warfare and secret rituals designed to hide "wonders allegoric of the Generations/Of secret lust. . .

The sacrifice of warrior victims serves several purposes. Warfare provides an outlet for the pent-up passions while conveniently creating more consubstantiation for Urizen's community, because the war allows Urizen's party to unite against a common foe, who are sacrificed, along with Urizen's own dead, to the pure ideal of his abstract law. One might add that the sacrificial deaths of soldiers would also act as a kind of propitiation for the continued sexual feelings that would perpetually reemerge in an order where sexuality is tightly controlled and concealed.³⁹

they took the Sun that glowd oer Los
And with immense machines down rolling, the terrific orb
Compell'd . . .
. . . they put the Sun
Into the temple of Urizen to give light to the Abyss
To light the War by day to hide his secret beams by night

³⁹In fact, it might be possible to argue, in somewhat more Foucaultian terms, that the denial of sexuality creates passions that then require warfare for their continued suppression.

For he divided day & night in different orderd portions
 The day for war the night for secret religion in his temple (p.96,ll.9-11,15-18; E 361)

Creating the temple so that it functions imaginatively as a cosmos makes Urizen's religious order look "natural," thus allowing for an easy conflation of nature, religion, and politics.

Thus, the mystification involved in Urizen's religion grows deeper and deeper.

Additionally, the theft of Los's sun also serves as a pretext for drawing Los into conflict with Urizen. Urizen's warriors can engage in ritual warfare only if there is an enemy, so they steal from Los in order to arouse him to action. Los enters the conflict precisely after the theft of his goods. Although Tharmas sees Los's involvement as a part of his own plan for revenge, the time of Los's rising up, immediately after the theft of property, suggests that his real concern is Urizen's violation of his creative energies. Thus Los is inspired to rise against Urizen so that he can become the enemy around whom Urizen's denizens can unite.

Throughout this segment of Night 7b, Blake treats religion, sexual denial, and warfare as interconnected social realities, bound up within a united, and mystified, system of order, where worship reinforces the political desire for conquest. Sacrifice, in this case the earlier sacrifice of Luvah at the beginning of the poem, underlies them all and perpetuates them all. This discussion of war as a sacrificial dimension of religion is the unique contribution of Night 7b to *The Four Zoas* as a whole. Crucifixions, on the other hand, occur in both 7a and 7b. The crucifixion of Orc in 7b is a pale shadow compared to a similar event in 7a, so we will omit analysis of Orc's crucifixion in 7b. However, the crucifixion of Luvah in 7b is unique to this version and makes its own argument, one

centered around a comparison between the crucifixion of Luvah and that of Jesus. The comparison centers around two points, the first being the context of the two crucifixions. Jesus' execution is a judicial act, albeit an unfair one, that has come to be understood theologically, as a sacrifice on behalf of sinful people. Luvah's crucifixion in 7b is the execution of a prisoner of war. Thus, Blake comments on the essentially religious and sacrificial character of warfare.

The second aspect of the comparison centers around an episode recounted in three of the four Gospels in which the soldiers who crucify Jesus cast lots for his clothing. By contrast, in the *The Four Zoas*, the soldiers divide up the garments of the dead enemy, then cast lots to see who among the prisoners will be subjected to crucifixion:

Now sound the clarions of Victory now strip the slain
 clothe yourselves in golden arms brothers of war
 They sound the clarions strong they chain the howling captives
 they give the Oath of blood They cast the lots into the helmet,
 They vote the death of Luvah & they naild him to the tree
 They pierced him with a spear & laid him in a sepulcher . . . (p.92, ll.9-14;
 E 364)

The allusions to the Gospel in this discussion of the spoils of war draws the reader's attention to the idea that warfare is sacrificial in nature, and the slaughtered prisoner becomes associated with the innocence of Christ.

This emphasis is heightened by the specific allusion to the soldiers who cast lots for Jesus's robe, here transmogrified into soldiers who cast lots for a man's flesh. In the Gospel of John, it is specifically Jesus's robe for which the soldiers gamble (John 19:23). In the context of *The Four Zoas*, this allusion is particularly telling, because throughout the poem, Jesus is referred to as wearing "Luvah's robes of blood"; in other words, as

Paley suggests, Jesus willingly takes on flesh like Luvah's ("Figure" 129). In casting lots to decide whether or not Luvah will die, the soldiers are casting lots for his "robes of blood," his body, in order randomly to identify a sacrificial object. In making such a sacrifice, the soldiers make themselves consubstantial with both Luvah and the enemy soldiers, at least in part. They use consubstantiation with a victim, no more guilty than they are themselves, as a way of evading their own deaths. When the soldiers kill Luvah, they have already killed many other enemies in battle. Furthermore, they have made themselves consubstantial with the fallen enemy by taking and wearing their clothes, just as Jesus has worn the clothes of Luvah. However, their consubstantiation is deliberately partial. All sacrifices, be they made on the altar or in warfare, require that we see the other as like ourselves and different from ourselves at the same time. We dissociate ourselves from the evil we see in the other, and from their tragic fate, but take as our own the beneficial effects we imagine will come through their death. The soldiers' execution of Luvah is similar. The ritual quality of Luvah's execution—the casting of lots, the crucifixion, and the careful entombment of a dead prisoner, all of these indicate a sacrificial impulse. The soldiers cast lots to see who will die for them, meaning literally, who will die in their place.

Nevertheless, such a sacrifice is woefully ineffective. The soldiers themselves may at any time be sacrificed, randomly, to Urizen's wars and to his purposes. The sacrifices of warfare are endless, with one death following another interminably, and the soldiers are gruesomely complicit in the very system that endangers them. The soldiers who cast lots into a helmet to decide whether or not Luvah will die are choosing to kill Luvah in an

attempt to save themselves. One must die so that the other will live. Yet the soldiers who cast lots for Jesus' robes, even as they kill Luvah/Christ to save themselves, also place themselves in the position of being the next one to die, the next one to wear the "robe of blood." Their sacrifice is simply one more submission to Urizen's system. The system of sacrifice is in no way threatened. Human desire, as embodied in Luvah, human compassion, as embodied in Jesus, and finally, innumerable human bodies, the bodies of soldiers, must be sacrificed to Urizen's repressive sexual laws, and to the continuation of "soldiering" as a way of life. This sacrifice, and the forms of consubstantiation it supports, stand in marked contrast to the death of Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus is understood to be guiltless, but he nevertheless makes himself consubstantial with malefactors by sharing in their execution. This contrast sets up a dissonance between the original Christian text and the practice of warfare as a form of religious sacrifice.

This version of Luvah's crucifixion protests the use of sacrifice in the Urizenic system, and it explains a great deal about how that system works. Yet, at the same time, it fails to indicate, in any clear way, how the personal attitudes of leaders and victims influence the process of sacrifice. Thus, while the sacrifice in 7b may influence readers' ideas about warfare and sacrifice, it does not clearly display the underlying motives that contribute to these phenomena, nor does it demonstrate how rhetoric in general and the Christian narrative in particular serve to reinforce the tangled web of mystery that connects political domination and religion as a system of order.

The depictions and discussions of sacrifice in Night 7a achieve these aims with far greater thoroughness. 7a shows exactly how Urizen tricks Orc into obedience to law and

to Urizen's system of mystery. In 7a, Blake depicts Urizen's duplicity and his willingness to sacrifice others to save, not only himself, but his system—not obliquely, as in 7b, but with utter directness. This duplicity is contrasted with Los' growing integrity. Los transformed by his reunion with his Spectre, sacrifices himself by giving to others, even when he suspects that his refusal to harm others may cost him his own life. In creating this contrast between Urizen and Los, Blake also contrasts two kinds of ordering principles—one based upon avoidance of change and the other more flexible and open.

Similarly, Orc's reluctant complicity in his own crucifixion is also stunningly clear in version 7a. Orc ultimately submits himself to Urizen's system because Urizen has tapped into Orc's anxieties, doubts, and terrors. Orc allows himself to be crucified because he allows Urizen to weaken his resolve through the manipulation of language, including a variety of symbolic orders. This victim of Urizen's order is contrasted to Jesus, whom Urizen also sacrifices later in the poem, in Night 8. Yet Jesus's crucifixion occurs, not because he submits to Urizen, but because he resists Urizen's laws and punishments. These contrasting images of systems of order, as embodied in Urizen and Los, and of sacrificial victims, as embodied in Orc and Jesus, become Blake's argument for undermining what he sees as the sacrificial order of mainstream Christianity and for reclaiming the Christian narrative for his own rhetorical purposes.

These purposes include an intervention in the historical realities of his own culture, insofar as Blake attacks warfare and imperialism by portraying Urizen's distortion of Christianity. Yet Blake is also making a statement about all thoroughgoing systems of order. If Christianity's social effects can be changed through reinterpretation, so can the

social effects of other symbolic systems. Urizen's forte is the development of symbolic orders that he then renders hard, rigid, and unchangeable in order to freeze them and make them obey his own desire. Before Urizen makes his way to Orc's den in Night the Seventh, he has already begun using his system of vortexes (mathematics), his scientific and technological acumen, and his web of religion to assist him in his battle with Tharmas and the Spectre of Urthona.

In Night 7a, Urizen continues to use his symbolic orders to further a desire for personal dominance, this time over Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre of Urthona. As Urizen tells his daughters, their interaction with Orc has as its purpose "To bring the shadow of Enitharmon beneath our wondrous tree/That Los may Evaporate like smoke & be no more" (p.80;ll.5-6; E 355). Placing Orc on the Tree of Mystery will draw Enitharmon to it, thus drawing the Shadow of Urthona to the tree as well; finally, the union of these two will lead to the destruction of Los.⁴⁰

However, despite its dire purposes, Urizen's crucifixion of Orc is the result of a remarkable mix of the two phenomena that Kenneth Burke refers to as scapegoating and courtship. These phenomena are supposed to be opposites, yet these opposites are blended as Urizen attempts to seduce Orc in order to get the fiery and angry young captive to submit willingly to victimization. The seduction is made using a variety of systems of order: science, history (or at least military history and strategy), religion, economics, and,

⁴⁰This prediction is only half true. Orc's crucifixion on the Tree of Mystery does draw Enitharmon, which does draw the Shadow. What Urizen does not anticipate is that this union, and the rebirth of Vala that is its result, will lead, not to the destruction of Los, but to his reunion with his Spectre, to the empowerment and healing of all concerned.

finally, the family order that had been Orc's undoing originally.

At first, Urizen seems to believe that courtship will not be necessary. Perhaps, he can put out Orc's fires and gain control of him simply by putting Orc into a Urizenic element. As a result, Urizen throws snow and ice at Orc in hopes of cooling him off. The snows fall for "Age after Age," apparently without result (p.78,l.4; E 353). The Tree of Mystery, upon which Orc and Jesus will both be crucified, is a growth that results from Urizen's "envy" of Orc. It seems that, once Urizen recognizes his inability to undermine Orc using the direct force of snow and ice, he unconsciously develops a new and more intricately complex means for controlling the bound youth, and for expressing his fury that the younger man is not subject to him. In fact, Urizen has so little awareness of the tree's growth that it almost overtakes him, and he seems unaware that it has taken root by means of contact between the ground and his own body. In a moment that Martin Bidney rightly identifies as comic, the startled Urizen has to flee, because this labyrinthine tangle of Tree, which grows rapidly and wildly, almost ensnares Urizen himself (Bidney 216-17):

Amazd started Urizen when he found himself compassd 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
Again he took his seat & rangd his Books around
On a rock of iron frowning over the foaming fires of Orc (p.78;ll.9-14; E
353).

The relationship between the tree and Urizen's books is also highly significant.⁴¹ If

⁴¹While this discussion of Urizen's books focuses on them as a negative tool, it is important to remember that in *The Four Zoas* as a whole, Urizen's books are as ambiguous as Urizen himself. When the Lamb of God saves Urizen from falling into Eternal Death in Night the Sixth, Urizen's books are the one thing that remains constant through each death and rebirth of the Urizenic principle. Thus, Urizen's books, which he carries with him constantly from Night 6 on, bear a kind of resemblance to Eternity; they partake of an eternal principle, even if they themselves fail to be eternal.

we recall the language of *Urizen* and *Ahania*, iron is the substance from which Urizen makes his laws. Because of the rapid growth of the tree of mystery, Urizen must abandon his book of iron. Thus, law becomes entangled with the envy that motivates Urizen's attack on Orc, so that law and envy become essentially one entity. Nevertheless, Urizen's envy is in no way abated by this event, and his snows have been useless, probably because, unlike Los, Orc's passion has created very little structure of his own, so that there is no symbolic system for Urizen to attack and petrify. Thus, Urizen begins to maneuver and seduce Orc by means of language, at one point having his daughters feed Orc "the bread of suffering" while reading to him from the book of iron. It is as if Urizen is trying to mold Orc with language, to discover and create the symbolic structures that will make Orc malleable to his will.

At first, Urizen's symbolic efforts are pure courtship. He tells Orc first that he, Urizen, has only approached the bound youth out of concern: "Pity for thee movd me to break my dark & long repose/And to reveal myself before thee in a form of wisdom" (p.78, ll.30-31; E 354). This maneuver being unavailing, as Orc does everything but call Urizen a fool, the bearded patriarch goes on to tempt Orc by means of knowledge, most specifically, the instrumental knowledge of navigation and warfare: "Urizen answerd Read my books explore my Constellations/Enquire of my Sons & they shall teach thee how to War" (p.79, ll.20-21; E 355). Thus, he appeals to the violence of Orc's anger, suggesting that his systems of order will, in fact, help Orc to be more successfully angry, more fruitfully enraged.

However, in the same breath, Urizen sends his daughters to feed Orc the bread of

sorrow and read to him from the book of iron, that is, the book of law. Urizen's messages are contradictory. The offer of assistance in developing a revolutionary strategy is merely a means of softening Orc's resistance and making him ready to listen to Urizenic law. Since this law is directly connected to the envy that bound it up in the Tree of Mystery, its purpose is clearly to disempower.

Then Urizen himself reads, evidently to both his daughters and to Orc, from his book of brass. In *The Book of Urizen*, the book of brass is the text which Urizen reads to the Eternals when he is first introducing them to his religion. Thus, it is somewhat distinct from the book of iron, even as it is closely related. While the content of the book of brass in *Urizen* is unknown, in *The Four Zoas*, it is clear. The book of brass teaches its readers and hearers how to manipulate the poor through rhetoric, and it is an overt and direct version of the somewhat more subtle expressions actually available in Blake's culture, especially in Malthusian economics (Schorer 277-78) and in the Malthusian political philosophy of William Pitt (Rosso 136):

Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread by soft mild arts
Smile when they frown frown when they smile & when a man looks pale
With labour & abstinence say he looks healthy & happy
And when his children sicken let them die there are enough
Born even too many & our Earth will be overrun
Without these arts . . . (p.80,ll.9-14; E 355)

The link to Malthus's economics is particularly vivid, since Malthus argues in *First Essay on Principles of Population*, first published in 1798, that giving to the poor is actually harmful to them. If the poor have enough to eat, it will allow them to reproduce more, thus becoming more plentiful and finally more in danger of starvation, since population

growth will always outstrip food supply.⁴²

There could be no better definition of Mystery than this. Urizen is encouraging his daughters to mingle religious law with economic expediency, so that Orc will cooperate with Urizen and perhaps even agree that his own persecution and suffering are necessary. Ultimately, Urizen's desire is to "Reduce all to our will as spaniels are taught with art" (p.80,l.21; E 355). By these means, Urizen will gain Orc's cooperation in his battle against Los while preventing him from gaining enough power to assault Urizen himself.

However, none of this has the effect on Orc that Urizen desires. Thus, Urizen resorts to an attack on Orc's most vulnerable front, that is, the family order imposed upon him by his father Los. As Wilkie and Johnson suggest, this attack is "both more cruel" and "more effective in raising self-doubt" than earlier ones (149). Whatever the nature of Orc's original feelings for his mother, Los's actions in binding the young man have produced in Orc something like a religious veneration for her. The chained Orc is surrounded by the emblems of sacrificial religion. There are "raging lamps of mercy," an oddly mixed image that may well describe the ambiguousness of Orc's adoration of the mother who was unable to save him from crucifixion (p.77,l.11; E 353). He rages at her and pities her all at once. There is also blood flowing everywhere, nourishing "the immortal seed" for "the slaughter," an image that links childbearing with sacrificial violence, probably in the form of warfare, a sacrifice even more violent than Los's living

⁴²Frye makes an interesting link between symbolic orders and the type of oppression described in this passage. He suggests that oppression is a necessary outcome of the desire for a uniform order. "What Urizen wants is *mental uniformity*, common sense, and the social product of this is the rule of tyrants over victims. Two friends of equal status are not necessarily uniform in their minds; a master and a slave are, because the master is as much a product of a slave state as a slave, and is equally ensnared by it" (222-23).

sacrifice of Orc (p.77,l.15; E 353). Finally, there is Orc's own spirit, which "Darted & darted higher & higher to the shrine of Enitharmon" (p.77,l.22; E 353). Orc's binding has merely increased his longing for his mother so that it is now a form of religious worship.

This adoration of Enitharmon is Orc's vulnerable point. Thus, Orc can withstand Urizen's other temptations. He can even withstand the pressures of an economic order that scapegoats him and others who suffer by telling them that they are not really suffering or that they are totally responsible for their own pain, thus letting rulers like Urizen off the hook. What Orc cannot tolerate is the breakdown of the symbolic order he himself has created in order to deal with Los's having separated him from his mother. The image of the mother as a virginal and sacred being must be retained, or Orc can no longer maintain his anger and his resistance. Thus Urizen finally gains control of Orc by describing Enitharmon as pregnant, and what is worse, pregnant as a result of her own sexual desire:

Lo how the heart & brain are formed in the breeding womb
Of Enitharmon how it buds with life & forms the bones
The little heart the liver & the red blood in its labyrinths
By gratified desire by strong devouring appetite she fills
Los with ambitious fury that his race shall all devour (p.80,l.22-26; E 356)

The reference to Los is not the significant factor here, because Orc does not remember that Los is the one who bound him. In fact, just a few lines later, he asks Urizen whether or not Urizen is the one who bound him. Rather, it is the image of Enitharmon pregnant because of her own desire that infuriates and weakens Orc, causing him to divide into two beings, one bound and angry but too weak to break free from his bonds, the other free, but peaceful and submissive to Urizen.

Orc unites with Urizen, whom he knows to be his enemy, by climbing the tree of

Mystery, because Urizen has shattered the symbolic order that allowed Orc to maintain his desire for his mother and yet see her as unavailable. In other words, Urizen has broken the system of Mystery that Orc had created for himself, and left him no way of coping with his frustration but to take on Urizen's form of Mystery instead. By breaking apart Orc's system of order, Urizen compels Orc to take on his own system. The battle between Urizen and Orc is undertaken at the level of rhetoric, although Urizen's ultimate aim is corporeal warfare against Los.

This reading of Urizen's use of symbolic orders to manipulate Orc can be linked to a variety of different versions of historical critique. It fits the vision of Orc as revolutionary France, insofar as Orc's worship of Enitharmon can readily be seen as a satire upon the veneration of the Virgin Mother in the Catholic France, which, when lost, is translated into submission to Urizenic warfare and empire as a way of life. It is compatible with Hobson's notion that Orc represents the working classes, although we must recognize that they are led into submission as much by the psychological residue of the family order as by political means. Finally, it is compatible with a critique of faculty psychology, which subordinates passion to reason, perhaps in part because the rational faculty is able to play upon the anxieties about authority and sexual desire that are developed within the familial system.

However we understand Orc, we can see that even though he overtly despises and rejects Urizen, and suspects Urizen of lying, once he climbs Urizen's tree and begins to "Organize a Serpent body" for himself, he puts himself in Urizen's power (p.80,l.44; E 356). Knowing Orc to be Luvah, Urizen sacrifices him again, subjecting him to a kind of

crucifixion:

. . . 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 nor knew the dread result (p.81, ll.3-6; E 356)

Thus any revolutionary power Orc might have had is controlled and recast to Urizen's own purposes. Whereas in *Ahania* is it Fuzon whom Urizen crucifies, thus leaving the revolutionary reader to hope that perhaps Orc would still break free from bondage and produce a new and better revolution, in *The Four Zoas*, Urizen co-opts the prophetic and revolutionary power of Los's son, rendering Orc's revolutionary interests futile.

Furthermore, Urizen uses Orc's sufferings to further his own power. When Orc mounts the tree of mystery as a snake, Urizen says that he will "draw all human forms/Into submission to his will nor knew the dread result." These words about being lifted up directly allude to a passage from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Thus, Orc is identified with Jesus. Yet Urizen is the one to whom humanity will be drawn by this particular crucifixion. This allusion suggests another Biblical passage as well. In Exodus, the Hebrew people worship the golden calf, in violation of the commandment against idolatry, and, as punishment, they are smitten with illness and die in great numbers. They can, however, be saved by gazing upon a golden snake that Moses has formed and held up before them. Later, in the New Testament Gospel of John, this snake is linked with Jesus as well, as the Evangelist writes, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:/That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have

everlasting life” (John 3:14-15). In driving Orc up the tree in the form of a snake, Urizen acts the part of Jehovah and/or his spokesman Moses, who punishes those who disobey his laws but provides a sacrificial means of redemption for them through the “crucified” snake.

For Blake, both of these passages can be used to put Jesus in the position of being a Urizenic pawn, an offering to appease Urizen’s bloodlust, but also a means to draw everyone into Urizen’s power through conviction of sinfulness and gratitude for redemption. This is the case despite the reality that Urizen creates the sins by establishing the law and tree of mystery in the first place. While Orc can be understood here to represent particular groups of people in culture, he also represents a certain way of understanding and applying the Christian narrative in the social order. Jesus/Orc submits to Urizen peacefully. Therefore, others should do so as well. The peaceful Orc, who submits to Urizen and becomes complicit with him, even in his death, becomes the type of Christ and the model of behavior. Of course, as the poem progresses, Orc continues to rage. Yet his rage becomes warfare on Urizen’s terms, as in Night 8, when Orc battles in fury “among the Constellations of Urizen” (p.101,l.8; E 373), while growing more and more into the form of a jeweled serpent who eats continually from the fruit of the tree of mystery, while “communing” with Urizen and the Sanhedrin of Satan in joint warfare against Los. Ironically, the submissive, peaceful Christ, in yielding to Urizen, becomes the warrior Christ, or at least, the warrior Christian. This Urizenic warfare is again sacrificial in nature, since its purpose is “avert/His [Urizen’s] own despair even at the cost of every thing that breathes” (p.102;ll.21-22; E 375). Urizen’s relationship with Orc describes a

particular understanding of the Christian system.

By the middle of Night the Eighth, Urizen spends much of his time in his “temple of the Sun” consecrating his books by “reading incessantly/To myriads of perturbed spirits thro the universe” (p.102,ll.23-25; E 375). He creates many, many believers who follow his laws and accept his ideas, following in Orc’s footsteps. The “Victims” of his laws create, by means of their “tears & sighs & death sweat” the Lake of Udan in a place called Entuthon Benithon (p.113,l.27; E 377). This lake keeps the roots of Urizen’s tree of mystery watered. Thus Urizen has created a veritable machine of mystery and sacrifice, which literally reproduces itself. Orc’s suffering has drawn others to Urizen, and these others have been made to suffer, thus watering the tree upon which Orc was entwined, drawing more followers to Urizen, and so on.

For this reason, when Jesus appears “wearing Luvah’s robes of blood,” in Night 8, Urizen is terribly disturbed. Urizen is confused by that appearance, because he knows that Orc is Luvah and he believes that he has Orc more or less under control. Furthermore, he has sacrifice as a system thoroughly under control. As a result, Urizen is “Perplexd & terrifid” (p.101,l.2; E 373) by the appearance of Jesus, looking like Luvah and wearing Luvah’s sacrificial garment. The appearance of this version of Jesus is a genuine problem for Urizen, because Jesus undermines the system of sin and sacrificial violence that Urizen uses to sustain his power, and which has become the center of his symbolic order. It is no longer a part of the order; it is the order. Yet Jesus comes to Entuthon Benithon where the Victims create the lake that feeds Urizen’s sacrificial system. There “taking refuge in his arms/The Victims fled from punishment for all his words were peace” (p.105,ll.3-4; E

378). Such forgiveness would completely undermine Urizen's system, because such free forgiveness would render sacrifices unnecessary. Urizen's control, based on bloodshed, would be lost. At an even more basic level, law itself would be undermined; Urizen's special function as the creator of boundaries seems to be at stake here.

So Urizen's next action is to confer with the "synagogue of Satan" and crucify Jesus, with the assistance of Rahab and her sisters.⁴³ These women simultaneously love and torment their victims. As Otto suggests, Rahab and the others love their victims, but they believe they themselves can only receive the promised redemption by killing the beloved. Thus, "noone opposes the crucifixion because they believe it is the only path to eternal life" (263). So the daughters of Rahab worship as a divine redeemer the very one whom they themselves destroy:

Thus was the Lamb of God condemnd to death
They naild him upon the tree of Mystery weeping over him
And then mocking & then worshipping calling him Lord & King (p.106,l.1-3; E 379)

This is the same principle upon which the temple of the Sun is founded in Night 7b, where Luvah is honored even as his sacrifice must be perpetually reenacted. If Jesus's death can be interpreted as one more sacrifice to Urizen, even a voluntary one, then that death would simply perpetuate Urizen's system, drawing more people into his snare, the snare of perpetual sacrifice in a temple devoted to death..

⁴³In Night 8, the term "synagogue of Satan," which sounds rather anti-Semitic, is linked with the Sanhedrin (l.4) who collaborate with the Roman governor to put Jesus to death in the Gospels. Elsewhere in Blake's writings there is evidence of some anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, as Bloom suggests, Blake is using the term in this context to link the religious structures that put Jesus to death with the supposedly Christian church of his own era (261). The point is the Satanic quality of both systems, not some uniquely Jewish form of evil.

Certainly Urizen sees things in this way. Jesus, wearing Luvah's robes of blood, is simply another Luvah, sacrificed in precisely the same way. At first appears as if Los shares this vision also, since he cooperates with Jerusalem when she suggests that they build a sepulcher for Jesus and "worship Death in fear while yet we live" (p.106,l.10; E 379). Rather than focusing on Jesus's mercy, Jerusalem focuses on death. If she and Los and the others all worship his death, as such, they put themselves back into the Urizenic order which would have them willingly participate in their own sacrifice in the same way that Orc did. Thus, whatever Jesus may have been or intended, Urizen would be able to incorporate him and his worshipers into the Urizenic system. In fact, Jerusalem falls into this precise trap, allowing Rahab to persuade her to sacrifice her own children on Urizen's "bloody Altar" (p.111,l.4; E 385).

Jerusalem's actions are a direct response to Rahab's interpretation of Jesus's death. After his body is taken down from the Cross, Rahab removes Luvah's robe from Jesus's body, and "it rolld apart, revealing to all in heaven/And all on Earth the Temple & the Synagogue of Satan & Mystery" (p.113 second portion, l.38-40; E 379). These lines seem to indicate that Jesus's generosity in assuming Luvah's robes of blood is finally just another submission to the Urizenic order. By letting himself be killed, Jesus submits to Urizen, and his death reveals Urizen's power and the power of Mystery. Jesus's death is the sacrifice of a rebel, just like all the others, and, like all the others, it will preserve the system. Lincoln sees this moment as the stripping away of the love in Jesus's act, so that Urizenic judgment becomes the only visible reality (269-70). Similarly, Peter Otto privileges this perspective on the crucifixion, arguing that if Jesus's death is emphasized at

all, Urizen's sacrificial system is supported. Even more disastrous is the emphasis on his death as a sacrifice. Instead, Otto suggests, Jesus's Incarnation, or embodiment, is the appropriate point of focus, because that emphasis affirms the body that Urizen has degraded, suppressed, and murdered throughout the poem (*Critique* 99).

Yet Blake allows for another way of reading of Jesus's death, even as Rahab, Urizen's conspirator, is still in the picture. Without necessarily rejecting Otto's perspective altogether, one can read the text as do Wilkie and Johnson, who suggest that it is precisely Jesus's death, understood as self-sacrifice, that destroys Orcan sacrifice, since Orc's crucifixion is based upon Urizenic accusations of sin, and Orc cooperates because he buys into Urizen's system (152). Jesus's sacrifice has a different motivation from Orc's, and that different motivation allows it to have a different kind of influence. This view bears some resemblance to that of Rosso, who suggests that Jesus's sacrifice supports the idea of self-sacrifice, and that self-sacrifice renders Urizenic morality obsolete (142). Urizenic sacrifice, after all, began with Urizen's attempts to evade his own guilt and his own fear of destruction. He persuades Orc to accept crucifixion for the same reason, and Orc is willing to accept his own crucifixion because Urizen has destroyed his power to resist. Jesus, on the other hand, resists Urizen's accusations of sin to the end, refusing to accept Urizen's definition of others as sinners. Furthermore, he even refuses to respond to Urizen with violence in order to preserve himself. From this perspective, when Rahab pulls back the robe and reveals the Tree of Mystery, she is accidentally revealing the source of Jesus's murder in all its turpitude. The interpretation of the death, and of the unfurled robe, lies within the eye of the viewer, and that is precisely the point. Blake is asking his readers to

choose what Jesus's death will mean for them.

Yet in *The Four Zoas*, Los's view is the one that has the most authority, and his perspective grows through events in Night 7a. While Urizen is busy seducing and enslaving Orc, Los is engaged in the process of reuniting with the Spectre—a rejected fragment of the original Urthona—and, as a result, he is rethinking his perspective on sacrifice. As has been previously mentioned, the male Los, the male Spectre, and the female Enitharmon are all fragments of the original Urthona. The Spectre suggests a reunion between himself, Los, and Enitharmon after the Spectre and Enitharmon engage in sexual union on the Tree of Mystery and, in the process, cause the rebirth of Vala in a new and different form. When Vala arises, along with her comes an absolutely disastrous resurrection of the dead “[i]n male forms without female counterparts or Emanations/Cruel and ravening with Enmity & Hatred & War” (p.85 1st portion, ll.19-20; E 360). Whatever this peculiar event might represent, a provocative question in its own right, it is clear that it is negative, disturbing even to Urizen and utterly horrifying to the Spectre who, along with Enitharmon, caused the disaster to occur.⁴⁴

The Spectre is distasteful even to himself and he recognizes that he is distasteful to

⁴⁴The hermaphrodites in Blake's texts are puzzling and fascinating, more so because they are clearly bad things. Yet, in Night the Ninth, when the Apocalypse comes and the Zoas are reunited, the female forms disappear. Thus, the hermaphrodites are both like and unlike the Zoas when they are whole. The difference is probably that in the true Zoas, male and female are united. Neither element of humanity is actually cut off. The hermaphrodites, however, remind the reader of the true Zoas, because they lack separate female and male selves. But the difference is that these figures have no female side at all, whereas the unified Zoas include both male and female qualities within themselves. Blake's hermaphrodites may be half-beings, like the divided Zoas, who are incapable of mating with anything. They can also be seen as utterly detached from the body. Both of these perspectives are arguable. Yet these matters need not be worked out in full, if our aim is to explore the way in which the hermaphrodite episodes contribute to an argument on sacrifice. What is central for the purposes of this discussion is the Spectre's horror at helping to create even more fragmented beings. This remorse makes him want to embrace Los, become one with him, and find a way to work together to help the hermaphrodites.

Los. Furthermore, his distaste for himself is matched by his distaste for Los. Nevertheless he insists that the two must be reunited, and Enitharmon along with them:

Thou never canst embrace sweet Enitharmon terrible Demon. Till
 Thou art united with thy Spectre Consummating by pains & labours
 That mortal body & by Self annihilation back returning
 To Life Eternal be assur'd I am thy real Self
 Tho thus divided from thee & the Slave of Every passion
 Of thy fierce Soul Unbar the Gates of Memory look upon me
 Not as another but as thy real Self I am thy Spectre
 Thou didst subdue me in old times by thy Immortal Strength
 When I was a ravning hungry & thirsting cruel lust & murder
 Tho horrible & Ghastly to thine Eyes tho buried beneath
 The ruins of the Universe, hear what inspir'd I speak & be silent

If we unite in one[,] another better world will be
 Opend within your heart & loins & wondrous brain (p.85 second
 portion, ll.32-44; E 368)

To the Spectre Los is a terrible Demon who has subdued him. To Los, the Spectre is “cruel lust and murder” itself, “horrible and Ghastly.” Yet the answer to their mutual disgust, the Spectre urges, is a reunion between them. That reunion is effected by “Self annihilation,” a Blakean term that will reappear constantly in the later works, but which appears here for the first time in the mythological texts. This self-annihilation is not suicide, however; nor it is Orc’s submission to Urizen. It is, rather, a renunciation of one’s claim to superior status, including the claim to moral superiority over the other. Thus, one is enabled to forgive both one’s own weaknesses and those of others. Forgiveness implies that the person is more important than the symbolic order that he or she may have violated.

Nevertheless, openness and forgiveness are not Los’s immediate reactions to the Spectre’s offer. Instead, Los is “furious,” he sees the Spectre as “horrible,” and he is

astounded at the suggestion that the two should join. Nevertheless, he is quickly convinced that the Spectre is telling the truth; as a result, he experiences the doors opening up within him, and comes to recognize that it is time for forgiveness: "I will quell my fury & teach/Peace to the Soul of dark revenge & repentance to Cruelty" (p.86, ll. 11-12; E 368). Los responds to the Spectre's words by embracing him. The two are united, and from this point become capable of working together. Furthermore, a new way of responding to guilt emerges. Throughout the text, from Tharmas and Enion's first recriminations, to Los's binding of Orc, to Urizen's domination of Orc, the characters in *The Four Zoas* have been scapegoating others, through either blame or actual sacrifice, in order to assuage their own guilt, ensure the dominance and the purity of their own systems, or save their own lives. Even though the two are unable, at first, to get Enitharmon to join them, the reconciliation of Los and the Spectre opens the way to forgiveness as an option.

This transformation is not immediate, however. Enitharmon is thoroughly entangled in the Urizenic system. She believes that she will die eternally if someone does not ransom her, and she insists that Los must eat Urizen's fruit and join her in her misery. Furthermore, Urthona's Spectre blames himself for the Spectres of the Dead who have no female counterparts and who suffer terribly, and he also feels the need for ransom. He wants to clothe bodies for the dead, giving them counterparts. At first, it appears that Los and his companions will be creating new entities solely for the purpose of sacrificing them in order to gain redemption. When Los agrees with the Spectre's plan, he uses the language of sacrifice in his affirmation, but he also uses that language in an ambiguous

way:

They [the dead who are victims of battle] feed upon our life we are their
victims. Stern desire
I feel to fabricate embodied semblances in which the dead
May live before us in our palaces & in our gardens of labour
Which now open within the Center we behold spread abroad
To form a world of Sacrifice of brothers & sons & daughters
To comfort Orc in his dire sufferings; . . . (p.90,ll.8-13; E 370)

It is unclear here whether or not Los ultimately intends to allow the newly recreated a time of life in his city Golgonooza before sacrificing them, or whether their life will somehow be his sacrifice, the sacrifice of his labors. Enitharmon, however clearly sees the newly clothed dead as potential “ransoms” that will allow her own soul and Los’s soul to survive (p.90,l.24; E 370).

Ultimately, however, once the process of forgiveness and yielding to the other has begun in the mutual embrace of Los and the Spectre, the process continues. As Los creates artistic forms, the spectrous dead see them and are able to take these forms to themselves for bodies. This is a strange idea, but, clearly, it has to do with art’s capacity, not so much to create bodies, as to create our perceptions of our bodies and of the world’s body. Los and Enitharmon both find that they love the new life that they have created through their work, and so does the bound Orc, the part of Orc that has never yielded to Urizen. Thus, if these new beings are ransoms for Los and Enitharmon, it is only because Los and Enitharmon are “ransomed” by their own love and labor, not by the blood of sacrifices:

But Los loved them & refusd to Sacrifice their infant limbs
And Enitharmons smiles & tears prevaild over self protection
They rather chose to meet Eternal death than to destroy

The offspring of their Care & Pity Urthonas spectre was comforted
(p.90,ll.50-53; E 371)

The idea of sacrifice as the method for avoiding death, even the Eternal death which throughout the text the characters have regarded as the ultimate terror, still exists in the minds of these characters. But they have come to value the lives of their offspring as more precious to them than their own lives. Once this shift occurs, one would rather be stained permanently by guilt or lose one's own life than harm another.

Through this transformation, the movement towards the Apocalypse of the later nights becomes possible. It also becomes possible to understand Jesus's death in a way that is very different from Urizen's. While Urizen sees in Jesus's crucifixion another death that can be used to redeem his own life and the lives of his followers, Los can see Jesus as another like himself who refuses to sacrifice others simply to save himself. Los and Jesus, unlike Urizen or the soldiers who kill Luvah, can be consubstantial with others based upon a common humanity, without feeling the need to sacrifice anyone.

Many critics, among them Lincoln, argue that Los's understanding of Jesus is still problematic. For example, Lincoln suggests that Los is operating within a destructive sacrificial system because he helps Jerusalem build a shrine to Jesus and talks with Rahab in a manner that indicates that he is saved in a way that she is not. Thus, Lincoln argues, Los is deluded, his creativity destroyed as he accuses Rahab of sin in a way more reminiscent of Entuthon Benithon than Golgonooza (270-71). However, all Los simply tells Rahab that he, too, was once willing to sacrifice others and that now, his values have changed: "I was once like thee a Son/Of Pride and I also have pierced the Lamb of God in

pride & wrath" (p.113 second portion, ll.51-52; E 380).

While these words might sound self-righteous, particularly those words that presume to identify Rahab's motives, they express a concept that is crucial to Blake's ethical perspective, the idea that it makes no sense to sacrifice others to save oneself from sin, judgment, or mortality. In lines 23 - 51, Los briefly recounts the narrative that will comprise the fall narrative of Blake's later illuminated work, *Milton*. As Wilkie and Johnson correctly observe, this segment of *The Four Zoas* seems oddly misplaced, and to anyone not already familiar with *Milton*, the short, condensed version of *Milton*'s fall narrative would be almost incomprehensible (192). Nevertheless, Los's basic argument is clear. He objects to the idea that an innocent victim can save a guilty party, or that such sacrifices are the price of forgiveness. In this brief passage, Los recounts the fall of Satan and the process by which others repeatedly seek victims who will die to atone for Satan's faults. Most refuse, some run away, some kill another person, until finally Jesus consents to die, "willing beneath Tirzah & Rahab" (p.115, l.50; E 381). The emphasis here is not on Jesus's death as such redeeming anyone, but on the fact that Jesus, unlike so many others, was unwilling to sacrifice someone else to save himself, and, furthermore, was willing to make himself consubstantial with someone who was condemned to death, even at the expense of his own life.

Furthermore, Los tries to make Rahab understand that her sacrifices are not sacred, redemptive acts; when she kills her victims, she is simply killing someone: "Thou art that Rahab Lo the Tomb what can we purpose more" (p.115, l.51; E 381). His final words are a plea; do not kill further. Someone has been willing to die for Satan. If that has

not caused redemption, clearly there is no sacrificial victim who can. Finally, he asks Rahab to bow before Enitharmon. This action is also simply a plea for Rahab to repent, to do what Enitharmon has finally chosen to do and embrace Eternal Death rather than kill others. Rather than being a self-righteous accusation, as Lincoln suggests, Los's encounter with Rahab represents an absolute embrace of his own vulnerability. Los is willing to respect the lives of others, even if it costs him his own life, and even if his life will not be redeemed in another world. Los, like Jesus, is willing to give his life for another.

Thus, Blake's use of the Jesus narrative in *The Four Zoas* moves beyond his previous critique of the doctrine of the Atonement in *The Book of Ahania*, pushing Blake's ideas about order and sacrifice closer to a Burkean perspective. Kenneth Burke's theory acknowledges that sacrifices of some kind are necessary for the preservation of order, if only because all aims, and thus all terms of value, cannot carry equal weight at every moment. In any given situation, one value must yield to another, and such sacrifices are not necessarily scapegoating. Furthermore, if warfare is to be avoided, there must be the possibility of yielding and of adapting one's own symbolic order in the face of the reality of the other. Insisting on the purity of a system cannot be the central focus of a system, or that system will begin sacrificing people for its own preservation.

This focus on purity is precisely what is at stake in the Urizenic and Losian approaches to the Jesus narrative. If the Jesus narrative is understood in terms of a Urizenic attitude, Jesus's sacrifice must occur in order to preserve Urizen's unyielding system. Jesus cannot be allowed to forgive those who offend against Urizen's order without someone's being killed. Los's attitude, however, includes the willingness to yield

the purity of the system in order to maintain relationship. Finally, Los sacrifices, not other people, but his need to insure his own survival and control his own order. In the depiction of the Tree of Mystery and its various victims, as well as in the representation of Los's unwillingness to buy his own life through the creation of more victims, Blake represents different forms of sacrifice that are the result of different forms of order. Urizen's form of order represents the imposition of a single unyielding and absolute code that must be maintained through scapegoating and violence. Los's order also involves strongly held values. These values culminate, however, in a refusal to sacrifice others to save himself and in an attempt to make amends for the harm that he and his companions have done when they were struggling so busily to preserve their own positions. This movement away from scapegoating can only occur, however, because Los is willing to sacrifice total control over his city of art, Golgonooza. He allows the aims of the Spectre and Enitharmon to help guide his efforts. He does not cling to the purity of his own symbolic order, so he becomes free to collaborate in the creation of order rather than imposing upon others by creating and sustaining it entirely on his own terms.

Ultimately, this difference in attitude determines how one will interpret events. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the crucifixion of Christ remains available only in forms of symbolic action—narratives or theological doctrines—and these symbolic actions can yield to a variety of different interpretations. Blake suggests that the Christian system built upon this narrative can vary. It can be understood in ways that promote a self-interested attempt to cling to one's own system and one's own power at all costs. Or, it can be used as a model for how to resist a system of scapegoating, even if one

must sacrifice one's own life to do so. Resistance to the system of sacrifice only occurs when one ceases to accuse others of sin, just as Jesus does in *The Four Zoas* and in Blake's antinomian reading of the Gospels. Ceasing to accuse, however, does not preclude a willingness to hold values and to express disapproval of the values of others, just as Los expresses his disapproval of Rahab's murder of Jesus. To cease to judge and accuse involves instead the renunciation of vengeance and the elimination of accusations that serve to place one's self above the other, in a position of purity.

Furthermore, differing interpretations of events can disrupt the symbolic order and transform it. This happens at the end of Night the Eighth. After the crucifixion, Rahab, Jerusalem, and Los understand Jesus's death to be an Eternal Death, but Ahania and Enion, who are still wandering outside the boundaries of Urizen's and Los's domains, anticipate Jesus's return:

The Lamb of God has rent the Veil of Mystery soon to return
In Clouds & Fires around the rock [where Albion sleeps] & the Mysterious
tree [the Tree of Mystery]. (p.110 First portion, ll.1-2; E 385)

The belief in Jesus's Eternal Death causes Jerusalem to follow Rahab and to sacrifice her children to the Urizenic system, but Rahab herself is so affected by Ahania's and Enion's songs that she becomes self-divided. Her wavering turns Satan's followers against Mystery, at least as it is embodied in the Christian narrative, so that Deism, or Natural Religion, becomes the new form of Mystery—still sacrificial and still malevolent, but now, from a Blakean standpoint, almost totally devoid of imaginative power. The Apocalypse becomes possible in part because of this shift to an imaginatively weaker form of Mystery, combined, of course, with Los's rejection of the sacrificial system. These two factors drive

Los to rip apart the last symbolic underpinnings of Urizen's sacrificial order and bring it down.

This action, which begins Night the Ninth, sets off the Apocalyptic events which reunite the Zoas. It is possible because events and the symbolic orders founded on them are differently interpreted by different characters, thus producing transformations in the symbolic order and making historical change possible. When Jesus's story can be understood as a story of self-giving and forgiveness, and when characters and readers can come to recognize that sacrifice can involve the acceptance of one's guilt, one's limited perspective, and one's mortality, without a panicky quest for redemption, then scapegoating is no longer necessary.

Yet Blake is not arguing on behalf of forgiveness and self-sacrifice as ultimate values *per se*. Once one is in a fallen state, a state wherein the parts of a human being or a human community are at war with one another, forgiveness, in the sense of yielding one's claim over the other, is a necessary step in the process of Self annihilation mentioned by the Spectre on page 84 (Second portion, l.34; E 368). Forgiveness allows one to release one's defensive attempt to show oneself pure by laying blame on another. Furthermore, when the egotistical Selfhood is diminished, Los and the others can renounce the desire to insure their own survival or dominance by unjustly sacrificing others. Yet forgiveness cannot be ultimate, because to make it so would place the Losian principle of yielding above the bounding line of Urizen rather than joining the two into one. That joining must be the ultimate aim, and it cannot occur if yielding is made ultimate. In fact, the worship of self-surrender and yielding would deify the behavior of the victimized innocents of *The*

Songs of Innocence, people like little Tom Dacre, the chimney sweep, who sacrifice themselves to a cruel Urizenic system, while believing themselves to be surrendering to an all-loving God.

Since the ultimate aim cannot be forgiveness or surrender in Blake's system, at the beginning of *Night the Ninth*, Los initiates the Apocalypse in a self-sacrificial act and does not appear again until he returns as Urthona, one who is capable of creating the armor for Intellectual Warfare and dwelling in the reign of Sweet Science. Forgiveness is simply one step on a path towards a more perfect order. In *The Four Zoas*, both forgiveness and revolutionary violence are terms which are part of a larger value system that Kenneth Burke would call an ultimate dialectical order. That order will fully emerge in *Night the Ninth*, the Apocalyptic climax of *The Four Zoas*. In the following section, we will examine how an absolute dialectical order is created in *Night the Ninth*, as Blake gives each Zoa a moment of dominance within the Apocalyptic conclusion of the poem. The characteristics of each Zoa have a place, while each Zoa is also required, at some level, to integrate the characteristics of other Zoas in a process of transformation.

The Apocalypse as Burkean Dialectic: Night the Ninth

Urthona, first in the divided and fallen form of Los and finally in his redeemed state, is both the first and the last Zoa to play the dominant role in *Night the Ninth*. The Apocalypse begins when Los destroys Urizen's system by pulling the Sun and the Moon down from the sky:

Los his vegetable hands
Outstretchd his right hand branching out in fibrous Strength
Siedz the Sun. His left hand like dark roots coverd the Moon

And tore them down cracking the heavens across from immense to
 immense
 Then fell the fires of Eternity with loud & shrill
 Sound of Loud Trumpet thundering along from heaven to heaven
 A mighty sound articulate Awake ye dead & come
 To judgment from the four winds Awake & Come away (p.117, ll.6-13; E
 386)

As we saw earlier, the Sun is actually Los's own creation; a part of Los's world is stolen from him and placed in Urizen's temple. When Los rips the Sun from the sky, he destroys the imaginative underpinnings that make Urizen's order convincing, and in doing so, destroys the order itself. After the events of Night the Eighth, Los is unwilling to perpetuate Urizen's sacrificial system by going to war with Urizen or by allowing his own creations to be appropriated for Urizen's temple.

However, in performing this act of resistance, Los releases powerful forces that cost him his own life. While his fate is not really explained, the Spectre's body and Enitharmon's are "buried in the ruins of the Universe/Mingled with the confusion" (p.118, ll.5-6; E 387). None of these characters will reappear until the end of the poem in the form of Urthona and his wife. This Zoa contains both the Spectre and Los united within himself, and his wife is evidently changed sufficiently that the name "Enitharmon" is no longer used to identify her. She becomes simply "the wife of Dark Urthona" (p.173, l.11; E 405). Urthona is restored, but Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre have made a genuine sacrifice in allowing this reintegration to occur.

Critics offer a variety of reasons for Los's actions, and an equal number of interpretations of Blake's *Apocalypse* in Night the Ninth. According to Bloom, for example, Los attacks "the deadness of the cosmos" out of despair (*Apocalypse* 267). Yet

Los's "uncomprehending but imaginatively correct attack upon nature" is exactly what needs to happen, despite the negative motivation (266). In a position fairly common for those who have been strongly influenced by Northrop Frye's approach to Blake, Bloom asserts that this action initiates a period of "human integration," leaving the political dimension behind. Like Bloom, Wilkie and Johnson also see despair in Los's action, while affirming, nevertheless, that Los was correct in wanting a life greater than the one constructed by the fallen Zoas. They, too, regard the Apocalypse as a largely spiritual event, but they are more specific in their claim that *Night the Ninth* describes the destruction of the material world and the "Resurrection of the body and the soul." This event "must begin here and now," in this world, "but . . . need not be limited to the here and now" (210).

In contrast to these critics are those like Aers and Hobson, who see this Apocalypse in largely political terms. While Los's action may have been an attack on the symbolic order, it precipitates political revolution in the public realm. Aers disapproves of that revolution. Hobson, on the other hand, makes an intricate argument, finding in *Night the Ninth* both positive and negative revolutionary practices laid out for the reader by Blake. But both of these critics, like David Erdman before them, agree that the apocalyptic events in *Night the Ninth* are part of Blake's long-term revolutionary project.⁴⁵

Taking a very different approach to the historical relevance of *Night the Ninth*,

⁴⁵See Hobson, pages 151-07 for an excellent brief overview of the traditional position, the deconstructive argument of Donald Ault, and the anti-revolutionary position of David Aers. Hobson's own fascinating discussion of *Night the Ninth*, which sees Blake as pursuing a quest for the appropriate agency for social change, appears on pages 196-205, followed up by his overall statement about the entire poem on pages 205-10.

Rosso maintains that the entirety of *Night the Ninth*, after the pulling down of the heavenly bodies, is Los's artistic creation. It is a non-violent symbolic action meant to intervene in the real world by modeling a non-violent symbolic expression of violent emotions and imagery. As such, Rosso claims, Los is engaging in an act of "imaginative faith" (144). This argument, while interesting, requires us to make a shift in narrative point-of-view without any real verbal cues to signal a new narrator. Los does disappear from the action, but it seems more likely that he is buried beneath the rubble of the universe than that he has suddenly become the narrator of the prophecy. *Night the Ninth* is disturbingly violent, and an understandable desire to retain the values of forgiveness promulgated in *Night the Eighth* may well be skewing Rosso's reading here. Furthermore, Rosso's argument implies that the use of non-violent resistance in the form of symbolic action would have predictably non-violent results, a position that seems unlikely, particularly if the symbolic action in question depicted violent activities.

Arguably, much of the discussion of *The Four Zoas* is sidetracked by these very issues, as readers, shocked by the disturbing violence in the text, attempt either to displace the violence from the human realm altogether, as if it were some sort of separate cosmic force,⁴⁶ or to become so involved in their own condemnation of the violence that they fail

⁴⁶It is only fair to admit that the text itself sometimes invites the tendency to separate the Zoas' actions from human agency. As Bloom points out in his discussion of Tharmas's winnowing process near the end of *Night Nine*, we, the readers, are experiencing things from a divine, removed perspective that reveals the underlying promise that lies at the other end of the suffering that the Zoas' apocalyptic activities bring about. The human beings experiencing it are simply suffering (279). Nevertheless, Blake insists that the Four Mighty Ones are in us all, and, if so, their actions are not separate from us. It would be inappropriate to think of the violence of the Apocalypse as an action of the Zoas that we as human beings have nothing to do with. If violence cannot be avoided, then human beings are the ones who will both enact and suffer it.

to separate their condemnation from Blake's argument. Furthermore, almost all of these discussions, with the exception of Hobson and Lincoln, locate the argument of *The Four Zoas* within either the spiritual or the material realm. These limitations are made possible by a failure fully to grasp the way in which physical and mental worlds are unified for Blake. If the Zoas dwell within individuals and within the social order, and if their relationships with each other are described by means of a symbolic order, then the inner spiritual lives of human beings, the symbolic order itself, and the events of public life are going to be intricately interconnected in a causal chain that can move in any direction. A new imaginative insight can change the symbolic order, a changed symbolic order can change public events, and vice versa. However, since each of these spheres contains different elements, it is unlikely that all elements would be transformed simultaneously, particularly since fragmentation is the definition of a fallen world in Blake's scheme of things. Thus, Blake's depiction of a cosmic order in the process of transformation will include many, many activities, some of which he approves, some of which he disapproves, but all of which may be a necessary part of the process. As Lincoln suggests, in Blake's *Apocalypse* the fiery and violent aspects of the vision are a "terrible necessity" (194). They are not good in comparison to the absolute aim, but, as temporary elements of a process of change, they are better than permanent submission to Urizen's system.

Los's refusal to submit to this system any further is the source of his choice to dismantle the Urizenic sky, and that choice contains something of the despair that Bloom identifies and some of the imaginative faith that Rosso describes. When *Night the Ninth* opens, Los and Enitharmon are both weeping for the dead Jesus, failing to discern his

resurrected presence, and both sense their own impending “Non-Existence/For such they deemd the death of the body” (p. 117, ll. 5-6; E 386). They are terrified, and they do not have the faith in the Resurrection that Blake would undoubtedly want for them.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, this terror does not mean that Los’s act is motivated simply by despair. Rather, his action is the measure of just how completely he has surrendered his self-centered drive towards dominance and personal survival at all costs. Despite his sorrow and his fear, Los does not try to save himself at the expense of another. Nor does he resort to violence. Instead he rips Urizen’s symbolic order apart by withdrawing the support Urizen has derived from Los’s creative energies. In doing so, Los continues the pattern of non-violence that began when he and Enitharmon refused to sacrifice their children, whatever the cost might be to themselves. As Rosso maintains, this kind of non-violent resistance often plays a role in Apocalyptic literature, even in the Biblical revelation. This resistance is “not the passive kind in which the persecuted play no role, but the active resistance of heroic struggle that hastens divine intervention” (Rosso 132). Whatever despair Los may have felt, his attack on Urizen’s symbolic structure is still an act of integrity.

Yet, despite its integrity, this action is not sufficient by itself to bring about the complete reordering of the symbolic system that is necessary for the redemption of all the

⁴⁷ Whatever complex relationship Blake imagined between body and soul, which he early on describes as inseparable, belief in some sort of life beyond death is evident throughout Blake’s recorded conversations and in his letters, and this belief appears at varying periods of his life. In this passage, the living Jesus is standing beside the couple all the time, even as they grieve for his death. In 1800, during the composition of *The Four Zoas*, Blake wrote a letter of sympathy to his patron William Hayley at the death of Hayley’s son. “May you continue . . . to be more and more perswaded. that every Mortal loss is an Immortal Gain” (705). In 1826, the year before his death, Blake tells Henry Crabb Robinson that “I cannot consider death as anything but a going from one room to another” (370-71).

Zoas. Los is only one of pieces necessary to the construction of a symbolic order that truly reflects the nature of the Eternal Man as an individual or as a social body. Los's action is the first of a long series of actions that will be necessary before the final consummation can take place. Once the Apocalypse begins, it is time for other forces to act, finally, under the guidance of Albion. He awakens to resume his proper role as the whole human being who chooses and guides the actions of the parts, deciding what forces are to be dominant in what situation.

From this point on, Albion, not Los, is the creator of the symbolic order, designing what Kenneth Burke would call an ultimate dialectical order, an order that has a final ethical aim, but that seeks to attain the aim by including other, lesser values within it. Different values assume greater importance at different times, depending on the need of the moment. Furthermore, the order itself can be affected by exposure to other orders that enrich and challenge it. In *The Four Zoas*, Albion decides which Zoa must act next in order to move the whole community towards the state of Universal Brotherhood, Intellectual Warfare, and Sweet Science that is the ultimate goal of the process.

Dialectical transformation also occurs, in part, because once Albion takes his proper place, each Zoa, each term within the system, becomes capable of embracing the characteristics of its opposite without attempting to dominate or extinguish it. In other words, it becomes evident that each Zoa is dependent on the functions of the others, even when those functions appear to be opposites. The mutual dependence of opposite dialectical terms is depicted in Blake's narrative as the Zoas move away from their desire to dominate one another. Instead, they resume the more positive practice of earlier days,

“When Heaven & Hell in Emulation strove in sports of Glory” (p.124,l.13; E 393). As primary responsibility for action moves from one Zoa to another, this mutual Emulation develops anew. Each Zoa finds that he must embrace and enact the qualities that are associated with other Zoas. For example, Los, the initiator of the Apocalypse, has begun his transformation of the symbolic order by embracing a pattern of forgiveness and openness which, as we have already seen, is deeply connected to his imaginative function. But when Los pulls the Sun and Moon from the sky, he is creating a boundary using an essentially Urizenic function, so that he can set limits on how he is contributing to Urizen’s order. In other words, he is combining the Losian form of order, the one that is open to the other, with Urizen’s boundary function. He does not impose a limit on Urizen in the sense of trying to contain or destroy him, but he does limit his own cooperation in Urizenic activity. This movement on Los’s part results in the fall of the universe as Urizen has constructed it.

Thus, despite the importance of non-violence in Los’s own actions, his symbolic gesture actually leads, not to peace, but to more violence, the violence that occurs when the captives are freed and turn on their oppressors. Once Urizen’s system is gone, there is nothing to hold back the rage of the oppressed. Los’s new willingness to limit his cooperation with sacrificial activity disrupts the sacrificial system that contains violence, and, at first, this results in more violence. So Blake makes it clear that violence is necessary to the process of transformation, just as forgiveness is. Neither of these two apparent opposites is ultimate. In fact, within the process of renewal, each Zoa requires the other, and each makes a contribution that is simply a stage on the journey. When

Los forgives, he escapes from Urizen's system, which leads him to limit his cooperation with Urizen's system, thus involving him in the creation of boundaries. Yet that boundary destroys the container that has held back the rage of those oppressed by Urizenic law and Urizenic reason. Thus, the prisoners rise up and begin committing bloodshed.

This process, Blake might have argued, characterizes what actually happens in history. A movement that refuses to cooperate with the current system, even if it is non-violent, can rip apart a symbolic order and release pent-up, even violent, energies in the social order. Nevertheless, the imaginative function can only transform society when it ceases to support domination, even at the risk of producing violence. Furthermore, the openness of imaginative vision must be balanced by sufficient boundaries to refuse certain kinds of participation in oppressive social orders, even as it is willing to open itself to awareness of and compromise with others' perspectives.

Once violence develops, however, it will soon be necessary for a new boundary function to emerge in order to contain the release of revolutionary energy. In *The Four Zoas*, Los's non-violent action sets loose uncontrollable energy. Violence breaks out as "The poor smite their oppressors they awake up to the harvest . . . The oppressed pursue like the wind there is no room for escape" (p.117, ll. 19 & 23; E 387). At some level, this pursuit is simple justice. Yet the narrator tells us, "Their oppressors have fallen they have Stricken them they awake to life/Yet pale the just man stands erect & looking to heaven" (p.117, ll.24-25). Orc's rage has been released, and the chaos that emerges cannot be entirely just because it is without limit. The Tree of Mystery begins to burn, a good thing, but flames also enter "the Holy City" and "Universal Confusion" reigns. (P.119, ll. 17 &

24; E 388). New boundaries become necessary again, because the violence that is enacted by the oppressed is not itself a final or positive state. The truly just person is not yet satisfied.

Thus, when Albion awakes, the first Zoa that he calls upon is Urizen, whose boundary function, operating sanely, is needed in this situation of violence and bloodshed:

See you not all this wracking furious confusion
Come forth from slumbers of thy cold abstraction come forth
Arise to Eternal births shake off thy cold repose
Schoolmaster of souls great opposer of change arise
That the Eternal worlds may see thy face in peace & joy
That thou dread form of Certainty maist sit in town & village
While little children play around they feet in gentle awe
Fearing thy frown loving thy smile O Urizen Prince of light (p.120,ll.18-25;
E 389).

Albion is calling upon the original Urizen, the Urizen who knew how to emulate kindness and gentleness even as he offered limits. Albion recognizes that even as change may be necessary, so is opposition to change that moderates and sets limits upon a violent process of transformation.⁴⁸

After a brief pause, however, Albion rebukes Urizen for forgetting the true nature of his function. He limits Urizen's right to contain Luvah, saying: "Let Luvah rage in the dark deep even to Consummation/For if thou feedest not his rage it will subside in peace" (p.120,ll.33-34; E 389). This limiting of Urizen's powers places Urizen, the part, in subordination again to Albion, the whole Eternal Man. It also affirms Urizen in his

⁴⁸It is important to realize that a number of critics see this address in negative terms. Lincoln states that Albion's words are absurdly oversimplified in light of the violence of the moment (194). Otto's response has already been noted; he believes that the Eternal Man has just waked up and is not in touch with what is going on. It is true that Urizen changes only after he is threatened, but this does not mean that the affirmation is not also important. Urizen has caused confusion by setting improper boundaries; Albion reminds him of what true boundaries would have looked like and then rebukes Urizen's error.

essential boundary function while rejecting Mystery, the devil-term of the text:

My anger against thee is greater than against this Luvah
 For war is energy Enslavd but thy religion
 The first author of this war & the distracting of honest minds
 Into confused perturbation & strife & honour & pride
 Is a deciet so detestable that I will cast thee out
 If thou repentest not & leave thee as a rotten branch to be burnd
 With Mystery the Harlot & with Satan for Ever & Ever
 Error can never be redeemd in all Eternity
 But Sin Even Rahab is redeemd in blood & fury & jealousy (p.120,ll.41-49;
 E 390)

Luvah's rage has gotten out of control because Urizen has tried to destroy the very principle of passion rather than setting gentle limits upon it. Albion condemns Urizen's religion of rigid morality and sacrificial scapegoating and calls it Error, because when law suppresses desire it produces the very behaviors that law would fight. Yet, ironically, Albion calls Urizen to renounce accusations and threats by threatening and setting an absolute limit for Urizen himself. Thus, limit is limited, rather than being given free reign to limit as much as it likes.

Urizen is only able to return to his right mind and his humanity when he says:

Let Orc consume let Tharmas rage let dark Urthona give
 All strength to Los & Enitharmon & let Los self cursd
 Rend down this fabric as a wall ruind & family extinct
 Rage Orc Rage Tharmas Urizen no longer curbs your rage (p.121,ll.23-26;
 E 390).

These lines immediately precede the renewal of Urizen's youth and his transformation. They reflect the coming of a somewhat Losian kind of openness, although, at this point, that openness is based in part, on a fear for his own self-preservation. Evidently, Urizen does not yet trust that Albion is right, and that the other Zoas will cease to rage once

Urizen stops trying to control them through his system of Mystery. At this point, Urizen believes that if he stops ruthlessly limiting all the other Zoas, everything will rage out of control. So his self-preservation is at risk either way. Yet, Urizen, now in the form of a snake, chooses to regain his humanity even at the cost of his life. He recognizes that he needs to embrace and emulate a quality that is more essentially Luvah's, passionate joy, and it is his desire for joy that ultimately makes him take the risk of letting go and obeying Albion's call: "I alone in misery supreme/Ungratified give all my joy unto this Luvah & Vala" (p.121, ll.17-18; E 390). Urizen's ability to set an appropriate boundary can only be restored through his embrace of Los's quality of openness and Luvah's capacity for passionate joy.

Nevertheless, at first it appears that Urizen's dire predictions are correct. When Urizen withdraws support from his sacrificial system, the dead rise, many of them to a ferocious judgment enacted by those whom they have oppressed. But at this point, at least, the judgment is stringently limited. When the dead rise, the oppressed come with all their wounds intact: "They shew their wounds they accuse they seize the oppressor howlings began" (p.123, l.5; E 392). The oppressors see Jesus whom they have pierced and they see their own nature, just as Urizen has had to see his own nature and the inhumanity to which he had sunk. In a moment that some critics find troubling, the judge pleads with the Prisoner for mercy and the Prisoner kicks him, confronting the judge with his own cruelty and refusing forgiveness.

Ault suggests that this moment renders the text inconsistent, since it seems to renounce the forgiveness that is present in the earlier passages about Los and Jesus (394).

Yet, on a historical level, Hobson points out that such actions are sometimes necessary to limit continued oppression by ruthless but hypocritical leaders. Furthermore, there is no evidence that forgiveness is meant to be the ultimate value in this Apocalypse (203). It is one value among many. Indeed, one of the values in the text is that those who have refused to give the kinds of mercy that Jesus and Los both have offered must be faced with their own cruelty. Yet the retribution for their cruelty is sharply limited. The Prisoner kicks the judge in retaliation for a much more serious crime: "...you scourged my father to death before my face/While I stood bound with cords & heavy chains. Your hipocrisy/Shall now avail you nought" (p.123,ll.30-33; E 393). No further punishment of the unjust judge is recorded. Punishment is not revoked, but it may well be severely mitigated.

Almost immediately after this incident, the reader is invited to look forward to the coming of further unity, as new links are forged between the apparent opposites of justice and mercy, and as a new heaven opens up, literally, in the following lines.

The Cloud is Blood dazzling upon the heavens & in the cloud
Above upon its volumes is beheld a throne & a pavement
Of precious stones. surrounded by twenty four venerable patriarchs
And these again surrounded by four Wonders of the Almighty
Incomprehensible. pervading all amidst & round about
Fourfold each in the other reflected they are named Life's in Eternity
(p.123,ll.33-38; E 393)

The four Wonders Incomprehensible suggest the four incomprehensible and mighty ones who live inside every person, the Zoas themselves, and their mutual reflection, even in the midst of a bloody conflict, anticipates the mutual emulation of the Zoas, their form of relationship in the earlier days and the state to which they now aspire to return.

To further that return, Urizen begins to engage in the agricultural labor of plowing, using a harness that is “ornamented/With beautiful art the study of angels the workmanship of Demons/When Heaven & Hell in Emulation strove in sports of Glory” (p.123,ll.11-13; E 393). As Lincoln suggests, Reason is used, at this point in the narrative, not to regulate behavior or thought, but to work “against the stifling mental habits it once fostered, undermining its own principles of order, destroying its fixed vision of creation” (199). As Urizen plows under cities, villages, mountains, and celestial bodies, he performs functions that resemble the destructive, revolutionary functions of Orc/Luvah. He also breaks ground and plants a new seed of humanity, thus continuing his emulation of Los/Urthona’s openness and capacity for creating the new. In emulating his fellow Zoas’ functions, he prepares to strive with them once again in “sports of glory” rather than bloody conflict.

Yet, as we have already seen, Albion calls upon Urizen to retain a kind of boundary function, not the destructive function of the iron lawgiver and judge, but the function of a teacher and lore master—the one who, in his wisdom, knows when to encourage and when to reprove—the one who is loved so much that reproof is all the restraint that is necessary. This, Albion suggests, is the proper role of law, not as the agent of power, but as a presence capable of offering tender and compassionate guidance. Thus, once Urizen has renounced his destructive power and submitted himself once again, to Albion’s authority, plowing up his own destructive creation, Albion is willing to place Luvah back into Urizen’s hands and let him set limits for Luvah mercifully, as he should have done in the beginning. When Albion places Luvah in Urizen’s hands, Urizen says:

Luvah & Vala henceforth you are Servants obey & live
 You shall forget your former state return O Love in peace
 Into your place the place of seed not in the brain or heart
 If Gods combine against Man Setting their Dominion above
 The Human form Divine. Thrown down from their high Station
 In the Eternal heavens of Human Imagination: buried beneath
 In dark Oblivion with incessant pangs ages upon ages
 In Enmity & war first weakend then in stern repentance
 They must renew their brightness & their disorganized functions
 Again reorganize till they resume the image of the human
 Cooperating in the bliss of Man obeying his Will
 Servants to the infinite & Eternal of the Human form (p.126,ll.6-17; E 395)

Some, like Otto, see these words as negative and judgmental. They also argue that the time that Luvah and Vala spend in the pastoral realm after this judgment entails a suppression of the energies of the body (Otto 308-09).

Yet, this episode is not the final and ultimate resolution of the text, nor is it Luvah's and Vala's final destiny. It is simply a period of both rest and discipline for Luvah and Vala. This time apart from one another and from the other Zoas allows time for the wounds of Luvah's victimization to heal. The pastoral world also provides a rest from violent passion. Insofar as this time apart serves both of these purposes, it allows Luvah the chance to recognize where he himself went wrong, apart from the actions of Urizen. In Night the Second, Luvah has claimed that the body should be cast away: "The hand of Urizen is upon me because I blotted out/That Human delusion to deliver all the sons of God/From bondage of the Human Form" (p.27,ll.16-18; E 318). Later, when he rises from Albion's feast and prepares to preside over the grape harvest, he asserts, "Attempting to be more than man We become less" (p.135,l.21; E 403). Furthermore, he now weeps for the pain of the "human harvest" and the threshing that he and Urizen, between them, have

necessitated through their actions. In other words, Luvah emulates and accepts the Urizenic boundary function, making it part of his own character. Once this transformation takes place, Urizen has completed the primary function to which Albion has called him.

Then it is time for Tharmas and his Emanation, Enion, to take the forefront of the action, at least briefly. Tharmas and Enion are able to rise again in strength because they have forgiven each other and reunited. The two of them, in the form of children, have dwelt in the pastoral land along with Luvah and Vala and have received maternal nurture from Vala. As part of her care for the two children, Vala acts as a mediator for their conflicts, which are still very much present even in their new, childish form. Like Luvah, Tharmas is able to emerge from his period of enclosure with new strength. Despite the tendency to chaos that he exhibits earlier in the poem, Tharmas's trumpet blasts help to order the apocalyptic events, and his music is what calls the dead to awaken. Furthermore, when Urizen threshes the human wheat, Tharmas is the one who winnows it, driving the chaff into his seas. Here, the chaos that is Tharmas's special province is able to render service to an overall principle of order. From now until the final lines of the poem, Tharmas will assist Urizen and Urthona with the tasks assigned to them by Albion, although, before, he had driven Los/Urthona to create systems of order for him in an effort to destroy Urizen. Now he can rejoice at the destruction of Mystery without needing to take vengeance upon either Urizen or Luvah, and without the need to dominate Urthona.

Luvah, however, is the one who will finally destroy Mystery for good. He is the next Zoa to preside over the Apocalyptic events, and his activity reflects his character throughout the text. But now his passions are allowed free reign only at the behest of

Albion, the Universal Man, rather than in rebellion against him. The Eternal Man calls Luvah into action by telling him that the Vintage is ready. This is the moment in which Luvah actually casts off his crown of thorns, the sign of his role as victim, and declares that he must not try to be more than human. Interestingly, however, his first role in the Apocalypse is not to harvest and crush his grapes. At first, Luvah simply uses his bulls to help crush and grind Urizen's crop of corn, putting the two into cooperation with one another, rather than in competition. Once the enmity of Luvah and Urizen is put aside, Urizen's Apocalyptic labors are complete and he disappears from the action..

Luvah, on the other hand, goes forth to harvest the grapes and make wine. He and his sons gather the grapes with joy and then place the grapes in the winepress. In the process, they destroy the last vestige of Mystery, but they also create a terrible hell for the human grapes within the winepress and a destructive drunken rout for themselves. The narrator reports that Luvah's sons and daughters are "[d]rownd in the wine" and must be buried "in lamentation," (p.136, ll.18-20; E 404). Furthermore, the human grapes within the winepress suffer, literally, the pains of hell. They are consumed in "fierce flames," they writhe in chains surrounded by "ceaseless fires" and whatever is left once the "Human Odors" escape, the remainder that the narrator describes as the "desire of Being," longs to escape from "the Pangs of Eternal Death" (p.136, ll.22, 23, 4, 8, & 15; E 404).

Furthermore, when Tharmas and Urthona come to stop the carnage, they find that Luvah's children, drunken and exhausted, have begun "to torment one another and to tread/The weak" (p.137,ll.20-21; E 405). This segment of the poem is in many ways the most violent, particularly because Luvah and his offspring seem to delight in the suffering

of their victims. The suffering seems excessive, and even Hobson, a critic who is supportive of Blake's revolutionary tendencies, finds this passage to be impossibly violent, suggesting that it represents revolution gone wrong, as in the Terror in France, where leaders began to engage in remorseless violence, what Hobson calls "elite violence" rather than the "mass violence" of the mistreated populace (205).

Certainly, Hobson's association of the winepress with the Terror is legitimate, and, in comparison with the ideal, this grotesquely painful violence is certainly wrong. Nevertheless, the poem as a whole tends towards unity throughout Night Nine, and it must be remembered that Albion called Luvah to this action immediately following a feast reminiscent of the one in which Urizen prepares to sacrifice Luvah. The orgy of violence around and in the winepress appears to be a necessary part of the structure of the Apocalypse, however repugnant it may be. The ideal is not yet possible at this point in the poem, and the reason is to be found in the language describing the tiny, despised creatures who dance around the winepress: seeds, roots, earthworms, beetles, centipedes, spiders, maggots, and weeds of various kinds. Otto objects that these creatures all feed on death and that this is one more incident of the oppression of the body, one with which Luvah cooperates (232). But the narrator describes these creatures with nothing but respect and compassion. Of the thistle, the narrator says that he is "indignant," that "[his] bitterness is bred in his milk" and that he "lives on the contempt of this neighbor" (p.136, ll.36-37; E 405). This phrase could apply to all the creatures listed in this scene. But, when they drink and make music around the winepress, these obscure creatures "shew their various limbs/Naked in all their beauty dancing round the Wine Presses" (p.136, l.38-39; E 405).

The suffering that so delights them is horrible and it is not part of an ideal order, but Blake implies that it is better than a world in which these despised creatures never have their moment to exalt and to affirm their own beauty, even if it comes at the expense of others. Luvah's debauchery is not simply a drunken, violent orgy. Albion uses the wildness of Luvah's passionate nature to create a limit on how much the lowliest creatures are allowed to suffer without recompense.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, this moment is not an expression of the final good, and Albion, saddened by all the suffering that the Vintage has cost, sends Tharmas and Urthona to stop it. Luvah is "put for dung on the ground," (p.137, l.24; E 405), another act that sounds dreadful and final, until we see Luvah and Vala rise again just a few lines later, to again be cast down by Albion until the Spring. Albion's actions contain Luvah's passion, while nevertheless affirming that it has a part in moving all of the Zoas closer to the ideal.

However, once Luvah is cast down, Urthona's time of precedence arrives, and he "rose in all his regenerate power" (p.137, l.34; E 405). But even now, the perfect end has not come, because more suffering is required. Urthona grinds Urizen's corn, and bakes the "Bread of Ages" (p.138, l.17; E 406). Once this work is done, the Apocalypse is over, but that does not mean that the old Los's forgiveness is now the norm. When Urthona is making the bread, he is participating in an act of judgment, and the imagery surrounding

⁴⁹Clearly this brief explanation is, ethically speaking, not entirely satisfactory. One thinks of Hegel's "slaughter-bench" of history, in which historical progress justifies the horrible suffering of individuals caught up in the process of historical change (27). However brutal this argument may seem, it still seems to be the argument that Blake is making. Certainly, it would be inaccurate to report that Blake was himself emotionally pleased by such suffering, but he does seem to believe that this kind of moment is historically and symbolically necessary, and that symbolic and social orders can only be transformed by periods of agonizing disruption, which can include orgies of cruelty and death.

him is Urizenic. Urthona's ovens are guarded by "[t]he grey hoar frost" and "his pale wife the aged Snow" (p.138, ll.9-10; E 406). Furthermore, this action becomes an occasion for forms of thought and reasoning that are described in Urizenic terms:

Nature in darkness groans
And Men are bound to sullen contemplation in the night
Restless they turn on beds of sorrow. in their inmost brain
Feeling the crushing Wheels they rise they write the bitter words
Of Stern Philosophy & knead the bread of knowledge with tears & groans
(p.138, ll.11-15; E 406)

Urthona, who in his divided life as Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre has fought with and resented Urizen, here embraces Urizen's labors, making them his own. It is only after this process is complete that the ideal can be approached, as the Universal Man walks forth, seeing the world washed and beautiful again, and dwelling in harmony with the animals.

In the last lines of the poem, the previous initiators of conflict, Urizen and Luvah, are not on the scene. Tharmas is present, a shepherd minding his sheep, and Urthona is present, a metalworker, who rises

In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science
For intellectual War The war of swords departed now
The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns (p.139, ll.8-10; E 407).

These lines, the last of the poem, are variously interpreted. While most critics see the ending of the poem as a moment of redemption and healing, in fact, as an ideal moment, Ault suggests that the poem ends where the story begins, with Urthona at his forge; thus, he argues, no progress is made in the poem. The text is simply a circle that folds back upon itself, and the entire process is doomed to repeat itself (463-67). Otto agrees with the idea that the action of the poem is doomed to be repeated, and he suggests that the

entire ending of the poem is the depiction of a false transcendence (334-44).⁵⁰ Yet the tone of the poem seems to insist otherwise. A few lines before the end of the text, the wild beasts, Urthona's Lions, come to the Eternal Man and say "How is it that we have walkd thro fires & yet are not consumd/How is it that all things are changd even as in ancient times" (p.138,ll.39-40; E 407). This tone of wonder permeates the last thirty lines of *The Four Zoas*. At the end of the poem, the ideal emerges, the ideal of sweet Science, which earlier in the text could not even be imagined.

Ault is correct, however, that the text implies only a pause in the conflict. Luvah and Urizen are not on the scene, but, as the narrator tells us at the beginning of *The Four Zoas*, the four mighty ones dwell in every person, and they are immortal. Urizen and Luvah will return, and, despite the fact that each of these characters has become a part of the whole, reflecting and emulating the qualities of the others, nevertheless they will come into conflict again. Thus, Urthona creates the armour of intellectual War. To make armour requires a boundary function, and to use armour is to affirm a bounding line. But to fight an intellectual War implies a readiness to embrace difference, an openness to intellectual change and transformation—that is to say, an openness to dialectic in the Burkean sense. Furthermore, an intellectual War requiring the armour of science does not require actual blood and actual death. At the end of *The Four Zoas*, Blake affirms an ideal that will allow

⁵⁰In all fairness to Otto, his argument is based largely upon examination of the drawings in *The Four Zoas* manuscript. Such an examination is certainly beyond the scope of this project, which focuses almost exclusively on the verbal text. Thus, any sure criticism of Otto's argument would be presumptuous. It is worthwhile, however, to refer the reader to Magno's and Erdman's facsimile edition and commentary. These two critics provide a reading of the visual text that is far closer to the more traditional and optimistic reading, thus demonstrating that Otto's evaluation of the drawings and prints is not beyond question (100-02).

the process of conflict to resume and continue at a new level, a level that assumes the kinds of compromises and transformations that have taken place already in Night the Ninth. Later conflicts will embody processes of movement and transformation, but without the need for bloodshed, because a model of intellectual combat has emerged that does not require the annihilation of one position by the other. It is recognized that one can fall vanquished in one battle and arise to lead in another, that each function can take its turn at the lead and then retreat when it is no longer needed.

Sweet Science is the kind of knowledge that grows out of a process of rotation, movement, and transformation like the one that has taken place in Night the Ninth, except that it no longer requires the death that was the residue of “the dark Religions,” those rigid systems--be they religious, scientific, or artistic--that required one term, one function, or one source of power to assume dominance and retain it forever at the expense of the others. Sweet Science is sustained by Intellectual, not Corporeal, war. Like Mystery, it is a kind of order, but it is an order capable of transformation, without domination or violence. In other words, it is an order in which the bounding line of Urizenic order and the Losian quality of openness and transformation are both affirmed and given place, allowing room for the other Zoas to thrive as well. No longer are reason, boundary, or order, treated as hindrance, while imagination, vision, and rebellion are portrayed as act. Hindrance can be any of the above pursued with rigid zeal and self-righteous desire for domination, played out in a system of order, a dark Religion, that maintains itself by sacrificing others. Action requires that, Reason and Imagination, boundary and vision, order and rebellion all work together in concert to create a flexible and changeable order by means of intellectual

warfare. Order still requires sacrifices, and the process of transformation can be devastating, but finally what is sacrificed is the desire to dominate or destroy the other. Like Burke's purification of war, Blake's intellectual war requires the purification of motives through the transformation of both symbolic orders and attitudes. In the final section of this chapter, I will revisit Kenneth Burke's theory in order to understand more fully how the Burkean model can inform our reading of *The Four Zoas*.

Blake's The Four Zoas and the Burkean Model

In chapter 3, we examined the link between Blake's Urizen and the "Blakean bearded patriarch" of Burke's Epilogue to *The Rhetoric of Religion* (276). In chapter 4, this comparison is less apt, since Blake's bearded Urizen no longer represents symbolic order itself, as he did in *Urizen* and *Ahania*. Instead, there is a more complex set of parallels and contrasts to examine. *The Four Zoas* comes closer to a Burkean antinomianism than any of Blake's early works. In *The Four Zoas*, Blake retains his belief that rigid law and rigid symbolic orders can be destructive, a view he shares with Burke. The connection between these destructive orders and scapegoating also remains. But in *The Four Zoas*, Blake has come to share Burke's view that, even if both law and symbolic systems can be problematic, they are nonetheless unavoidable, necessary, and even at times genuinely positive and valuable.

In changing his view of order, Blake's aim shifts away from the annihilation of order posited in the Lambeth prophecies and focuses instead on its transformation. He suggests the creation of a mobile system, like Burke's ultimate dialectical order. Ultimate and absolute goals remain, but they allow for a mobility of terms that lends flexibility to

the system. These flexible orders also allow room for their adherents to be influenced, or even transformed, by other symbolic systems. In other words, in *The Four Zoas*, like Burke, Blake differentiates between two kinds of order. He rejects the kinds of order promulgated by authorities who “would say No definitively to any further questioning” (RR 303). In its stead, like Burke’s bearded patriarch, he argues for a symbolic order that permits “the progressive criticism of itself” (RR 303), through what Blake calls intellectual warfare.

In order to achieve this goal, Blake offers a model for the transformation of the Christian narrative as it was understood within his culture. But the question remains, why this system? Why, if one objects to social injustice, choose to transform the very order that, according to many educated radicals of the time, had been a primary agent of that disorder? Why not simply abandon it and work with another order? Why would Blake work so hard to rehabilitate an order that he himself had so trenchantly criticized in so much of his work, the chimney sweeper poems, for example? Furthermore, if one objects to either economic oppression or to scapegoating practices, why choose a symbolic order that is built on sacrifice? After all, sacrificial language can readily be transformed into self-mortification or used as a basis for encouraging others to submit to mistreatment, either in the name of the sacred order or in emulation of a divine victim, as Night 7a so vividly depicts.

Certainly Blake’s immersion in radical Protestant culture, with its traditional use of Christianity to attack state power, provides a sufficient historical explanation.

Furthermore, the quotations we have already seen from Blake’s letters and conversations

indicate that Blake accepted a variety of Christian ideas, however unorthodox his interpretations of them were. But the question can also be answered in logological terms, and the best way to do that is to pursue the Burkean understanding of a term that is important to both thinkers—Mystery. We have already seen how Mystery functions for Blake as a way of holding Urizen's system together. Burke's definitions of Mystery can help us to understand how this process works, even as it helps to explain Blake's privileging of religious language in the creation of his ultimate dialectic. Burke, however, does not treat Mystery as a devil-term. His definition is somewhat more complex.

In a neutral definition, Burke describes mystery as an unavoidable outgrowth of both limited knowledge and differentiation. The inevitable limits of our knowledge breed a sense of mystery. The genders, insofar as they are different from one another, are mysteries to one another. Furthermore, "[m]ysteries will arise socially, from different modes of life. The king will be a mystery to the peasant, and vice versa" (308). Even the developmental differences between parents and children, or the differences between persons who have different skills or training can produce a sense of mystery that will affect the formation of the symbolic. Where a sense of mystery is present, it can easily be used to support symbolic orders, as Urizen sustains his empire, or as Orc sustains his familial relationships. Thus, Burke offers a more negative definition. He defines Mystery as a condition brought about by social hierarchies, which can "elicit 'God-fearing' attitudes towards agents and agencies that are not divine" (*RM* 123). Burke suggests several forms of "mysticism" that derive from the worship of a fragment of reality: the fascination with another social class, with a lover, with a drug, with money, all of which can be mystified

so that they are treated as if they were the whole of reality. There are the “mysteries of empire” (*RR* 307). Finally, there is the mysticism of warfare (*RM* 332), which, as we have seen, both he and Blake associate with scapegoating.

There are any number of logical connections between symbolic order, hierarchy, and scapegoating. We have already examined several of these. But there is one that we have not yet explored, and that is the connection between hierarchy, mystery, and the call to sacrifice. “Sacrifice,” Burke writes, “is the essence of religion” (*RM* 266), and for Burke, mystery is religious, whether or not it is connected with a religion. Of course, sacrifice here does not necessarily mean the sacrifice of another person in an act of scapegoating. It can represent the yielding of material things or of parts of oneself so that a higher aim can be served. But, since Mystery is to some degree unavoidable, it is absolutely necessary that we be extremely conscious of our tendency to fall into it. It is absolutely necessary that we choose carefully that to which we will yield ourselves. We must be careful about what we sacrifice and for what deities.

The rigid symbolic orders that both Burke and Blake describe are alike in that they are fraught with Mystery and they demand from their adherents a kind of total worship, a worship of the system itself, which must be preserved at all cost. They demand sacrifice to the system itself, sacrifice of the adherents and sacrifice of the violators. Those who comply with the order can sense their consubstantiation with others in the system and experience a sense of union through it. Those who do not comply can be made consubstantial through their punishment. Finally, those who believe in the system but fail to meet its demands can at times find consubstantiation through the sacrifice of a victim

who substitutes for them. The desire for union, the drive towards perfection, the yearning to yield oneself to a cause or an order that is greater than oneself, the mysteries built into the natural world, the differentiations built into our symbolic systems, all of these things hold within them the potential to set this process into motion, whether or not we are conscious of it, and whether or not the system we participate in is religious or secular.

Thus, aside from his personal religious beliefs, Blake's religious language provides the ideal vehicle for demonstrating the changes that must occur for a rigid symbolic order to undergo a positive transformation. Burke contends that religious language acknowledges the necessity for sacrifices—although the particular sacrifices required could certainly be debated. Blake rejected most of the sacrifices that eighteenth-century Christianity would have demanded of him. He did not believe that he should mortify his flesh. He did not believe that sexuality was evil. He did not believe that obedience to God meant obedience to the state and its church, or obedience to any number of its laws. He did not believe that war with France or any other nation was holy. But, by the time he wrote *The Four Zoas*, Blake did believe in the necessity for "Self annihilation," the sacrifice of that part of the self that needs to dominate others, and he does so in reverence for "the Human Form Divine," as it manifested both in himself and in others. His is a radical Protestantism that pushes against all systems because no system is great enough fully to express the grandeur of that whole Human Form, with its possibilities of growth, vision, and imagination.

Burke, on the other hand, never claimed to be religious, but despite his agnosticism, he, too, casts down the false gods, the false and rigid systems of order that

lead to false self-moritification bloodshed, scapegoating, and sacrifice. At the end of *A Rhetoric of Motives*, he calls upon his readers to seek “God as the beloved cynosure and sinecure, the end of all desire” (333), by which he apparently means nothing specific, but rather, the idea of the perfect, the idea of the absolute, beneath which anything that can be said or explained or placed into a symbolic order proves absolutely inadequate. The name “God” is the placeholder for an unnameable god-term, the absolute that is never reached in any system of order, but the idea of which prevents our worship of the partial orders that we can create. If we seek that unnameable god-term, Burke seems to be suggesting, we can avoid settling for any particular system, simply excluding the terms, ideas and people that do not fit our preconceived notions. More importantly, we can let go of the belief that any particular order is worthy of human sacrifice, If the god is unnameable, then our best description can change every time new evidence, new knowledge, or new insight appears. The god may be unnameable, but the practical ethic is clear: “And finally let us observe, all about us, forever goading us, though it be in fragments, the motive that attains its ultimate identification in the thought, not of the universal holocaust, but of the universal order . . .”(RM 333). Peace is the absolute, necessary as it is to the avoidance of total destruction. At the same time, Burke, deeply influenced by Marxism throughout his career, continues to criticize the imperialist way of life that is not only prone to warfare, but profoundly unjust.

Finally, a just peace is the limit that provides an outer boundary for Blake’s and Burke’s antinomianism. Neither of these antinomians is truly without law, insofar as the term “law” refers to a moral value that is treated as an absolute. Both Blake and Burke

embrace an ultimate law of peace, but not a law that is based upon command or upon an intellectual system that functions as if it were unchangeable and complete within itself. For neither Blake nor Burke is it possible for language, or any form of symbolic order, to structure reality in a way so adequate that it can stand unchanging forever as a description of reality or as a mode of insuring justice. To the contrary, any system that is treated as capable of such perfect description or legislation will, inevitably, become tyrannical. It will not allow its terms to change, even when no one understands them any longer. It will not allow its terms to change even when they have become obsolete. Finally, it becomes an end in itself, and as such, it becomes something for which people will kill or persecute either without self-doubt or with the intent of quelling their doubt or guilt through the sacrifice of others. Any peace such a system offers will come at the cost of human vitality and creativity. Whether in peace or war, such a system is an agent of death.

Thus, the notion of an ultimate “dialectic.” For Burke, the term “dialectic” is always used to talk about how we change the meanings of our language and of our systems. Dialectic also has to do with how opposites tend to create and imply one another. This shift in meaning is, in fact, one of the primary means by which we transform our systems, shifting those opposites about, finding new opposites for old words, creating new syntheses out of old pairings of opposites. For Burke, the willingness to be “corrupted” by an opponent’s system, rather than to retain the purity of one’s own by means of warfare, is central to the purposes of rhetoric. If an order is dialectical, with peace as an overarching value, it becomes possible to let the system change, even let it be influenced by the opposing system. Of course, such transformations always require sacrifices, but these

sacrifices need not be human bodies. They can be attitudes. They can be ideas. Certainly, there is sacrifice involved in allowing oneself to be open to a system different from one's ideas. At the least, one must sacrifice the illusion of perfection and purity if one is to truly listen to the ideas of others.

This type of process, the willingness to water down a rhetorical order in order to protect real human lives, and the willingness to embrace one's opposite, is depicted throughout Night the Ninth of *The Four Zoas*. At the beginning, Urizen, Luvah, and Urthona all seem to want a system that dominates all the others, and none of them wants to acknowledge his dependence upon others' gifts. Rather than acknowledging that dependence, they try to appropriate the others' powers through tyrannical means, depending upon them without admitting it to themselves. Each creates a system which subordinates other parts of the Human Form Divine to himself. Yet, in Night the Ninth, when Albion, the whole person, reassumes decision-making powers, dialectic becomes the standard. Once every Zoa has participated in this process, the bloodshed can stop. Still, such a peace is an ideal seldom realizable within the real world.

Nevertheless, as Burke points out in *The Rhetoric of Order*, sometimes, in an imperfect world, we must be satisfied with an ultimate goal accompanied by imperfect means. We must strike rather than kill, kill rather than butcher. Peace remains the aim, but it is sometimes impossible to create peace by means of peace. Blake accepts this idea as well. Yet historical context affects the degree to which each of these men is willing to support violence as a means for achieving a just peace. For Burke, writing at the height of the Cold War and in the shadow of Hiroshima, the times when violence is to be chosen as

a means to peace would be few indeed.

For Blake, at the end of the eighteenth century, violence, when initiated by the oppressed, is a purifying fire that must be endured at times, the unavoidable outbreak of long-suppressed tensions and energies. In *The Four Zoas*, violence without forgiveness is dangerous, but once the “Selfhood” the self interested only in its own survival, is broken down through forgiveness, even then, some violence may necessarily occur, as the most oppressed persons in a culture break free. For Blake, violence is never to be desired, it is never the ideal, but, for the oppressed, it is better than becoming a perpetual sacrifice to the order that tortures them. For Blake, there is a marked difference between the sacrifices made in the service of a tyrannical order and the punishment of the oppressor that is intended to liberate. The violence of the winepress is better than the continued persecution of the weak, but intellectual war, unaccompanied by bloodshed, is better than both. *The Four Zoas* is itself a symbolic action, an act of intellectual warfare waged against the powers that sacrifice the minds and bodies of others to retain rigid systems. For the Blake of *The Four Zoas*, revolutionary warfare alone cannot lead to the ultimate, dynamic peace that is intellectual war. Nor can forgiveness. These two opposites must come together, and when they do, perhaps peace can begin to emerge as the end result of a flexible and forever changing dialectical order.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

While it is true that the Druids and their sacrificial altars appear most frequently in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, works that Blake engraved during the nineteenth century, the previous chapters should make it more than clear that Blake's interest in scapegoating does not begin with the sacrificial acts portrayed in these late works. Nor should we assume when Los exclaims in *Jerusalem* that "I must create my own system, or be enslav'd by another man's" that his interest in systems and system-building is something new, even though *Jerusalem* embodies the most intricate system-building of Blake's career. Using the lens of Kenneth Burke's theory, we see that, even in the 1790's, Blake's work exhibits something close to an obsession with scapegoating in both its mild and in its most violent and demeaning forms. Furthermore, the concern with scapegoating is always connected with concerns about reason, about order, and about systematic thinking in general. Our interest in scapegoating in William Blake's writings should not be limited to an interest in Druid sacrifice, and it most certainly should not be limited to the later texts, where sacrificial imagery is the most prominent. Indeed, from the beginning of his career, Blake argues that scapegoating, violent and non-violent, is one of the most fundamental by-products of the rigid systems that he so deplores. Yet, he also learned that the systematic is inescapable. Thus, in *The Four Zoas*, he begins to accept the fact of systematic forms of order and to employ them himself, not in an accidental, unavoidable way, but deliberately; an interest in exploring inclusive, mobile, yet systematic structures will remain with him for the rest of his career. This much we know.

We also know that Blake wants Mental Fight, or Intellectual War, to remain and prosper, while he hopes for an end to Corporeal War, and he hopes that his work, and his way of thinking about symbolic order, will be a part of that process. Yet there are certainly questions that remain unanswered, specifically about the role of violence in Blake's vision. Blake is clear that the violence of the established orders is simply victimage, and he sees it as an absolute evil, or, to use his terms, it is error, negation, or hindrance. On the other hand, Revolutionary violence seems to be less than ideal, but, nevertheless, sometimes necessary. The rebellion of Fuzon in *The Book of Ahania* is simply destructive, but the winepress of *The Four Zoas* is purgative. The difference appears to be, primarily, one of attitude.

The same question about the role of violence would be difficult for Kenneth Burke to answer, although Burke is clearer that answering this particular question is not his primary concern. Burke's obsession is words, and his concern is to describe different kinds of symbolic orders and the mechanisms by which they shift and change. Nevertheless, he has definite ethical commitments, and he shapes his discussions of language in such a way as to demonstrate that particular values are being harmed or helped by particular ways of understanding and using language. In the early Burke, the Burke of *Permanence and Change* and *Attitudes Towards History*, Burke's analysis is most concerned about the ways in which language can create change, and the changes he seems most concerned to make are economic. It is the Marxist Burke who is most prominent in these texts. The abusiveness of the economic order seems to be his primary ethical concern. Later, in *The Grammar of Motives*, *The Rhetoric of Motives*, and *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke's interest in economic justice remains, but his primary focus is on the purification of war. The need to avoid world conflict and later nuclear holocaust is the ultimate ethical aim. In

his later years, this concern for peace is accompanied by a concern for environmental issues, and he becomes more concerned about how the uses and abuses of language affect our treatment of the natural ecological system. None of these values are argued for; they are simply present, and Burke assumes that we will recognize their importance, just as we recognize the importance of our own personal survival. He assumes that the ethical is built into language, that we aspire to ultimate moral aims in part because our language is necessarily structured hierarchically. But he also asserts, straightforwardly, that no value can be pursued with purity all the time. Only in the realm of the symbolic can pure motivations reign, not in the world of bodily action.

However, despite these ultimate commitments to justice, to peace, and to ecological balance, all of them, apparently, a commitment to the continuation of life and vitality, Burke does not offer us a procedure for sorting out when is the moment to make what compromise. He certainly does not imply that we should always be flexible, insofar as pure flexibility would be as rigid a system as any. What Burke finally tells us is that transformative dialectic is necessary, but so is some level of stable order, and the two will always remain in dialectical relationship with each other. Ethical systems, scientific systems, in fact, any systems of order, are to remain flexible and open to self-critique. Yet Burke declines, even more than Blake, to tell us just when to make what kind of compromise. While Burke is motivated by particular ethical aims, he is not an ethicist. He is a “word man,” a rhetorician, and if he is more interested in describing how language works than he is in telling us how to behave. Furthermore, his ethical concerns are, in part, rooted in the nature of language. If rigid systems cause warfare and other forms of scapegoating, it is, in part, because they are unreal, untrue to the dialectical nature of language itself and untrue to the nature of the ever-shifting physical realm in which we find ourselves. Ultimately, Burke is asking

us to be realistic, and thus somewhat skeptical, about what language can do.

Perhaps this is what most divides Kenneth Burke from William Blake, whose vision, while ironic like Burke's about specific systems of order in the world as we know it, seems always about to leap into purity, always on the edge of proclaiming or even creating the absolute, the true Apocalypse, the thing that someday, somehow, will be given to human beings if they make room for imagination and vision. On the one hand, Burke tells us that we must "turn precisely in the direction of a neo-Stoic cosmopolitanism, with ideals of tolerance and resignation to the bureaucratic requirements implicit in the structure of modern industry and commerce," in order to avoid "fanaticism and dissipation" (*GM* 318). On the other hand, Blake proclaims:

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land. (*Milton* pl.1, ll. 13-16; E 95-96)

Then he goes on to quote from the book of Numbers: "Would to God that all the Lords people were Prophets" (Numbers 11:29). One cannot help but suspect that the twentieth-century Burke, like so many of Blake's eighteenth century and nineteenth-century contemporaries, caught a whiff of fanaticism in language like this.

Yet the Jerusalem that Blake seeks here is an ideal that he hopes to bring to England, to here and now, and the continuing presence of that ideal raises a very basic and important question: How is it possible to have a system of order that changes, that responds to different situations in different ways, that allows different values, even, to take precedence at different times, without putting oneself in the position of being ethically uncommitted? Certainly Blake is never ethically uncommitted. In fact, many of his values do not change all that significantly

throughout the 1790's and even on into the nineteenth century, as he engraves *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. Always, he places imagination and vision high on the list of values. Sometimes he seems to imply that imagination is genuinely better than other faculties. On other occasions, he seems to argue that imagination and reason are essentially equal, but that he must advance imagination because it is degraded and demeaned within his culture. In any case, imagination, enthusiasm, vision, Poetic Genius, and the like are all connected terms, and deeply important to Blake. Throughout his career, Blake is concerned about human sexuality, desiring to see it celebrated rather than repressed. Always, he resents the permanent enslavement of groups of people, either through literal enslavement, as blacks were enslaved in the Americas, or through economic enslavement at home. Whatever terms rotated for Blake, within a moving system of order, these terms never rotated very far..

The later nineteenth-century texts *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, and *The Ghost of Abel* are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this project, but even a brief examination reveals that in these later works, the same moral commitments remain, along with Blake's continuing obsession with the relationship between order and scapegoating. Blake's own vision grows ever more systematic, but his critical use of Druids, with their violent ritual sacrifices, also enter the scene in growing numbers. Furthermore, these later texts also maintain elements of the ultimate dialectical order that appears in *The Four Zoas*. This is clearest, perhaps, in *Jerusalem*, where all kinds of thinkers, including Newton, Locke and others whom Blake perpetually resents in most of his writings, appear as part of his system, not at the pinnacle of the system, but present nevertheless. In *Milton*, one of the most impressive visual images of the text portrays John Milton as a muscular, divinely human being, who molds the clay form of the Druidical Urizen into a new shape and thus prevents

his Urizen from sacrificing him on a Druid altar. Here, the rhetorical power of art to reshape the symbolic order is powerfully portrayed.

Yet there is also evidence that Blake's own system hardens a bit in these later texts, and that Blake becomes more interested in those questions of how the stability of his values connects to the rotating and open order he esteems. A hint of this interest appears in *The Four Zoas*. Los forecasts the plot of the later illuminated text, *Milton*, as he remonstrates with Rahab concerning her sacrifice of Jesus, and tells her that we must learn to differentiate between states and individuals within these states. The state does not change, he says, but the person can. In *Milton*, this basic idea of states is developed and transformed, becoming far more complex. The angels of the Presence tell Milton that individuals do not change; they are eternal, but they can change their state. Furthermore, the angels indicate that some states can change, and are in fact created to change: "Reason is a State/Created to be Annihilated & a new Ratio Created" (p.32, ll.34-35; E 132). Finally, there are Forms that cannot be annihilated or changed, ever. While an individual of a species can be destroyed, the form or idea of it remains.¹

Furthermore, some critics, like Jeanne Moskal, author of *Blake, Ethics and Forgiveness*, see these later works as advocating a total renunciation of violence. In this texts, Moskal maintains, Blake renounces violence and embraces an ethic of forgiveness and gentleness. The sense that these later works are different from the earlier ones, more systematic, less violent, more Christian, and more otherworldly, has marked much critical discussion. In these later works, the dialectic between forgiveness and violence appears diminished, and forgiveness emerges, some would argue, as a god-term. However, it is difficult to say whether Blake in fact changed his

¹The Platonic element here is obvious, despite Blake's renunciation of Greek and Roman models, or rather, his denunciation of them, in the introduction to *Milton* (E 95).

values significantly, or whether he simply identified himself as existing historically within a time in which he was called upon to play the role that Los plays in *The Four Zoas*, that is, the role of the peacemaker, the exemplar of forgiveness, who, in the process of Self- annihilation, makes Apocalypse possible.

In any case, *Milton's* increasing attention to shifting individuals and permanent states appears to signal a different approach and a different response to the need for a permanent moral aim, something that does not shift with the system. In any case, the Burkean theory used in this study would provide an important backdrop for examining these later works as well. Such a study might help provide answers to questions that remain about the relationship between order and scapegoating in Blake's thought, particularly as regards the ethical questions arising from the dialectic between that which must change and that which is fixed, the changing state and the permanent form.

Even if we stop our analysis with *The Four Zoas*, however, we nevertheless gain something significant. Not only do we get a clearer picture of Blake's development between 1798 and 1806, particularly as regards his views about symbolic order and scapegoating. We also can gain a new perspective on the ethical implications of the rhetoric we use, whether or not Blake or Burke is able to tell us how to make specific ethical decisions. When Blake attempts to eliminate order altogether, in an attempt to rid the world of Urizenic oppression, he finds himself at a logical and an historical dead end. Hierarchy is built into language, and in any given moment, we must create an order. In both the symbolic and the historical realms, the revolutionary order can be as cruel and relentless as the order of the longstanding tyrant. Or, as Burke tells us, revolutionaries can also scapegoat, reversing the order of oppression and cleansing themselves by

condemning those who have traditionally been at the top of the order. Such condemnations need not automatically be entirely just. Whatever one's position, an over-confidence in one's own righteous dogma, as opposed to the unrighteous dogma of another, is dangerous.

On the other hand, a considerable number of contemporary critical theories have a strong antinomian element, not necessarily the Protestant antinomianism that one finds in Blake and, for that matter, Burke, but antinomianism, nevertheless, insofar as the rational structure or the traditional symbolic order, are in some way resisted. From Derrida, to Foucault, to Deleuze and Guattari, we find thinkers who, in very different ways, recognize the dangers inherent in the frozen word, the frozen system, the deified order. Some may emphasize the dangers of scapegoating, while others may focus on other forms of oppression, violence, and so on. Yet for many, there is the tendency to make resistance in some sense ultimate, even as the impossibility of a true ultimacy is granted and acknowledged. In a fundamental sense, there is, at the root of every antinomian effort, a tendency to self-contradiction—the kind of self-contradiction that occurs when one creates a metanarrative that says that there is no such thing as a metanarrative, or a metarhetoric that says that there is no such thing as a metarhetoric, or a law that there can be no law.

One of the great gifts that Burke and Blake both offer is the awareness of that contradiction, accompanied by a refusal, finally, to carry the antinomian renunciation of system all the way. Finally, Burke is not skeptical of system-building; he is skeptical of the deification of a system. Finally, in *The Four Zoas*, Blake does not condemn Reason; he condemns the deification of reason. Like our contemporary antinomians, they have reasonable suspicions. The tendency to deify one's own position, to freeze words into something certain and unchanging in a way that

words can never be, is real enough and dangerous enough, and, as Blake shows us, it is, this tendency thinly masks the Selfhood, the Self that wishes to hold itself intact and superior in the face of every claim that would resist it. Yet in reading Burke and Blake, we also recognize that the deification of an antinomian anti-system is finally no different than the deification of any other symbolic order. Both can wreak the same havoc, produce the same defensive tendency to oppress others, and in the end, cause us to seek a scapegoat when we are unable to retain the purity of our own belief.

Finally, Blake and Burke both recognize and accept the human tendency to seek perfection. Blake seeks it, in fact, with an avidness that would probably make Kenneth Burke somewhat nervous. But neither will allow us to think that a given, pre-existing system is already perfect. While they do not tell us how to make specific ethical decisions, both Burke and Blake offer us a way of thinking about the limits of language that allows us to be skeptical about our certainties without completely renouncing our faith in a world beyond language, our belief in our ability to talk about that world, or our moral commitments. Blake and Burke both offer us a dialectical tightrope walk between structure and openness, between the yearning for perfection and the impossibility of attaining it, between perfect certainty and perfect doubt. In a world torn between extreme and warring perspectives, many of them asserted with remarkable levels of self-confident certainty, that tightrope is no small gift.

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Vita

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