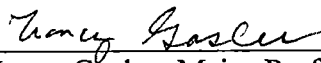


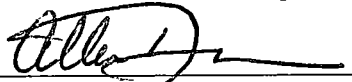
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Wayne Charles Ripley entitled "From Eternity to Eternity': Blake's Last Judgment, the Material Vision and its Living Form." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

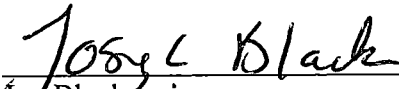


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Associate Vice Chancellor and
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"FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY":
BLAKE'S LAST JUDGMENT,
THE MATERIAL VISION AND ITS LIVING FORM

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Wayne Charles Ripley
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Otto Dewitt

1904-1998

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Abstract

Thematically, this thesis positions William Blake's thought in relationship to a fairly orthodox Christianity—specifically, the notions of a last judgment, providence, and dualism. This thematic procedure, however, raises several methodological questions, such as how Blake is, wanted to be, and should be read; and how to reconcile diachronic reading practices with synchronic interpretations.

Using Christ's unique position between time and eternity and between body and spirit, Blake rejects the abstraction that results from privileging any one of these over the others. When Blake does seem to privilege "spirit," he does not mean immaterial soul but imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition." Blake's visions (his specific works) reveal this "precondition" 1) by dialogically engaging narrative conventions—using and critiquing them simultaneously: the plot of *The Four Zoas* posits and unravels the Aristotelian unity and Christian closure it aims for and in doing this, becomes a site of perpetual narrative desire; and 2) by embracing its material existence in a manner that makes the accident of its composition an essential part of the work. *A Vision of the Last Judgment* and *The Four Zoas* seem unfinished fragments, but the play and chaos that exist in their respective notebook and manuscript states suggest a flux of meanings beyond authorial control or intention. This concept of imagination resembles contemporary notions of discourse. Hence, the figures of orthodoxy introduced in Night VIII of *The Four Zoas* show Blake engaging orthodox theodicy discursively and directly, and not allegorically as he does in his earlier works, critiquing orthodoxy while using its own language.

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List of Abbreviations

B	<i>William Blake's Writings</i> , vol. II, 1977
BR	<i>Blake Records</i> , 1969
E	<i>The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake</i> , 1988
FZ	<i>The Four Zoas</i>
J	<i>Jerusalem</i>
MHH	<i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>
NB	<i>The Notebook of William Blake</i> , 1973
VLJ	<i>A Vision of the Last Judgment</i>

Note: Excluding references made to William Rossetti's catalogue in chapter two, all references to Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* refer to the first volume.

Introduction

I.

William Blake considered himself a Christian, but what exactly he meant by Christianity is by no means clear. A friend to Blake in his later years, artist John Linnell, for example, after Blake's death wrote that Blake

always defended Christian truth against attacks of infidels, and its abuse by the superstitious. . . . It must be confessed, however, he uttered occasionally sentiments sadly at variance with sound doctrine.

(BR 43)

In 1825 Crabb Robinson recorded in his diary that "concerning the imputed Divinity of Jesus Christ" Blake said: "'He is the only God'—but then he added—'And so am I and so are you'" (Wittreich 90), while Frederick Tatham reported to Blake's biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, the surprising notion that "He had a sentimental liking for the Romish Church" (BR 42).

The difficulty in defining an orthodox Christianity after the Reformation in England and how doing so relied much on defining what heterodoxy was is implied in Swift's 1696 *A Tale of a Tub*, his allegory and satire of religion and, perceptively, also interpretation. When Martin and Jack decide together to reject what they, with their Catholic brother Peter, had added to their unadorned coats of simple religion, left to them by their dying father, the Anglican Martin and the Dissenter Jack proceed

in very different ways. Martin plucks cautiously, removing what damage he can without damaging his coat, a fear that makes him pause, though knowing “well there remained a great deal more to be done” (65). Jack, on the other hand, with “zeal,” tears, rips, and yanks until his coat is but “a medley of *rags* and *lace* and *rents* and *fringes*” (68). While this image praises the cautious reform of Anglicanism and shows how the Dissenters, according to Swift, had destroyed the true church still buried in Anglicanism and even Catholicism, the state of the three coats also show how epistemologically unsettled Christianity was. Instead of stating how and why Anglicanism’s doctrines were the most true, Swift lampoons, for instance, Jack’s idolatrous worship of his father’s will (i.e., the Dissenters’ use of the Bible as *the* foundational document). Hence, *A Tale of a Tub* becomes a satire of dubious interpretations, a fear of which was apparent early in the English Reformation with Henry VIII’s 1543 ban prohibiting “women, artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving men, husbandmen, and laborers” (Sommerfield 20) from reading the Bible in English. This fear is also apparent in the 1591 lament of an anonymous Englishman:

We live in a printing age, wherein there is no man either so vainly, or factiously, or filthily disposed, but there are crept out . . . all sorts [of] unauthorized authors, to fill and fit his humor, and if a man’s devotion serve him not to goe to the Church of GOD, he neede but repayre to a Stationer’s shope, and reade a sermon of the divels. (2)

Despite this anxiety, however, that aligned heterodox interpretations or practices with the devil, eighteenth-century English culture still considered itself predominantly Christian, and whatever that may have meant in doctrinal minutiae, the vast majority of its population thought and communicated both consciously and unconsciously as Christians and found solace and truth in the story of Jesus Christ. Blake was surely one of those persons.

It is possible then to take a pluralistic view of Christianity and consider Blake a Christian for no other reason than he considered himself one. While in 1789 Blake did subscribe to the principles of the Swedenborg New Jerusalem Church (35), it is generally agreed that during and after his residency at Felpham, fuelled possibly by his own artistic frustration in those years coupled with his learning of Hebrew,¹ Blake increasingly expressed himself with traditional Christian tropes, moving away from critiques of these tropes while still rejecting the yet in vogue language of the Enlightenment. His letters from the time reveal this increase in Christian language. In 1803, he refers to himself in Pauline terms as “a Soldier of Christ” (E 724). A letter from Thomas Butts the same year catches him “reading the cxxxix Psalm” and determined to “go on in the strength of the Lord through Hell” (E 729). In his last known, 1805 letter to William Hayley, whom five years earlier he had addressed as the “Leaders of My Angels” (E 709), Blake writes, “Excuse this Effusion of the Spirit from One who cares little for this world which passes away. whose Happiness is Secure In Jesus our

¹ This view is suggested by Paul Youngquist’s *Madness & the Myth of Blake*.

Lord" (E 767). In his poetry as well, there is also a clear move away from the "secular" pieces of the 1790s, *America*, *Europe*, and *The French Revolution*, and towards the more religious epics, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, which use explicit religious tropes and figures.

Straddling this period of change is the major subject of this study, *The Four Zoas* (FZ), whose composition lasted at least eleven years (1797-1808?). This work, if Andrew Lincoln and other textual scholars are correct, is a transition piece, evolving itself from *Vala*, a new Lambeth prophecy which would correspond and join with *The Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, *The Song of Los*, and *The Book of Los*, to an epic of at least nine nights, which incorporates in the later stages of its revisions such specifically Christian figures and events as the Lamb of God, Satan, and the Last Judgment. It is in FZ that many critics believe that Blake shifts from a humanist/romantic perspective to a more orthodox theodicy. Either implicitly or explicitly, critics such as Lincoln, P. M. S. Dawson, and Paul Youngquist equate Blake's adoption of specific Christian tropes with a literal and historical move on his part toward a belief in a transcendent, Protestant God, which differed from the heterodox or mystic theodicies that had such a large influence on Blake, such as Swedenborgianism or gnosticism.

This view of both Blake and of FZ is argued for most directly in Dawson's "Blake and Providence: The Theodicy of *The Four Zoas*." While his argument is not confronted directly until the third chapter below, it is important to introduce his as-

sertions here as they provide a backdrop for what is argued against throughout the thesis. Dawson asserts that "Blake criticism does not really know what to make of these providential references [in FZ], since they suggest a transcendent conception of God which Blake is not supposed to have any truck with" (135). He suggests that through the use of these providential figures in FZ "we can see Blake being forced to shift his ground and to invoke an extrahuman agency of salvation to do what he no longer believes can be done by human agency" (135). Hence, Dawson exchanges the idea that Blake "was hostile to the accepted theodicies of his age" for the idea that his earlier "rejection of the concepts of theodicy and providence was not and could not be final" (134). In saying this, Dawson suggests that Blake came to believe during the composition of FZ: 1) in a God who existed outside of humanity, 2) in a providence shaped by this God, 3) that Christ's divine sacrifice was and is necessary for the salvation of humanity which exists in fallen state, and 4) that Jesus is the agent of the apocalypse and, as Damon says, "the Real Angel of Death" (qtd. in Dawson 141).

Dawson makes an interesting case, and he highlights some very real changes in the way Blake dealt with religion as well as a certain squeamishness on the part of certain critics to associate Blake with any sort of Christianity whatsoever. But Dawson's conclusions about Blake are based on real methodological shortcomings. Even though he recognizes that Blake "eschews narrative structure in his later epics" (141), Dawson does not factor this rejection into the way he uses his evidence. One example should prove what I mean. Dawson asserts confidently, "Blake moves in effect from

the defiant antinomian assertion that “‘everything that lives is Holy!’ to the more orthodox recognition that ‘There is none that liveth & Sinneth not!’” (138). The second quotation, which Dawson equates with Blake’s own belief, is from *Jerusalem* 61:24, E 211. The context of this quotation, which Dawson makes no mention of, changes fundamentally any guileless equation of this statement with what Blake believed. The statement is said to Mary by Joseph, who is himself repeating what he was told in a dream by an angel explaining the Covenant of Jehovah. This scene between Mary and Joseph is itself a reply of the Divine voice to Jerusalem, who bids her “Behold: in the Visions of Elohim Jehovah. behold Joseph & Mary / And be comforted O Jerusalem in the Visions of Jehovah Elohim” (61:1-2 E 211). Moreover, this exchange between Jerusalem and the Divine Voice is not a singular act but one that takes place in iterative time: “. . . often she saw / The lineaments Divine & oft the Voice heard . . .” (60:50-1 E 211).

Clearly, even though Blake does write in his poem the orthodox belief that none “liveth & Sinneth not,” its context and Blake’s explicit critique of the concept of divinity in this and other works make us at least question the reliability of equating this statement with Blake’s own beliefs. Blake’s poetry has to be examined and wrestled with as the complex narratives they are.

Dawson’s assertion of Blake’s belief in an external providence raises some interesting issues for Blake’s relationship to the activity of narration, one of the major

concerns of FZ.² Providence and narration have been connected in Christian thought at least since Augustine. Narrative was Augustine's answer to his skeptical problems with time. Augustine writes,

you, Lord, are my consolation. You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge with you. (244)

Augustine envisions God's relationship to time like that of a central point to its circle, taking solace in the idea that at least God is not ravished by time. Blake, however, retorts to this God in his notebook poem, "To God": "If you have formd a Circle to go into / Go into it yourself & see how you would do" (E 516). In many ways, Blake's retort is very Christian (at least gnostically Christian) since it urges the distant Nobodaddy to enter time and become the loving and immediate Christ, but as regards narrative and providence, this poem rejects the safe place in which Augustine places his removed God. In neither time nor narrative, for Blake, is there an objective position. Providence suggests an ordered universe, a tale with a teller. The form of Blake's epics and their rejection of linear narrative, I believe then, represent more of Blake's argument about providence than any specific excerpt can.

² These concerns are certainly emphasized by the manner in which new texts (e.g., translations of the Bible, commentaries, new church doctrines—new stories in general) came to define and for many became Christ in the Protestant Christian print culture.

For these reasons, what I will refer to in this thesis as “orthodox Christianity” will include first, the very idea of a true, objective Christianity that exists beyond perspective and that one can and should reach by doctrinal approximations; second, the idea of an external God who reveals himself through Christ and thus saves a fallen humanity according to a providential plan; and third, the distinction between body and spirit such a conception of God implies.

Orthodoxy, as such, is contingent on the idea of a single, revealed truth, which I find homologous with what Donald Ault calls the single vision of Newton (*Narrative Unbound* 8), following Blake’s poem to Butts in a November 1802 letter (E 720-2).³ Orthodoxy presupposes possession of an *ur*-narrative, the *true* story of Jesus. Of course, the proliferation of *orthodoxies* in the centuries before Blake’s time already challenged this notion, but that was more of a combating one Truth against another. Asserting Blake embraced an orthodox theodicy means that Blake embraced in some form the “true” story it presents and that a true story was possible. To assert this, however, creates a special problem not only for Blake’s thought but also for his aesthetic practices. The macro-narrative presented by the orthodoxy runs counter to Blake’s own move away from linear narration in his epics, for FZ, if nothing else, critiques the desire to return to the “true” story beneath all accounts.

³ Ault asserts that Newtonian Narrative “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, but can (in theory at least) be fully captured through systematic analytic explanation” (8).

There is then the problems of duality—the relationship of the body to the spirit and the complexities inherent in this relationship. This conception of duality relates directly to the distinction Blake was trying to make between vision and allegory. Allegory for Blake was reductive, both minimally as a reduction to materialism and maximally as a reduction to “pure” spirit. Orthodox Christianity reduces itself to tenets and doctrines while it accepts a spirit apart from the body. Vision, on the other hand, posits both the body and soul as existing necessarily together infusible, meaning that Blake in principle did not move much beyond what he asserts in MHH that “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul” (E 34), even though the particulars of this relationship certainly changed over time.

II.

It should be made clear that I am not suggesting that Blake dismissed orthodox assertions out of hand. He himself was adamant in privileging the Hebrew and Christian traditions, tropes, etc. over their Enlightenment, Greco-Roman counterparts. Still, Blake always recognized an element of true vision in these other traditions, even if this vision had been perverted and lost, though it was Christianity, he contended, that had kept the forms of true vision. Orthodox Christianity does this by asserting that its unique claim to truth will be justified in a last judgment. For this reason, I believe Blake’s conception of the last judgment needs to be rigorously examined with especial attention paid to the last judgment’s relationship to narratives of history since

the last judgment is what returns Christ to time (*or* time to Christ), ending time and history itself in the process. The last judgment is a site of convergence: the meeting place of time and eternity; body and spirit; the individual and the universal; and the mortal and divine. I will argue that Blake takes the idea of the last judgment from orthodoxy and changes it into his own aesthetic/ontological trope that explains the individual reader/viewer's relationship to both art and reality. Hence, we will see in *The Design of the Last Judgment* and *A Vision of the Last Judgment* that Blake is doing more than describing his rendition of the biblical last judgment. He is also, and most importantly, pushing his readers to participate in an aesthetic last judgment as well that, for Blake, is essentially a moment of awareness of how the imagination ontologically precedes what he calls "Natural Objects." In his poetry and other works then, Blake manipulates, distorts, critiques, and plays with orthodox conceptions of the last judgment and its promise of temporal, and, therefore, narrative, cessation as well as its distinction from everyday life. Blake accomplishes this manipulation by means of innovative narrative strategies that resist endings; defeat plotted, Aristotelian closure; question causal relationships; and disrupt temporal sequencing. In doing so, Blake avoids the allegorical reading of the biblical last judgment done by orthodox accounts that must explain its continued postponement while justifying its continued importance and necessity (despite, and perhaps because of, its postponement).

These radical re-workings of orthodox assumptions, tenets, and practices put Blake squarely in step with his time and other self-declared prophets who wanted to

return immanence and inspiration, and, therefore, some form of a living God, to dead, formal conventions (Mee 167). Blake differs from his contemporaries, though, chiefly in that he does not allow himself their distinction between spirit and body nor between God and humanity. While he believes in a perpetual and immediate awareness of immanent divinity that is possible for everyone,⁴ art and imagination become for him not ways of reaching the divine but the very form and substance of this divine. This is a heuristic taken directly from Christianity when God (the pure spirit) gives to the incarnated Christ all his power.

Blake's style is a large part of his negotiations with orthodoxy. Quite early in his career, Blake adopts a mode of prophetic writing that was called "parabolic," or "dark" among certain millennialists, which functions through an intentional obscurity to "stimulate the reader into a fuller hermeneutic engagement with the text" (Mee 27). By using such a style, Blake was showing his debt to and appreciation of the Bible, but this view of the Bible does not equate to a similar relationship with the orthodoxy. Blake's style prevents his poetry from being paraphrased into doctrine but at the same time does not prevent communication with readers, if they wrestle with Blake's text and make what they can of it by means of their imaginations. Through his style, Blake encourages us to read him as liberally as he read the Bible or Milton. The intentionalist paradox in this practice, one which crops up again and again, indicates a Blake who wants us to find in his text meanings that were far beyond his control to

⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell asks about Blake's Last Judgments, "Doesn't it seem that Blake is trying to pack all five acts into one image?" ("Blake's" 2).

create, resting in the active participation his reader/viewer. But for a man who was an engraver by trade, a prolific painter, and the inventor of his own illuminated book, this mode of argumentation should not surprise us. Visual images are not translatable into words finally, but Blake continually and insistently placed the two mediums side by side to create synergistically rich texts that exceeded the mediums that they employed. By subverting the very printing practices that led to Christianity's doctrinal contentions, Blake is also trying to revitalize a Christianity that would exist beyond these doctrines, even if his Christianity is one that is finally incommensurable with any orthodox usage of that term.

Chapter One

Anxiety of the Apocalypse

The Pangs of Eternal birth are better than the pangs of Eternal Death -*The Four Zoas*

Los altered his Spectre & every Ratio of his Reason / He altered time after time, with dire pain & many tears -*Jerusalem*

Let us begin, as Blake does, with voices, with utterances (*enonces*):

[His] whole enterprise constitutes the irreducible presence of multiple interfering and incommensurable structures that operate 1) to rule out a pre-existent underlying world which surface events (i.e., those narrated by the linear text) partially rearrange and partially distort, and 2) to generate a narrative field in which the past is not finished and closed but incomplete and open—alterable and revisable. (Ault, *Narrative Unbound* 4)

and:

[He] rejects the authority of both logic and conventional narrative. His discourses often suggest a story, but they are never about the same “characters,” and the events that comprise them are not linked by laws that would permit us to understand some as causes and other as effects. [His] “histories” are fraught with discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, and lacunae as his “arguments.” (White 108)

What is common to these voices, these critical echoes, is their suspicion of unity, cohesiveness, and closure. There is a fear of the deep, the past, the subject and an em-

brace of the surface, the present, the discursive. The first quotation refers to William Blake's FZ. The second, to Michel Foucault.

Blake's move in this century from a marginal, pre-Romantic figure to the least compromised, most productive, and profound of the Romantics is based on his increasing relevance to our intellectual and artistic lives.¹ More and more we find that Blake is speaking to *us*. Our concerns are becoming his concerns. That we are able to put Blake for a moment in the company of Foucault shows how this is so, even if this homology simultaneously defamiliarizes the humanist Blake of Frye. It helps to keep Blake moving. We can listen again to him, taking apart what has become formulaic and rethink how his thought relate to our present moment, which remains in the shadow of the post-structuralist revolution of the last generation.²

Specifically, these quotes tie Blake and FZ to the various structuralist and post-structuralist arguments about the relationship between narratives and reality.³ Our quotation on Foucault comes from Hayden White's *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. White is concerned with Foucault there because of what Foucault does to the possibility of historical narrative. White tells us, Foucault's narratives, his supposed "histories," reject beginnings,

¹ Besides Donald Ault's *Narrative Unbound*, works such as Robert Essick's *Language of Adam* and Nelson Hilton's *Literal Imagination* as well as the collections, *Unnam'd Forms* (ed. Nelson Hilton) and *Critical Paths* (ed. Dan Miller et. al.) construct a Blake that seems to speak with a post-structuralist voice. The question now becomes whether Blake was able to solve any of its problems that still engage us (e.g., the role of the agent, the foundation of ethics, or the function of history).

² This is not to allow ourselves to be anachronistic but to understand that a work will always be understood from the ideological position of its reader. Blake is relevant to us only in this "contemporary" position; otherwise, he is an artifact.

³ The issues these arguments deal with are outlined well by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*. Most apropos is the problem of representation and the representation of history, which Jameson writes "is essentially a narrative problem" (49).

middles, and ends. They reject the closure and unity usually associated with a narrative account of history because, as White puts it, Foucault "denies the concreteness of the referent and rejects the notion that there is a reality that precedes discourse" (108). In short, for Foucault there is no objective reality for a narrative to describe or represent. Instead, our "reality" is the discourse created by narrative. Significantly, Foucault defines this discourse negatively, *not* as "a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (*langue*)" (*The Archeology of Knowledge* 30).⁴ Rather, discourse exists as historically situated utterances. For the historian or critic who would follow Foucault, the notion of discourse means abandoning cohesive, narrative accounts of transhistorical *systems* (be they institutions or subjects) for investigations of *strategies*, the historical and institutional context of "unities" or organizing narratives such as medicine, sex, or science (64-5).⁵ Foucault is suspicious of narratives because they say impossibly too much in their description of "reality" and with their rising action and closure are too easy and too complete. Narratives keep us from being aware of our own interpretive limitations. They are, from Foucault's point of view, ideologically suspect in their totality. Closure imposes a moral on reality (White 21). For Foucault, this totality and this moral are precisely what one must avoid if one wishes to be intellectually honest, though doing so is difficult. As he himself asks: "how can we be sure that we will not find ourselves in the grip of

⁴ Positively defined, discourse is "the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" (*Archeology* 107):

⁵ As Jameson puts this point, Foucault's "insights are strategically limited as much by their own situational origins as by the narrow or local ways in which they construe or construct their objects of study" (21).

all those over-hasty unities or syntheses concerning the speaking subject, or the author of the text, in short all anthropological categories?" (48).⁶

White and Foucault's mutual concerns with narrative, representation, reality, and methodology are necessary to keep in mind as we move to our own consideration of FZ⁷ and what Blake is doing in it. FZ forces us to be acutely aware of our own critical practices. As we will see, much of how we read Blake depends on how one places him- or herself between deconstructive, text centered readings and new historicist, cultural readings. For the time being at least, we will adopt the fiction of the author, recognizing in doing so: 1) how precarious it is to say what Blake *really* means, which requires us to pull out an abstracted "totality"—inherently false—from the details of his text and organize this system under the trope of *Blake*; and 2) how, at the same time, we can only know what Blake is saying by engaging in this critical fiction of system building, though we must also be on guard against "over-hasty unities or syntheses." In his "What Is an Author," Foucault asserts the author's name "performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function" (267). "Blake" is how we classify FZ, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *Jerusalem*, etc., making Blake himself into a fictitious system that must embrace (or at least account for) these specific works. Foucault recognizes this *de facto* function

⁶ According to White at least, Foucault makes certain he does not grasp any "over-hasty unities" by rejecting conventional, historical narratives and then, in a very Nietzschean moment, by rejecting his rejection. White writes: "Would it not be the height of irony for a scholar known for his idiosyncratic style in his early works to end his career by the composition of at least two books in which what was written was 'straight' history, in which the method used was the most conventional kind of philological analysis, and in which the manner of composition was so pedantic as to make of sex the most boring of subjects?" (140).

⁷ Both Andrew Lincoln's *Spiritual History* and George Rosso's *Blake's Prophetic Workshop* show how FZ is concerned with countering Enlightenment methods of history.

of the author and writes, "The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society" (267); nonetheless, Foucault characterizes this function of the author as essentially limiting: "The author is . . . the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (274). Yet, without this *Blake*, our "etc." above would be meaningless. It is of the utmost importance to recognize that *Blake*, the now great Romantic and not "the often unemployed Cockney engraver" (Bruder 1), was constructed and has been actively re-constructed time and time again. He remains troubling to us, coming, nonetheless, to dominate in many ways the romantic oeuvre he was once defined against. Why this happened, why we read Blake now, and how his works became literary and the focus of academic study are essential questions to ask,⁸ but doing so does not allow us to escape from the fact that we *are* reading Blake *now*.

These wider issues of interpretation are acutely at play in FZ⁹ since for a long time Blake's status resembled that of FZ manuscript, which was from some time around 1827 to 1891 papers "un-paged and unsorted" (Ellis and Yeats v. II 300) with the Linnell family. During much of that time, there was no attempt to understand

⁸ One book that asks such questions is Helen P. Bruder's *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. The aim of the book, Bruder writes, is "to bring home a whole set of Blake's meanings, politically important and historically specific meaning which have been submerged by the distorting procedures central to the process of institutional canonization" (1). To do so, she not only performs a Bakhtinian reading of Blake in terms of late eighteenth-century discourses regarding gender but also attacks the "Blake industry" and its neglect of feminist issues.

⁹ Ault's close reading of FZ in *Narrative Unbound* without critical or historical sources deserves some mention here. Ault wishes to avoid finding a false unity in FZ through making it dependent on other discourses. Nonetheless, at the same time, he must position FZ against its oeuvre and characterizes FZ strictly as an anti-Enlightenment text.

either FZ or Blake in any of the comprehensive terms Foucault would deplore. Without these terms, however, Blake remained largely an enigma. This is because, excluding a few, well-noted exceptions, no one thought Blake (by this is meant his unorganized, undiscovered works looked for by Rossetti in book stores) worth engaging until the appropriate figure of *Blake* was created. The creation of this figure, by Gilchrist, Rossetti, Swinburne, etc., slowly made reading Blake's *works* possible, led to the Ellis and Yeats edition of the works, which in turn saved/privileged/presented FZ itself. Admittedly, given the manuscript state of the poem, it was not without a considerable amount of violence that the poem could be saved or presented, but without the effort there would be no poem at all; just papers. Despite Foucault's suggestion then that all texts be read as if they developed "in the anonymity of a murmur" (275), this anonymity does not necessarily (and did not in Blake's case in regards to FZ) lead to "the proliferation of meaning." This violence of construction done (which is and will continue to be done) to Blake gives him meaning with certain moments always privileged over others and re-readings being done.

At this point, we should recognize that finding analogues for Blake in post-structuralist thought in how he both constructed and deconstructed meaning is not the same as using the strategies suggested by such thought ourselves. Even our early Foucault of *The Archeology* said, analyzing discourse "does not replace a logical analysis of propositions, a grammatical analysis of sentences, [or] a psychological or contextual analysis of foundations" (108). It is out of respect toward works that really do analyze discursive formulations that we recognize that our own analysis

here is foundational and analytical, even if through these foundational arguments we find a very anti-foundationalist Blake.

But let's progress past this as Kierkegaard's self-conscious pseudonym, Johannes Climacus did in regards to his explication of Lessing: "I now intend to present something that I shall, what the deuce, ascribe to Lessing, without being certain he would acknowledge it" (72). *What the deuce!* Necessary, the results of analytical practices are not always laudatory. After creating the new body of Urizen in Night IV of FZ, Los steps back as "Pale terror seizd [his] . . . Eyes" (55:28 E 338). For our example of terror, we will choose Northrop Frye, whose masterful, albeit systematic, conception of Blake remains the Blake most well known and who gave Blake's critics the ideas they argue with and against today. Frye writes that in FZ Blake "had not achieved a definitive vision, and leaving his great work in manuscript, started again where he had really left off, with the triumph of nature and reason" (309). Frye distinguishes FZ from its manuscript and assumes an ideal notion of the poem existed somewhere in Blake's mind. This is wrong because in doing so we turn away from FZ and toward the two later epic simply because they are, supposedly, more formally complete. So faced with this "error," we must, like Los, recoil and recreate, as Blake often did to FZ, with a new heuristic that is our own, one we hope Blake would recognize.

Still, reading FZ is difficult.¹⁰ Because the poem is so unwieldy, the temptation to generalize about the poem falsely (that is, at the expense of its details) always looms large. The incommensurability of the details one finds in FZ both among themselves and with Blake's other epics is perhaps why Frye also asserted, "Once [*Milton and Jerusalem*] were finished, there was no longer any real place for *The Four Zoas* in Blake's canon" (315).¹¹ Why Frye said so can be seen just by looking at the poem's manuscript state, where the text threatens to break apart and escape our ability to understand it. There seems to be no correct order (or, perhaps, no possible order) to the pages of manuscript. In a work of nine nights, there are *two*, very different Night VIIs. The pages are filled with erasures, emendations, and half-finished drawings. It starts as *Vala* and becomes *The Four Zoas* at some unspecified point, before which there are numerous layers of composition, probably reflecting the various intentions Blake had for the poem, and which many critics see as several poems working all at once in the wider text generally called *The Four Zoas*. And these elements are all present *before* we have even engaged the poem's narrative itself.¹²

When we do finally dive in, such a density of detail and contingencies confront us

¹⁰ Paul Youngquist confesses, "To read *Jerusalem* is to experience confusion. I have read it many times, never with the kind of comprehension I have come to expect from writing deemed literary" ("Reading the Apocalypse" 601). When dealing with Blake's epics, this difficulty is not limited to *Jerusalem*.

¹¹ This idea of incommensurability in FZ draws on, of course, Donald Ault's conception of the poem who first suggest this idea in his "Incommensurability and Interconnection in Blake's Anti-Newtonian Text," which argues Blake used incommensurable details "to draw the reader's attention to conflicts which arise in the nature of explanation" (277).

¹² An example of this tendency toward fragmentation in the poem itself is how the voices of the characters overpower the voice of the narrator. Instead of a narrator's privileged account of the past, which in terms of the poem is also eternity, each character accounts for the fall from his or her own perspective. Since all these accounts take place mimetically, these multiple voices radically discredit the idea of a real truth beyond them as well as accentuating how this past no longer exists except in these ac-

that it becomes nearly impossible, in Roland Barthes's terms, to distinguish between indices and functions. We cannot tell what is important in the poem, and so instead we generalize, trying to find *any* unity or synthesis.¹³

The impact of FZ's methodological difficulties and why it has been necessary to dwell on them is best seen in the fact that, more than one hundred years after the poem's first publication in the 1893 Ellis and Yeats edition of the works, it remains heavily debated whether FZ is even a finished work. Admittedly, Frye's proclamation that FZ is "the greatest abortive masterpiece in English literature" (269) long suspended, or at least hushed this debate, and why Frye's opinion was and remains so popular as a workable critical position on the poem is easy to see.¹⁴ The position allows readers to come to a point of resolution about the poem; they can praise its greatness while pinning its textual and manuscript difficulties on Blake's own inability to get the poem done. With the author blamed for these difficulties, FZ can then be utilized for various ends. As Hazard Adams suggests, for example, with its various accounts of the fall and the conflict between Luvah and Urizen, FZ can be a tool for understanding the "completed" epics (628), which only mention these incidents peripherally.¹⁵ The poem can also be used for biographical purposes. Not only does

counts. As Hazard Adams puts it, the multiple voices of FZ show us "a perspective in which only the present exists" (629).

¹³ Frye's *Orc Cycle* is the example par excellence of a generalization that helps us make sense of FZ while at the same time absolutely falsifying what is in the text. Nowhere, except in "The Mental Traveller," does an "Orc" Cycle occur, and there is no textual evidence to suggest that the male in that poem represents Orc in any specific way.

¹⁴ More or less, Frye's opinion is shared by such Blake illuminaries as Bentley, Erdman, Essick, Mann, and Lincoln.

¹⁵ "Almost everyone who has studied these poems . . . agree that an understanding of *Jerusalem* comes much more easily, and may only come at all, if one is familiar with *The Four Zoas*. If that is really the case, we have a unique situation in which a major poem is dependent in some sense on one that was

FZ tell the stories never recounted in *Milton* or *Jerusalem* (and, indeed, FZ tells these stories so many times that they become problematic), it is also where Blake's thought is said to develop from the enthusiastic, humanist views of the 1790s to the more Christian and less explicitly political views that are seen in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.¹⁶

But what we would like to highlight about Frye's position and its widespread acceptance is the feeling it captures among Blake's readers that something is fundamentally lacking in FZ. Even though the poem has even more than the nine nights necessary to complete a nine-night poem, as well as having a phenomenal beginning and ending (Otto, "Final States" 144), FZ is still taken as incomplete some way. Interestingly, this uneasiness exists even though Blake left other poems, other *great* poems, jotted down and unengraved in his notebooks.¹⁷ This perceived lack in FZ seems, therefore, more than just formal.

The argument that runs "counter" to Frye's is that the proper form of FZ is precisely its present, "unfinished form." This view of FZ as a fragment is useful if for no other reason than it allows us to put Blake in step with our conceptions of the Romantic oeuvre. Majorie Levinson asserts in her book, *The Romantic Fragment Poem*, that the intentionally unfinished fragment came into its own as a poetic form during the Romantic Age. The Romantic fragment poem (e.g., "Kubla Kahn," *Christabel*, *Hyperion*), she writes, "dramatizes the poetic function" (199). The poet writing a

never finished and existed in manuscript form for nearly a century before being published" (Adams 628).

¹⁶ William Richey writes that Blake discovered at Felpham and in FZ that "He must . . . cease to be a journeyman engraver who creates original works in his spare time and become a prophetic artist who ignores all earthly concerns to follow his inspiration" (709).

¹⁷ Particularly, the aforementioned "The Mental Traveller."

fragment “identifies the transformational act [in the process of reading/writing the poem itself] . . . as opposed to the product, as the essential literary fact” (199). The Romantic fragment shows us directly the *process* of the poet’s inspiration and allows us to participate in it. Understood in this manner, FZ was left somehow incomplete so that it could show us Blake’s imagination in progress.

Yet, one should recognize this “debate” between those who say FZ is not finished and those who say it is a fragment is really a debate over how (as opposed to *whether*) FZ is not finished. Now this is a debate that revolves around how one conceives of Blake’s intentions: namely, did Blake leave off intentionally, or did Blake just leave off? But these questions will have to be postponed for the time being until we have fully investigated the point of agreement in this important debate we have touched—the “unfinished” state of FZ. For in either case, FZ is still a fragment, a fragment in both its form and, necessarily, even in its “finished” plot.

When we engage a text, we desire, as perhaps we should, to find some unity. We expect to understand the work in some fashion. Because FZ gives us the signs that it is an epic (the invocation, the beginning *in medias res*), as informed readers we read it with the expectation that there will indeed be an epic narrative for us to find. But to bracket for a moment Blake’s relationship to the epic and other determining genres or meta-narratives, we simply expect that FZ will account for itself by means of a story. We want to be able to say what happened in the poem. But the practical unanimity that there is indeed something “wrong” with the plot of FZ, which makes it seem unfinished, makes us examine: 1) Blake’s relationship to the narrative process

and 2) our own relationship to narratives—our own reading practices. Foucault's methodological warning against "over-hasty unities" sounds so loudly in this because in choosing to recognize the poem as *either* finished *or* not finished, we debilitate meaning. I would suggest then that our reading practices in FZ be shaped by the tensions existing in how we actually treat the work: a finished work that seems a fragment and a fragment that seems finished. In this contradiction, the poem works actively both to construct a narrative and dismantle this narrative (as an anti-narrative).¹⁸ It works toward closure but at the same time defeats that closure. It simultaneously fulfills our desires as readers and leaves them unsatisfied. It is noteworthy that Levinson only mentions FZ in an endnote, saying "To talk about Blake's fragment poems is to talk about Blake in the most comprehensive way" (234 n.12). This respect shown to the poem is correct because to discuss FZ, one needs to maintain a stubborn, almost divided perspective on what is both finished and unfinished, on its individual words themselves and their wider structures,¹⁹ and on its own themes of unity and division. FZ is thus a dialectic between the finished and the unfinished that seems to bestow Blake's eleven-year struggle with the poem onto us.²⁰

¹⁸ We will work toward a clearer definition of "narrative" in our discussion of White and Peter Brooks that follows shortly. An "anti-narrative" though can be distinguished from a "non-narrative" in that the former subverts our expectations regarding narrative, while the latter sidesteps them. White discusses annals and chronicles as non-narrative forms of histories, which lack "the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (24). This distinction is important since it equates narrative with imagination and a unique sense of reality.

¹⁹ Ault specifies the dialectic relationship between the poem's "microscopic surface" (12) and its "schematic patterns" (16) in the metaphor of weaving, which he takes from Night I. Much of my argument here is based on Ault's conception of the poem, differing chiefly in the manner I employ Brooks and take the meta-narratives Blake is critiquing in FZ to be Christianity's teleological structure and the neoclassical epic's conception of unity.

²⁰ I take the dates of the poem's composition to extend from 1797 to 1808. My argument for a late 1808 date will be made in detail in chapter three.

This essential dialectic, which does not push us quickly towards any synthesis, is why we cannot allow the actual narrational elements in FZ to be eclipsed by its anti-narrational tendencies or *vice versa*. This view is to follow Adams' reading of *Jerusalem*, where he asserts that "I suspect it is mistake to apply terms like 'structure' or 'system' to *Jerusalem* without also involving their contraries" (627). We must be aware of both FZ's narrative clues as well as how the poem subverts these clues. The danger in focusing exclusively on the poem's "discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, and lacunae" (White 108) is that this focus threatens to push the poem beyond the realm of intelligibility and Blake back towards imputations of madness and intentional obscurity. It is very easy to dismiss the world of FZ (and Blake's other epics) as too alien and distant to be understood. Not only does it seem that there is nowhere for us to settle down and watch the action of the poem unfold, worse still, there often seems to be no action at all as we understand it (other than, perhaps, pontificating). Too close or too far away to understand what is really going on then, imagining "the scene" is often difficult, while relating to characters who pass from life to death and back again with such disconcerting rapidity is nearly an impossibility.²¹ Despite our difficulties in reading the poem, as P.M.S Dawson tells us, "The narrative structure of *The Four Zoas* [still] encourages us to argue in terms of cause and effect" (141). Much more than *Jerusalem*, there is a story in FZ, and what marks FZ as unique, according to Ault at least, is how it is able to play on the reader's own desire for unity ("Incommensurability" 283). Hence, if the anti-narrational aspects of the poem are to work at

²¹ One needs only to think of Ahania's inexplicable resurrection and immediate death in Night IX.

all, they must work with and against the poem's own narrative structures and the reader's own desire for a plot. It is not profound to say that how one views the plot determines for the most part how one views the poem. Erdman, Lefebvre, and Kilgore, for example, all see the climatic moment of the poem as Los's embrace of his Spectre at the end of Night VIIa, while Otto, on the other hand, sees the climax of the action in Los's destruction of the sun at the beginning of Night IX.²² Both of these readings share the idea that FZ is building to a certain, crucial dramatic moment and that this moment shapes the poem *in toto*. The danger here is seeing the poem only as an abstracted plot, which reduces the poem to specific moments at the expense of others. This practice is detrimental since it allows us aggrandize a few of its moments into an allegory for the whole poem. It allows for a false synthesis. Admittedly, in many ways this is a description of the danger present in all critical practices, which threatens to cast us into an endless hermeneutic circle. We must abstract to understand, but in abstracting we generalize, and "To generalize is to be an Idiot." Yet, in trying to maintain the tensions in our methodology, the rest of this often quoted response to Reynolds is useful to keep in mind: "To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit—General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess" (E 641). Hence, if the post-structuralist revolution and Blake together can teach us any-

²² The first set of readings can be found in issue 46 of the *Blake Quarterly* (78), an issue devoted to FZ. Otto's argument can be found in "The Spectrous Embrace, the Moment of Regeneration, and Those Two Seventh Nights." Otto's view here is interesting since elsewhere he critiques the stress critics place "on narrative development and continuity" ("The Multiple Births" 137) and the idea that "poems should be unified, coherent, and formally complete" ("Final States" 144). My point here is that one must both identify a plot in FZ and be aware of how this same plot unravels itself.

thing, it is that interpretive practices must privilege the particular, even if these particulars are contradictory.²³

The discussion here of how our own narrative can best relate the "true" FZ re-focuses us on the relationship between narrative and reality, which exists both critically (the work and the interpretation) and historically (the events and the account). As hinted at in our discussion of Foucault, White distinguishes two views of this relationship. The first is that "[a] narrative account is always a figurative account, an allegory" (48). That is, narrative is a representation that always refers to a reality behind the narrative itself. Narrative (in this case, the *sjuzet*) is a twisting of something bare that already exists (the *fabula*). White borrows the other view from Roland Barthes, who tells us narrative's "function is not to 'represent,' it is to constitute a spectacle" (qtd. in White 43). Narrative is the reality, while the "pure" events are the abstraction that in turn only exist in a new narrative context. When he attempts to reconcile these views with one another, White hits upon the major issue that exists at the heart of both Blake's ontology, aesthetics, and the *plots* of his later epics:

[T]he notion of what constitutes a real event turns, not on the distinction between true and false . . . , but rather on the distinction between real and imaginary One can produce an imaginary discourse about real events that may not be less "true" for being imaginary. It all depends upon *how one construes the function of the faculty of imagination in human nature*. (57, emphasis added)

²³ This assertion is in accordance with Fish's notion of an "experiential structure" (103) as shown in his

According to White here, the relationship of narrative to reality *depends* on one's conception of the imagination.²⁴ Interestingly for us, these two descriptions of narrative correspond to the competing conceptions of the imagination seen in the "debate" between William Wordsworth and Blake.²⁵ As indicated in his long titled poem: "Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening the Imagination in Boyhood and early Youth," Wordsworth understands imagination and reality as co-existing but distinct. The world of a poem is not the same as the physical world but is dependent on it. At the same time, reality exists prior to the mind and stimulates the imagination, which would be empty without this input. Wordsworth declares Blake insane to Robinson since Blake denies this co-existence in the mind and, indeed, denies the *real* preeminence of reality. The world of poetry, at least according to Wordsworth of the prefaces (a distinction Blake makes), is the illusionary, allegorical one that needs a pre-existent nature, something to see, in order to create.²⁶ However, Blake counters in his marginalia Wordsworth's connection between nature and poetic fecundity: "Natural Objects always did & now do Weaken deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is

"Interpreting the *Variorum*."

²⁴ Those who follow Frye then and suspend the particulars of the FZ for generalities neglect investigating the role the imagination plays in their own critical investigations. They, thereby, assume that all critical practices are allegorical. The ramifications of this insistence will be seen in chapter two.

²⁵ While bringing to bear Blake and Wordsworth on the role the imagination plays in human nature is a particularly un-Foucaultian move since reinforces the "unity" of the Romantic oeuvre's concern with the imagination, how closely the poets' conceptions of imagination correspond to White's descriptions of narrative show that the Romantic concern with imagination is directly anti-Enlightenment and signals a profound dissatisfaction with the narratives of empiricism that emphasize unity, totality, and cohesion, which echoes our own, contemporary dissatisfaction with these narratives.

²⁶ One thinks of "The Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*," "emotion recollected in tranquility" (25, emphasis added).

Not to be found in Nature" (E 665). Blake equates reality with the imagination here; but more, Blake's use of the words "Natural Objects" also shows that he recognizes, in a way Wordsworth cannot, the problems in any view of reality, including his own.²⁷ Blake's use of "Natural Objects" does not mean that Blake accepts them as real in the same way Wordsworth does. On the contrary, it is because these objects are natural and take no part in imagination that they are unreal for Blake. They are abstractions; they exist impossibly outside of imagination and, thereby, outside of narrative itself. In the language of Foucault, "Natural Objects" are the false unities of things existing beyond discourse that allow Wordsworth to say there is a reality beyond his poetry (outside of his imagination), shaping his poetry. But Blake recognizes in the same breath both the ideology inherent in Wordsworth's empiricist conception of reality and the imagination working in Wordsworth that makes his poetry possible. To be the great poet he was, Wordsworth, according to Blake, had to have been able to view the world as a function of his imagination and not as determined by it. The empiricism Wordsworth shows in his prefaces does not sufficiently explain Wordsworth's poetry: "I do not know who wrote these Prefaces they are very mischievous & direct Contrary to Wordsworths own Practise" (E 665). Wordsworth's prefaces are "mischievous" because they give a false account of the relationship between imagination and reality. They give nature preeminence. Nonetheless, in a moment that is instructive, Blake still does not call Wordsworth "mad" but describes him instead using the language of dualism: "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man

²⁷ I take this acknowledgment of other perspectives even while rejecting them, a practice which is ech-

rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & then he is No Poet but a heathen Philosopher at Enmity against all true Poetry or Inspiration" (E 665). Blake can see both Wordsworth's "Spiritual" imagination and his "Natural" empiricism and knows they battle against one another.²⁸ We must recognize that for Blake, his imagination and Wordsworth's empiricism do not refer to either a purely ideal reality in the mind or a material reality outside of the mind. Both function in the realm of discourse, that is, the imagination, which, to imitate a Blakean maneuver, at the same time constitutes reality for Blake.²⁹

Blake sees this conflict between empiricist or allegorical *accounts* of reality and the imaginative *positing* of reality by means of poetry so acutely in Wordsworth precisely because he was aware the same conflict in his own life and works.³⁰ As seen in the debates between Los and the Spectre in *Jerusalem*, there is in Blake, on some level, the desire to embrace this fixed reality of Wordsworth's (and Newton's, Bacon's, and Locke's) ideology.³¹ Rather than neglect this difficulty as Wordsworth does, however, Blake made the challenge of determining the function of the imagina-

oed throughout Blake's career, to be the irrefutable evidence that Blake was never mad.

²⁸ The distinction between "spiritual" and "natural" is Blake's own but should not be read, as too often in the case, as being equivalent with the same distinction in orthodox Christian thought. How Blake conceives of duality is one of the major concerns of this thesis, and this idea will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter as well as in chapters two and three.

²⁹ Later I will call Blake's specific works *visions*, and it is Blake's visions that "compete" with Wordsworth's poetry. Vision is also, however, used by Blake to signify the Imagination, which, in the words of Fredric Jameson, provides the "ultimate semantic precondition" for Blake and thus serves as the backdrop for both Blake's visions and Wordsworth's poetry (to say nothing of their very existence).

³⁰ Blake's marginalia to Wordsworth were written in 1826 (E 887).

³¹ Norman Wacker picks up on this struggle in Los and writes that Los "preserves the sense of interanimating violence that passes back and forth between emanation and its spectral others, between the visionary prolific self and its positive self-devouring selfhood" (135).

tion the chief concern of his poetry. His poetry, and FZ in particular, therefore, must be understood as being more than just dialectic. It is dialogic.³² It is where Blake's ontological/aesthetic war is waged. It is where he is determining what the role of imagination is and, thereby, what reality is. His poetry is a struggle between these two views of narrative, and this returns us again to White, who says that narrative is where "our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual" (4).

As a struggle between the possible and the actual, Blake's poetry can then be read as existing in the contradictions between propositions six and seven of his early tract, "There is No Natural Religion [b]." Proposition six suggests empirical deduction: "If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot." Proposition seven suggests a radically different ontology: "The desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite" (E 2). For Blake, the possible is an infinite realm because of the existence of infinite desire, but the first proposition makes it clear, and this where Blake's dialogism comes into play, that Blake was also aware of a supposed actual that denies the infinite nature of our desire and condemns us, therefore, to despair.³³

³² Michael Holquist's glossary in his Bakhtin collection, *The Dialogic Imagination*, writes, "Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (426).

³³ Lest it lead to a misunderstanding that Blake found in his contemporary audience, it should be made clear that Blake is not simply making a leap of faith in proposition seven. Blake's "infinite" is neither that of the empiricists (infinity as, say, the infinite extension of a line) nor the orthodox Christians (infinity as the providence of God alone). An "infinite desire" is not one which exists continually in an

To help us understand this play of infinite desire in FZ and explore the dialogic conflict between the "possible" and the "actual" in FZ, we turn to Peter Brooks's account of narrative desire as it is suggested in his *Reading for the Plot*, which will also serve to give us some standard for determining what exactly narrative and plot is and how FZ subverts it. Brooks tells us when we read, we read expecting an ending that justifies the plot. In the language of Aristotle, this ending is not haphazard but necessary; not the result of randomly ordered, episodic *mimesis* but of a probable, plotted *muthos*. The ending of a plot is the soul of the plot. A proper ending is what makes tragedy superior to history. A good plot moves us towards closure. Following Freud, Brooks distinguishes between two types of narrative desire: *eros* and *thanatos*. A good plot moving towards its proper ending maneuvers symbolically between an immediate death, which is a short-circuited resolution, and an indefinite pleasure, which is a meaningless extension. Repetition of the plot's primal scene enables the text to maintain these tensions between textual life and death, extension and conclusion, replaying the plot in dilatory space until the correct ending can be achieved and the desire for the "right" ending present at the beginning of the narrative can be properly fulfilled. At this moment of fulfillment, however, *eros* is revealed to be one with *thanatos*: "narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end" (Brooks 52). It is this merging of *eros* and *thanatos* that determines the *ending*, which in turn guarantees the *meaning* of the plot: "The very possibility of meaning plotted through sequence and through time depends on the anticipated structuring

abstraction but is one which must be renewed continually in the concrete, and which, in Blake's con-

force of the ending: interminable would be meaningless, and the lack of ending would jeopardize the beginning" (93). Plot (which is the defining feature of narrative) fulfills our desires through dramatic closure. This closure binds them (precludes them) and makes them finite. In terms of the epic,³⁴ analogous in the *Poetics* to tragedy, plot possesses a unity that Aristotle equates with the actual. Paul Ricoeur calls this equation "structuration," wherein what is probable or actual is constituted between "the work and the public" (50).³⁵ While it will be made clear that Blake endorses such a relationship between a work and its audience, Blake is also aware that this classical/neoclassical unity of plot ends the *eros* of the narrative by changing it to *thanatos*. Life is conquered by death. Closure and unity force the world of the imagination toward an ending, an acknowledgment it exists in the wider, "real" world of empiricism. The final rejection of closure and unity in FZ then seems also a rejection of this "real" world for the poetic one.³⁶

In addition to being applicable to the epic, Brooks's description of linear narrative can also be easily applied to orthodox Christianity whose proper ending is the return of Christ and the last judgment. The last judgment is the climax of Christianity. It justifies the role of orthodoxy in the "plot" of time, and through its eschatological nature, the last judgment both relieves and fulfills the orthodoxy's role as me-

ception of the last judgment, must be experienced continually.

³⁴ Norman Wacker contends that Blake's relationship to the epic is dialogical in that Blake challenges the epic tradition while employing it. Blake shows the "epic-in-progress" (131) according to Wacker in much the same manner I wish to argue that he shows a continual last judgment.

³⁵ As further evidence that Wordsworth's practices are contrary to Blake's own, note that in "The Preface" he writes, "Aristotle, I have been told, has said that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative" (15).

³⁶ This may be a reason Blake changed the title of the poem from *Vala*, the principle of nature, to *The Four Zoas*, the living creatures.

diator between the eternal divine and temporal humanity. Accordingly, the last judgment is the structuring device of the orthodoxy; the last judgment *plots* the orthodoxy. It is where the repeating motifs of Judeo-Christian history are finally played out correctly and where repetition can cease for an eternal ecstasy that is both a fulfillment of the orthodoxy's desire and its death. Remove the last judgment, and the orthodoxy is neither justified nor structured, and the myths of origin it protects and promulgates are threatened by meaninglessness.

FZ aspires formally to be both an epic and a Christian narrative. Night I shows the result of the fall, while Night IX is self-consciously titled "Being The Last Judgment" (E 386). Under Brooks's heuristic, in terms of both the epic and orthodox Christianity, the meaning of FZ becomes largely contingent on Night IX and its ability to unify and explain what is found divided and mystified in Night I. As the last judgment, Night IX ideally should move us beyond the narrative, that is, from dramatic, plotted time to a undramatic, unplotted, post-narrative world. This role of last judgment is especially necessary for Night IX because the condition of the fall (the condition of the world according to orthodoxy) is the condition of the first eight nights. This point is important to clarify. Kathryn S. Freeman, for example, tells us that in the plot of FZ we see "the fall of consciousness from wholeness into fragmentation and its reintegration at the apocalypse" (19). It needs to be made certain, however, that there is never any dramatic "wholeness" in the narrative of Night I and that its "reintegration" in Night IX is suspected by every reader who has been dissatisfied with the poem's closure. The wholeness Freeman mentions here actually belongs to a

state before the time of dramatic narrative begins. The fall (and not the creation) is the exigency for the plot of the poem, which takes place exclusively in the fallen world.³⁷ While it is Tharmas who laments in Night I, "Lost! Lost! Lost! are my Emanations" (4:7 E 301), Tharmas is part of a wider unity that exists only potentially among the characters but which is already gone (in the past or future, most importantly in some moment that is *not the present*).

By the time the action of Night I begins, the pre-narrative unity has already been shattered, the very act of Tharmas speaking with his own voice signaling by synecdoche the presence of lack (and, therefore, desire) throughout the narrative and other characters. This "fall" of the narrative functions both formally and dramatically. It allows the plot to unfold and the narrative to happen. Tharmas's voice spawns Enion's, while what Enion says to Tharmas, "Thy fear has made me tremble thy terrors have surrounded me / All love is lost Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of Love" (4:16-7 E 301), echoes the pre-narrative subtitle of the poem, "The torments of Love & Jealousy" (E 300). This initial example of intra-textuality shows how the desires of the narrative, narrator, and characters all influence each other.³⁸ Tharmas speaking reveals that an ideal, prelapsarian (pre-narrative), universal love has been transformed in and through historic (narrated) time to jealousy and division. This

³⁷ Again we see a parallel between Blake and Foucault. Foucault writes: "Behind the visible façade of the system, one posits the rich uncertainty of disorder; and beneath the thin surface of discourse, the whole mass of a largely silent development (*devenir*): a 'presystematic' that is not of the order of the system; a 'prediscursive' that belongs to an essential silence. Discourse and system produce each other . . ." (76).

³⁸ This formal feature in turn works dramatically. The seeming similarity in identities and fluidity of body among the characters, narrator, and narrative suggest a quick resolution of the plot and thus a reunification into silence.

transformation spreads throughout the action of the poem, but this active, sexual division and generation is already only repeating what has already happened between Urizen and Luvah in the poem's lost primal scene, which is but recounted again and again. As both the last judgment and the site of dramatic climax and closure, Night IX is the poem's final attempt (and last chance) to replay this scene correctly, turn jealousy back to love, and reach a state of unity that fulfills and ends the lack/desire of the plot. This, in turn, will allow the last judgment to occur and end the narrative. To reach this ideal unity, dramatic closure should coincide with the end of narrative space. In the language of Brooks, the desire of the narrative should be repositioned properly so that the both symbolic and literal dilatory space of the work itself can stop its delaying and end.

In *Jerusalem* at least, we can see that Blake is aware of this relationship between dramatic time and narrative space, for they are reconciled to one another in a coordination of the characters, narrator, and author. Adams shows that Blake is not only the poem's "envisioning actor" (634), or narrator, but also "an active character in a dramatic scene of poetic visionary creation" (630). In addition, it is declared in parallel terms late in the poem: "The Poets Song draws to its period" and "Time was Finished!" (92:8, 94:18 E 252, 254). The end of dramatic time and the narrative activity itself coincide through metonymy in *Jerusalem's* apocalypse, where the distinction between Blake, Los, and Jesus is lost. Before the apocalypse, the identities of Los and Blake have already become increasingly joined through the poem, but in the apocalypse Albion sees that "the Divine Appearance was the likeness & similitude of

Los" (96:7 E 255). The narrator's voice at this moment is not lost but rather joins the others in a way that equates reality with imagination. Albion's leap into the Furnaces of affliction makes all "a Vision, all a Dream" (96:36 E 256), but this is not destruction. Instead, reality in this last judgment becomes vision (Blake's concept of the imagination), and *vice versa*.³⁹

But in FZ, with its stubbornly unsatisfactory plot, we cannot be certain if dramatic time and narrative space share the same relationship. As noted, the characters and the narrator are quite distinct in FZ, with the narrator having sometimes seemingly less power than the characters themselves over the narrative. Enitharmon, for example, shortly before she calls Urizen into the poem, declares, "Hear! I will sing a Song of Death! it is a song of Vala!" (10:9 E 305). This conflict is seen in FZ's apocalypse when it is Urizen who declares that "Times are Ended" (131:31 E 400) and not the narrator. The apocalypse here occurs only dramatically and does not affect the narrator or Blake himself at all directly (unlike what happens in both *Milton* and *Jerusalem*). Moreover, given the struggle to control the narrative and provide the privileged, true story of fall, Urizen's plural "Times" seems to strategically undermine the unity the narrator wishes to give to the poem. There is no universal conception of time, no epic time as Bakhtin conceives of it, for each character conceives of time in his or her own fashion. The "End of The Dream" tells us that in light of this loss of narrative unity and dramatic control, the narrative can only be concluded by

³⁹ How this is done will be expanded upon in the conclusion to chapter three.

forgoing narrative space. The poem ends abruptly, and for all the subsequent revisions to the work, it does so by filling only ten lines of the last sheet.

The unity the narrator wants to give the poem is posited diegetically before the drama begins, in the pre-dramatic space⁴⁰ of Night I that exists before Tharmas speaks, where there remains a hint of the monologic world that Bakhtin asserts belongs to the epic. The narrator is trying to position himself within an established epic tradition by asserting the plot of the poem and signaling that Los is the poem's hero:

Los was the fourth immortal starry one, & in the Earth
Of a bright Universe Empery attended day & night
Days & nights of revolving joy, Urthona was his name
In Eden; in the Auricular Nerves of Human life
Which is the Earth of Eden, he his Emanations propagated
Fairies of Albion afterwards Gods of the Heathen, Daughter of Beulah
Sing⁴¹

His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity
His fall into the Generation of Decay & Death & his Regeneration by
the Resurrection from the dead (3:9-11, 4:1-5 E 301)

Several elements here already signal that the narrative will spin apart and that this voice (like all others) is never monologic. As Bakhtin writes, "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's

⁴⁰ This space becomes a narrative space only when the implied author enters the narrative with the endnote, "End of The Dream," which, by ending the narrator's assertion that "sweet Science reigns" regulates the narrator to the level of the characters.

⁴¹ Note that "Daughter" here is singular while it is always plural elsewhere.

intentions; it is populated—over populated—with the intentions of others” (*Discourse in the Novel* 294). In addition to the characters’ voices, the narrator’s voice in this opening is also battling with the voices of several epic and religious traditions. Some examples of this latent heteroglossia include: the influence of Milton—the mixing of Christian and pagan traditions as well as the parallels between Satan and Los—how Earth and Eden coincide, as well as how this passage contradicts the claims of the title page that the poem will be about Albion, which strangely pits the narrator’s goals for poem against those of the implied author.

Still this assertion is the last moment of the narrator’s complete control over the plot, which ironically has yet to unfold. The unspoken poem still has one voice, and with it comes the promise of epic unity and, following the Christian notion of history, providence and resurrection. Los’s identity is equated with Urthona’s, and the narrator indicates this is the unity to look for in Night IX, which will reverse Tharmas’s initial cry of loss. In Night IX, the narrator then reasserts this claim from Night I: “Then Los who is Urthona rose in all his regenerative power” (137:34 E 405), and nearly all readings take this claim of the narrator as authoritative in terms of the action of the poem. Yet, when we look at the passage that is traditionally cited as indicating that this unity between Los and Urthona is complete, we see that the narrator’s diegetic assertions may not be mimetically accurate:

Urthona is arisen in his strength no longer now

Divided from Enitharmon no longer the Spectre Los

Where is the Spectre of Prophecy where the delusive Phantom

Departed & Urthona rises . . . (139:4-7 E 407)

When the first "no longer now" is taken with the following line, it does indeed seem that Urthona is quickly unifying and regaining his ancient strength.⁴² Urthona is "no longer now / Divided from Enitharmon" and is no longer [divided from] the Spectre Los." But given the ambiguity that arises from Blake's enjambment and lack of punctuation, we can see this reading is not exhaustive. For if the same "no longer now" is taken with the rest of its own line, then Urthona, though risen, *is* "in his strength no longer," *is* "now Divided from Enitharmon," and *is* "no longer the Spectre Los." That Urthona has not unified with Los would, in addition, explain why the narrator exclaims, "Where is the Spectre of Prophecy where the delusive Phantom / Departed[?]"⁴³ Seemingly the narrator's own equation of Los and Urthona two pages earlier, "Los who is Urthona rose" (137:34 E 405), which signals integration and resurrection, has been refuted by the actual actions of Urthona. This reading turns the very passage that promises a unification between Los and Urthona into the same passage that shows Los's "Resurrection to Unity" never comes or is at least made suspect. What makes the ambiguity at this point so crucial is that it does call into question the poem's final unity. If this unity is not achieved, then, as we have shown with Tharmas, there is no totalizing unity possible among the other characters at all, which the narrator's conception of the plot is aiming for. There would remain in the poem's

⁴² Urthona's continual rising over the last few pages of the poem are enough in themselves to make one suspect the purity of it. Some form of "rise" is used ten times in the last two pages, and six of these apply directly to Urthona.

⁴³ Wilkie and Johnson explain these lines as arguing "that art itself must avoid setting itself up as a God . . . the worship of creativity itself can be wrong" (237). I doubt the line could be misread any more thoroughly.

conclusion some division, lack, and, therefore, desire. In terms of plot, this totalizing unity (which is literal given the nature of the characters) is also the dramatic moment of closure, and without this closure, the poem does not really finish dramatically but just ends. But how and why the poem does not finish dramatically needs to be demonstrated in greater detail.

Evidence that the "delusive Phantom" of the poem's end is Los can be found in the opening of Night IX. While Los and Enitharmon are weeping over the crucified body of the Lamb at the beginning of Night IX, "their Phantom Eyes" do not allow them to see the spiritual Jesus standing next to them. Corresponding to these "Phantom Eyes" are Los's "vegetable hands," which tear down the sun and initiate the last judgment (117:3, 6 E 386). This link between "Phantom" and "vegetable" in Los shows that the ephemeral nature of "Phantom" applies to the vegetative or generative world of the material body. Los is often associated with the body. He is born in Night I, and in Night VII, the Spectre (of Urthona, we should remember) says to the Shadow of Enitharmon: "Los the Slave of that Creation I created . . . I will destroy / That body I created then we shall unite again in bliss" (84:31, 34-5 E 359). The Spectre is claiming that he himself created the world of Los, who exists in a body that is both vegetative (created) and phantasmal (illusory), and to return to the unity of eternity, this body needs to be destroyed. Otto summarizes best what this implies for Los when he writes, "Los is the reality of the fallen world" ("Spectrous Embrace"

642).⁴⁴ Otto's observation also implicitly emphasizes the spiritual otherness of Urthona, who is usually praised as being the ideal Blake was striving for. He is the ideality of eternity; in the narrator's version, the ideal of Eden. He exists in an eternal world foreign to us, the pure ideal that supposedly exceeds (ethically and ontologically) the created, material world of Los. This ideal of Urthona seems to be, though, also an example of a false unity, a pure spirituality that conceives of itself existing beyond the body, beyond time, and beyond language. Urthona is the only zoa who does not speak. He cannot engage the other zoas or, more importantly, the reader. He seems to be the tool of the narrator. Here we see how Urthona provides a connection between the unity of plot and the idea of a controlling providence. The "triumph" of Urthona in Night IX shows that FZ is a plotted world and that the narrator has been in control. Undermining this moment undermines then both his idea of plot as well as providence.

How Los and Urthona's inability to unite reveals FZ's dialogic arguments about the role of the imagination in constructing reality can be seen when we compare this concluding scene with other scenes in Night IX. Much of Night IX does try to work out the problem of Night I, that is, how to reconcile division and unity. For this reason, one of the major concerns of the night is with families, which serve to balance individuals and communities.⁴⁵ At the feast of the Eternals, after the newly arisen Albion has joined them, the Eternals see "The female form now separate . . . the hor-

⁴⁴ What is missing in Otto's equation is the role of the Spectre if Los is fully equated with the fallen world. Clearly, Los is the mean between the Spectre's pure materiality and Urthona's pure spirituality.

⁴⁵ This point provides a third way in Jameson's wrangling with Frye whether the individual or society should be privileged as the final conceptual horizon. C.f. *The Political Unconscious*, 69-74.

rible thing / Not born for the sport and amusement of Man but born to drink up all his powers" (133:6-7 E 401). To these Eternal Men, the female form "is Sin / . . . the Generative world" (133:8-9 E 401), and they cannot understand a separate female form as anything other than sinful. As if to calm them, though, one of their numbers (perhaps Albion) describes to them the progression of man. "Man is a worm," he says, who "in his Selfish cold repose / Forsaking Brotherhood & Universal love in selfish clay" seeks "the places dark / Abstracted from the roots of Science." In these dark places man is entombed "In walls of Gold" and cast into the Earth "till divided all / In families we see our shadows born," learning "Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live" (133: 11, 12-3, 14-5 16-7, 20-1, 24 E 401). In this account, man becomes reconciled to the feminine presence, signifying, it seems, a form of alterity—reconciled to the female presence by means of the family. Man loses his individuality ("his Selfish cold repose") for the multiple reflections of himself. This is a lesson Los is aware of. He tells Rahab in Night VII: "I divided / To multitude & my multitudes are children of Care & Labour" (11:49-50 E 380). At the end of this account, the Eternal Men embrace the "New born Man," who seems to arise from the account itself, as an "image of the Eternal Father" (133:26-7 E 402). The Eternals learn that the goal of man is to exist in the family. The individual is divided and in division regulates his parts. Our reading of the closing scene showed that it is possible that the poem ends with Urthona still divided from both Enitharmon and Los. This reading is augmented by the fact that when the emanations rise from "the Golden feast," the narrator says "Enion & Ahanian & Vala & the wife of Dark Urthona"

(137:7, 11 E 405, emphasis added). This new title for Enitharmon shows us how ambiguity works to make the final unity of the poem suspect. If Enitharmon at this point is already displaced from Urthona, it means that she disappeared in the destruction of the material world by Los at the tomb of the Lamb. From this view, Urthona cannot reconcile himself to her because she no longer exists.

If Enitharmon does not exist any longer, it is because her link with the body is the same as Los's. After the narrator asks "where [is] the delusive Phantom / Departed," the passage on the last page continues with:

... Urthona rises from the ruinous walls

In all his ancient strength to form the golden armour of science

For intellectual War (139:7-9 E 407)

The link between these "ruinous walls" and Enitharmon's disappearance can be explained by looking back again at the beginning of Night IX. As Los is tearing down the sun and the moon, the Spectre of Urthona and the short lived *Spectre* of Enitharmon come together in the moment of their destruction:

The Spectre of Enitharmon let loose on the troubled deep

Wailed shrill in the confusion & the Spectre of Urthona

Reciev'd her in the darkning South *their bodies lost* they stood

Trembling & weak a faint embrace a fierce *desire as when*

Two shadows mingle on a wall they wail & shadowy tears

Their bodies buried in the ruins of the Universe

Mingled with the confusion. Who shall call them from the Grave

(117-8:24-5, 1-6 E 387, emphasis added)

This passage is elucidated when we note that, after being chastised by Albion, Urizen cries out:

... let dark Urthona give

All strength to Los & Enithamon & *let Los self-cursed*

Rend down this fabric as a wall ruind & family extinct (121:23-5 E

390, emphasis added).

The structure of the universe, walls/ruins, family, and bodies are connected figures in all three of these passages. The family becomes another way to structure the universe that can be contrasted to the architectural structures seen in Urizen's construction of the Mundane Shell in Night II and in Los's construction of Golgonooza in Night VII. The first passage shows that without their bodies the two Spectres become through simile part of the wall that collapses; they become just shadows on ruins. Losing their bodies in the destruction of the universe by Los renders them ineffectual and prevents them from returning to the action of the poem, which is as dead as the characters ever become in FZ. Urizen's description of Los as "self-cursed" makes sense in this context since Los exists in the material world and to destroy it is to destroy himself. But why Urizen would urge dark Urthona to give all his strength to Los and Enitharmon makes sense only if we see that it is necessary to their unity that in the destruction of the material universe Urthona should give his strength not to himself but to his family, his particulars. Urthona instead, however, works to regain his own

"ancient strength" for himself, rising "*from* the ruinous walls" that we have seen are connected to both the created, material body and the family. Urthona aspires to supercede this material world and reach a level of pure spirituality. While the new man at the feast of the Eternals crawls out from the "roots of Science," comes to put off his "walls of Gold," and learns that "Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face," Urthona, for his part, forms the "golden armour of science" and initiates his own reign of science (133:15, 16, 25; 139:8 E 401-2, 407).⁴⁶ This armor he casts will help protect "his limbs renewd" (138:36 E 406) in the caverns beneath Tharmas's flocks. This newly formed body, it seems, supplants Los and Enitharmon, his proper members.⁴⁷

Urthona, in his golden armor, accentuates the connection between him and sun that is made again and again in the last few pages of Night IX. He is becoming like a sun god, and in this role, like the Renaissance notion of Christ represented in its last judgments.⁴⁸ The idolatry with which Urthona is treated is seen where he rises supposedly as Los from the sea and then is worshipped by the Human Wine:

... [They] lift up their hands

Singing & shouting to the Man they bow their hoary heads

⁴⁶ Ault notes that "Blake never use[s] 'armour' in a positive way elsewhere in the poem" (*Narrative Unbound* 462).

⁴⁷ It is significant, I believe, that after Luvah asserts, "Attempting to be more than Man We become less," that he both loses his crown of thorns that connected him with the Lamb and sings a song of Los (135:21 E 403).

⁴⁸ Valeri Shrimplim writes that "The Last Judgment in particular was suited to . . . cosmological interpretation as the one scene in Christian theology where heaven, Earth, and Hell, together with their relative physical positions in the cosmos, would naturally be depicted together at one time" (612).

And murmuring in their channels flow & circle round his feet (137:36-38 E 406)⁴⁹

Unlike the new born man who is welcomed into a family, Urthona is worshipped.

This reading of Urthona as a nefarious ideal is further supported by the manner in which he safeguards the Bread of Ages. The Eucharist makes the bread and the body of Jesus one in the act of transubstantiation. When in Night VII the Spectre suggests to Los that they construct bodies for the other spectres, a similar equation of body and bread is made:

The Spectres have no [Counter(parts)] therefore they ravin
Without the food of life Let us Create them Coun[terparts]
For without a Created body the Spectre is Eternal Death (87:36-38 E 369, Erdman's emendations)

Unlike the active and inclusive creation of bodies performed by the fallen forms of Urthona (Los, the Spectre, and Enitharmon), Urthona himself places the Bread of Ages "In golden & in silver baskets," which are then placed "in heavens of precious stone" (138:18 E 406). This connection between heavens of precious stone, Urthona's own golden armor, and his activity of mining, "The hammer of Urthona sounds / In the deep caves beneath" (138:35-6 E 406), should not be ignored. Urthona's action leaves the world of nature suffering, deprived of this bread:

Men are bound to sullen contemplations in the night
Restless they turn on beds of sorrow. In their innermost brain

⁴⁹ This equation of Urthona with "the Man" is based on the fact the narrator tells us that in Urthona's

Feeling the crushing Wheels they rise they write the bitter words
 Of Stern Philosophy & knead the bread of knowledge with tears &
 groans

Such are the works of Dark Urthona (138:12-16 E 406)

Significantly, after Urthona puts away this Bread, he departs, repeating the departure of Jesus propagated by orthodox Christianity that allows suffering now for a promised eternal heaven of bliss later on, after the last judgment.

When the ending of the poem is read as a successful execution of the plot (as it is outlined by the narrator in Night I), the reign of sweet science commencing at the poem's end is usually seen as benign. Wilkie and Johnson argue that Blake distinguished between two types of science, "an inhuman science" related to "'dark Religions' of mystery" and the "science that meets human needs" (236). Their distinction, however, is difficult to maintain, especially if one defines "science" as it has been used previously in the poem. The dark places man retreats to in the story heard at the feast of the Eternals are "Abstracted from the roots of Science" (133:15 E 401), and it is significant that for the "roots of Science" Blake had originally written "roots of Nature" (E 845). This image recalls the Tree of Mystery that figures so heavily in Nights VII and VIII, and Blake's indecision links this conception of nature/science with the "Stern Philosophy," emphasized with the men who have only the "bread of knowledge" to sustain them. The addition of "sweet" to science does not necessarily allay the textual anxiety that surrounds Urthona's rise either. Sweet is used through-

caverns, his lions were "conversing with the Man" (138:38 E 406).

out the poem both alternatively with “dark” and in so many senses not sweet as to make it almost consistently suspect. Ault writes, it “is so deeply entwined with delusion that it occurs in few contexts where its association with delusion can be completely eradicated” (*Narrative Unbound* 463). Thus, in the ambiguity of “sweet Science reigns,” the narrative and anti-narrative tendencies of the poem merge, showing again how Night IX unravels the same unity it posits. The only other place “science” is used in Night IX is in Albion’s castigation of Urizen: “Thy self-destroying beast formd Science shall be thy eternal lot” (120:40 E 390). This threat closely resembles the ending of FZ. Under the reign of science, we too end the poem with science as our “eternal lot,” an end that is both sweet and delusive at the same time.

This, of course, has been to privilege the textual anxiety that suggests both that the unity of Los and Urthona does not occur and that Urthona may not be the ideal he is usually taken to be. Readings contrary to ours, such as the one suggested by Bloom in his commentary in the Erdman edition of the works, are essential to retain because they show how FZ’s ending can also be read as “sweet.” We must remember that both possibilities (and it goes without saying there are many other possibilities). Considered together then, the narrative and anti-narrative tendencies can be seen in the tension between FZ’s dramatic resolution and irresolution. This tension is different from the simple irresolution that would allow us to say with Frye that the poem is just not finished, for with this tension the characters’ voices haunt the post-narrative space for all readers who cede that FZ does not feel finished. There is a plot that asks to be finished. FZ both has and lacks the closure that would allow the read-

ers to escape it. We are forced by its disjunction between narrative space and dramatic time to return to FZ again and again in an attempt to make sense of it, much like Blake was and much like the characters who find it necessary to make sense of their fall. As it applies to the characters, the most instructive example of this disjunction is found in Luvah and Vala, who serve as the poem's literal "desiring machines" (Brooks 39) and who, as such, fuel the plot of the poem.⁵⁰ After their pastoral interlude, which was prefigured in Night I by Enitharmon's "For in the vision of Vala I walkd with the mighty Fallen One / I heard his voice among the branches, & among sweet flowers" (10:15-6 E 305), the narrator tells us they awoke and "reascended / To the Eternal Man" (137:29 E 405), trying to repeat, it seems, the initial, lost fall of the narrative. When their attempt fails, Albion casts them from the poem "into / The world of shadows thro the air till winter is over & gone" (137:30-1 E 405). And even though winter ends with Urthona's final rise, because the narrative space of the poem ends, Luvah is not able to return dramatically. Yet, the narrative desire he created remains.

This lack of a clearly plotted ending—evident since the narrative desire never does find its proper place—argues against a moment of dramatic climax and closure that justifies the plot (of the poem or of life). In this, we are met with the paradox that if the dramatic moment at the end of Night IX did succeed in effecting the unambiguous unity the narrator promised, then it would undermine its own dialogic argu

⁵⁰ In addition to Luvah's wrestling the horses of light from Urizen (or some variation of this), Vala's misplaced desire not only influences the plot in her relationship with Urizen and Satan, but also permeates the poem's structure and title.

ments through its privileging of the dramatic moment, its closure, and its own unity. Instead of continual rebirth and regeneration, there would be closure (a conversion of *eros* to *thanatos*) and a final death. The ambiguity of the ending (again, both its dramatic resolution *and* irresolution) then is the only manner the last judgment of Night IX remains active, dramatic, and at the same time historical.

This is because after the plotted end of the poem, the reign of science, like all the other reigns in the poem, ends. But this reign must be ended with a non-dramatic device, the disconcerting "End of The Dream" (139:11 E 407). As Ault observes, this endnote is so disruptive to our understanding of the poem because the phrase, "a Dream of Nine Nights" (Magno and Erdman 115), is crossed out on the title page (*Narrative Unbound* 466). This non-narrative endnote thus recontextualizes the ontological location of the entire poem. The dramatic (narrated) reality of the poem engulfs even the teller of the tale, who too become a part of the dream that ends. This reign, the drama of the poem, and the poem itself literally becomes part of a fiction that can be opposed by awoken, "real" fact.

Countering this move, though, are the layers of authorship found on the last page, which resist the narrator's insistence of FZ's state as an epic, as *fiction*. The implied author's endnote regulates the narrator's voice to a position comparable to what Blake thought of Wordsworth's "Natural Objects." The narrator is but one hermeneutic horizon that exists among others. Beyond the endnote itself, there is even another layer to the text, the drawing beneath the endnote of a figure leaping or waking up, while on the reverse of this *last* leaf of FZ is the engraving for the *first* page of

Blake's *Night Thoughts*, the title page of the first night, which is entitled: "On Life, Death, and Immortality" (Magno and Erdman 254).⁵¹ Can we consider this part of the text and plot or is it merely an accident or coincidence? Magno and Erdman, in their edition of the facsimile, read the other *Night Thoughts* engravings in terms of poem's characters. What prevents this last engraving then from being part of the text too? Where the actual narrative ends, where we can stop reading the plot, becomes interminable, and in this, the last judgment breaks both the structural and dramatic bonds of Night IX. The horizon of the poem extends from the narrator, to implied author, to illustrator, to engraver, calling into question at each step what the boundaries of the poem and, thereby, reality are.

The formal and dramatic interminableness of the poem's ending shows how the poem renews its own narrative desire. It becomes a site of perpetual return and renewal, which is no more apparent than on the literal site of our and Blake's own return, the poem's title page, for it is here Blake changes the title from *Vala* to *The Four Zoas*. The art surrounding the altered prose is of a flying man blowing his trumpet downward on heads of men, women, and monsters rising up from the earth. Is this a scene of resurrection? Is the trumpeter rousing these creatures for battle (with the reader)? Or is the battle between the single voiced narrator and the multi-voiced characters, thus emblematic of the conflict between the poem's narrative and anti-

⁵¹ Magno and Erdman quote Vincent De Luca's comment on this fact, which was made in conversation: "By making the first page of Young's work the last page of his own, Blake suggests that *The Four Zoas* moves in a counter direction Young's poem. Back to back on the same leaf are the designations 'Night the First' and 'End of the Dream.' By using this proof where he does Blake suggests that two works are contraries, one moving toward the installment of orthodoxy, the other towards a triumphant humanism" (102).

narrative tendencies? The narrator's voice can neither unify nor harmonize the voices rising in contrast to his own, but neither can the many voices of the characters break down the narrative unity completely. In the space between the narrator and the characters, the title (the *two* titles) of the poem is written, and it is in this signature space that the entire drama of the poem unfolds and refolds in a cycle. This cycle must be seen then as a critique of both epic closure, which allows one to escape the narrative world for the *real* one, and the teleological structuring of Christianity, which requires a post-historical moment to justify its historical existence. The resurrection that finally occurs in FZ, as it is promised on the title page, is not that of a particular character then but of the poem itself. The lingering feeling that the plot of FZ is not finished reveals, therefore, the essential aspect of the poem's argument. The poem becomes a continuous cycle of desire. This is more than saying FZ is a fragment, it shows the real inexhaustibility of desire and reveals how Blake's conception of the last judgment is both immediate and continual; the last judgment of FZ returns us to the poem's beginning, the fall from prediscursive silence into voice (*enonce*).⁵²

⁵² This account of FZ is similar to and influenced by Otto's article "Final States." Otto writes that FZ "is a kind of Moebius strip that denies the possibility of reaching an End" and that "If the poem were completed in any conventional sense this would suggest that the narrator had reached the 'void outside of the poem/world that eludes Urizen'" (145, c.f. FZ 72:22-7 E 349). I differ from Otto in that I hold that this continual return is contingent on Blake's conception of the last judgment.

Chapter Two

Vision of the Last Judgment[s]

Anyone who as a believer posits inspiration must consistently regard every critical deliberation . . . as something dubious, a kind of temptation. -Kierkegaard

And when not referring to his Visions [Blake] talks sensibly and acutely -Crabb Robinson

Chapter one showed how the last judgment of FZ is actually a continual and immediate process that arises from the tension between the poem's narrative and anti-narrative tendencies. This tension, which is not finally resolvable, makes the poem a site of perpetual narrative desire, which reveals itself in the inability of critics to say whether or not the poem is finished. This chapter will continue exploring Blake's idea of the last judgment but will do so by examining his non-poetic treatments of this "event": both his pictorial representations of the last judgment and the accompanying prose "descriptions" found in his letter, *The Design of the Last Judgment*, and his notebook tract, *Vision of the Last Judgment* (VLJ).¹ In doing so, we will try to: 1) establish how much importance to give to the fact Blake was expressing his idea of the last judgment in so many different mediums; 2) see how the last judgment relates to his ideas of allegory and vision; and 3) understand how Blake kept his own concept of the last judgment and what we will call his *material visions* from being curtailed by larger systems such as standard language (*langue*) or meta-narratives such as orthodox Christianity.

¹ My approach here was inspired by Robert Essick's *William Blake and the Language of Adam*, in which he writes: "This book is an attempt to complete the circle of influence by returning to Blake's

In terms of Blake's other pictorial efforts, such as his 537 watercolors and 43 engraved plates for *Night Thoughts* (Bindman 124), his series of 135 paintings and drawings from the Bible done for Thomas Butts (Essick 6), or his 102 Dante paintings (Bindman 178), the actual number of pictures Blake did of the last judgment is relatively small: three paintings, a finished drawing, four or more rougher drawings, and a design engraved by Schiavonetti for Blair's *Grave*.² The first two paintings, in the collections of the Pollock and Petworth Houses, were executed in pen and watercolor over pencil and are dated 1806 and 1808 respectively (466-7 Butlin). In the early catalogue included in the second volume of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, William Michael Rossetti does not consider either work worthy of much commentary. He writes briefly that the 1806 painting was "A very elaborate treatment of the subject, exceedingly fine" and in just slightly more detail describes the 1808 painting as:

A small picture highly finished in drawing, but slight in colour, the white predominating save on the side of the condemned. Some of the figures of the blessed are of extreme loveliness, and the grouping is admirable. (Gilchrist v. II 218)

What makes this 1808 Petworth painting noteworthy for our purposes, however, is that it is the *Last Judgment* described by Blake in *The Design* for the miniaturist Ozias Humphrey, who obtained Blake's commission for the painting. Humphrey appreciated *The Design* enough that he asked for two more copies of the letter from

writings and bringing to the study of their language a perspective informed by what we have learned from the study of his graphics and the media-consciousness they have raised" (1).

² Some of these drawings are lost. For a complete listing and descriptions, see Martin Butlin's *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*: 466-471.

Blake, which he then passed on to the painting's owner, the Countess of Egremont and David Steuart Erskan, Earl of Buchan and art collector (BR 188).

The third painting was lost by 1863. It was reportedly the largest and the most impressive of the three paintings, measuring 7 by 5-ft. Done in Blake's refined "fresco" technique, the painting appeared to be gilded in silver and gold.³ The best description we have of it comes from John T. Smith, Keeper of the Prints and Drawings in the British Museum at the time of Blake's death. Smith writes,

Had [Blake] fortunately lived till the next year's exhibition at Somerset House, the public would have then have been astonished at his exquisite finishing of a Fresco picture of the Last Judgment, containing upwards of one thousand figures, many of them wonderfully conceived and grandly drawn. (qtd. in Roe 204)

Despite the fresco's exquisiteness, Gilchrist reports that "Nobody could be found to give twenty-five guineas for it" (qtd. in BR 468 n.1), and by 1863 the painting had disappeared (Roe 204). How long Blake worked on this painting is unknown. We do know that in 1815 George Cumberland, jr., wrote to his father that Blake "shewed his large drawing in Water Colors of the last Judgment[;] he has been labouring at it till it is nearly as black as your Hat" (BR 235), but whether the young Cumberland mistakenly called Blake's fresco a watercolor or whether there was actually a fourth painting is difficult to say. It has been customarily assumed, however, by Geoffrey

³ What Blake called "fresco" he also called, and should have properly called, *tempera*, used "a mixture of carpenter's glue, whiting, and pigment" (Essick, *Language* 6). This method was initially unstable and caused his paintings to decay or, in Blake's own language, to be "molested continually by blotting

Keynes and others that VLJ describes this fresco much in the same direct way that *The Design* describes the Petworth.⁴ Moreover, because the description found in VLJ so closely matches the finished drawing, which, I mentioned earlier, is housed in the National Gallery's Rosenwald collection, this Rosenwald drawing is usually taken to be a very close approximation of the lost fresco. With this somewhat circular logic, Keynes takes the 1810 date found on the first page of VLJ as an indication that at least the drawing and most likely the fresco were also completed by then, with the few discrepancies between the drawing and the description showing the differences that existed between the drawing and the fresco (even though this does not account for what Smith implies—that Blake had not finished the fresco enough for exhibition by 1827).

By comparing these *Last Judgments* with Blake's other pictorial works, however, Albert J. Roe rejects Keynes's assumptions. Roe notes that in the description of heaven, the "other [two painted] versions more closely follow the text [of VLJ]" (216) than does the Rosenwald itself. While Roe admits that "the same features are to be found in almost all" of the paintings, he contends that the "arrangement" and "details" are quite different in ways that reveal a connection between the Rosenwald's depiction of heaven and those that are found in Blake's Dante engraving, "Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car" and the fifteenth engraving from the *Book of Job*

and blurring demons" (E 546). See also Gilchrist vol. I 413-4. Following Blake, the lost last judgment painting will be referred to as a fresco.

⁴ Keynes asserts this in his *Pencil Drawings. Series Two: Entry #27*. Gilchrist too assumes this, writing VLJ is "a very curious paper by Blake, . . . appearing to be partly descriptive of his picture, partly running off into vision and speculation about vision" (262).

(216). These differences lead Roe to conclude that the Rosenwald dates, not prior to the 1810 date written on VLJ, but from sometime between 1820 and 1825. This implies that Blake "took" the description of heaven found in VLJ chiefly from the Pollock and Petworth paintings *before* he had even started the Rosenwald drawing or the fresco. As Roe describes the relationships among the paintings and VLJ he is suggesting,

The section of the Rosenwald drawing about and above the figure of Christ on the throne thus represents a *further development* beyond that of this account in Blake's notebook [i.e., the description found in VLJ]; these notes may, therefore, have served as a first outline of what Blake intended to do in his proposed large-scale tempera. (219, emphasis added)

Roe's theory complicates the relationship previously assumed between VLJ and the Rosenwald drawing. VLJ becomes more than just a description. It becomes instead a part of Blake's composition/design process and a step in his changing conception of the last judgment, which stretches across different mediums and modes (painting and drawing; prose and poetry). Hence, when we ask what Blake's conception of the last judgment is, we are confronted with the question: which conception? Or, more specifically, which execution? Especially since the large fresco, historically and in scope arguably a final *Last Judgment*, is gone, there is no simple answer.

Roe's and Keynes's conflicting accounts of the role VLJ played in Blake's wider conception of the last judgment introduce the problem of *mimesis*, which in

turn underlies Blake's conception of both allegory and vision. These two accounts each suggest a different meaning for the word "vision" (in the way it is used by many critics) as it is found in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*. If we assume with Keynes that the fresco was finished enough by 1810 to serve as a "basis" for the VLJ, then "vision" seems to refer to Blake's actual, biological perception of his lost *Last Judgment*, which existed pictorially, and which VLJ only transcribed into words: A Vision of [i.e., a looking at] the *Last Judgment*. VLJ is treated as if it were simply a description that employs what Saussure calls a naïve understanding of language, which functions only as "a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names" (158). Keynes's approach privileges the *image* of the lost painting, but not its subsequent "translation" into words, which, in his critical practices at least, is assumed unproblematic and perfunctory.⁵

Roe's account of VLJ, of course, undermines this concept of "vision" as well as what it implies about language. Blake's words exist as part of his general conception of the last judgment and *cannot* then be separated as simply corresponding to the pictorial elements. For Roe, "vision" becomes yet another vision, one that differs from any other: *A [New] Vision of the Last Judgment*. As was seen in Blake's reaction to how Wordsworth conceived of a poet's relationship to nature, Blake's conception or practice of *mimesis* cannot be simple or unproblematic representation. The

⁵ A correspondent relationship between the lost fresco and VLJ has its uses. As Damon does in the appendix to *A Blake Dictionary*, the figures in Rosenwald can be identified and a theoretical design of the lost fresco composed in order to place the fresco in relationship to Blake's other pictorial works. And this works since there are so many of the same figures in all of Blake's *Last Judgments*, even though they are never simply replicated.

pictures from the Pollock and Petworth paintings became new words, and these words eventually became new pictures again in the Rosenwald drawing and lost fresco (only to be once again rendered as words in Smith's description, which ironically, is all we have left of it). It is precisely this connection between words and images, however, that adds to our difficulty in knowing which execution of the last judgment should or *could* be privileged (even without considering, for the time being, the poetic and illuminated renditions of the last judgment). Donald Davidson writes, "Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture" (263), but by conceiving of the last judgment both pictorially and verbally, Blake seems to do just that by allowing his pictures to shape his words and his words, his pictures.⁶ Yet, and here Davidson seems right, Blake still did not allow himself to "exchange" what he saw with his eyes (in Pollock and Petworth) into an objective and descriptive written language but recognized that any "description" was a new execution, be it in the same medium (the Pollock to the Petworth) or a new medium (these paintings to VLJ).

Irene Chayes asserts that in his visual art at least, Blake distinguished between the practices of copying, borrowing, and imitating. It may surprise us to note that Blake wrote, to counter Reynolds, "Servile Copying is the Great Merit of Copying" (E 645). In this sense, copying meant for Blake, trying "to reproduce a given image or object as exactly as possible" (62). Importantly, Chayes emphasizes that copying's value for Blake "lay in the act, not in the product *per se*" (62), and this is so because

⁶ One wonders if Blake was capitalizing on the tropes already at play in Revelation of a written vision that in turn had become a standard visual image.

by making copies, an artist learns "the Language of Art" (E 645). Blake's engraving *Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion*, for example, is copied from a figure in Michelangelo's *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* and is nearly exact. Borrowing, on the other hand, is a more active process. It consists of taking images and changing them in various ways for one's own ends. Interestingly for us, many of the images Blake both copied and borrowed in the 1790s, according to Chayes, originated in prints of Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment*.⁷ While Chayes herself admits that borrowings "do not reveal their ancestry in any predictable or consistent ways" (64), she is nonetheless able to locate several images in the Lambeth prophecies borrowed from *The Last Judgment*.⁸ On the other hand, despite these examples of copying and borrowing, imitation was a practice Blake clearly distinguished from them and rejected. Reynolds defined imitation as "borrowing a particular thought, an action, attitude, or figure, and transplanting it into your own work" (qtd. in Chayes 63). Perhaps recoiling from the idea of borrowing "thought," Blake countered Reynolds here that imitation between artists was just as ridiculous as "the Sheep Endeavouring to walk like the Dog" (E 656).

⁷ In ways that add to our observations about the emblematic relationship of FZ's title page to the poem's plot, Chayes notes a connection between Michelangelo's *A Dream of Human Life* and page 38 of Blake's *Night Thoughts* engravings, which shows a trumpeter blowing down upon a shrouded skeleton. The title page of FZ, though, is even a closer borrowing, for Michelangelo's *Dream* shows many figures engaged in activities, indifferent to the awkwardly positioned angel blowing his clarion but (and here it is instructive) who is almost drawn into the confusion of the scene around him. Another interesting connection that should be investigated in Blake's borrowing from himself is between the engraving on page one of Night IX of *Night Thoughts* (# 419) that shows a hatted figure entering a door, which is very similar to *Jerusalem's* front piece.

⁸ These include Blake's "Renovated Man" on MHH 21 and *America* 6 and a figure on *Urizen* 15.

Blake's *Last Judgments* seem then to be a series of borrowings from himself (and the *topos* of the Last Judgment motif), with each borrowing definitionally a reworking and a reconception of what was borrowed. From picture to picture or from picture to word, none of the images is ever exactly the same, and hence, is not copy. Even recognizably borrowed figures are placed in new contexts and, perhaps in the process, even new theodicies. This means that Blake did not even imitate himself. The sheep of the 1808's *Last Judgment* did not try to walk like the dog of the 1806's *Last Judgment*.

Yet, this implies that Blake's vision of the last judgment is not only a new vision, as Roe's account suggests, it is also Blake's general conception of the last judgment as it exists outside of any one medium in particular. VLJ becomes: *A* [New] *Vision of the Last Judgment* [in general]. With this conception of the vision, we are asking: what do all of Blake's *Last Judgments* share that allow us to group them together? Our question, however, reveals that Blake's vision of the last judgment (in the sense of a general idea) is really an interpretive fiction, an abstraction, that assumes each specific execution (vision in Roe's conception as a new vision) struck closer or farther from the mark of *one* clearly defined mental conception. Troubling for us is the fact that this general conception of vision simply returns us to Keynes's conception of vision as unproblematically mimetic. We have only replaced his literal, visual image of a lost fresco with a mental image, which Blake's pictures and prose just represent. We are not in this case, then, looking at any one of Blake's works specifically, but at all of them together, creating, it seems, what Barthes called

a simulacrum, “a veritable fabrication of a world which resembles the first one, not in order to copy it but to render it intelligible” (“The Structuralist Activity” 171). This third conception of vision as a general idea and its approach to the *Last Judgments*, however, must reconcile itself with the fact that, although the descriptions and images found in each particular work are contingent, to some degree, on the other works, each individual work also depends on the *praxis* of Blake’s active, re-visionary imagination, which rearranges and adds to these images in the active practice of borrowing. We are trying to find here, what exactly did Blake’s *praxis* work on? In other terms: what is it that connects Blake’s new executions or new visions? And, at the same time, what accounts for the difference in these representations of the same subject?

With its concern about the difference between vision and allegory (again, both forms of *mimesis*), VLJ seems particularly relevant here. It asserts vision and allegory “ought to be known as Two Distinct Things” (E 554): “Allegory is Formd by the Daughters of Memory,” while “Vision is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably” (E 554). Allegory represents memory; vision, eternity. But by being itself a kind of representation, vision, it would seem, is just allegory by a different name. Blake in fact concedes that “Allegory is seldom without some Vision” (E 554), and in a July 6th 1803 letter to Thomas Butts, he seems to use “Sublime Allegory” as a synonym for vision. What he writes there, moreover, confuses the very association made between allegory and memory and between vision and eternity in VLJ:

I hope that all our three years trouble Ends in Good Luck at last &
 shall be forgot by my affections & only rememberd by my Under-
 standing to be a Memento in time to come & to speak to future gen-
 erations by a Sublime Allegory which is now perfectly completed into
 a Grand Poem (E 730)

This letter shows there exists a subtle play that does not give itself easily to distinction among memory, allegory, understanding, and the actual *praxis* of Blake's poetry, presumably the *FZ* or an early version of *Milton*. Blake wishes to forget what has (dare we say, *really*?) happened at Felpham and remember instead only his "Sublime Allegory." Even though memory is made the province of allegory in VLJ, it seems that here vision can also be a form of remembering as well.⁹ We need to figure out then how vision can then represent eternity while still acting as a kind of "memento" to understanding and without becoming by necessity allegorical.

The conception of vision that Roe helped us arrive at (vision as a *new* vision) shows Blake's concern with the role of the individual perceiver. This means that at least in VLJ, Blake is distinguishing his own vision from Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment*, which reports to show simply the actual, orthodox last judgment to every-

⁹ Damon's dictionary gives us many more examples of how Blake uses the words, but all these examples only lead Damon to conclude vaguely: 1) "Blake's visions were not supernatural: they were intensifications of normal experience" and 2) "Blake always insisted that Vision and Memory are entirely different: yet it is obvious that memory furnished the raw materials in his subconscious: they altered, combined into new forms, in accordance with the thought which Blake was expressing" (436). This seems to be saying that Blake is simply wrong about what he was doing. He was not representing eternity in any sense, but instead only rearranging what he perceived in a pre-existing, external reality, which is a description that echoes, but for "subconscious," John Locke and Wordsworth.

one.¹⁰ This concern with the individual perceiver is emphasized, moreover, in the phrase, *A Vision*, which shows Blake's own awareness of his role as perceiver and his role as artist. This role is emphasized each of the many times Blake writes in VLJ some form of the word "represents" or a very similar concept. Just on page 77 of the notebook we find:

they *represent* those who perished by the flood

he *represents* the person name in Isaiah XXII

the Scaled figure *representing* Og

two figures *representing* the Pharisees (E 557, emphasis added)

and so on, six more times on that page alone. These representations, which purport to be visions, seem allegorical and dependent on the idea that Blake is simply replicating what he sees, either literally or in his imagination. Blake seems to be admitting that he cannot give us an unmediated eternity or a pure vision but can only echo some world he cannot fully describe. Indeed, this concession is almost explicit when he writes, "I have represented [this vision of the last judgment] as I saw it" (E 555).

This is not even to assert that this is how it was, and Blake goes so far as to admit that this supposedly eternal vision, "appears differently" to different people (E 555).

Even from the moment of inspiration, it seems difficult to distinguish between vision and allegory. Notice, for example, how far we are removed from the original inspiration of the prophets in this sentence from VLJ, "the Writings of the Prophets

¹⁰ Of course, there was the painting over of the nudity that brought Michelangelo's vision in line with the Catholic orthodoxy.

illustrate these conceptions of Visionary Fancy by their various sublime & Divine Images as seen in the Worlds of Vision" (E 555). This paraphrase details all the levels of representation, all the levels or mediums that must be past through in order to reach an inspired, true, eternal vision beyond medium: the biblical *writings* illustrate the visionary *conceptions* by verbal *images*, which were first *seen* in the pure world of vision. By charting these levels out, we can see how complicated (and utterly problematic) Blake's conception of representation and, thereby, vision is:

Reader—Biblical Writings—"Visionary" Conceptions (Empirical Fancy?)—Sublime/Divine

Words and Images—The Process of "Seeing" Poetically (Inspiration-seen differently by

different people?)—**The "Pure" Eternal Vision (Existing outside of any one mind)**

Blake's own original, eternal inspiration must first be abstracted in the process of his vision, second reproduced in his art (with all the inherited denotations and connotations in his words and images at play), and finally in our own reading and interpretations of it.

When vision reaches our world through the artist, vision seems, though, to function as just another level of understanding, again an allegory that just represents memories and perceptions in a way that is almost Lockean. Robert Essick contends that "At this basic semiotic level, vision is not distinguishable from allegory, for the latter must also depend on representation" (*Language* 98). Moreover, even if vision does successfully represent a pure eternity (whatever this finally means), it still must present that representation to someone else while preserving its meaning (its reflection of the eternal?) in some fashion. As Essick writes, "visions turn into allegories

as soon as Blake or his critics start to interpret them" (100), and even Blake's contemporary, Thomas Paine, asked how a divine inspiration not our own can be trusted. Communication and understanding are by nature allegorical acts that must, it seems, be "falsified from the original" (Damon's definition of allegory 17). By being representations, both vision and allegory are false, and means of expression (writing, painting, etc.) themselves become suspect if one is guarding against the misrepresentations of a pure, general, and eternal vision.

Many of these problems are often explained away with this excerpt from VLJ:

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. (E 565-6)¹¹

But for this to explain away the blurring of allegory and vision, one has to make Blake's vision belong to him alone because of his prodigious imagination. Such a reading argues that Blake's vision cannot finally be communicated because it is based on how Blake alone imagines and sees the world. After all, "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" (MHH E 35). Blake's doubting questioner here can only see "a round Disk of fire" (what is *really* there according to literal eyesight and common sense), and at best he must not only supplement this mundane image with a simile, a poetic device analogous in mode to the allegory Blake has been raging against

¹¹ In *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye asserts that this sun exists in Blake's art, "in a world formed and created by Blake's imagination" (26). I would agree in general terms, but this explanation simplifies the problems of communication that dogged both Blake and his readers.

in VLJ, but also reduce the sun to the status of a guinea. This *lack* of imagination turns the sun into a quantifiable commodity, an abstraction that has no value in itself, and a unit that can be broken down mathematically like the points of Euclid's line. Because the questioner has no imagination, he sees the sun only as it is. On the other hand, because he has an incredible *amount* of imagination, Blake sees in terms of metaphor. The sun is "the Heavenly host," and the vision Blake sees with his imagination is "innumerable," approximating, thereby, the Burkean conception of the sublime,¹² while crossing the boundary of the senses in that the vision appeals to the sight and the hearing when the "host" cries out (*Language* 182). Blake's vision, from this view, is rich and instructive, but it is exclusively Blake's own. It is he, and not we, who sees the sun as "the Heavenly host," and he does so because his imagination is different from ours.

This interpretation makes Blake an imaginative eccentric, which at the end of the day allows us to say either: Blake is only speaking in metaphor and now I get what he really means or Blake means nothing because he is seeing the sun as it simply is not. This view makes Blake speak in allegory or moves him towards solipsism. Blake cannot succeed in communicating what "vision" means in this interpretation because it defines imagination as something limited and belonging to the individual alone. From this perspective, one which is often adopted with Blake to make him intelligible, imagination is conceived as a mental faculty that exists aside others like

¹² In his treatise on the sublime, Edmund Burke writes infinity is most capable of creating the sublime and is "the truest test of the sublime" (73).

reason or pity and reacts to a pre-existing reality. In chapter one, we distinguished between Blake and Wordsworth's conception of the imagination. Paradoxically, Blake's imagination was both a view of the world that competed with Wordsworth's and also the way the world was shaped, which included within it Wordsworth's empiricism. Imagination in this latter sense is not one faculty among others but equivocal with discourse. Imagination makes the other faculties (including what Coleridge calls Fancy) possible. The "Eternity" vision represents then is not the empty eternity of the empiricist but eternity as the imagination.¹³

To demonstrate that this is not simply a sleight of hand, we can see a parallel for how Blake is using "vision" and "Imagination" in Fredric Jameson. Jameson holds that each level of the medieval scheme of allegory rewrites experience in a new interpretative framework. But, for Jameson, these levels must finally rest on an ultimate interpretative scheme to provide any meaning whatsoever. As opposed to Frye, Jameson, as a Marxist, sees the anagogical as this level since it fixes the collective or political meaning. For Jameson, this is a recognition that history itself is what guarantees/determines meanings, even if history is lack or "an absent cause" (35) that cannot actually be "found" in itself since this would require one to step out of history. For Blake, this final level is the imagination, which is found in an eternity (or totality)

¹³ According to Essick, Coleridge's *symbol* finds a foundation exclusively in the transcendental, while *allegory* is purely empirical. Essick distinguishes this from Blake thus, "It is all too easy to conclude that Blake makes . . . a distinction equivalent to Coleridge's between allegory and symbol—that is between an arbitrary and a motivated system of reference. There are, however, several features of Blake's statements that thwart this conclusion. . . . Unlike Coleridge, Blake does not attempt to construct an ideal difference in kind where none exists in actual practice. The sublimity of Blake's allegory resides in to *what*, not *how*, it is 'addressed'—in the sense of both reference and audience. . . . Blake's allegory establishes the ground of its motivation in the relationship between sign and recipient" (*Language* 97).

that too is strangely absent from the "fallen" world (as seen in the relationship of FZ's "fallen" plot to the pre- and post-narrative, transcendent but empty world) and which can only be revealed to us by a representing "vision." Vision is the act itself (*praxis*) that signals imagination's presence as a totalizing scheme and the act that signals the lack of imagination in the "fallen" or natural world. Admittedly, from Jameson's view, Blake's own use of "vision" may be closer to Althusser's inadvertent "expressive causality" than his own scheme since Blake obscures distinction between a particular work of vision as a structure and imagination as mediation; as Jameson writes, "We must . . . repudiate a conception of the process of mediation which fails to register its capacity for differentiation and for revealing structural oppositions and contradictions through some over emphasis on its related vocation to establish identities" (42). But, as we shall see, this blurring of structure and mediation may, however, be exactly Blake's point.

According to Jameson, we are all Marxist, whether we know it, like it, or not. It tells us we exist in history, which is the "ultimate semantic precondition" (75). According to Blake, we all exist in imagination. But Blake's assumption of (and his struggle to accept) this imaginative "precondition" did not make it any easier for him to convince his contemporaries of this fact than does Jameson's own assertion about Marxism's privileged relationship to history necessarily convince us. Unlike Jameson, Blake seemed always aware of how strange and difficult his beliefs were. Hence, in his works, dialogism always plays a large role.

To explain what this means and how it played out for Blake biographically, focus upon how Blake uses the word "Sun" in the excerpt from VLJ above. Like the plot and anti-plot of FZ, it is another example of Blake's dialogism. In the manner in which it is situated, "Sun" seems unproblematic and conventional. At least to Blake's questioner, what is meant by "Sun" will be obvious to everyone. Blake undermines, however, the obviousness of this meaning and the confidence in language itself. By employing a questioner, Blake makes his readers aware that he and themselves are part of the same, larger linguistic community (*langue*). His use of the passive voice, "it will be Questiond," draws the readers into the text, makes them the questioner, and indicates that the identity of the questioner is unimportant except for his questioning and his participation in Blake's language. The reader's identity becomes just voice. Blake has the questioner (now the reader) begin by asking, "When the Sun rises," and not, "When you see the Sun rise." This small difference in syntax succeeds in introducing "Sun" as a linguistic subject and not as a visual image. "Sun" becomes a word that definitionally rises and not a thing that is given naturally to sight. In doing this, Blake circumvents the naïve argument that the "Sun" is a motivated sign and disallows the link between "Sun" and the "Disk of fire" actually rising in the sky as a natural one. He does this so that even according to the questioner's proposition, the "Sun" is a linguistic signifier existing in the mind that requires a linguistic or mental signified to complete its meaning as a sign. Blake thus follows the step empiricism takes in equating words with thoughts (Essick 92). "Sun" must rely on other words for its definition.

But it is here in trying to distinguish himself from the empiricists that Blake ultimately fails to explain what vision is. The questioner's acknowledgment that "Sun," like all other signs, is arbitrary, does not mean that he must forgo that there is a habitual link in clear, common English between the word "Sun" and the "Disk of fire" in the sky seen by his eyes, which Blake, as a member of the questioner's linguistic community, cannot deny. Blake's efficient refutation of a sign's *natural* link to an image brings him face to face with the assertion Saussure will later make "that the individual does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community" (160-1). Hence, in his acknowledgment here of a common language (*langue*), in which both his and his questioner's utterances (*parole*) exist, Blake has implicitly acknowledged an arbitrary but restrictive sign, which, in turn, prevents a full expression (revelation) of imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition" by means of a fixed language or, visually, by traditional images such as the last judgment motif. The "mad" Blake, who responds to the questioner with a dismissive, "O no no," and which is taken to be the whole of Blake's beliefs and his only perspective, does not sufficiently answer these arguments in any way except through thick-minded denial. Yet, by virtue of acknowledging both these views and presenting them to his readers, the writer of VLJ is trapped. This Blake clearly recognizes (for why otherwise would he be writing?)¹⁴ that if "Sun" is arbitrary in the conventional sense, namely if the "Sun" can be either a "Disk

¹⁴ Since VLJ was indeed never published by Blake, this remains an interesting question. Did Blake think his arguments in VLJ were not convincing or did he simply give up?

of fire" or the "Heavenly host," then he is lost because the commonsensical, Urizenic vision will triumph over his. "Arbitrary" *will* gain the Saussurian meaning of habitual. Moreover, if all signs are arbitrary signs in this sense, that is, if signs gain their meaning through previous discourses, which the individual has no power to alter, Blake will be declared either a mad man who denies the real meaning of words or an enthusiastic allegorist who simply speaks in code.¹⁵ And at all cost, Blake wished to avoid hearing in condescending tones that while we can *poetically* call the sun "a Heavenly host," that does not change the fact it *really* is a "Disk of fire" in the sky when we are being serious. What Foucault in the last chapter called "anthropological categories" become now explicitly linguistic ones, and Blake finds himself caught within them.¹⁶

For his concept of vision and imagination to be viable, Blake had to conceptualize a sign that both functions in communication *and* corresponds to the imaginative precondition, "what Eternally Exists" (E 554). As seen in his placing of "Sun," Blake prefigured Saussure's insistence that a sign is completely psychological. His other statements in VLJ further deny that an extra-linguistic reality, and certainly a phenomenological one, can serve as a referent for the mental. Blake writes boldly, "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). This statement

¹⁵ Even Coleridge, it should be remembered, said that Blake was "certainly, a mystic *emphatically*" (132).

¹⁶ Nelson Hilton writes, "For Blake, as for Heidegger, 'language is the house of Being' in which we live" (*Literal Imagination* 10). We must ask whether Blake is trapped in this house, retreated to it, or escaped from it.

makes the sign "Sun," along with the process of signification (seeing) and its signifi-cants (the "Disk" and/or "host"), exclusively mental things. No one ever sees this "Sun," but neither does anyone ever see this "Disk" or "host" outside of the mind. As he also asserts, "Mental things alone are Real What is Calld Corporeal Nobody know of its Dwelling Place" (E 565). But as Bishop Berkeley's idealism breaks down where he posits archetypes over things,¹⁷ even an idealist account of the sign still leaves Blake either at the mercy of his questioner's common sense use of language or in need of some sort of common reality that reaches across a gulf of unintelligibility. One is either connected (and confined) by a common language, or communication is not possible.

In 1799 Blake wrote his famous statement to Reverend Trusler, "What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care" (E 702). Given the increasing complexity of Blake's poetry, this statement is usually taken to be a long-standing reflection of Blake's disdain for anyone incapable of understanding him. Yet, why Blake would be trying to communicate explicitly what he meant by vision in VLJ and why he might have been

¹⁷ Towards the end of *A Treatise Concerning the Principle of Human Knowledge*, Berkeley writes, "It is therefore plain that nothing can be more evident to anyone that is capable of the least reflection that the existence of God, or a Spirit who is intimately present to our minds, producing in them all that variety of ideas or sensations which continually affect us . . ." (212), but he cannot buttress this assertion with anything other than a castigation regarding incorrect perception: "But though the Lord conceal Himself from the eyes of the sensual and lazy, who will not be at the least expense of thought, yet to an unbiased and attentive mind nothing can be more plainly legible than the intimate presence of all-wise Spirit, who fashion, regulates, and sustains the whole system of beings (213). Blake's criticism of Berkeley's philosophic endeavor can be seen in his epigram to Flaxman: "Hes a Blockhead who wants a proof of what he can't Perceive And he's a Fool who tries to make such a Blockhead believe" (E 507).

troubled when his arguments there fell short can be seen by examining Blake's public position in the years prior to 1810.

Back at London, with his ordeal at Felpham and his subsequent trail for sedition over at last, Blake writes in December 1805 his last known letter to William Hayley. In it, Blake asserts both, "It is the Greatest of Crimes to Depress True Art and Science" and in a sense of religious/artistic fervor, "The Mockers of Art is the Mockers of Jesus" (E 767). These two opinions seem to have driven Blake into the public arena in new earnest, a period beginning with his July 1806 letter to the *Monthly Magazine* refuting criticism of Fuseli's picture of Count Ugolino and extending to 1810, when he had his falling out with Cromek over the Chaucer engraving. Coincidentally, this is also the period in which Blake began his *Last Judgments*, with the Pollock painting dating from 1806. These years mark Blake's most ambitious attempts to engage the public in his conception of art and are years which did not encourage him to be intentionally obscure, either in his pictures or writings or about what he was doing in them. 1808, for example, saw Blake's designs for Blair's *Grave* published and reviewed harshly by the *Examiner*, the *Antijacobin*, and the *Monthly Review*. Robert Hunt's review in the *Examiner* particularly castigated Blake for the manner he attempted to represent "the *Spirit* to the eye" and for other generally unempirical connections between "*the visible and invisible world*" (BR 195). The *Antijacobin* was similarly unkind, beginning with, "Mr. Blake was formerly an engraver, but his talents in that line scarcely advancing to mediocrity" and not

becoming any nicer after that, likewise castigating Blake for “giving *substantial* form to incorporeal substances” (205).

Despite this criticism, however, at the end of the year Blake was still excited by notions of publishing and painting. On December 19th 1808, he wrote to George Cumberland: “I have procured a Publisher & am determined to pursue the plan of publishing what I may get printed without disarranging my time which in future must <alone> be devoted to Designing & Painting” (E 770). And because his paintings were “regularly refused to be exhibited by the *Royal Academy*” (E 527), Blake held an exposition at his brother James’ house from May to October of 1809,¹⁸ for which he wrote his only published work (E 881), the *Descriptive Catalogue*.¹⁹ In it, Blake tried to argue publicly for the first time about the nature of his vision and to explain what he was doing in his paintings: “Those wonderful originals seen in my visions were . . . all containing mythological & recondite meaning where more is meant than meets the eye” (E 531). Blake also tried to answer the criticism previously made against his conception of vision and duality: “A Spirit and a Vision are not . . . a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that mortal and perishing nature can produce” (198). This explicitness, combined with the *Catalogue*’s epigraph from Milton, “Fit Audience find tho’ few” (E 527), shows how Blake was eager that the explanation he was making of his vision be heard and understood, even if it was by a select coterie.

¹⁸ The exposition was originally scheduled to end in September, but Blake extended it in “the hope of attracting more of the ‘Fit audience’ . . . anticipated” (BR 219).

¹⁹ Erdman qualifies this assertion with “if it is true that Poetical Sketches was printed for [Blake] by friends and never sold” (E 881).

Hunt, however, provided the only public response Blake received from his audience on September 17th 1809 in the *Examiner*. In this review, Hunt specifically attacked Blake's sanity and the nature of his visions, naming the *Catalogue* "a farrago of nonsense, unintelligibleness, and egregious vanity, the wild effusions of a distempered brain" (BR 216). The effect of this review is difficult to measure, but it may be one of the chief factors that precluded Blake's further engagement with the public after 1810.²⁰ Blake did attack Hunt subsequently in his notebook by means of epigrams and made Hunt and his brothers a symbol in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*²¹ in the years to follow, but still these private attacks were not public refutations. Hunt's and others' accusations of madness seemed to thoroughly defeat Blake's major attempt to explain his visions publicly and silence him. These attacks did this so well because by making Blake someone who *literally* saw his visions, Hunt was able to deflate Blake's complex linguistic and hermeneutic arguments (as well as those in the Bible, as Blake understood it) into mystic ravings. We should emphasize that Hunt based his assertion of Blake's insanity particularly on the manner in which Blake "confounded [the soul] with the body," a supposed misconception shown in his pictures in that "the personifying figure [of spirit] had none of the distinguishing characteristics of allegory, presenting only substantial flesh and bones" (216). This may sound like

²⁰ Bentley notes that the years from 1810-1814 are the most obscure in our record of Blake's life, which must rely chiefly on Crabb Robinson's diary (BR 233).

²¹ Bentley cites this example:

The Examiner whose very name is Hunt
 Calld Death a Madman trembling for the affront
 Like trembling Hare sits on his weakly paper
 On which he usd to dance & sport & caper (BR 219).

Hunt is only attacking Blake because he didn't draw the spirit as an immaterial ghost, but such a critique shows Hunt's almost Hobbesian understanding of body and spirit and the result of making Blake's signs incommunicable, mad visions that existed in Blake's mind alone.

Still it is hard to believe that this harsh review could frustrate completely Blake's enthusiasm as it was expressed a few month earlier in a May 1809 letter to Ozias Humphrey. Blake writes to Humphrey there, "You will perceive that I not only detest False Art but have the Courage to say so Publicly" (E 770) and goes on to say, "Florentine & Venetian Art cannot exist together Till the Venetian & Flemish are destroyd the Florentine & Roman cannot Exist, This will be shortly accomplishd" (E 770). Blake's public exhibition and *Catalogue* demonstrate that Blake believed the means of effecting this destruction of false art was public opinion and particularly the public's ability to appreciate true art. He would write sometime the next year in VLJ, the last judgment is "when Men of Real Art Govern & Pretenders Fall" (E 561), and for this to occur, it seems necessary that Blake should engage his audience in direct, aesthetic discourse and not retreat to solipsism and obscurity. In fact, Gilchrist's *Life*, contrary to the Blake associated with the comments to Trusler, does indicate that Blake could be more or less obscure as the situation dictated: "The impression he made on others varied in proportion to the community of sentiment which existed; . . . he showed his best self only to such as had this bond of sympathy" (360-1). If this is accurate, then when not among friends Blake was definitely capable of playing the mad, peevish Blake who spoke only in riddles, thick visions, and intentional obscu-

urity, but when among friends, Blake seemed to explain his meanings better. For example, a friend of George Cumberland's, Charles Ker, wrote in suspicious tones, "But Blake is more knave than fool" (BR 228), while at a dinner party of Lady Caroline Lamb, Charlotte Bury observed that Blake "looks care-worn and subdued; but his countenance radiated as he spoke of his favourite pursuit, and he appeared gratified by talking to a person who comprehended his feelings" (249). Gilchrist also notes that Blake asserted both that "the faculty for seeing . . . airy phantoms can be cultivated" (360) and that he "would candidly confess [his visions] were not literal matters of fact; but phenomena seen by his imagination" (363).²²

All these reports, the exposition, and *Catalogue* make it clear that Blake did believe that the public could understand his works and that he could find his audience "Fit . . . tho' few" to whom he could communicate the eternal visions he saw in some form. These attempts to communicate and explain his vision were not limited to his public exposition and *Catalogue*, however. He also tried to do the same privately for his friend, Ozias Humphrey. That Humphrey and Blake had different ideas about art can be gathered from the close of the May 1809 letter quoted above: "This [destruction of Venetian and Flemish art] will be shortly accomplishd. Til then I remain Your Grateful *altho seemingly otherwise* I say Your Grateful & Sincere William Blake" (E 770, emphasis added). And this close returns us to Blake's conception of the last judgment. Blake is writing to Humphrey in a manner similar to the early apostles

²² It should be noted that this is not a direct quote from Blake. The phrase, "airy phantoms," indicate an understanding of Blake's vision similar to Hunt's.

who believed they would live to see the apocalypse in their lifetime. For Blake, in 1809 at least, the destruction of the Venetian and Flemish arts was imminent, and their destruction would change everything, including the relationship between Blake and the miniaturist Humphrey. The last judgment becomes here a public act.

Although Blake admits to his friend that he seems neither grateful nor sincere, he insists that he is, and the proof of this gratefulness and sincerity, I believe, can be found in *The Design of the Last Judgment*, which was written in January of 1808, eight months before the *Examiner's* first review of the designs for the *Grave*. To show his gratitude to Humphrey for obtaining the commission of the 1808 *Last Judgment*, Blake provides an explanation of the painting. As it is written in the letter's introduction: "it is necessary for the accommodation of those who give it the honor of attention" (E 552). Blake knew the painting would be among those who did not share his conception of art, and the "accommodation" he provides in *The Design* shows that he wanted it (and himself) to be understood. Another element in this "accommodation," though, is that by 1808 Humphrey was quickly going blind (BR 168 n.1). The Petworth painting, while it may not have "upwards of one thousand figures," is still an intricate and complex painting, measuring only 20 by 15.5-in. (Butlin 467) and full of figures that would be very difficult for a man going blind to distinguish. But because he was indebted to Humphrey in the corporeal world, Blake attempts to train Humphrey's vision in the imaginative world.

The Design lacks much of the ambiguous syntax found in VLJ and Blake's other works. Its careful structure leads the viewer's eyes skillfully around the paint-

ing. Following *The Design*, one begins with Christ and then descends down through the center of the painting to hell. When leaving the center of the design, Blake conscientiously moves from the general to the specific:

The right of the Design is appropriated to the Resurrection of the Just
the left hand of the Design is appropriated to the Resurrection & Fall
of the Wicked (E 552)²³

The reader/viewer is then carried down with the Wicked on the left side of the painting and then up again with the Just on the right side before being told clearly, almost prosaically, "The Whole upper part of the Design is a View of Heaven" (E 553). The reader/viewer is then left safely on the scroll that rests on Christ's lap with a cohesiveness in structure that, coming from Blake, is almost startling. Blake's clear descriptions help the reader/viewer to see the painting's particulars and not to be overwhelmed by its sublime, confusing whole. Unlike VLJ, the figures in *The Design* do not "represent" states but simply "are" what they appear to be.²⁴ This implies that in *The Design* Blake allowed himself in some measure to employ a form of visual allegory (the vision we drew from Keynes), which was simple and easy to follow, especially if one has the painting and *The Design* side by side, as Humphrey could have.

All this is not to say, however, that Blake necessarily capitulates to the "Idiot" in *The Design*. Shying away from his usually more ambitious poetic and syntactical

²³ Blake always wrote "right" and "left" from the point of view of Christ in the painting. His practice is followed here.

²⁴ The two exceptions to this are "Adam & Eve . . . as representatives of the whole Human Race" and the figure who "represents the Christian Church" (E 553), which were common representations Humphrey was no doubt already familiar with.

devices, Blake closes his instructive letter with suggestive irony: "Such is the Design which you my Dear Sir have been the cause of my producing & which but for you might have slept till the Last Judgment" (E 554). This close refers not only to the fact that Blake's commission for this painting came through Humphrey's assistance but also indicates that "the Design" is contingent on Humphrey's activity as a viewer/reader. Whether "Design" here refers to the painting's visual design or the written description is ambiguous. Having read *The Design* with the painting, like Humphrey, we ourselves cannot be sure where the "Design" Blake mentions lies. Is it in the painting, the prose, or both? *The Design's* journey around the painting starts with the painted body of Christ "seated on the Throne of Judgment" (E 552) and ends with the "Scroll of Judgment upon [Christ's] knees before the Living & the Dead" (E 554). As participants in *The Design* and the Petworth painting, we similarly have moved back and forth from image to text before finding there is text in the painting as much as there is a painting in the text. Hence, with the distinction between text and image blurred, Blake's point in *The Design's* close seems to be that in no matter what medium "the Design" lies, without Humphrey's (or our) eyes roaming over it, there would have been nothing for him to see; no last judgment at all, which is literally and figuratively true. There would be neither a painting nor a recognition of the imaginative precondition (Blake's last judgment). The close urges Humphrey then to understand that the true "Design" (and Humphrey himself) lies only in the imagination. Blake's 1808 painting of the orthodox last judgment, in conjunction with *The Design*,

seems then a rendition of Blake's *general* conception of the last judgment that succeeds in communicating his "pure" vision beyond any specific medium.

When writing to the Earl of Buchan, Humphrey describes the Petworth painting enthusiastically:

. . . the grandeur of its conception, the Importance of its subject, and the sublimely multitudinous masses, & groups, which it exhibits

In brief, It is one of the most interesting performances I ever saw; & is, in many respects superior to the last Judgment of Michael Angelo and to give due credit & effect to it, would require a Tablet, not less than the Floor of Westminster Hall (BR 189).

Despite this glowing report that Blake would have appreciated ("superior to the last Judgment of Michael Angelo"), Humphrey confesses at end to the earl that he cannot see what he has written, noting on the back of Blake's letter he encloses, "Of this duplicate paper which I have the Honor to inclose I have not been able to read a single Line" (BR 189 n.1). Exactly how blind Humphrey is in January of 1808 is difficult to say,²⁵ but because Blake is trying to show Humphrey's mind the imaginative vision in *The Design*, how well Humphrey can see with his vegetative eyesight becomes seemingly irrelevant, except for this condition. Humphrey has to be able to participate in Blake's language in some manner, as the questioner in VLJ does. Without a means of communication, Blake's vision would remain in his mind alone. Hum-

²⁵ Gilchrist writes that Humphrey's "eyes failed him altogether in 1799" (263), though clearly from this February 1808 letter, this cannot be a totally accurate assessment.

phrey's blindness may be why then without *The Design* Humphrey's visionary eye would have been remained closed and would "have slept till the [biblical] Last Judgment." If this is correct, then through *The Design*'s careful description that so closely corresponds to the Petworth, Blake meant to give his friend the chance to participate in the imaginative last judgment of burning up the "Error or Creation" (E 565) of false art through his own imaginative efforts. For if Humphrey participates in the Petworth *Last Judgment* and/or *The Design* correctly, allowing himself to see a vision and not a sight, then he has the opportunity to turn from false art. He can participate in the last judgment now. His ontological foundation will shift from the material world to the spiritual one of the imagination.

Detailing seventeenth- and eighteenth-century accounts of language, which in part all wish either to return to or to account for the motivated sign of Adamic language, Essick argues that in both Jacob Boehme and Emmanuel Swedenborg, "the sign requires for its completion the active participation of its perceivers to close the gap between letter and spirit" (54). Working in this tradition, Blake's vision, Essick asserts, works similarly by establishing "a triadic structure (sign, referent, recipient) based in turn on the community of speaker, audience, and the medium" (97). Blake's vision is not then his own mental conception or moment of inspiration, nor what exists in the medium "speaking" for itself. Instead, this account posits that the artist, medium, and viewer are all necessary for vision to occur. When we apply this heuristic to the above discussion, the "vision" of the last judgment presented to Humphrey by means of the Petworth *Last Judgment* and *The Design* exists then only in the

synergetic relationship that these works are able to maintain with Humphrey's imagination.

Using two mediums to convey his idea of the last judgment to Humphrey, Blake displaces any specific and unambiguous material location of his "Design," which forces its true figures into Humphrey's imagination. In this, Blake's imagination seems to communicate directly with Humphrey's, and in many ways, the material representation of the vision has been circumvented. This corresponds well to Essick's distinction between allegory and vision since, as he writes, they differ in "where they situate the real and the true, not how they represent them" (98). And this distinction, in turn, rests on "whether the viewer takes this representation literally or figuratively" (98). Hence, by not allowing Humphrey's vision a specific medium, Blake's vision of the last judgment in *The Design* and Petworth succeeded in presenting a reality all its own and avoided solipsism through embracing, as a kind of kerygmatic sign, the community which receives it.²⁶

In Essick's account of vision, Blake's "chain of signs, arbitrary or motivated, must begin and end somewhere, and . . . this point of origin and ultimate reference is the immutable truths of religious conviction" (99). The community receiving this sign (this vision) must be a "community of faithful recipients" (26). In this equation

²⁶ Essick writes, "Christ's kerygmatic signs avoid the solipsism of pure self-referentiality by extending incarnation to the community of faithful recipients. It thereby approaches the power of the Logos . . ." (*Language* 26). George Rosso observes how FZ is particularly determined by the way it functions as a kerygmatic sign that "points to the historicity of the text, its call for an existential commitment by its readers. The meaning of such texts lies partially in the transformation of word into act that marks their reception. Blake seeks to convert his audience, but not to any religious position. He expects readers to make his text their contemporary . . ." (46). In this, Rosso implies a tension between persuasion and conversion in Blake's works that we will explore here and in the next chapter.

of vision with conviction, Essick's account of Blake's sign too sidesteps the problem of communication and persuasion Blake was concerned with at this time. For Essick, it is the belief in the reality of imagination, which works to resist imagination's "conversion into a trope" (99), and this is based, in a circular fashion, on the belief that the imaginary is "the only reality" (99). Essick's reply to the questioner in VLJ is that to accept Blake's vision, he must accept Blake's metaphysics; he must already recognize the vision which exists "Really & Unchangeably" (E 554) for Blake. He must be a believer in the precondition of the imagination. In terms of White's distinction between the two views of narrative, this is simply to move from a belief in a reality *outside* of narrative and discourse to a belief that reality is *determined* by narrative and discourse, without any rationale.

Blake's 1809 letter to Humphrey reveals that, despite Blake's great efforts in *The Design* and the Petworth *Last Judgment* to train Humphrey's imaginative vision and effect in him a last judgment, Humphrey, nonetheless, retained his incorrect views of art after all. Humphrey and Blake would remain only corporeal friends but spiritual enemies until Humphrey could participate in or reject fully the last judgment (as Blake conceived of it), until the destruction of Venetian and Flemish art. Having one's imagination (as a faculty) exercised and embracing Blake's aesthetics and linguistic ontology of the imaginative precondition seem, therefore, to be two distinct activities.

Despite his own triadic conception of Blake's sign as existing among sign, referent, and recipient, Essick still recognizes that "[m]ost readers. . . tend to re-

allegorize [Blake's language] to accommodate it to a language grounded in disjunction between being (the signifier) and meaning (the signified)" (230). That is, most readers will make Blake's vision into allegory. The *fabula* or the event will always exist before the *sjuzet* or the telling. According to Essick, the questioner (and most of Blake's readers) does not respond to Blake that they are all existing in a common language (*langue*) but asserts that there is a division between being and language, and since he is using the *tool* of language correctly and unpoetically, he is right and Blake is wrong. The "Sun" is a "Disk of fire" because the "Sun" *looks* like a "Disk of fire" to English speakers. Here Essick misconstrues Blake's argument, and why he does so can be seen in the fact that he still believes (with Keynes) that VLJ represents the images found in the lost fresco. He writes,

Thus, Blake can claim, without contradicting his initial equation of allegory and fable, that the latter 'is Vision itself', for the images of his *Last Judgment* painting represent what really exists and are not to be taken as signs of signs, representations of images which are in turn 'Allegories . . . that Relate to Moral Virtues' (E 563). (98)

Essick is right but for the fact he retains the idea of a purely mental vision—a third of his triadic sign. He does not recognize the words of VLJ themselves as "what really exists" but the pictorial images that he believes these words represent. Even if Roe's account is completely wrong, it is significant that this painting (and its images) is lost, and only VLJ remains.

Essick, it bears repeating, argues that vision, if it is not simply allegory, must rest on "the immutable truths of religious conviction" (99), which are shared between Blake and his audience. Essick suggests that Blake's vision is neither symbol nor metaphor. Vision, instead, consists of "language-as-performance" (102), with this language being not "rigidly objectivist, grammatical, and spatial" but "expansively subjectivist, instrumental, and temporal" (229). This conception of Blake's sign requires that the differences between the self and others as well as the differences between the self and language be dissolved.²⁷ Viewed correctly, Blake's verbal and pictorial representations are representations that should bowl over the alterity created by empiricism, while at the same time requiring this other to complete their meanings. Essick's idea here is similar to Mitchell's assertion in "Blake's Composite Art" that Blake's "poetry exists to invalidate the idea of objective time, his paintings to invalidate the idea of objective space" (69). Blake's visions thus posit that both time and space are subjective creations and require the reader/viewer to view him or herself, at least when confronting Blake's work, in the same manner. It is only when we cling to a self distinct from Blake's language, therefore, that we are compelled to allegorize Blake's representations in order to understand them. In other words, we must throw down our nets and follow the mad Blake who says he sees the sun as "the Heavenly host."

But this approach again only moves the burden of error away from Blake's

²⁷ This conception of what Blake's language does corresponds well to Kathryn Freeman's reading of FZ's Night IX in her *Blake's Nostos*.

obscurity and onto our own stubbornness as subjects. There can be no persuasion, only revelation. I believe this approach, which is based on the idea that what is really communicated in vision is a general, mental conception, neglects Blake's own attempts at persuasion both explicit and implicit from 1806-1810 and the necessity of his visions' materiality.

Explaining the source of vision in VLJ, Blake uses the analogy of the oak tree that "dies as well as the Lettuce but Its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies. but renews by its seed" (E 555). This analogy leads Dan Miller to ask in his deconstructive reading: what is the seed of Blake's eternal vision and how does it exist? Miller challenges that this eternal image of the oak must rest on either "a germinal element that somehow regenerates the image itself" or the acorn that is the actual seed producing a new oak tree, which contradictorily makes eternal vision dependent on "'Generative Nature,' the natural recurrence of the physical object" (157-8). In other words, the eternal image found at the source of Blake's vision either participates in a kind of metaphysical aseity that really does return us to Berkeley's conception of the ideal archetype or is contingent upon a form of generation. Miller takes this to be a contradiction that leaves us no choice between them. Blake's vision must be pure. But, I wish to counter, because it seems analogous to Blake's actual artistic practices, the latter explanation is entirely acceptable. This rejects then that Blake's actual modes of production are what make the idea of "pure" vision suspect. Rather, these modes of production are what make vision possible at all. For even if Blake's vision exists as performance; is communicated through a conjunction of sign, referent, and

recipient; and is not necessarily contingent on any particular medium, the communication of this vision remains contingent on at least *a* medium. Here one might object that the language and pictorial images Blake is using cannot ever be his own and that this prevents Blake's imagination from being revealed to someone else (as we suggested with Humphrey). But here again, imagination is being used to indicate a faculty. It is exactly my point that Blake *cannot* dictate his own meanings fully on the level of execution. Similar to the narrator's relationship to the plot that has yet to unfold in FZ, Blake must lose control over his "pure" vision as soon as he tries to render it, and it is this "pure" vision that, like the fresco, is lost to us. Just as the loss of the fresco as a referent for VLJ does not rob VLJ of its own role as a *Last Judgment*, neither does the "loss" of a pure mental conception rob Blake's *material visions* of their imaginative function. Blake's visions are not caught in their mediums but are their mediums.

The orthodoxy inherent in painting a *Last Judgment* is an example of this limitation of vision that raises some questions about this account. Mitchell notes that, excepting the exclusion of the warrior archangel Michael and the crucified position of Christ's hands, Blake's *Last Judgments* are all typical representations of the last judgment ("Problems" 2). He asks poignantly: "if we did not know these pictures had been created by William Blake, the radical, unorthodox visionary, would we be so likely to suspect that they depart from Christian doctrine or express unorthodox notions of the Last Judgment?" (1). In other words, how does any of Blake's *Last Judgments* (a visionary work) distinguish itself from anyone else's *Last Judgment* (an

allegorical work)? If these small differences in execution noted by Mitchell are the whole of Blake's argument against the orthodox conception of the last judgment and how vision can be distinguished from allegory, then they may present distinctions too subtle for any but a scholar since, as we saw, even a man as familiar with painting and symbolism as William Rossetti made no special mention about these paintings' presentation of a commonplace subject in his catalogue.

Related to this is the long delayed issue of specifying the relationship between these pictorial representations and their "corresponding" text. If the idea of Blake's mental conceptions is jettisoned, then how (and where) do his *Last Judgments* relate? In his same paper about the *Last Judgments*, Mitchell writes: "the really interesting problem . . . is to encounter [Blake's] pictures of the Last Judgment on their own terms" (1) apart from the prose. Mitchell takes this view because of how the prose was privileged in being able to explain the pictures. But, in his "Blake's Composite Art," Mitchell argues that Blake was very concerned with relationship between his text and his pictures, with his thesis being that between the text and the pictures of the illuminated books, there exists a necessary "composite" relationship whose function is to expose "the errors and contradictions of dualism" (61), which the correspondent²⁸ relationship suggested by the practice of *ut pictura poesis*, on the contrary, encourages. The *Last Judgments*, prose and pictures, cannot be fully severed either, but, since each execution is different (e.g., the changing figures, new figures, the changing

²⁸ "Correspondent" is exactly the right word to use here. Ellis and Yeats note that "correspondence" for Swedenborg signifies "the symbolic relation of outer to inner" (235 v. I). As we will see in the next chapter, FZ challenges the entire notion of an outer and inner.

heaven), they cannot be fully equated either. This begs the question then of whether the relationship here between the prose and the pictures is a composite one that refutes dualism or a corresponding one that reinforces dualism. In answering this question, it will be useful to remember that this lack of a corresponding dualism is what Hunt based his assertion of Blake's insanity on.²⁹

William Rossetti called the Petworth's "grouping . . . admirable." For his part too, Humphrey emphasized the "multitudinous" quality of this painting, using the word twice, the second time in the context of the sublime. The multitude and the effects stemming from it seem to exist exclusively in the painting and not the prose. As we have seen, it seems that one of *The Design's* practical functions in its clear descriptions is to delineate these "multitudinous" groups to the reader/viewer and identify what their members "really" are with verbal signifiers. Yet, Blake in VLJ explicitly rejects this practice of direct identification. He makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the "representations" in VLJ are not unities that allow for unambiguous identification but themselves also exist as a multitude—in the imagination:

it ought to be understood that the Persons Moses & Abraham are not
here meant but the States Signified by those Names the Individuals

²⁹ To avoid a too hasty assertion of analogy, however, the real differences between the works must first be acknowledged. The illuminations and its text are connected synchronically on the same plate. Excluding the typeset editions of the illuminated works that pass themselves off as the work *in toto* (and this is not a small exception), the illumination and the text are materially joined. Meanwhile, the paintings do not demand that they be considered together with the prose, even though, as we have seen, they are sequentially and chronologically interdependent in Blake's composition process, leading to and in part determining one another. In addition, while the individual plates form parts of larger works, the *Last Judgments*, though each painting is traditionally taken with its corresponding text, are not usually considered as components of Blake's wider, general conception of the last judgment.

being representative or Visions of those States as they were reveal'd to
 Mortal Man in the Series of Divine Revelation . . . these various States
 I have seen in my Imagination when distant they appear as One Man
 but as you approach they appear Multitudes of Nations (E 556).

Blake does not mention this aggrandizing nature of his representations at all in *The Design*. Taken by themselves, the paintings or the drawing can only represent the multiplying signifieds of their figures/signifiers in how they portray an amorphous multitude that changes from a multitude to a collection of individuals when one regards the painting with strict attention to its particulars. Interestingly, the later a *Last Judgment* is, the more figures it has, with the lost fresco having, Smith told us, "upwards of one thousand figures." Rather than explicitly rejecting the possibility of direct correspondence as the *Catalogue*³⁰ and VLJ do, *The Design* seems dependent on an idea of correspondence. An aid in a process of delineation, *The Design* teaches the viewers of the Petworth how to see past its multitude. The danger, however, in this far more subtle approach is that one will see the painting and prose as only corresponding in a dualistic fashion. These correspondent (instead of composite) arguments then are risks Blake takes in *The Design*, which actually leads to a failure if his viewer rejects the imaginative "Design." Despite exercising Humphrey's perception and his faculty of imagination, these correspondent arguments cannot persuade Humphrey of his own imaginative "convictions." Humphrey remained fixated on the

³⁰ In the *Catalogue*, Blake writes, "Visions of these eternal principles or characters of human life appear to poets, in all ages; the Grecian gods were ancient Cherubim of Phoenicia; but the Greeks, and since them the Moderns, have neglected to subdue the gods of Priam" (E 536).

multitude and not on the complex relationship of this group with its particulars. The corporeal world Blake supposedly brushes from his feet with indifference actually prevents an unmediated communication of Blake's "pure" vision at the moment Humphrey fixates on the painting's groups as groups, and not upon the individuals in those groups. *The Design* was meant to help Humphrey make a "Servile" copy of the Petworth with, and despite, his damaged eyes. It is this activity that would help "put" these particulars into the imagination since, we should recollect, copying teaches "the Language of Art." But Humphrey simply imitates what is there and learns nothing. He only makes a general copy of the painting. And as *The Design* subtly indicates, these seen images do not themselves convey a "vision" unless these images can be understood as existing in the imagination, which is eternity (Blake's conceptual scheme). Otherwise, there is no distinction between memory and eternity and, likewise, no last judgment. Even Blake's art then, through correspondence, is capable of becoming bad, allegorical art. It seems that not only is allegory seldom without some vision, but, unless viewed correctly, vision is seldom without some allegory.

Here we see it is the "accommodation" Blake intends in *The Design* that finally undercuts the aesthetic/ontological last judgment he is aiming for. An argument based on the correspondence between word and picture echoes the distinction between body and soul, and Humphrey, as fallen, or (in less Christian language) unconvinced of imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition," embrace this dualism. Blake's 1808 *Last Judgment* is, for Humphrey, a well executed representation of what the orthodoxy has been able to *remember* (by approximations, allegory, and mystery),

which will come someday in the indefinite future. With this, Blake once again resembles the apostles, but now he himself is waiting for a last judgment (a revolution in public opinion about art) that never comes. The irony Blake uses in *The Design*'s close thus turns against him. Humphrey's vision *will* sleep until the biblical last judgment, taking both Blake's imaginative "Design" and the immediate and imminent last judgment, which occurs in recognizing it, along with him. Like his later exposition and its *Catalogue*, therefore, *The Design* fails to effect Blake's aesthetic last judgment because of its unwitting concession to the correspondence between words and pictures; allegory and vision; and body and soul. In short, the orthodox rendition of the last judgment portrayed in the Petworth, buttressed by *The Design*, defeats the more radical aspect of Blake's "Design." Once again, the arbitrary sign becomes restrictive. This account shows how equating vision with conviction falls short.

Roe has already showed us that VLJ shares no direct correspondent relationship with any of Blake's pictures of the last judgment. VLJ is one of many executions then Blake made of the last judgment, but, given this, what exactly is the form or genre of VLJ? It is in prose, but does that allow us to classify it as a description even though it really does not describe any picture completely? Both Blake's intentions for the work as well as the ultimate historical role it did have are, for the most part, hidden from us. We assume with its 1810 date and subtitle, "Additions to Blakes Catalogue of Pictures &c" (E 554), that it was probably meant to be new mis-sive in Blake's public battles and perhaps a further reply to Hunt. And as Bentley points out, VLJ's prose does overlap that of the *Public Address*, which does suggest

he was working on both works at the same time (B 1718). Moreover, an editorial note Blake writes to himself on page seventy of the notebook, "Query the Above ought to follow the Description" (E 555), may indicate an intention to at least revise, if not print the work. Yet, these speculations, which are probably historically accurate, still mislead us in that they obfuscate the fact that Blake never actually organized or printed the work in any form other than as it exists in the notebook itself. One can suggest the painting it describes was not done, and so VLJ rendered itself pointless (that is, non-mimetic) by being born too quickly; or one can suggest, as we have, that VLJ's arguments may have been considered insufficient for a public refutation of Hunt. In either case, if VLJ was meant to be publicly persuasive (about vision) or instructive (about a *Last Judgment*), then, at least in Blake's lifetime, it never fulfilled this function, simply remaining in the notebook until it was rescued by Dante Rossetti.

How we can and how we should look at this text, and what it means for our idea of a *material vision*, can be adopted from Paul de Man's reading of Shelley's "Triumph of Life." De Man emphasizes the role of Shelley's death upon the poem's final form: "its reduction to the status of a fragment [is] brought about by the actual death and subsequent disfiguration of Shelley's body" (66). More, de Man shows that the disfigurement of Shelley's body is literally part of the "Triumph of Life." Shelley's "defaced body is present in the margin of the last manuscript page and has become an inseparable part of the poem" (67). This actual disfigurement of the author's body in his manuscript diffuses the imaginary and symbolic acts of reading and inter-

pretation with "an event that is no longer simply imaginary or symbolic" (67). The mutual disfiguration of the poem and its author blurs the distinction between the real and the imaginary. Of course, for de Man, one does not need a literal corpse for this to happen but simply an awareness of the activity of reading and the contradictions this activity and the language it attempts to master possess. The blurring of the real and the imaginary Shelley's body, however, leads, to borrow from de Man's "Semiology and Rhetoric," to a conception of text that is not grammatical but rhetorical.³¹ Yet, while he maintains there that conceiving of the text as rhetorical leads to an "anxiety . . . as an emotive reaction to the impossibility of knowing what [the text] might be up to" ("Semiology" 261), this anxiety ridden move is specifically what allows Shelley, as a "disfiguring reader" of Rousseau, (and, of course, de Man as a "disfiguring reader" of Shelley) to avoid "the recuperative and nihilistic allegories of historicism" and see the fragments working in and against the "monumentalization" necessary to reading ("Shelley" 69). In short, de Man argues that the activities of reading and interpretation are the very activities of living and dying and are what relate the living to the dead *and* the dead to the living. As de Man puts this himself,

[T]o read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat—that is to say, the endless prosopopoeia by which the dead are made to have a face and voice which tells the allegory of

³¹ De Man writes, "the reconciliation of fact and fiction occurs itself as mere assertion made in a text, is thus productive of more text at the moment when it asserts its decision to escape from textual confinement. But even if we free ourselves of all false questions of intent and rightfully reduce the narrator to the status of a mere grammatical pronoun, without which the narrative could not come into being, this subject remains endowed with a function that is not grammatical but rhetorical . . ." (260).

their demise and allows us to apostrophize them in our turn. No degree of knowledge can ever stop this madness, for it is the madness of words. What *would* be naïve is to believe that this strategy, which is not *our* strategy as subjects, since we are its product rather than its agent, can be a source of value and has to be celebrated or denounced accordingly. (68)

It is in our own uncertainty and anxiety about what VLJ is doing that finally makes the work instructive and persuasive about the nature of vision in a way Blake could not have done so intentionally, even if he had revised and published it. In VLJ there is no space for authorial intentions because there is no space outside of the text. There is no room for the arguments of correspondence. VLJ embraces its own material conditions, and in this, it expands our faculty of imagination into the imaginative preconditions that is ever creating meaning. VLJ “unfolds like a game (*jeu*) that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits” (Foucault, “What” 264). Through its relationship with its material existence, VLJ threatens to engulf everything. Both the loss of the fresco, whose existence is like the looming “Natural Objects” that threaten to deaden Blake’s imagination and which would answer whether there existed a correspondent relationship between it and VLJ, and the failure or refusal of Blake to print VLJ, become “inseparable part[s]” (67) of the VLJ and Blake’s general conception of the last judgment. Spread out over his notebook, the accident of its composition and placement does not become a large part of VLJ but *constitutes* VLJ. The point of capitulation in both *The Design* and the *Catalogue* is

that while they locate vision in the imagination, their respective descriptions (based fundamentally on an idea of correspondence) threaten to become matters of mere representation and explication that refer the vision of the viewer not toward "what Eternally Exists" (E 554) in the imagination but outward again toward the phenomenological reality of the pictorial representations and/or text seen with the actual eyes. By referring outside of themselves, these writings reject their own status as visions.

If we dispense with viewing VLJ as merely the handmaiden to the fresco and other pictorial images, then our readings of it are informed, not by some illusionary link to a painting that does not exist, but by how it was finished in the notebook as another sketch, scribbled and crammed in among emblems, drawings, and poems. The letterpress editions of Rossetti, Keynes, Bentley, and Erdman we are leaving behind all have variations that try to approximate what they find in the notebook and to privilege what they think is important, but these approximations all fail to capture the organic nature of the notebook.³² By his respective "translation," each editor puts his allegorical stamp on the work. Rossetti, for example, stitches together the lacunas and even adds phrases that he thinks clarify Blake's meaning so that VLJ appears to be a lucid, printed whole for his Victorian audience. While the modern and "authoritative" editions of Bentley and Erdman move beyond such heavy handedness, they both differ in their layout of the text and in their organization of the ending. Despite his much faulted punctuation, which is found throughout the edition, Bentley's

³² The notebook form of VLJ provides for a radical extension of the Santa Cruz Blake Study Group's critique of Erdman's *Complete Poetry and Prose*: "Blake's production is itself a performance situation, a 'scene of writing' which continually draws attention to itself as graphological production" (323).

division of VLJ's prose into the clusters that are found in the notebook serves well to emphasize the text's fragmentation across the notebook pages, an effect Erdman's integration of Blake's prose into larger paragraphs does not do. While they include mostly the same text, Bentley ends with the ominous sentence, "Space is a Woman & her Masculine Portion is Death" (1028); Erdman, with the more optimistic, "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" (566).³³ Viewing these different endings in tandem highlights how in the notebook VLJ has no definitive order (E 881).

The point in bringing these discrepancies up is to show how the letterpress editions fall short of representing the notebook and the instructive play that is found there.³⁴ For example, beside Blake's prose discussion of the "seed of Contemplative thought" (NB 69), which was deconstructed by Miller above, is Blake's emblem that shows a cherub bursting from its egg. This seems to be a pictorial response to Miller's question about the source of the eternal image, and Blake is answering with the chicken (in this case, angel) and the egg paradox. This emblem also recalls Horace's phrase *ab ovo* and his statements about poetic ordering that Blake is clearly against in both VLJ and in his addresses on Homer and Virgil, as well as recalling the mythic significance of *ab ovo*, the rape of Leda, the birth of Helen, and the subse-

³³ Bentley ends with the following pages and parts: 91w; 92; 91y. This section begins, "Many Suppose that before Adam the Creation All was Solitude and Chaos" (B 1027-8). Erdman forgoes Bentley's labeling of sections on the notebook page and ends with NB 95. He places Bentley's ending in the same order after NB 85 (E 563).

³⁴ These readings of the coincidences found in VLJ's notebook form have as much validity as Erdman and Magno's interpretations of the *Night Thoughts* engravings under the rubric of FZ's characters and actions.

quent link of the Greek poetic tradition with war, another topic Blake argues against explicitly in VLJ. Moreover, beneath the emblem is written its motto in two lines, but strangely finishing the bottom line and making it parallel with the top one is the free floating word, “Dryden.”³⁵ Thus:

At length for hatching ripe he breaks

the shell

Dryden (NB 69)

The prose of VLJ runs over this motto with seeming indifference, but in doing so “Dryden” is caught in a striking chiasmus:

... the death of the Vegetated body

Dryden

... the world of *Generation* (italics here indicate lighter and earlier ink)

This is certainly not to argue in any way that Blake meant for these effects to occur, but it does indicate how reading VLJ in its notebook form overcomes the threat of correlation by its chaos and play. The work participates with what surrounds it and calls into further question the role of intention in written and pictorial signs.

Another fruitful example of how the play of the text creates meanings that reject dualism and combine instructively the text with our imaginations (and hence, the text with ourselves) is the large piece cut from pages 71-2, which presumably describes the history or origin of vision, somewhat like MHH. With this omission,

³⁵ In his *Public Address*, Blake wrote that “I do not condemn Pope or Dryden because they did not understand Imagination but because they did not understand Verse” and “Stupidity will Prefer Dryden because it is in Rhyme” (E 575 and 581).

vision is left without an origin. Losing both the text and the page, Blake's vision too falters, and if his sign does indeed exist as a triadic structure, lacking the sign and the referent, we must make up for this loss of "pure" vision ourselves, picking it up as it begins *in medias res*: "when they Assert that Jupiter usurped the throne of his Father" (NB 71). Even the origin of vision begins in the time of fable and allegory, when pure vision had already been lost, and this ironically prefigures what Blake has written below on the page, "the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Vision and Real Visions which are lost & clouded in Fable & Allegory" (NB 71-2). The origin of vision (its purity, its eternal nature, and its exclusively mental existence) is stolen by means of its representation in material form. While Blake claims, "my work . . . is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients call'd the Golden Age" (NB 72), his work, in its corporeal nature (that is, by existing at all), has itself robbed us of that Golden Age, placing us in historical time, the world of oral traditions and written text, which are dependent on the division between the word and the subject.

Hence, contrary to our initial assumptions, VLJ shows us that Blake's vision is *purely* material and not dependent on a pre-existing, static notion of the last judgment exclusively within Blake's mind. Vision is *praxis*. Essick, whom we've borrowed much from, puts his solution in these terms: "the rationalist grammarians and scientists . . . had turned their language and their world into a prison house. Blake turns both into a poem" (231). This point condemns us to accepting a common language and society in which we (and even Blake) must function without change. Vision can never, according to Essick, fully overcome this stricture and still communi-

cate, which is why, for Essick, vision must be "conviction." Yet, the notebook state of VLJ escapes this. The play and chaos resulting from its material existence returns to Blake's questioner that a common language (*langue*) is finally only itself an abstraction that does not exist except in how it is actively *used*. Language is neither imitated nor copied but *borrowed*. This borrowing, this swerve, occurs in the material mediation of imagination—in the *material vision* of writing, drawing, painting, singing, etc.³⁶ VLJ's notebook status makes this response in a way that its abstracted, typeset text cannot precisely because as a typeset text VLJ exists simply as another utterance (*parole*) in a wider, standard language (*langue*). Existing among drawing and other non-verbal structures, VLJ in its notebook form makes a common language but one of many ways to express meaning. "Natural Objects" are placed in the wider "semantic precondition" of the imagination.

One need only recall the violent erasure of references to his "Dear Reader" in *Jerusalem*, whose first chapter is dedicated to the public, to know that Blake was a man never satisfied with his audience.³⁷ This audience, however, was an essential element to his conception of the last judgment, and no more so than during his attempts at public recognition in 1808 and 1809. The distinction he wished to make between vision and allegory to effect this last judgment failed, in part, because the relationship between explicit explanation and allegory allowed his reader/viewer to

³⁶ Blake's recently discovered letter to George Cumberland confirms his activities of musical composition: "I can be Poet Painter & Musician as the Inspiration comes" (Essick and Paley 4).

³⁷ With his engraving acid, Blake burned away on a finished plate of his greatest work the words "love," "friendship," and "blessed," as well as the "wholly One" in the phrase, "be with me wholly One with Jesus."

neglect his or her own role in the imaginative vision. Wishing to accommodate this audience in its lack of imagination led Blake to betray unwittingly his own aesthetic strategies and ontological beliefs. He did this by using correlative arguments that emphasized the disjunction between mediums, which in turn opened up a road for his enemies to attack his sanity and misrepresent what Blake meant by vision, which we find could never be pure, general, exclusively mental, nor separated from the medium in which it existed. Not long after Robert Hunt's attacks, Blake all but disappeared from public record for four years, printing neither his drafted *Public Address* nor VLJ. By not publishing and fixing VLJ into a finished, typeset form, Blake kept a play in VLJ that the *Catalogue* and *The Design* lacks. This play acknowledges that, by existing in a medium, vision is a process or a sketch that is not and cannot be pure in the sense impugned by Hunt in his review. An incorrect viewing of art that does not sufficiently privilege a work's particulars or a desire to find Blake's pure vision changes vision into allegory in ways that echo similar mistakes regarding pure spirit and a body that is only material. Even Essick's account that VLJ is an explanation for the lost fresco whose images "really exist and are not to be taken as signs of signs" (98) suggests a vision more pure can be found beyond the VLJ, but it is VLJ itself that must be understood as being "what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably" (E 554) when what is expressed in a medium engages with our own imaginations in ways Blake could not foresee or control. Through its chaos and play, the notebook status of VLJ draws its readers into it and into a new conception of the imagination. In doing so, it escapes being fixed by the powerful strictures of the or-

thodox figures that threaten to dominate his pictorial *Last Judgments* and make them exclusively allegorical and correspondent. While Blake defended vigorously his right to render visions in these orthodox terms, claiming that the ancients had employed the same right in rendering the spirit as flesh, the notebook status of VLJ sidesteps this constricting force of orthodoxy with an effectiveness that Blake's use of orthodox imagery and explicit Christian language elsewhere does not.

But was this unfinished form of VLJ really without any conscious design on Blake's part? It is tempting to think that Blake had learned a lesson from *The Design's* failure to convince Humphrey to embrace his conception of art and of the *Catalogue* and the exposition's failure to convince London. We have already noted an implicit acknowledgment of his failure in the May 1809 letter to Humphrey, and the explicitness of VLJ at certain points seems to suggest a similar awareness of just such a lesson and what is necessary to remedy it:

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things . . . then he would be happy General knowledge is Remote Knowledge it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too. Both in Art & in Life General Masses are as Much Art as a Pasteboard Man is Human Every Man has Eyes Nose & Mouth this Every Idiot knows but he who enters into & discrimi-

nates most minutely the Manners & Intentions . . . is alone Wise or
Sensible . . . as Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant so
Painting admits not a Grain of Sand or Blade of Grass . . . much less
an Insignificant Blur or Mark (E 560).

Blake seems specifically aware here of a need for his viewers to turn from "General Masses" to particulars, an action which would enable them to join with the image and their own imaginations. If it is only an accident that these remarks sound so much like a reply to Humphrey, while suggesting a reading similar to the one we have just done of the notebook, these same remarks also suggest that in the particulars of art or life there are no accidents: "Painting admits not . . . an Insignificant Blur or Mark." Blake makes us rethink what we mean by coincidences and intentions.

Chapter Three

Re-Visions of Orthodoxy

For I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme Similar to Homers Iliad or Miltons Paradise Lost the Persons & Machinery intirely new to the Inhabitants of Earth (some of the Persons Excepted)
-Blake, 1803 letter to Butts

VLJ's use of accident, chance, and play characterizes to a degree all of Blake's works. *Songs of Innocence*, for example, borrows three of its poems from *An Island in the Moon* and, in the process, radically recontextualizes them. Different versions of the illuminated texts show color variations, different paginations, and even seemingly altered drawings that come about from the printing procedure itself.¹ Yet, corresponding most directly to the notebook "form" of VLJ and the concept of a strictly *material vision* it implies is FZ, whose manuscript status also encourages (and some would say forces) its readers upon the resources of their own imaginations. In FZ, the readers must provide for themselves what the poem ultimately lacks in explicit causal connections, a clear distinction between the narrative (*sjuzet*) and the story (*fabula*), and ultimately the work's very purpose since no one is sure what Blake meant to accomplish by FZ. And like VLJ, because it is so dependent on its readers for its arrangement, FZ has proven to be a nightmare for Blake's editors. The work defies typeset format, for the very form of a typeset edition immediately belies, by any ordering, the flux of the manuscript's pages, the erasures and deletions found

¹ See Joseph Viscomi's *Blake and the Idea of the Book* for a detailed discussion of this topic.

throughout the work, the presence of the drawings, and the use of the *Night Thoughts* prints.² A typeset format of the “true” FZ proves in the end impossible because it will always fail to capture this active play of the manuscript. Moreover, finding the story “as Blake meant it” and neglecting the visual aspects of the work also proves problematic because this involves locating Blake’s intentions for the work, and as Erdman writes, “the search for Blake’s ‘final intentions’ disappoints us” (“Night the Seventh” 136). Because of our inability to fix the text in general, “standard” terms, it thereby falls to each specific reader to complete the meaning of FZ and to decide for him- or herself what should be privileged in his or her own reading.³

At no point is the play in the manuscript and narrative more acute than in the two Night VIIs, which are traditionally named Night VIIa and Night VIIb, with Night VIIa subsequently divided into VIIa1 and VIIa2.⁴ It is in these Night VIIs especially

² In his *Prophet Against Empire*, Erdman had already acknowledged that “no orderly synopsis can do justice to the real, if arguably intentional, disorder of the work itself” (296).

³ Part of the “form” of FZ may be in fact that there is only one copy of the manuscript, allowing for only one, specific reader at a time and only one specific arrangement. This discussion of FZ is meant to make FZ typical of narrative in general in the same way Victor Sklovsky makes *Tristram Shandy* typical of the novel. By this I mean that a reader will always do his or her own reading of a text and come away with a singular understanding of that text and that the manuscript of FZ embodies this process in its very form.

⁴ These distinctions can be quite maddening, especially given Erdman’s change in the page numbers in his facsimile of the manuscript. Under Bentley’s numbering, VIIa=pages 91-98 with VIIa1=77-85 and VIIa2=85-90. Erdman’s changes leave the numbering of VIIa2 and VIIb the same, but turn Bentley’s 87-90 to his 95-98 in VIIa2. It is easier, I believe, to consider and remember these sections in terms of their plot—if this abstraction can be forgiven.

In VIIa1: Urizen and Orc converse; Orc reveals he is Luvah, turns into a serpent, and climbs into the Tree of Mystery; Los and Enitharmon are at the base of this tree; Los laments while the Shadow of Enitharmon descends to the roots of the tree and meets the Spectre; they discuss how the Orc is a child of Enitharmon, and the Spectre recalls eternity, being placed in Enion’s womb and curses that “demon Los;” the Shadow and the Spectre confer, and Enitharmon brings forth the Shadowy Female.

In VIIa2: The Spectre gives charge of Orc to Enitharmon; after spreading a “double rooted Labyrinth around their head,” the Spectre enters Los; Los then embraces the Spectre; the two still

that the distinction between the *fabula* and *sjuzet* of FZ is lost. We have no means of knowing which is our own ordering of the events in these two Night VIIs and which is the narrator's telling. Again, trying to locate Blake's intention in the text fails us. To illustrate how one reconciles these differences can alter the poem's meaning, as well as how this play in the two Night VIIs allows for a multiplicity of readings that the text itself in no way encourages us to constrict, I would like to examine briefly Bentley's and Erdman's arrangements of the two nights, reading them particularly for how they change Vala's role in affecting Night VIII and the rise of the figures of orthodoxy.⁵

In his edition, Bentley places the two parts of VIIa together before VIIb (i.e., VIIa1-VIIa2-VIIb). In terms of the plot, this means that Vala's wandering through the worlds of Urizen leads directly to Night VIII, and specifically this coda is the narrator's mention of Satan that follows the Daughters of Beulah's brief song to Vala:

Then the myriads of the Dead burst thro the bottoms of their tombs[,]

Descending on the shadowy females clouds in Spectrous terror

Beyond the Limit of Translucence on the Lake of Udan Adan[.]

quibble over who has the pure vision; the Spectre suggests building bodies for the other Spectres of the dead; Los sees in the Lamb in the bosom of Enitharmon; Enitharmon fears the Lamb; Golgonooza is built; Orc is comforted and reconciled with the family of Los; Urizen becomes a son of Los.

In VIIb: Urizen establishes empire; Los and Tharmas rage and do battle; Enitharmon asserts her distrust of Orc; there are war songs from the Prester Serpent and the Demons of the Deep; Orc rents Vala and then consumes himself in his own fires though his serpent form remains; Tharmas upbraids Vala while he recalls eternity and Enion; Vala wanders in the worlds of Urizens while Urizen himself broods.

⁵ Both of these editions must be praised for including Night VIIb and refusing to regulate it to an appendix. Otto points out that Bloom, Erdman, and Paley (and I would add Wilkie and Johnson) suggest that VIIa is later and therefore preferred by Blake over VIIb ("Spectrous Embrace" 136).

These they namd Satans & in the Aggregate they namd Them Satan[.]

(98:11-14 B 1220)

This ending emphasizes the role of Vala in Night VIIb in a manner that is obscured in Erdman's edition where VIIb is placed between the two parts of VIIa (i.e., VIIa1-VIIb-VIIa2).⁶ Bentley's ordering implies that Vala's actions directly lead to the dead bursting from their tombs and the advent of the Divine Council in Night VIII, which keeps Vala's role in the poem essential as well as making her particularly complicit in the advent of Satan into the poem, a role we will see she repeats as the Shadowy Female in Night VIII. In Night VIIb, Vala begins to take on the attributes of the Shadowy Female and as such is blamed for the fall by Tharmas directly: "Vala thy Sins have lost us heaven & bliss" (94:24 B 1218). Following the typological pattern of Eve, Vala releases the sin that can only be contained by the intervention of the divine.

In his edition, Erdman combines the two Night VIIs and concludes them with VIIa2's embrace of Los and the Spectre, which leads to Orc's reacceptance into the family of Los and Urizen's brief role in FZ as a newborn son of Los:

Startled was Los he found his Enemy Urizen now

In his hands. he wondered that he felt love & not hate

His whole soul loved him he beheld him an infant

Lovely breathd from Enitharmon he trembled within himself (98

[90]:64-67 E 371)

⁶ Specifically it is placed after the break on page 85 where the Spectre gives Enitharmon charge over Orc (85:21 E 360).

When Bentley's Night VIIb ending, with its focus on Vala, is placed well before this embrace of the Spectre and Los (E 367), Los's "reform" and transformation lessen considerably its horror. Vala's sins and the pain of the fall are de-emphasized. Erdman borrows this arrangement from Mark S. Lefebvre who writes that "In VIIa2 the poem makes the crucial upswing toward salvation, and Los is the zoa in control" (134). Lefebvre himself admits, however, that in his opinion this arrangement means "the absence of a signaled transition to VIII" (134). Yet, as if to indicate how much one's arrangement depends on what one wants the plot to be, another advocate of this *same* VIIa1-VIIb-VIIa2 arrangement, John Gilgore, disagrees with Lefebvre's criticism. Gilgore counters that the dramatic flow from Night VIIa2 to Night VIII makes *perfect* narrative sense since the counter "VIIb-VIII sequence would present an inexplicable shift from sardonic gloom to prophetic hope[.]" an incongruity, he contends, which led Blake "to route the poem around VIIb" (110). This "sardonic gloom," we should remember, is Vala's wandering and the Satanic forces it subsequently releases. This arrangement, which is in Erdman's standard edition, encourages then the belief that at the latest stage in the poem's composition Blake no longer saw Vala's role as essential since the figures of orthodoxy who enter the poem in Night VIII do so as part of the motion toward salvation already initiated by Los rather than in reaction to Vala's continued error or some notion of *felix culpa*.

Erdman's VIIa1-VIIb-VIIa2-VIII arrangement suggests that the advent of the providential figures is contingent chiefly on Los's embrace of the Spectre. This view

would correspond to the increasingly central role Los played in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* and would argue that the fallen world of FZ reaches its lowest point in Night VI's battle between Urizen and Tharmas. Bentley's VIIa1-VIIa2-VIIb-VIII arrangement, on the other hand, suggests that the fallen world continues to decline in the whole of Night VII, despite individual acts of contrition. Vala's actions from eternity continue to have ramifications on the fallen world, and her error leads to the dead bursting from their tombs and Satan's first entrance into the poem. Our point is the play of the text and manuscript here leaves us no objective or intentional standard for choosing one arrangement over another. As is the case with the notebook status of VLJ, readers are left to their own imaginations to decide which, if either, arrangement is the one that corresponds to their own sense of the poem's plot and themes.

As we saw in the first chapter, a final indeterminacy does not condemn the poem to meaninglessness. Rather, this indeterminacy becomes part of FZ's material vision, part of its argument. What kind of argument it presents, however, and how Blake fits within this argument depends on how one interprets the poem, and with some generalization, these interpretations of the poem in manuscript can be divided into two main modes, each with its own assumptions and pitfalls. The first mode examines the poem diachronically, as a function of time and as a reflection of how Blake's goals for the poem, his thought, and his myth in general changed in the time it took to write it. This diachronic mode attempts to date the manuscript revisions relative to one another and to trace, in doing so, Blake's historical development as an

artist and thinker. It suggests the idea that within FZ there exists one or more kernel *Valas*, which were each disregarded for its successor, a successor that engulfs and re-contextualizes its predecessor. These poems, it is argued, can be distinguished from one another in the confusion of the manuscript because close readings of the manuscript reveal, more or less, certain stages of development, which each correspond to a coherent narrative structure.⁷ There are three major indications in the manuscript that Blake changed his mind about what he wanted to do with the poem. The first 42 pages were written neatly on blank paper in what Bentley calls Blake's "Copperplate" and "Modified Copperplate Hand" (B 1723). On page 43, the seventh page of Night III, Blake moves from blank paper to his proofs for the *Night Thoughts* engravings, and on these proofs he finishes Nights III-IX. Once the poem was finished (and what exactly was finished in this draft is not entirely clear), Blake began a process of radically revising by erasing and rewriting text he had already written (particularly Night I's first four pages), scribbling passages in the margins, and crossing out passages with wash until, it seems, he no longer cared about the appearance of the manuscript. Second, stitch marks are extant on pages 43-84 and 115-6, and these marks suggest that these pages were bound at one time and in this order, although by the time Yeats and Ellis obtained the manuscript in 1891, this ordering was no longer preserved (Erdman, "Night the Seventh" 135). The binding of these pages suggests that Blake composed much of the two Night VIIs, Night VIII, and Night IX (i.e., pages 85-114)

⁷ As Vincent De Luca describes this process, "For most of Blake's revisions [to FZ] are indeed revisions; they register the eruption of new or deeper conceptions of a subject already rendered" (*Words*

after this binding had been already done. Third, at one point in the poem's composition Blake numbered the lines of the poem, but he continued his revisions after doing so. As part of the struggle to pinpoint a standard and completed layer or edition of the poem (depending on where one stands on the question of fixing Blake's intentions), H. M. Margoliouth went so far in 1956 as to publish this numbered version as *Vala: Blake's Numbered Text*. This edition begins with Night II and continues through much of Night IX, including both Night VIIs, but excludes almost completely Night VIII and the references to the orthodox figures made in the revisions (Margoliouth xxv). Margoliouth's text reads quite "clean" in terms of plot, with many of the full manuscript and text's contradictions omitted, but, lest we declare this text the or an undisputed *Vala*, Youngquist warns us that even what lines Blake meant by his numbering, as well as how Margoliouth picked his lines, are often times "highly conjectural" (*Madness* 179 n.11).

Perhaps the best description of these layers or potential poems in FZ is by Andrew Lincoln in his *Spiritual History*. Lincoln distinguishes four main layers in the manuscript, each with its own narrative theme: 1) the Copperplate text, "a universal history as the story of one person" (32); 2) a "Dream of Nine Nights," where Blake was trying to emulate/respond to Young's poem, using his engraving proofs, and which, incidentally, most closely corresponds to Margoliouth's *Vala*; 3) "A Christian Vision," in which Blake revised this "finished" text "in order to include a comprehen-

sive history of Jesus" (223), adding Night VIII as well as changing Night I and other "completed" sections; and 4) the "Final Changes," a section entitled appropriately enough by Lincoln, "Buried Beneath the Ruins" since this is when, he argues, Blake tries to turn the poem into a national epic but ultimately fails and abandons the poem.

Even though Lincoln effects his own zoa-like maneuvers of integration and recontextualization in distinguishing and then combining the layers of the poem, all while reading these layers in light of late eighteenth-century theories of history, he holds, nonetheless, that *Spiritual History* provides "a reading that has more coherence, and may be more accessible, than the disordered appearance of the manuscript might lead us to expect" (ix). Why he can assert this is his belief that Blake's thought and his conception of the poem evolved in steady and observable steps. These steps, moreover, curtail the flux that one might expect to result from viewing the poem as a function of time. Despite the changes the FZ manuscript clearly did undergo then, it is Blake's wrestling and re-wrestling with certain ideas in the poem that help to order the layers of the poem and fix their meanings.

However, as can be expected, viewing the FZ manuscript as containing layers of poems, requires a lot of guess-work regarding the circumstances of the poem's composition and the relative dates of the emendations, additions, erasures, drawings, and bindings. It is not even agreed upon, after all, when Blake began or finished/abandoned the poem. Lincoln in fact acknowledges this and several other limitations in his kind of manuscript reading. He asserts both that what is in the

manuscript may indeed only contain transcriptions of what was composed elsewhere ("Revision" 119) and that the stitch marks in themselves tell us nothing about at what point in the composition of poem the pages were bound (116). These acknowledgments mean that even fairly obvious late additions to the manuscript may not necessarily be indicative of changes in Blake's thought. The second weakness of this mode, as could be gathered from our examination of the FZ's two typeset editions and our own practice in chapter one, is its reliance on the belief that "a single and reasonably coherent narrative" (115) marks each stage of the poem's completion.⁸ Lacking physical manuscript evidence that is unquestionably conclusive then, this mode must rely too, to a large degree, on the "internal [narrative] evidence" (116), which is found simply in one's own reading. Blake's goal for the poem at each of these hypothesized levels is determined by what one is looking for. This mode's assumption in its *readings* is that Blake was indeed striving for a narrative unity of some kind at each stage of the poem's completion. And this narrative unity becomes not only a mark of these completions but also a mark of its final failure. For this view to be credible, the narrative unity it supposes Blake was aiming for must have realized to some degree at each of these stages for it to be salvageable. But, somewhat paradoxically, this mode locates these coherent narrative levels only to tell us that Blake rejected these levels. This implies, in other words, that Blake wrecked a fairly cohesive FZ or *Vala* several times before he abandoned it, despite the fact that it was this

⁸ This critique is suggested by Otto's "Spectrous Embrace."

very narrative cohesion he supposedly wanted.

Peter Otto best sums up the philosophy of the second mode of interpretation the indeterminacy of FZ manuscript suggests. He writes: "there are cogent thematic and contextual reasons to entertain the possibility that at least when Blake finally stopped working on the manuscript he believed that the form taken by the work was the only one that the subject matter could assume" ("Final States" 144). This mode approaches FZ synchronically and requires that one explain the obvious signs of revisions and emendations in the manuscript exclusively in terms of FZ's themes of division, unity, fragmentation, etc. This approach is similar to what we did to FZ's plot and anti-plot in chapter one, but it goes further and suggests even the incongruities of the manuscript indicate, in some manner, a level of intentional argument on Blake's part. The logic here is that in Blake's epics (and perhaps, as it is seen in VLJ, this is true of all of his works), it is difficult to know exactly what Blake's conception of a finished form was. Frye and Lincoln assume that, because FZ was not illuminated and because the plot does not quite work, it cannot be finished, but no one new to Blake's works could imagine the illuminated *Jerusalem* from a typeset edition, while very few could imagine that a typeset edition of *Jerusalem* itself was a finished work.

This synchronic mode, therefore, rests on the premise that, since the themes (e.g., fragmentation, unity, etc.) of FZ *do* correspond so closely with its "unfinished" form, it may be, after all, that FZ was indeed finished to Blake's satisfaction (144). Besides Otto, the other chief practitioner of this mode is Donald Ault, who himself

notes the similarity between Otto's approach and his own (482 n.7). His *Narrative Unbound* is based on the assumption "that every detail in the poem has aesthetic and perceptual significance and that the most minute articulations . . . hold the keys to vast narrative riches" (xi). What Ault does, which is amazing and adds much credibility to this argument, is locate "hidden" structures within FZ, which, pointed out again and again, strongly suggest that Blake must have been conscious of these structures. In Night I, for example, Ault locates what he calls "embedded structures." This simply means that many of the scenes of this night, and other scenes throughout the poem, are marked by phrases that repeat on either side of the scene. These include such phrases as "Los & Enitharmon sat in discontent & scorn" (13:19 and 16:18), which encloses the song at the feast of Los and Enitharmon, and "Eternity groand" (12:4 and 18:9), which seems strategically located to suggest a causal relationship between it and the phrase "wept upon the desolate wind" (8:2 and 17:1). Also particularly convincing is his spatial layout of Night VIIa's plot against the Tree of Mystery, which shows that the action is happening at three levels, its branches, trunk, and roots. Through such examples, Ault suggests implicitly that there are many structures within FZ that suggest a level of completion others discount by not actively looking for them.

The position of Ault and Otto is an interesting one in that it suggests a conjunction of two ideas that are usually thought of (except in post-modern literature and *Tristram Shandy*) as contradictory. FZ buckles "normal" linear narrative, "standard"

formal organization, and “regular” ways of readings (things we expect a deconstructionist reading to say), but Otto and Ault suggest FZ does these things intentionally. This indicates that Ault and Otto’s synchronic method is both foundationalist and formal.⁹ By locating its structures, they are letting the text speak for itself. While Lincoln considers FZ’s failure to do the “normal” things narratives do indicative of a failure both for FZ and for Blake, Ault and Otto view this same “failure” as a success.

This difference in opinion about the work and the incommensurability of their respective (and convincing) pieces of evidence rests, it seems, on how their assumptions about Blake’s intentions for the work differ. As suggested by his title, Lincoln asserts that FZ was meant to be a “spiritual history,” which “incorporates, attempts to harmonize, strikingly different approaches to history” (*Spiritual History* 1). FZ was meant to bring different views together; it was meant to “harmonize.” Because of this view, Lincoln privileges the unity and structure extant in FZ but then is acutely aware of this *lack* of unity and structure, and concludes, in short, the poem failed for Blake. Ault, on the other hand, asserts that FZ is Blake’s experiment “with developing narrative structures that could function therapeutically to rehabilitate imaginations damaged by ‘Single vision’” (*Narrative Unbound* 3). Ault lauds then the lack of an obvious harmony in the poem. By having hidden and elusive structures, FZ works because it fulfills Blake’s intentions to exercise the imagination. The other clear difference in these approaches is in how they use Blake’s time—that is, his actual historic

⁹ Stanley Fish writes, “neither when I find that a work is ‘about’ the limits of language or the conditions of assertion, or the relativity of truth, am I doing theory” (*Doing* 336).

existence. Lincoln reads FZ in the context of Blake's artistic life (i.e., the process of revisions) *and* of his life in the culture of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries (e.g., theories of histories). He explicitly disagrees with how Ault abandons considerations of Blake's life and culture for a focus exclusively on the text and its "continuously originary" processes of creation and re-creation. "If we accept [Ault's] assumption at face value," Lincoln writes, "we seem committed to losing contact with the historical conditions that make that process necessary" (*Spiritual* xi-xii).¹⁰ Lincoln's approach rests on an idea that all historical scholarship takes for granted, namely, that history does exist outside of narrative, that artists exist outside of their works, and that what exists "outside" of them (i.e., culture, language, etc.) has a great deal of influence on what is found "inside" them.

This discussion seems to lead us to asking the question, which we put off in chapter one: how did Blake want his works (and FZ specifically) read? This question may be of particular relevance since we found in chapter two that Blake's concept of the last judgment, for a time at least, was dependent on his audience's correct view(ing) of art. Moreover, our reading of VLJ there suggested finally a Blake who argued everything in his works was meaningful: "Poetry admits not a letter that is Insignificant" (E 560). Painting does not admit as insignificant even a "Blur or Mark" (E 560). But does this mean, however, that Blake wants us to equate a work's meaning with his own? To echo de Man, it all depends on how one disposes of

¹⁰ Lincoln's criticism of Ault doesn't seem to recognize how Ault has made FZ exclusively an anti-Enlightenment document.

Blake's body.

How Blake wanted us to read him finds an immediate analogue in how he wrote. His practices as a writer were tied to his notion of sketch, which "was both an act of *discovery* and the art of *fixing*" (Viscomi 43). Joseph Viscomi argues that Blake was not systematic when composing either his poetry or his drawings: "The poems—or at least the minor and major prophecies, texts whose forms were not externally structured by rhyme schemes and ballad forms—may have been composed just as the illustrations were; spontaneously and almost automatically" (30). At the same time, Blake never abandoned some idea of form. His spontaneity arises instead from his practice of structuring and his adeptness at creating, which in Viscomi's description echoes the practices of a jazz musician: Blake "was a ready inventor, with a well-used repertoire of images that enabled him to draw/invent quickly" (28).

This process of discovery and fixing in Blake's own writing is especially relevant to FZ since, despite his steady revisions to the work, Blake always was able to maintain some form. Essick notes how in FZ, "The language is all of a piece. The roughest draft contains the same tone, diction, and rhythm of the fair copy" (*Language* 171). The form Blake was able to preserve by means of his language's consistency is also, as we saw in chapter one, preserved by the consistency of the plot. Its tendency to dissolve and dissipate never fully engulfs its own unity. In his much later work, *On Virgil*, conjectured to be printed in 1820, Blake asserts that there are two different types of form, a mathematic form and a gothic form:

Mathematic Form is Eternal in the Reasoning Memory. Living Form
is Eternal Existence. Grecian is the Mathematic Form. Gothic is the
Living Form. (E 270)

Blake's redefining of "Eternal" here echoes how we had to redefine "infinite" in chapter one and "imagination" in chapter two. The eternal in reasoning suggests abstraction, neoclassical unity, dramatic closure, and correspondent dualism. It is what Blake meant by allegory. The living form is the *material vision* we found in chapter two. In this distinction, Blake is asserting that the *sjuzet* is the level of life and art, while the *fabula* is the abstraction. Pure events divorced from narratives are abstractions—even lies. The material vision is a living form by not fixing a pre-material meaning; it grows and is dependent on its reader. While this is true of all texts, the living form works against and defeats an abstraction that would allow its reader to put it down, claim a complete understanding of it, or escape from it. By not allowing an abstraction of the *fabula* from the experience (*sjuzet*) of reading, FZ is a living form par excellence.

The experience of the living form lies in both its material form and the style of its verbal or pictorial content. As anyone familiar with Bentley's facsimile knows, in its manuscript state, with its huge 16 ½ by 12 ½ in. pages (E 816), FZ must literally be entered into.¹¹ This necessary physical presence of vision may be why Blake advocates in the *Catalogue* that pictures be painted "on a scale that is suitable to the

¹¹ This point is suggested by George Quasha's foreword to Ault's *Narrative Unbound* (ix).

grandeur of the nation" even to "one hundred feet in height" (E 531). Directly opposite of Aristotle's claim in the *Poetics* that "beauty consists in magnitude and arrangement . . . [that is] easily taken in as a whole by the eye" (16), Blake held art should not be of a comprehensible magnitude. Art should be overwhelming if not confusing: thus the urgings he made in VLJ for the spectator to enter his pictures; thus the increasing size of and number of figures in his *Last Judgments*.

Near his death in 1827, Blake wrote to Cumberland, "I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever. In that I am stronger & stronger as this Foolish body decays" (E 783). In this letter, Blake uses "Real Man" in a sense Cumberland would understand, what Blake himself would call the ontologically real, the "Imagination." Curiously, we see in his other letters from this year that Blake was actively, if not fervently printing and painting. Given our conception of *material vision* and the *living form*, this artistic activity was Blake's way of becoming part of the "Imagination," the "Living Form" which "is Eternal Existence." Through his activity, Blake was becoming just imagination, just vision, *just text*.

This idea of how Blake conceived of the *living form* and his relationship to it finally illuminates what he said twenty-one years earlier in his July 6th 1803 letter to Butts: "our three years trouble . . . shall be forgot by my affections & only remembered by my Understanding to be Memento in time to come . . . to speak to future gen-

erations by a Sublime Allegory" (E 730). Blake's memory of the Wordsworthian, real events at Felpham will cease to be in themselves and only exist in the *praxis* of his "Sublime Allegory" as a memento to the understanding. And in the same paragraph of this letter, Blake writes that his "Sublime Allegory" is "addressed to the Intellectual powers while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding" (E 730). This implies Blake's not surprising distinction between true and corporeal understanding. But how the style of the living form addresses this true "Understanding," while still addressing the "Intellectual Powers," can be seen in an account of why Urthona was also called "Dark Urthona."

As noted in chapter one, Ault observes in *Narrative Unbound* how "dark" and "sweet" are the adjectives used most often in FZ and how Blake switched back and forth between them, at least once indecisively (463). We saw how sweet gains the implication of "delusive" in this exchange. Rather than dilute their meanings, this exchange makes the words duplicitous, dialogical. Dark Urthona, never sweet but nonetheless posited as the spiritual ideal, is thus similarly duplicitous in ways already suggested in chapter one. John Mee notes, however, that the word "dark" also refers to the obscure, parabolic style common in the Millennialist movement (24). Robert Lowth, the eighteenth-century Hebrew scholar, described the obscurity found in the parabolic style of the biblical prophecies thus:

It describes events in a manner exactly conformable to the intention of prophecy; that is, in a dark, disguised, and intricate manner; sketching

out in a general way their form and outline; and seldom descending to the minuteness of description and exactness of detail (vol. I 246).

This emphasis on the general should not be ignored in how Blake distanced himself from other Millennialists. Blake's contemporary, Richard Brothers, who was born in the same year as Blake, also used the word "dark" to denote his own obscure style that was meant to emulate the biblical prophets and "work on the minds of his readers" (Mee 33 n.14). Brothers was a popular figure among the enthusiastic Millennialists, and he believed himself not only to be a prophet but, for a time, the Messiah (29-30). What we know of Blake's opinion of Brothers reveals much about Blake's own relationship with the Millennial movements that seem to share and shape many of his ideas as well as how his own "dark" style should and should not be read.

Crabb Robinson relays in his diary a story he hears at Flaxman's about Blake and a fellow engraver, William Sharp, "the ready dupe of any & every religious fanatic" (BR 235), who tried to make Blake a convert of Brothers:¹²

Fl[axman] judiciously observed, such men as Blake are not fond of playing the second fiddle—Hence Blake himself a seer of vision & a dreamer of dreams w[oul]d not do homage to a rival claimant of the privilege of prophecy (235, Bentley's emendations)

Robinson and Flaxman clearly saw this rejection by Blake as one of the many examples of his hubris and eccentricity. But Blake's rejection of Brothers as a prophet and

¹² Sharp published a portrait of Brothers in 1795 with the caption, "Fully believing this to be the Man whom God has appointed:-I engrave his likeness" (McCalman 323).

visionary was well founded as what Brothers meant by the terms was completely opposite of what Blake meant. Brothers's "dark" style did not address the "Intellectual Powers." When Brothers addressed the mind, he meant to indoctrinate it—reveal the truth. Our chapter one reading of Urthona's ambiguous relationship to the spirit and body in Night IX, and even to Blake himself (as opposed to his narrator), suggests a great deal of ambivalence, if not animosity, for the "dark" style and what it affects (e.g., the worship of Urthona and his hiding of the Bread of Ages). As much as it works on the mind, a "dark" style is also always potentially duplicitous and misleading—its plain meaning is never apparent and must be worked with, lived with, not resolved to *the Truth*. Blake's own "dark" style engages the true understanding because it addresses "the Intellectual powers" by remaining a dialogic site of belief and suspicion.

But has investigating Blake's intentions justified either the synchronic mode of Ault and Otto or the diachronic mode of Lincoln? If we were correct in chapter two and Blake did conceive of the imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition," it seems that the historical Blake himself could only become part of the "Living Imagination" by executing specific works. Ault and Otto's focus on the text alone does seem to accord then with Blake's wishes that the memory of his life be read only in his "Sublime Allegory," which would serve as a "Memento" to the true, and not "Corporeal," understanding. Undermining Blake's own intention to have no intentions outside the text, however and appropriately enough, is his own historic exis-

tence. The real Blake, found in historical records and amalgamated from the individual works, casts a shadow of intention over the textual, purely imaginative Blake.

The figure we ourselves advocated as necessary for creating meaning in Blake now, in turn, resists its own existence because the historical mode of Lincoln, one which we employed trying to find Blake's intentions, approaches Blake with a Wordsworthian ontology. Doing so and looking at Blake, "The Old Man," precipitates that, in Lincoln's words, "historical conditions" were "necessary" for Blake. Even in death, it seems, Blake cannot escape the Corporeal world he claims he is no part of and brushes off his feet like dirt.

All this leads us to a very odd and possibly distressing entry in Robinson's diary that may at first seem contradictory to our observations here about Blake's intentions and his desire to become text. Blake confesses to Robinson in 1826 that he has been tempted to burn all his manuscripts but that Catherine will not let him. Robinson agrees with Catherine and answers him, "You have these, not from yourself but from a higher order[.] The MSS are their property—You cannot tell what purpose they may answer:—unforeseen to you[.]" Robinson then writes that "He liked this [answer]." Blake then begins on what Robinson obviously considers a tangent to this discussion, as he notes first the content: that Blake said "Everyman has a Devil in him and the eternal between a man's Self and God" and then "&c &c &c &c" (BR 322-3). Yet, clearly, this was Blake's point in wanting to burn the manuscripts in the first place. The Blake who wished to burn the manuscripts was the historical Blake

who wanted to be "a man's [own] Self" and not a man belonging to "God."

Here we must dig a little deeper into how Christian dualism relates to Blake's material vision. Even though, as seen in his marginalia to Wordsworth, Blake employs the language of dualism with the Christian privileging of the spirit, Blake still had on the other side of him a conception of spirit shared interestingly by Brothers and Hunt in which the spirit was everything or nothing. By this I mean that both Brothers and Hunt would read the miracles of the Bible as the proper providence of an omnipotent, eternal spiritual God who can do anything.¹³ The only difference between them is that Brothers believed this to be literally true, while Hunt dismissed it as either true only in biblical times or as superstition. Their mutual understanding of the spirit and its relationship to the body, from Blake's point of view, was wrong. As Blake understood it, Christianity's whole project is to combine the material world with the ideal one—to correct this erroneous dualism. Hence, he writes to Brothers and Hunt's external God: "If you have formd a Circle to go into / Go into it yourself & see how you would do" (E 516). The spirit must exist in time, as Jesus did.

This idea, I believe, can reconcile the synchronic and diachronic methods. In his "Typological Narrative in the Reuben Episode of Jerusalem," John Pierce writes,

Thus in an attempt to reconcile the horizontal thrust of conventional narrative with the vertical implications of myth and thematic juxtapo-

¹³ Robinson records in his diary, "On enquiring whether the Devil would not be destroyed by God as being of less power, he denied that God has any power—asserted that the Devil is eternally created not by God, but by God's permission. And when I objected that permission implies power to prevent, he did seem to understand me" (Wittreich 67).

sition, Blake unites the diachronic tendencies of sequential narrative with the synchronic dimension of biblical typology, creating a unique form of narrative typology. (756)

In structuralist language, Pierce suggests that Blake was able to combine the syntegmatic progression of plot with the mythic or thematic "levels" of the work to create a new way of telling a story. In Christian terms, this is to combine the synchronic spirit with diachronic material existence. Though Pierce is using "diachronic" here to signify the temporal processes of our own reading rather than Blake's historical development, FZ shows how both these meanings are encompassed. As Lincoln has told us, while reading FZ, we pass from one coherent narrative context to another, many of these overlapping, each of which reveals a stage in Blake's thought, in the development of his myth, and the evolution of his theodicy. Each of these levels possesses its own rules, its own assumptions, and its own version of Blake's myth. This flux, which occurs while we are reading, corresponds well with Adams' assertion that there exists in Blake's poetry "no previous ur-myth now 'lost' to be recovered by scholarship, by gazing through the apparent poem for its Platonic idea, or by abstracting from it" (629). But, at the same time, the chaos this could unleash is kept at bay through the very strictures of vision we tried to escape from in chapter two—language (*langue*), poetic and pictorial traditions, and (as suggested by Lincoln) religious and cultural ideas—as well as Blake's own eye toward form and structure (as shown by Visconti and Ault). Reading the poem, therefore, moves us "from Eternity to Eter-

nity," with each "Eternity" reflecting for us Blake's thought at that moment, an "Infinity in the palm of your hand" (E 490).¹⁴

An example of how these two modes can be fruitfully employed together is found in Pierce's reading of the manuscript, pages 43-84. Pierce argues that the Spectre of Urthona and Tharmas were late additions to the poem, which means they either were not conceived of or were not fully developed when Blake began transcribing the first 42 pages of the poem, even though their presence (and especially that of Tharmas) seems necessary to the direction of the Copperplate poem (487). Pierce notes that the references to Tharmas and the Spectre in Night I are most likely "chronologically later in the development of the poem" (490) since Blake obviously erased and rewrote extensively most of the first seven pages of Night I. Tharmas and the Spectre then did not come into the narrative originally until Night IV, and importantly, they do so together. Their connection is seen in the fact that Tharmas is the first to recognize Los as the fallen form of Urthona, and when Los responds indignantly, "I am all powerful Los & Urthona is but my shadow" (48:20 E 332), Tharmas literally draws the Spectre of Urthona into the poem:

And Tharmas call'd to the Dark Spectre who upon the Shores
With dislocated Limbs had falln. The Spectre rose in pain
A Shadow blue obscure & dismal (49:11-13 E 333)

¹⁴ Paul Youngquist asserts that traditionally *Jerusalem* has been read with its "synchronic integrity" resolving its "diachronic contradictions" ("Reading the Apocalypse" 617). Youngquist suggests, however, that *Jerusalem* creates its own field of reading. Each reading is unique and takes the reader on an unique course.

Tharmas becomes instrumental again in Night VI, where his chaotic world serves as a point of contrast to Urizen's geometric universe (Pierce 494), a stand-off that Tharmas wishes to end in mutual death and destruction (E 346). Because Tharmas functions at these moments as an embodiment of chaos, confusion, and disintegration, Pierce asserts that Tharmas "marks an important step in Blake's mythology and in his use of noncontinuous narrative" (494). Not only was the content of Blake's mythology changing but also, on account of this change, *how* his mythology was told.

Chapter one showed the difficulty in fixing the exact relationship among Urthona, Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre. Pierce highlights how the Spectre's ambiguity in the poem reflects that Blake himself is changing his opinion about the Spectre's role in the poem even as he writes. The relationship among the forms of Urthona may not be able to be fixed because Blake himself did not fix it. The flux and creation Tharmas embodies thus works in the poem both dramatically and textually.

Additional evidence that Blake's conception of his myth was never fixed can be found in the five pages of manuscript fragments. In one of these fragments we can see that Blake considered using two other characters in FZ, Ariston and Onana. In the fragment, they are placed in this context: "Ariston ran forth with bright ?Onana" (E 845, Erdman's emendation). Though Ariston and Onana were never used in the body of the poem, this fragment shows us how the early plot was developing. Dark Urthona, for example, seems to be in a role later assumed by Los at the end of Night IV where Orc is born (55 E 338): "And dark Urthona rouzd his shady bride

from her deep den / . . . / Pitying they viewd the new born demon" (E 845).¹⁵

All of this is not to argue, however, that Blake's thought did not develop but to remove the reductive and teleological implications from "develop." To view Blake's myth and thought as permanently fixed at any one point in the composition of FZ is to make the same mistake Urizen makes in Night VI of fixing the world by his own mind (Adams 629). Yet, this is also not to accept the chaos of Tharmas and a change so continuous that there exists no place of analysis. Instead, the tension in Night VI between Urizen and Tharmas, between structure and flux, provides us with an analogue of understanding the tensions working in FZ and, to a degree, in all of Blake's works.

By employing both these modes of examination—both the temporal development of Blake's thought and the structures in the poem Blake recontextualizes again and again—we escape the difficulties of an allegory that is finally just explanation and apology for a "pure," unobtainable vision, a vision that is solipsistic and existing in Blake's "crazed" imagination alone. Both the reader/viewer and Blake determine the meaning and form of FZ through the conjunction of form and accident in a manner that precludes any of the parties in this triadic structure from fixing or *limiting* its meaning absolutely. Lacking a determined order, the very pages of FZ are prevented from fixing the meaning of what is written on them. The particular *enonce* of any portion of FZ is contextualized simultaneously by several different *enonciations*, and

¹⁵ Our combination of the synchronic and diachronic modes suggests that these fragments could and should be read as part of the poem.

as Lincoln shows these *enonciations* need not be bound to the poem itself. Different parts of the poem show a different conception of Tharmas, while, as we saw above, Dark Urthona read against the epic tradition is radically different from reading him against the Millennial movement. The fluid text and narrative of FZ is the source of its own radical recontextualizations. And if this is true of all texts in general, this simply means that FZ is an extraordinarily typical text.

Yet, this characterization of FZ as merging synchronic and diachronic structures in ways that makes each section of the poem its own “Eternity” is threatened by the idea that Blake’s turn toward the tropes and figures of Christianity in the later stages of the poem’s composition signals Blake’s historical embrace of a rather orthodox Christian theodicy. As P. M. S. Dawson, an advocate of this view, puts this point, “In the course of this work’s composition . . . we can see Blake being forced to shift his ground and to invoke an extrahuman agency of salvation to do what he no longer believes can be done by human agency in history” (135). It is his argument that from FZ we can gather certain, set beliefs that Blake had. First, Blake “never doubted that man as he existed in the world was fallen” (134); second, he sees “fall and redemption . . . [as] stages of a divine plan” (134)—that is, a belief in providence; third, he holds “human will alone is ineffectual without divine aid” (138); and fourth, he believed that “There is none that living & Sinneth not!” (138, qtd. from *Jerusalem* 61:24 E 212). In short, Dawson holds with Leopold Damrosch that “Blake’s system, for all its humanism, cannot get along without the divine” (qtd. in Dawson 135), and

thus Dawson himself concludes, "the shifting gravity of [FZ] as it progresses undeniably moves it in the direction of Christian (more specifically Protestant) orthodoxy" (142). Paul Youngquist, who shares the gist of Dawson's view, reveals what is at stake for our conception of the poem in conceiving Blake as "yielding" to Christian orthodoxy in FZ. Blake, he declares, "retreats from an unabashed confidence in his own experience, looking to verify it in the humanity of Jesus," a move that encloses the "open vistas of *The Four Zoas* . . . in a system" (*Madness* 133).

Here again, we must move carefully because, as we saw above, once Blake reaches his later epics, he does indeed express himself unapologetically in the language of Christianity in a manner that seems to lack both the self-consciousness and the critique that his earlier works, particular MHH or the *Book of Urizen*, perform. But I want to argue that Blake "realizes" even as he inverts and parodies orthodox language and conventions, and this is what moves him beyond the thought of MHH, that there is nothing that sufficiently replaces the language of Christianity. This is not to say by any means that Blake's thought developed outside the Christian heuristic, rather the opposite. But Blake needed to make Christianity his own. This move is not unique on Blake's part and, on the contrary, puts him squarely in step in his time with those who also wanted to return immanence, inspiration, and, therefore, a living God to what had become for many the stale conventions of orthodoxy. Yet, while recognizing this, it is still dangerous to both Blake's project (as we have conceived of it) and to our conception of the historical Blake to accept that Blake did in fact move

toward what Dawson himself calls "orthodoxy." Lincoln brushes against this danger and shows its pitfalls when he contends that the second stage of the poem he identifies, a "Dream of Nine Nights," was recontextualized (textually engulfed) by the third stage of the poem, "A Christian Vision." He implies that this change means that the entire poem then must read in terms of Blake's developing theodicy, and if that theodicy is an orthodox Christianity, then the many "Eternities" of the poem are engulfed and must be read much as Nietzsche lamented the Old Testament must be read—as always Christian.¹⁶ Night VIII, where we see the Lamb of God and Satan, is where the "right" perspective enters the poem. And all this is only to recognize the unique power of Christianity's tropes, which are so powerful that their structuring effect, a very large part of the cultural influence/stricture keeping FZ from dissolving into chaos, threaten to trammel up the entire poem (the textual Blake) and the historical Blake.

We are left with this conflict. By incessant revisions, Blake avoided creating in FZ a stable allegory, an original *ur*-myth, that could be deciphered and then explained in other terms. But, in the process of these revisions, Blake is also supposed to be historically moving closer and closer to embracing some form of orthodox theodicy and a belief in an external God, dualism, and providence, which would then order his (constant) creation by an external system. This conflict rests on the assump-

¹⁶ This is in *The Dawn*. Nietzsche writes, "I refer to the attempt to pull away the Old Testament from under the feet of the Jews—with the claim it contains nothing but Christian doctrines and *belongs* to the Christians as the *true* Israel, while the Jews had merely usurped it" (80). This implicit claim of Lincoln's would only become explicit if he thought Blake had finished the poem.

tion that the reunification of the poem in Night VIII and its proliferation of orthodox figures, as well as those added in the revisions, is in fact a move by Blake toward orthodox beliefs. We must ask ourselves then, following Mitchell's and our own examination of the *Last Judgments*, how much Blake does depart from or follow orthodoxy in the last nights of the poem and what this departure and following means in terms of the poem's themes as well as Blake's developing thought and aesthetic practices. I would like to argue that, despite Blake's increased use of orthodox figures and tropes, which cannot be denied in itself, he does not in FZ finally move much beyond the practices of millennial reinterpretations of the Bible done in the 1790s that "attempt[ed] to re-create the 'Inspiration' . . . suppressed in the perverted bible of state religion" (Mee 167). Night VIII does interject the figures of orthodoxy into the poem, but when we consider that Night IX was mostly written before Night VIII and remains largely unaffected by these figures, their appearance in the poem becomes strangely ineffectual and extraneous to the apocalypse that unfolds in a way that must be accounted for. Viewing this night from a diachronic perspective, Rosso states that "Night VIII stages the final intellectual battle between the narratives' contending cosmologies" (90). He is right in this.¹⁷ Night VIII is the site of one of Blake's greatest and most threatening dialogical battles, and we must examine it closely.

¹⁷ Rosso shows us how widespread and current, though, problematic the belief in Blake's Christianity is. He writes, "While I believe that Blake remains an eighteenth-century Christian apologist, he melts down both the orthodoxies and heterodoxies of Anglican and Dissenter in the forge of his prophetic workshop, exercising the divine arts of imagination" (90). While this is a striking image in a brilliant book, I think it allows Rosso to skirt a complicated question.

Let's begin with how Night VIII and the nights around it deal with dualism. Hunt was correct in identifying the importance of dualism to Blake's thought, but, misunderstanding Blake, Hunt concludes that Blake fails (much like all have before him): "The greatest poets have failed in their attempts 'to connect the visible and invisible world,' and have conveyed no just idea of the incomprehensible and intellectual faculty, whenever they have tried to embody it" (BR 195). We have already seen that Blake uses the language of dualism without hesitation, and Dawson contends, with some reason, that this signals Blake's belief in a God who exists outside of the individual and as pure spirit.

As opposed to either Bentley or Erdman, Ottosees the two Night VIIs as occurring simultaneously, reflecting, thereby, the bodily (VIIb) and spiritual (VIIa) struggles of Los. This synchronic reading insists, and we shall accept, that these two nights are concerned chiefly with the problem of duality. In this reading, VIIb is where Los "allows [the world of the body] to be completely appropriated by Urizen" ("Spectrous Embrace" 140). Accordingly, Los cannot be then cleansed of error or visited by grace in his union with the Spectre at the end of Night VIIa because this is just "an embrace" that "leaves the fallen world [of the body] intact" (138). An "embrace," defined as "a relationship in which the other is *not* assimilated and in which the other can remain intact" (138) finds interesting parallels with our own conception of the "accommodation" Blake extended to Humphrey in *The Design*. In both cases, the subject and the other remains distinct and can disagree about art, the nature of vi-

sion, or the role of the imagination as Los and the Spectre do and as Blake and Humphrey did.¹⁸ The embrace between the Spectre and Los gives Los a "vision" of unity and the true eternity, but this "vision" remains exclusively internal, only spiritual and incommunicable since the fallen world remains both beyond and outside of it (140). Its limitations are seen in that even though Orc is reconciled to his father Los and is like a father to his younger brothers he remains, nonetheless, "bound with chains of Jealousy & in scales of iron & brass" (98 [90]:49 E 371).

The true climax of the poem for Otto, as we have said, comes at the beginning of Night IX when Los destroys himself and the bodily world. An embrace, Otto argues, "is not itself 'an act of annihilation which is Imagination'" (138). We can see here that Otto, like Dawson, is taking Blake's privileging of the spirit over the body in orthodox terms. The spirit is Blake's imagination, and this is true, but then this equation is reversed and Blake's imagination becomes the orthodox notion of spirit. This is not true. For Otto, the embrace between the Spectre and Los leaves in the poem debilitating notions of alterity that prevent the full expression of imagination or spirit. Los's destruction of the sun, moon, his world, and his notions of selfhood in Night IX are then what releases the spirit and frees the imagination. This action of bodily destruction is, for Otto, simultaneously Blake's and Los's answer to duality: "the experience of the tension that this duality introduces into the world . . . will push Los and

¹⁸ Lincoln equates the bodies of the spectres of the dead woven in Golgonooza with art, which offers "a perception of the infinite in its minutely organized concrete particulars" (*Spiritual History* 257). This conception of those bodies indicates how Blake's problems of communication were tied to his conception of the body.

provoke the reader until there remains no option but the embrace of the whole Man" (143). Note here, however, that "the whole Man" is a man without body. Los in destroying the body disappears from the poem.

While Otto correctly observes that Los and the Spectre's embrace signals Los's recognition of "the world created by the Spectre as his own body" (138), he does not at all explain how Los similarly reconciles himself to the purely spiritual Urthona. Moreover, Otto does not explain what happens when the narrative and, by implication, Los reunifies in Night VIII, all while notions of alterity remain and even flourish. By neglecting a close analysis of Night VIII and idealizing Los's destruction in Night IX, Otto reinforces the idea that Night VIII's orthodox figures are Los's and Blake's answer to dualism and what forces/allows him to chose the abstract spirit over the body.

As shown above, Youngquist argues that Night VIII is an aggressive move toward orthodoxy that allows Blake to unify *himself* in many ways. Youngquist writes, "Jesus descends from above to put an end to the maddening politics of consciousness and to provide a center around which Blake can organize the scattered fragments of the Ancient Man" (133). From a narrative perspective, Ault too argues chiefly the same thing about the role of the orthodoxy, asserting that Night VIII forces a reunification of the narrative after the split of the two Night VIIs by means of a "sudden intrusion of a structure of authority" (333), i.e., the Council of God. A real divinity of some sort, according to both arguments, allows Blake to reunify the poem

after its split into two nights and provides a way of ending the poem. Likewise, Otto seems to imply in his account that when the tensions of duality are exacerbated this should lead to an acceptance of the orthodox answer. In all accounts, the orthodoxy provides the answer for the split between body and spirit, which is reject the body.

I hold, however, that the orthodox figures themselves exacerbate the tensions of dualism and that the religious error of following the orthodoxy is what forces Los to his self-destructive moment. Four examples from Night VIII will show what tensions exactly are emphasized in the night, which in themselves begin to call into question the distinctions between spirit and body and the role of orthodoxy. The first occurs when the Council of God meets "in Great Eternity . . . Upon the Limit of Contraction to create the fallen Man" (99:1, 3 E 371). The supposed transcendence and distance implied by "God," "Eternity," and "create" are contradicted and offset by the bodily "Limit" and "fallen." The orthodox God is one; not a council. There should be no limits in eternity, and the orthodox divinity does not set out to create man already fallen. This characterization thus disturbs the notion of a far off, perfect eternity. A second example occurs when Los sees "the Divine Vision" in the broken heart of Enitharmon. As noted in chapter one, much of the first part of the poem is concerned with showing us that Los and Enitharmon are born and not part of the original eternity. They are creations of the fall and part of the fallen world. Despite this origin, in Night VIII Los is still able to see the spirit in Enitharmon's body and can even "enter into Enitharmons bosom & explore" (99:26 E 372) this spiritual

realm within her. Not only do we see here that spirituality is immanent but that this immanent spirit is its own place, possessing extension and intersecting directly with the corporeal world. The spiritual is conceived here in spatial terms, and not in the immaterial and allegorical terms Hunt would have. Third, those dying in Beulah, a *spiritual* realm at war and generating death, descend after this *spiritual death* to the presumably *lower* state of Ulro “thro Gates of Death.” Here, the spectres’ condition actually seems better than it did in Beulah since they receive their bodies and “humanize” (101:41, 46 E 374) in the safe fortress of Golgonooza. This humanization makes the redemption found in eternity contingent on the created world. At the same time, however, the bodies Los and Enitharmon give the spectres are in turn unwound by Satan and Rahab, who reclothe the spectres in “far different mantles” (113:19 E 376). This complicates the relationship between body and spirit for there now seem to be two bodies, a true and a false one—one given in Golgonooza and one given in the Satanic mills—and playing into this cycle does not stop Los and Enitharmon from weaving more bodies for the doomed spectres. Related to this difficulty is our final and most instructive example. While the Lamb seems to be outside of the Beulah-Ulro, Los-Satan cycle, never dying in Beulah nor given a body by Los, the Lamb is, nonetheless, not able to avoid putting on the body of Satan, a fact we learn when the Sons of Eden praise the Lamb of God who “beginneth to put off the dark Satanic body” (104:7 E 376). The Lamb’s body consists solely of a satanic mantle, and when Rahab removes it from him, he is left without a body and becomes a spirit who is in-

effectual.

Ignoring how the orthodoxy effects the tensions between body and spirit, as Otto would have us do, is what leads one to equate the triumph of imagination with "annihilation" ("Spectrous Embrace" 138). Los's solution to the problem of duality is that of the orthodoxy. Los destroys himself because he cannot reconcile body and spirit. The destruction of both his world and himself is usually seen as a positive act because it allows his eternal form, Urthona, to return. Los's identity in this reading is subsumed properly and somewhat mysteriously into Urthona's. We have already demonstrated in chapter one, however, that Urthona is *not* necessarily Los. At least in the reading done in chapter one, Los is not resurrected, and the poem instead laments, "where is the Spectre of Prophecy where the delusive phantom" (139:6 E 407). Exactly through its incorrect notions of body and spirit, the orthodox promise fails. Lacking a body, the Jesus at the opening of Night IX never returns.

To better grasp how Blake negotiates and ultimately rejects the orthodoxy, as he introduces it in Night VIII, in order to save his own vision from domination from an external system, we need to compare FZ more explicitly with the *Last Judgments*, works in which Blake found it necessary to express himself by means of more or less traditional Christian imagery. While we have been employing a distinction between the works that is common, with FZ belonging to Blake's middle period and the *Last Judgments* belonging to the end of Blake's life, chronologically there is an interesting period of overlap. No one is certain when FZ manuscript was finally aban-

done/finished, but Youngquist suggests that the change in the title from *Vāla* to *The Four Zoas* may have taken place as late as 1808 (*Madness* 106). This date would imply that Blake was still working on FZ, and particularly the Christian revisions of the poem, during the same period he was painting the Pollock (1806) and Petworth (1808) *Last Judgments* as well as writing *The Design*. That Night IX is also entitled "The Last Judgment" suggests that it too belongs to roughly the same period in which Blake was beginning to think about the last judgment—both the orthodoxy's conception and his own.¹⁹ The quality that all of these last judgments share is that they are all examples of Blake reconciling his own vision with that of the orthodoxy. The paintings are chiefly distinguishable from Night IX in the fact that the *Last Judgments* show the reader/viewer the Christ who never returns in the conclusion of FZ. Night IX instead leaves us awakening from a dream vision. Yet, lest we take the Christ who returns in Blake's *Last Judgments* as the Christ of orthodoxy, we should note that this Christ never returns in the same manner twice. Each return occurs in a different context. The Eternity shown by the various *Last Judgments* is not static, the scenes of judgment neither fixed nor even duplicated but changing constantly to the end of Blake's life.

Augmenting this period of overlap between FZ and the *Last Judgments* and

¹⁹ Lincoln notes as well that the references to Jesus in Night IX are all part of a transcribed text and were probably composed *before* Night VIII (*Spiritual* 223). In addition, he suggests that page 116 of FZ, the first of Night IX and which has the subtitle "Being The Last Judgment," was not part of the original Night IX but was added in the same set of revisions that accompany Night VIII ("Revisions" 120).

further illuminating Blake's early negotiations with the concepts of orthodoxy is the series of paintings based on Revelation that Blake painted for Butts from 1803 to 1805 (Bindman 138). Three of these four paintings portray the multi-headed Beasts and Dragon from Revelation, chapters 12 and 13. Immediately relevant to FZ is how Blake borrowed these images of multiple heads and used them when visualizing the zoas (as seen in the Rosenwald drawing), and we will see shortly how FZ is directly tied up in this visual representation of the zoas and how these representations change perhaps because of connections Blake makes in FZ. But for the moment I want to stress how these paintings, drawn from Revelation, are instructively emblematic of the conflict in FZ (and particularly in Los—his experience with duality, orthodox beliefs, and their impact on his identity), in the tensions they create between a series of re-visionings and the single, orthodox vision of Christianity. In *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman clothed with the Sun*,²⁰ the woman who is to give birth to the redeemer lies prostrate across the bottom of the design. Bindman points out that Blake identifies this woman in VLJ with "the Church Universal" (140). Vertically over her and splitting both the design and the woman is the multi-headed Dragon, who will devour the child when he is born. The single vision of the orthodox redeemer, safe and potent in his mother's womb, is divided by and contrasted to the

²⁰ This idea of the universal church clothed in the mantle of the sun suggests not only a mantle of Jesus but, in terms of Night IX, a mantle of Urthona, whose likeness to the sun, we have noted, is emphasized several times in the last few pages of Night IX.

multi-headed, multi-perspective Dragon.²¹ In this painting then, Blake shows that he has not abandoned his view expressed in MHH that it is necessary to converse with both angels and devils (E 43), but he has begun to make it more explicitly a conversation between Jesus and Satan (as Milton himself did).

The Number of the Beast is 666 depicts a similar scene with much the same design, with the Beasts from the sea and earth now dividing the design like the Dragon. But there is a difference. The Lamb has replaced the woman in the design. Only instead of representing "the Church Universal," the Lamb in this picture, Bindman writes, "takes on the deceitful role of False Prophecy" (140), being the false Lamb from Revelation 13:11-18, namely, *the Beast* whose number is 666. As was suggested in Blake's relationship with Brothers and the "dark" style, the comforting story of the redeemer becomes here duplicitous, a restrictive, linear narrative—the reductive allegory of a falsifying orthodoxy. Given the overlap between the creation of these paintings and FZ, I suggest it is of no small significance that Blake directly reverses these images and their connotations when using them in FZ: in Vala and her roles of Mystery and the Shadowy Female, the feminine figure becomes representative of "False Prophecy,"²² while the Lamb becomes seemingly a wholly redemptive

²¹ The link between womb and orthodoxy is made clear in Blake's drawing of Vala on page 44 in Magno and Erdman's facsimile of FZ (158).

²² In his annotation to Cellini, Blake writes: "The Pope supposes Nature & the Virgin Mary to be the same allegorical personages, but the Protestant considers Nature as incapable of bearing a child" (E 670).

figure. We see Blake again reversing and undermining the givens and the promises of orthodoxy.

Moreover, read in the context of FZ, Blake's depiction of the Lamb in *The Number of the Beast* can help us understand the interconnectedness of the Lamb and Satan in FZ as well as clarify Blake's tropes of mantle and body—even if understanding one connection seems to be inversely proportional to our understanding of the other. Extending from the Lamb's torso in the painting are a pair of thick, human shaped arms, covered in fleece, that end in bare human hands. It seems that the false prophet in this painting is but wrapped in the mantle of the Lamb. To expose/reach the false prophet beneath his fleece, this mantle needs only be removed in a manner similar to what Rahab does to the robes of Luvah around the holy Lamb in Night VIII. This action should remove the false, *external* garments and reveal the true, *internal* nature of both the false prophet and the holy Lamb. Yet, this is to play into a metaphor of correspondence, which implies a notion of inner and outer Blake seems to reject. In FZ, to our surprise, Rahab's similar shearing/unraveling of the Lamb in Luvah's robes reveals, not the real holy Lamb of God beneath Luvah's robes, but only many of the characters, places, and attributes associated with Satan. These turn out, moreover, to be the whole of what was within the mantle: "when Rahab had cut off the Mantle of Luvah from / The Lamb of God it rolled apart, revealing to all in heaven / And all on Earth the Temple & the Synagogue of Satan & Mystery / Even Rahab in all her turpitude" (105 [113]:38-41 E 379-80). Far from being revealed in

this process, the Lamb of God instead disappears as an actant in the poem the moment the robes of Luvah are cut from him, with the only exception being his intangible appearance to Los and Enitharmon in Night IX and Enion's oblique account "from the Caverns of the Grave" about "what is done in the caverns of the grave" (113 [109]:13, 35 E 384-5). Enion's account of the Lamb, however, is filled with its own difficulties and contradictions. Even though we read that it was Rahab who cut the mantle of Luvah from the Lamb, Enion tells us that "The Lamb of God has rent the Veil of Mystery [himself]" (114 [110]:1 E 385). Yet, this puissant act does not remove the Lamb from Mystery for Enion tells us that he returns to "the Mysterious tree / . . . Eagerly watching for its flower & fruit" (114 [110] E 385). In short, according to Enion at least, after his crucifixion in Night VIII, the Lamb of God is waiting for the Tree of Mystery to bear fruit!

A passage following Enion's tale, which was subsequently deleted by Blake, reinforces this connection between the Lamb and Satanic mystery and allegory, as well as strongly suggesting Blake's relationship to orthodoxy. Rahab is given here the role subsequently belonging to Los of placing the body of the Lamb in the sepulcher. I quote the passage in its entirety:

But Rahab [built] <hewd> a Sepulcher in the Rock of Eternity

And placing in the Sepulcher the body which she had taken

From the divine Lamb wept over the Sepulcher weaving

Her web of Religion around the Sepulcher times after times beside

Jerusalems Gate

But as she wove behold the bottom of the Sepulcher
 Rent & a door was open thro the bottom of the Sepulcher
 Into Eternity And as she wove she heard a Voice behind her calling
 her
 She turned & saw the Divine Vision & her [here the passage leaves
 off] (E 843)

This version shows how the web of religion is built on the dead body "taken from" (and *not* "of") the Lamb, which, again, leaves the Lamb a spirit without a body. But this deleted passage is also noteworthy in that it shows orthodoxy as having redemptive potential. In the typological role of Mary Magdalene, Rahab is still visited by the divine vision, and this vision, we must assume, is as valid as that which appears to Los and Enitharmon in Night VIIa. The orthodoxy here, thereby, plays a role in inspiring and centering the divine vision. As Enion told us, the Lamb waits for the fruit of allegory and mystery—the fruit of orthodoxy—to fall. That Blake deleted this passage suggests he rejects the possibility of orthodoxy's redemption. As the poem stands revised, Rahab is never visited by the divine vision, and her supposed contrition to Los only leads to the rise of Deism. And just as important, once the Lamb is divided from the Satanic body, neither the Lamb nor the divine vision returns to the poem in any manner that is accessible to the characters as it was in the deleted passage to Rahab.

FZ is marked by a constant struggle for and towards divinity. Each of the male characters proclaims at least once that he is God. The entrance of the Lamb and Satan puts these struggles into a new context, one, which we have seen, many critics take to be a true context. Doing so, however, overlooks the connections between the Lamb and Satan that Blake is making. Ault is correct when he observes that "The Lamb and Satan are . . . preconditions for each other's entrance into the narrative proper" (*Narrative Unbound* 275). They are also preconditions for each other's existence. The Lamb cannot exist independent of Satan, while both must have its physical existence buttressed by another creature. In FZ this selfsame creature is Luvah/Orc. Blake first establishes this confusing relationship in *America* and *Europe* with Orc, whose simultaneous ties to both Christ and Satan, Mee writes, "disrupt one of the most basic of biblical paradigms" (70). Although many of the details of this relationship subsequently change in FZ, the Lamb-Luvah-Orc-Satan relationship continues to disrupt this orthodox paradigm.

Appropriately, the first character in FZ who begins to understand the complexities and contradictions in this relationship is Urizen:

When Urizen saw the Lamb of God clothed in Luvahs robes
 Perplexd & terrifid he Stood tho well he knew that Orc
 Was Luvah But he now beheld a new Luvah. Or One
 Who assumd Luvahs form & stood before him opposite
 But he saw Orc a Serpent form augmenting times on times

In the fierce battle & he saw the Lamb of God & the World of Los

(101:16 E 373)

We can see and share the perplexity of Urizen when confronted with these notions of identity. He cannot distinguish between clothes and body nor spirit and body, and his very attempt to name and specify the relationship between the Lamb of God and Luvah comes up short. His logical (or "Corporeal") understanding is split by the vertiginous gulf (as he sees it) between the Serpent and the Lamb, that is, between the two aspects of Luvah. Urizen knows that the Lamb and the Serpent should have two distinct identities. That they do not, combined with Urizen's failure in reconciling this fact to his understanding, causes the rise of Satan proper in the poem. Satan emerges from the chaos between Urizen's perception and his understanding.²³ This is not a spontaneous rise, however, but results from Urizen actively "Communing" (100:32 E 373) with the amalgamated form of the serpent Orc, the Shadowy Female, and Tree of Mystery. Satan's rise from this amalgamation shows how Satan himself is a consolidation of all these characters' "error" as well as how the difference between the Lamb and Satan is determined not by differences in morality or ontology but differences in understanding and vision. When Urizen returns to his temple afterwards, he returns to orthodoxy and the myths he himself has created to quell his own fears: he "consecrated reading incessantly / To myriads" to "avert / His own de-

²³ In terms of the plot of FZ, this scene actually takes place directly after Night VIIb and Vala's wandering in the world of Urizen and fits quite well. What is amazing about this fit is that Night VIIb is usually taken to be written before Night VIIa while Night VIII, it is universally agreed, was written last.

spair" (102:24, 22 E 375). By doing this, Urizen is trying to fix a single, intelligible (hence, fixed) vision of the Lamb and Satan for himself and others.

This attempt to create a single, orthodox vision affects the ability to discern particulars and truly understand a living identity. In the scene immediately following Urizen's instituting of orthodoxy, the Shadowy Female arrives to question him about Luvah. The Shadowy Female has difficulty distinguishing between the passion/wrath of Luvah (in his guises as Lamb and Satan) and Urizen's own orthodoxy and the fruit of allegory. She says to Urizen: "I see the murderer of my Luvah clothd in robes of blood / He who assumd my Luvahs throne in times of Everlasting" (103:3-4 E 375). Is it Urizen as a murderer who is in clothed in robes of blood, or is it Luvah as crucified who is in the robes of blood? What may be more important than the answer to this question is the fact that the Shadowy Female makes no effort to answer it herself but mixes the identities of Luvah and Urizen completely and indiscriminately, which is the same error committed by the orthodoxy: the church (its doctrines) become Christ. She praises Luvah, who is also the Lamb now, as the "source of every joy that this mysterious tree / Unfolds in Allegoric fruit" (103:18-9 E 375), over which Urizen now presides and is trying to fix into one orthodox vision. The Shadowy Female then mixes Luvah/Orc, Urizen, and the Tree of Mystery into a single entity, which she herself joins, merging for a second time with the crucified Orc and the Tree of Mystery. Doing so, the Shadowy Female becomes Mystery, the counterpart of Jerusalem for Satan and "Created . . . from [allegoric] Fruit of Urizens tree" (109[105]:20 E 378).

As we saw above, moreover, in this form, the Shadowy Female becomes a mantle in her own right, a mantle put on by the Lamb of God through the robes of Luvah: the Lamb is “born of Fair Jerusalem / In mysterys woven mantle” (104:38 E 378).²⁴

With this flow of identity back and forth between the Lamb and Satan, it is little wonder that Urizen despairs. The Lamb of God seems impossibly complicit in the workings and identity of Satan. Turning to Los’s reaction to the Lamb, we can see that despite embracing, by most accounts, some form of the holiness represented by the Lamb at this point in the poem, Los is unique among the characters in that he alone recognizes and embraces the connection between the Lamb and Satan. But this recognition simply betrays his orthodox views, which finally are not that far removed from those of Urizen.²⁵ Los accepts the continuity between the Lamb and Satan, but he does so only because he accepts the orthodox distinction between spirit and body, a union of which cannot be maintained, at least in historic time. Conversely, he maintains this connection because only it provides him with an understanding of the Lamb. Los asserts: the Lamb was born “In mysterys woven mantle & in the Robes of Luvah” in order to give up “his vegetated body / To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Reveald” (104:35, 37-8 E 378). The Lamb’s birth into the body/robes of mystery and Luvah are necessary to Los (and to orthodoxy) because

²⁴ Lincoln asks whether the mystery on page 134 of Night IX is the same as the Vala/Mystery figure in Night VIII (“Revisions” 120). Blake exploits the connection between Vala and Jerusalem more fully in *Jerusalem*.

²⁵ This view explains why at the end of VIIa Urizen has become a son of Los while Orc is still, at the same time, bound though supposedly reconciled.

they are ultimately to be put off to reveal the pure spirit. This view seems to echo what Blake wrote in "To Tirzah," which begins, "Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth, / Must be consumed with the Earth" and ends, "The Death of Jesus set me free, / Then what have I to do with thee?" (1-2, 14-5, E 30).

Yet, as we saw above, the frustration for Los (and the poem's readers) is that this spiritual body is never revealed in the poem. Rahab cuts the mantle of Luvah from the Lamb of God; Los places the body in the tomb; but Jesus never returns in body, as his effervescent presence at the beginning of Night IX shows. The death of Jesus effects nothing except the rise of the solipsistic Urthona. Despite their orthodox beliefs, Los and Enitharmon both fear the death of the body as "Non-Existence" (117:5 E 386), and Los's destruction of the world is indeed more like Urizen's desperate act of fixing his myths than creative heroism.

Contrasting with this orthodox view is Los's recognition in the later part of Night VIII regarding the difference between states and individuals, a distinction that reinforces the eternal connection between the Lamb and Satan.²⁶ In as much as Luvah rises to the state of the Lamb, he also descends in the form of Orc to the state of Satan. When he is divorced from Luvah at the crucifixion, the Lamb is deprived of a body and becomes just a pure spirit who must wait for the fruition of the orthodoxy's allegorical fruit, much as the orthodoxy itself is structured by its anticipation of the

²⁶ Lincoln contends that this page is part of the second revision of Night VIII and tied to Blake's late reconceptions of Los ("Revisions" 124), an idea corroborated by Los's new, unorthodox understanding of duality and the repetition of this passage in *Milton*.

last judgment. Sustained explicitly by means of the orthodoxy, always in the world of the body, Satan is never divided from Orc since even the conflicts between the orthodoxy and Deism are only actions occurring in the same state. "Satan divided against Satan" (115 [111]:19 E 385) yields a reductive allegory in either case.

To reiterate our point here, since the problem of duality cannot be solved by the orthodox conception of the redeemer, Los has no choice when he embraces the orthodox notion of spirit but to destroy the distinction between spirit and body within himself and between himself and others through a total destruction of his world, which is the body. He destroys his own limitations by erasing himself and everyone around him. In the manner of the orthodox last judgment, Los strives to reach a post-historical paradise, one which FZ's irresolution does not allow him to reach and one which Los's own decision here prevents.

Adams' argument against the existence of an *ur*-myth in Blake's poetry finds support in the assertion by Margoliouth that Blake did not conceive of the idea of zoas until late in Night IX. According to this argument, the word "Life's" (123:38 E 393) in Night IX is actually plural and is a translation of the Greek "zoas." As Margoliouth writes, "The four 'Life's' have here not yet been identified with Urthona, Luvah, Urizen, and Tharmas," and it is not until they are that "zoas" provides "a new title for *Vala*" (148). Since Night IX was, by all accounts, written before the change in the title page and before *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Margoliouth's assertion would mark this passage as the first place Blake used the concept in his poetry, and Lincoln

argues that the ramifications of this word eventually affected Blake enough that he initiated his set of Christian revisions on a poem that was practically finished ("Revision" 121). Reading FZ in light of Blake's later writings, it is only customary to take Urizen, Urthona, Luvah, and Tharmas as the four zoas because the word is used on the title page and because Blake names them explicitly as the four zoas in *Milton*:

Four Universes round the Mundane Egg remain Chaotic

One to the North, named Urthona: One to the South, named Urizen:

One to the East, named Luvah: One to the West, named Tharmas

They are the Four Zoa's that stood around the Throne Divine!

(19[21]:15-18 E 112)²⁷

In this passage Blake is specific that the four zoas of the bible are his four zoas, and that through their misalignment, they cause the fall. Margoliouth and Lincoln show us, though, that Blake could not have even begun to consider his own "zoas" in relationship to the biblical Living Creatures until some time after this point in Night IX and the revisions that follow it.²⁸

When examining the poem diachronically, as we are doing, we should remember that the "final" night is not actually Night IX but Night VIII. Blake's

²⁷ While *Milton* is dated 1804 on its title page, Viscomi argues that the actual composition process for *Milton* last sometime past 1808 and was probably not printed before 1811 (323, 325). This account corresponds to my theory that Blake does not fully equated his own "zoas" with the biblical Living Creatures any earlier than May 1808 since this move must have taken place after the painting of the Petworth.

²⁸ In the following discussion, I will follow Blake's practice in his writings for the public and use "Living Creatures" for the biblical zoas and "zoas" in quotation marks when referring to Blake's own eternal characters, the quotation marks retained since when Blake thought of his characters as zoas is exactly the question.

thought developed beyond what is present in Night IX. Revising in this manner and placing the figures of orthodoxy in Night VIII, Blake defeats orthodoxy's idea of linear narration. To reach the intellectual climax of FZ, one is forced to go backwards in the poem. Because he inserts the powerful and seductive tropes of orthodoxy in a night which does not conclude the work, Blake is able to confront the orthodoxy directly while moving the poem and himself at the same time past Night VIII and its threat of an engulfing orthodoxy as well as subverting orthodox Christianity's need of a last judgment to justify itself. Instead of signaling a move toward orthodoxy then, the late, Christian revisions of the poem critique orthodoxy most bluntly and decenter the ending of the poem. While in Night VIII, "Man responds passively" to the forces of orthodoxy, in Night IX, these forces "have no such controlling effect" (*Spiritual* 121).²⁹ Because Blake does not allow the encounter with the orthodoxy to dominate Night IX, which he clearly recognized would be read after Night VIII, Blake's use of the tropes of orthodoxy in Night VIII must be read as the ending of the poem is, suspiciously and dialogically.³⁰

The clear difference between Night IX and Night VIII lies in the degree to which Blake engages orthodox Christian thought. This difference is very similar (if it does not exactly correspond) to that between the paintings for Butts whose subjects

²⁹ This distinction rests on Lincoln's hypothesis that Night IX originally consisted of pages 119:24-139:10 ("Revisions" 119), which makes Los's destruction of the world and the effervescent presence of Jesus on the first two and a half pages of the night later than that which follows it.

³⁰ Ault emphasizes how FZ plays on the reader's expectations (ix), and this is an excellent example of that.

are drawn from Revelation and the formally orthodox *Last Judgments*. Again, we return to Mitchell's question of what Blake was trying to accomplish by employing the language and images of orthodoxy. In Night IX Blake draws on the language of orthodoxy in general terms. The relationship between Night IX and Revelation is one of correspondence. This relationship is allegorical because here Blake uses the last judgment indirectly. Night IX uses the last judgment much as *The French Revolution* uses the historical event in France. Blake is generalizing. The actions and roles of Urizen, Luvah, and Tharmas all echo Revelation, but there is nothing in the poem to suggest a directly relationship. In Night VIII, the accompanying revisions, and for the rest of Blake's career, however, Blake's language and characters directly engage with the dominating tropes and figures of orthodoxy.³¹ The "zoas" become *the* zoas when no distinction can be made between the biblical Living Creatures and Blake's conception of them. They interact with Satan and the Lamb of God, for they are no longer in a pseudo-religious and typological world that echoes real religious debates but instead "inhabit" the same world as the personages of orthodoxy.³²

Night VIII shows that while the theodicy of the orthodoxy is not embraced by Blake, he is negotiating with it much more directly, and this new turn allows him to

³¹ Hence, Blake does not write a Miltonic epic, re-writing Milton in a Bloomian sense, but writes about the imaginatively real Milton and his influence on the imaginatively real Blake. Rachel Billigheimer explains how Blake from FZ onwards "elaborated on the symbolism of the seven eyes and seven lamps in Zechariah" (234) but does not recognize how Blake literally takes those symbols in the Bible as real nor how difficult his elaboration of these biblical symbols was.

³² One might add historical persons, as seen in how Blake draws Milton into *Milton*, the Hunt brothers and Scholfield into *Jerusalem*, and, lest it slip by as being too obvious, *himself* into both poems.

avoid the threat of allegory mentioned in chapter two. In this move, Blake effects an ontological reversal against the orthodoxy, and he does so by appropriating the figure of Jesus, equating Jesus (as he does in his last letter to Hayley) with art and imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition." Becoming more "literal"³³ (in ways that must be distinguished emphatically from his contemporaries who saw the day's events "literally" fulfilling the biblical prophecies) in dealing with the orthodoxy is how Blake prevents equivocation of his works in allegorical terms.³⁴ Instead, as *material visions with living forms*, his poems become things with a being more real than history because they create history, a phenomenon we see when Milton enters Blake's foot in *Milton* and when Blake functions as Los in *Jerusalem*. Blake's Milton was the real, imaginative Milton; Blake in *Jerusalem* was the real, imaginative Blake. Vision, as the privileged relationship to imagination as the "ultimate semantic precondition," allows Blake to re-read and alter the discourses of history and religion that we, from an empirical view, usually think the individual is unable to change. Here again Marxism provides a useful analogue with its own privileged relationship to history.

³³ Hazard Adams uses "literal" in this same sense: "Blake took his tropes, if you will pardon the oxymoron, *literally*" (632-3). He goes on to explain that "Blake's poem [he refers to *Jerusalem*] is not an imitation of the natural world, where indeed it would be impossible. Blake's poem is . . . where identity becomes an imperative as a contrary to the natural world of multiplicity or to any world of abstract realism or to its negation. . . . Blake's poem is not referable, then, to ontological or epistemological foundations" (633). I would distinguish my own view by saying that Blake's poetry rather posits its own "ontological or epistemological foundations." It engulfs other discourses and systems of analysis by taking them literally as well. It is again a matter of Blake radically privileging the *sjuzet* over the *fabula*. He would not be at all shocked by Karen Armstrong's thesis in *Domestic Fiction*, for example, that novels created the domestic sphere and a corresponding notion of selfhood.

³⁴ No one, for example, could attempt to explain *Milton* or *Jerusalem* as Erdman does FZ by means of the war with the French.

All natural events unfold on an imaginative backdrop, and vision allows one to recast these events in the realm in which they really exist.

To return to an emphasis on the diachronic, however, and its emphasis on Blake's changing thought, if we examine the development of the "zoas" in Night IX in terms of Blake's other works from about the same period and Revelation itself, we may find some clues about what led Blake to engage directly with the orthodoxy and why it was even necessary to add Night VIII and the other revisions. The passage Margoliouth refers to takes place well into Night IX and is a description of the throne and city of heaven:

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.
 Four Starry Universes going forward from Eternity to Eternity
 (123:33-39 E 393, emphasis added)

This passage draws chiefly on Revelation 4 and 5, in which John sees the throne of God. There God is handing over the universe to the Lamb in the form of the scroll with the seven seals. In the biblical version, the four Living Creatures prostrate themselves before the Lamb, and the Lamb opens the seals of the scroll, unleashing judg-

ment and the four winds held back by the four angels at the four corners of the earth. Blake's account of Night IX changes the order of this biblical vision. After the revelation of the throne, the redeemed Eternal Man and Urizen behold "the Vision of God" but are prevented from joining "the Lord coming to judgment" by flames of "the Consummation" (124:1, 3, 4 E 393), which they retreat from. Their inability to join with "the Lord" impels Urizen to begin the plowing up of the world. Like the orthodox Los, Urizen and the Eternal Man fail to reconcile body and spirit, and, therefore, repeat the same destruction Los initiates, sacrificing themselves and their world in a desire to reach a pure spirituality that they equate with totality. What this destruction means in terms of Blake's use of "zoas" will be seen shortly.

We have seen already how Blake borrows the multiple heads of the Beast and incorporates them into the image of the four-headed zoas in the Rosenwald *Last Judgment*. By doing so, he also borrows from Revelation and Ezekiel, whose images reinforce the notion of a fourfold eternity. While this combined imagery reinforces the connection between the holy and satanic figures in FZ, remembering Roe's argument, we know that the Rosenwald representation of the zoas is a fairly late one. The early 1806 Pollock shows no "zoas" at all around heaven, just unfurling clouds, while coming just two years later, the Petworth has "zoas," but they are creatures who look like winged fairies and are covered with the eyes of God, which is an attribute taken directly from Revelation: "Each of four living creatures had six wings and was stud-

ded with eyes all the way round as well as inside" (4:8, New Jerusalem Bible).³⁵ This addition of zoas to the Petworth, I believe, shows an early step in Blake's move toward negotiating and reinterpreting orthodoxy more directly. But because of the dependence of these zoas on Revelation, I would suggest that even by this late date of 1808, Blake had still not connected his "zoas" with the biblical Living Creatures, implying that the title page of FZ had yet not been altered.

Even though Blake's prose descriptions make no mention of the word "zoo" but use instead the more orthodox "Living Creatures," and are, therefore, no direct help in pinpointing the date Blake did make the connection, these descriptions do show us how his conception of the biblical Living Creatures was beginning to merge with that of his own "zoas." *The Design* reads:

The Whole upper part of the Design is a View of Heaven opened
around the Throne of Christ in the clouds which rolls away are the
Four Living Creatures filled with Eyes attended by the Seven Angels .
... (E 553)

And VLJ:

The Cloud that opens rolling apart before the throne & before the New
Heaven & the New Earth is Composed of Various Groupes of Figures
particularly the Four Living Creatures mentiond in Revelations as Sur-
rounding the Throne these I suppose to have the chief agency in re-

³⁵ Moving from the Pollock to the Petworth, the clouds around the throne of Christ become the zoas.

moving the [former] [p 84] old heavens & the old Earth to make way
for the New heaven & the New Earth to descend from the throne of
God & of the Lamb. that Living Creature on the Left of the Throne
Gives to the Seven Angels the Seven Vials of the wrath of God

(E 561)

In *The Design*'s description we see that Blake found it important enough to mention that the Living Creatures were covered with eyes. This image again shows both its reliance on Revelation and the importance of multiple perspectives in Blake's conception of the divine, which he retained with the multiple heads of the Living Creatures in the Rosenwald (even though he makes no explicit reference to this aspect of the Living Creatures in VLJ). Unlike VLJ, *The Design* does not specify, however, the relationship between the Living Creatures and the seven angels who cause the apocalypse in Revelation, and this connection may even be unresolved since the word "attended" suggests the generalities of Night IX. In contrast, VLJ specifies this relationship and tells us that the function of the Living Creatures is to effect the destruction of the old heaven and earth.³⁶ This means that, for Blake in 1810, the *biblical* Living Creatures had become complicit in the old world's destruction in the last judgment, but this connection seems to be an innovation of Blake's. This implies that by the time he was writing VLJ, the biblical Living Creatures were beginning to act like his "zoas" from Night IX. By 1810 then, Blake had at least begun his re-visioning of the

³⁶ Blake's uncharacteristic, "I suppose," may indicate how quickly his thought in this area was changing.

orthodoxy in the terms of his own thought, and which could enter FZ retroactively when he changed the title page. This change, whenever it took place (most likely between 1808 and 1810), should be seen as the final stage of the direct confrontations with orthodoxy Blake began in Night VIII and its accompanying revisions. The late change of the title page, moreover, allowed Blake to undermine even further the orthodoxy's privileging of linear narration and a structuring last judgment. While the "zoas" of Night IX echo Revelation allegorically, when they become zoas directly and unequivocally, by means of the historic change in the title page we might add, they fundamentally replace for Blake the orthodox Living Creatures. Blake moves then from a poem about interpreting nature and history to one that negotiates with real, discursive history through the imagination. This process of active reinterpretation, which is so active that it moves beyond allegorical notions of interpretation, is what allowed Blake to read and appropriate the Bible and Christianity (as well as Milton) in a manner that did not compromise his own activities as an artist.³⁷ If Blake was never able to persuade anyone of the imagination's role as the "ultimate semantic precondition," he at least, by the time he changed the title page, had convinced himself.

When Night IX's Luvah, Urizen, Tharmas, and Urthona are read specifically as not being zoas, we can see changes in the way Blake was treating the orthodoxy. While this change does not make Blake's later equation of his "zoas" with the Living

³⁷ Hence, Los's declaration in *Jerusalem*: "I must create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (10:20 E 153) can be read as also applying to Blake's negotiation with the orthodox, Christian vision. Blake must literally appropriate and reshape the language of orthodoxy or be subsumed by it.

Creatures obvious or necessary, it does seem to lead to the new approaches he employs in Night VIII.³⁸ Urizen and Luvah, whose conflict initiates the poem both as it stands and in its earliest drafts, in Night IX's last judgment are clearly modeled on the angels in Revelation 14 who reap the harvest and work the winepress.³⁹ They are allegorical imitations. Yet, when we turn to Tharmas, a character Pierce suggests developed later than either Urizen or Luvah, we see that he finds no easy model in the biblical last judgment. He wakes the dead (E 401) and absorbs the nations harvested by Urizen (E 402), emulating by synecdoche perhaps the seven trumpets blown by the angels after the Lamb breaks the seal and the flood of blood released by the crushing of the grapes. But these are stretches at best, and his lack of a correspondent model is true for Urthona to an even greater degree, unless one considers the figure of Jesus himself. The advent of Tharmas and Urthona then, the figures of chaos and creation, into the last judgment shows a step away from allegorical echoes or imitations as Blake considers the figure at the heart of Christianity. Blake's use of the typology of Jesus here is still indirect and similar to Urizen and Luvah's imitation of the angels. But this role for Tharmas and Urthona in the pre-Night VIII-Night IX seems to create the very space which allows the Lamb proper to enter the poem in Night VIII.

³⁸ Our procedure here exemplifies the utility of a combined synchronic and diachronic reading. It is an attempt to capture Night IX at a moment in its development before Night VIII was composed.

³⁹ Because this chapter just follows 12 and 13, those from which Blake's painting for Butts were drawn, and because Blake's usage of the orthodoxy is similar in both cases, I find it likely that the works share an approximate composition date.

Finally humanized from his place in, or even as, the chaotic margins of the poem (132:36 E 401), Tharmas becomes the good shepherd with “his flocks upon the hills & in the Vales” (138:33 E 406).⁴⁰ As shown in chapter one, Urthona’s connections to the orthodox notion of Jesus are even more numerous. His continuous risings and re-risings make a parody of the resurrection. The Human Wine worships *him* when he rises from the sea and chaos (137:35-8 E 406). Interred in “the deep caves beneath,” he rises with a new body, even though this body needs “the golden armour of science” to protect it (138:36, 139:8 E 406-7). It is Blake’s rejection of the way he was using Jesus here, I believe, that actually led him to write Night VIII and the other revisions, perhaps even writing Night VIIa then to highlight the differences between body and spirit, wrestling with notions the harsh reviews from those years had challenged him with. It was only then, with these revisions well under way, that Blake could reread Night IX and make the connection between the Living Creatures around the throne and his “zoas,” radically shifting his own position in regards to the orthodoxy. Blake’s dissatisfaction with the ending of Night IX is signaled by its highly ambiguous tone and the way that its narrator is subsequently undercut. The linear plot and the synchronic form conclude uncertain about the relationship between Urthona and Los. Los’s failure in the poem is his embrace of orthodoxy that leads to his destruction and the rise of his spiritual form and the reign of science. But, as we saw in chapter one, Blake brackets this reign. Not only does he place it in our own

⁴⁰ That Blake associated the apocalyptic Jesus with the shepherd can be seen toward the end of *Jerusalem*, when Jesus appears to Albion as “the Good Shepherd” (96:3 E 255).

dreams, which enables him to snap the "mind forg'd manacles" of orthodoxy and its conception of duality when he wakes us, but Blake also continues to work on the poem and work through his own relationship to the orthodoxy in more direct terms.

The uncertainty of FZ's last judgment's relationship to the orthodoxy can only be seen when it is compared to *Jerusalem*'s. The most obvious difference is that there Jesus (and not the Lamb) takes the *living form* of Los and not the external/internal mantle of Luvah.⁴¹ The connection between Luvah and Jesus has been severed when the crucified Jesus is no longer worshipped for the living one. This crucified Jesus is instead "Vegetated" and "Hermaph[r]oditic / Twelvefold in Allegoric pomp" (90:34, 89:4 E 250, 248), and this figure recalls from FZ, "the twelve portions of Luvah" (109 [105]:55 E 379). Blake carries through directly with Los what the FZ narrator implied allegorically with Urthona: "the Divine Appearance [of Jesus] was the likeness & similitude of Los" (J 96:7 E 255). This relationship is possible because the Los in *Jerusalem* has a correct understanding of duality. He destroys neither himself nor his world but lives within it, keeping "the Divine Vision in time of trouble" (J 95:20 E 255), that is, the dialogic combination of a material world created in the imaginative precondition. The sun and the moon here are not destroyed but "lead forward the Visions of Heaven & Earth" (95:21 E 255). Here too Albion does not see "the Lord coming in Judgment" (FZ 124:3 E 393) but his "Creator & Redeemer" and "his

⁴¹ Blake's shifting of Jesus from Luvah to Los is hinted at when Luvah loses his crown of thorns in Night IX. Luvah says "Attempting to be more than Man We become less" and afterwards is "Sound- ing the Song of Los" (135:21, 25 E 403). This sentiment is echoed by Los in *Jerusalem*.

Friend / Divine" (J 96:13, 30-1 E 255, 256). In the literal reality of *Jerusalem's* material vision and living form, Blake becomes Los and becomes Jesus, the redeemer and creator for Albion, the aggregate of his audience.

If anything, sexual difference in *Jerusalem* is emphasized. No longer is there the FZ's distinction between "the good girls" like Enitharmon, Enion, and Jerusalem and "the bad girls" like Vala, Rahab, and Tizrah, but female will in general is now related to allegory and Satan. Hence, it is Enitharmon in *Jerusalem* who creates "the Female Womb / In mild Jerusalem around the Lamb of God" (88:52-3 E 247). While in the Revelation paintings for Butts Blake still distinguished between the Dragon and the Church, in *Jerusalem* he equates the Dragon and the Harlot/Virgin as "A Double Female" that is "Religion hid in War" (89:52, 53 E 249). As Los explicitly says, "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be" (92:13-4 E 252), and a plate later, "Enitharmon ceast" (93:17 E 253). This seems simply to repeat Urthona's rejection of the family in FZ and an embrace of pure spirit.

Enitharmon's extinction, however, relates directly to the extinction of narrative activity itself: "The Poets Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more" (92: 8 E 252). Los said earlier to Enitharmon that "No Individual ought to appropriate to Himself / Or to his Emanation, any of the Universal Characteristics / Of David or of Eve, of the Woman, or of the Lord" because doing so leads to a division of the sexes and "Eternal Death" (90:28-30, 54 E 250). But as we saw in chapter one with help from Brooks, this sexual difference and this "Eternal Death" are both necessary

for a continuous cycle of desire. More, a similar cycle of flux and form is also precluded if one does not push both toward and away from the universal by means of particulars. To see the true vision of Jesus, Los says, one must "see him in his Children / One first, in friendship & love; then a Divine Family, & in the midst / Jesus will appear; so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect whole / Must see it in its Minute Particulars" (91:18-20 E 251).

I read the deviation from Revelation by the zoas and their inability to reach a living Jesus to indicate Blake's retreat from an ultimate embrace of orthodoxy, even as he simultaneously continued to employ its tropes and figures and equated his idea of art with the living Jesus. Like the Shadowy Female in the temple of Urizen or even like the Jesus in Enion's account of the cavern of the grave, Blake could have embraced the allegoric fruit after realizing the correspondence between his own characters and the biblical zoas and allowed them to be subsumed by their functions in Revelation. He could have turned his poetry into a more explicit Midrash or apologetic allegories. Instead, Blake seems to run his myth bluntly into orthodoxy, problematizing its promises and assertions, all the while taking these promises and assertions quite seriously and not satirizing them directly as he did in MHH and *The Book of Urizen*. Blake stops the apocalypse short before Jesus' return in FZ and turns it into a dream. This precludes a last judgment in the biblical sense because its last judgment means to withdraw from the processes of time and space and the dynamics of body and spirit. By means of his revisions to FZ and its lack of a final form, Blake

is able to continue in these processes in a way that makes him part of the poem, a move made explicit in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. In *Jerusalem*'s version of the last judgment, we see that Los is not buried beneath the ruined fragments of his world but that he is instead made part of Blake, Jesus, and even the narrative itself. The apocalypse and the end of time is seen in terms of the poem's ending, with the final scene starting with the shout of the narrator, "Time was Finished!" (94:18 E 254), but this exclamation of an ending only self-consciously conveys the syntegmatic winding down of the plot that corresponds to the diachronic process of reading. *Narrative* time is finished. Yet, by moving beyond the narrative, the reader is also moving beyond the imaginative real. The readers turn to the Corporeal world thus performing the ending of imaginatively real, discursive time—unless they can participate in this last judgment and accept Blake's aesthetic ontology. *Jerusalem*'s ending self-consciously shows the end of narrative desire and division, which is marked by the end of the sexes: "The Poets Song draws to its period & Enitharmon is no more" and "Sexes must vanish & cease / To be when Albion arises from his dread Repose" (92:8, 13-4 E 252). There is a return to the idea that Los is the Spectre of Urthona, but Urthona has no role himself in the poem because his world of the pure spirit (at best, mental conception) exists only outside the boundaries of the narrative. Instead, in a reversal of FZ's ending, Urthona becomes part of Los's giant form, and Los is praised because "he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble" (95:20 E 255). This "time of trouble" precipitates the need for vision and creates the very narrative this

literally eschatological scene is ending. Albion does not try to walk through the flames of consummation with Urizen, as he tried to do in FZ, but during his conversation with Jesus throws himself willingly on “Furnaces of affliction[,]” which becomes in his leap “Fountains of Living Waters” (96:35, 37 E 256). This action breaks the narrative but does so in a way that implies the proliferation of narratives: “All was a Vision, all a Dream” (96:36 E 256). This vision and dream does not become a silent, post-discursive space because of its flux and activity, which creates not an absence of time and space at all but “the variation of Time & Space / Which vary according as the Organs of Perception vary” (98:37-8 E 258). Alterity is not overcome but retained, accepted, and sympathized with:

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all
Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
(99:1-3 E 258)

Finally, for those participating in this last judgment, even Los’s comments about the disappearance of the sexes, which is necessary for *Jerusalem*—the poem—to end, prove false in the last line of *Jerusalem*—the vision and site of the immediate last judgment: “I heard the name of their Emanations they are named Jerusalem” (99:5 E 259).⁴² *Jerusalem* too turns back upon itself, sweeping the willing reader up with it,

⁴² I would like to suggest, following Hilton, a polysemous link between “Emanation” and “imagination.” This link would illuminate the tensions between a wider, mental vision and one particular, physical execution of that work. Sexual division is creation. Hence, Enitharmon can be read as “Any-

recognizing that difference is necessary for artistic labor and life: the *material vision* of a living eternity, which is imagination.⁴³

Tharmon" or any body or artistic work, which contrasts to Los, whose name indicates a necessary lack of eternal imagination and division in the artistic process.

⁴³ Catherine Haigney asks about FZ, "How can there be universal regeneration when male and female remain at war?" (116). The end of *Jerusalem* suggests that this "war" is necessary for material generation, the basis of a living vision.

Afterword

The mischief is the same whether a man does it Ignorantly or Knowingly -Blake's marginalia
"Pure," said Blake. "Do you think there is any purity in God's eyes?" -Crabb Robinson's diary

Blake's material visions of the last judgment relate to one another through their living forms. Each work expresses a certain moment of Blake's thought and his conception of the last judgment, borrowing elements from one another in the flux of time in which Blake himself existed. What exactly Blake borrowed in each execution—what remained fixed in the flux of time and what was rejected into "non-entity"—can only be seen in each specific execution. Roe based his reappraisal of the Rosenwald's date on a comparison of Blake's various executions of heaven. Laying all of Blake's last judgments (prose, pictures, and poetry) next to each other, we move from one eternity to another, each with its own system and theodicy, each with its own truth, which all existed in Blake's life.

Blake, we have seen, wanted to escape the actual history of his life and be remembered only by his "Sublime Allegories," which are surprisingly autobiographical in many respects. He did not escape historic or linguistic strictures by doing so but did anticipate discursive understandings of history. As readers of Blake, we can maintain a respect for Blake's intentions in this by recognizing how Blake's historic existence (and our own historic existence) shapes and reflects in an endless cycle what happens in the imaginative realm that is discourse and text. Blake's art consisted of specific new visions, embracing the mediums in which they were composed

and which they became a part of. Blake's life tells us that reading too is an art that must be done materially—word by word, page by page.

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