VISION AND LANGUAGE OF PROPHECY
IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY 1783-1794

BY

YUKIKO IMAMURA

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg Manitoba

(c) April, 1991
The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

VISION AND LANGUAGE OF PROPHECY IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY 1783-1794

BY

YUKIKO IMAMURA

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

© 1991

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.
ABSTRACT

Critics generally agree that William Blake belongs to a tradition of prophetic poets in English literature who conceive of themselves as heirs to the biblical prophets both politically and aesthetically. Recent criticism that examines him as prophet focuses on his use of the larger structures and devices of the Bible, especially those identified in biblical exegeses from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. However, I wish to show that Blake is aligned with the biblical prophets not so much because of those features of the Bible in his work as because of his stance, his purpose, his revisionary treatment of traditions, and, most importantly, his visionary perception that penetrates the barriers of time and space, subject and object, and divine, human, and natural. Such perception and the other characteristics are registered in his style and are also in similar forms found in classical prophets--Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "Minor Prophets." In this study, I examine Blake's poems from his earliest work to The Book of Urizen and seek to demonstrate that his style renders his prophetic perception of the world through syntactical and semantic ambiguities, transfiguring metaphors, and the organic use of allusions to the Bible and to Milton.

Chapters I to III examine Poetical Sketches, Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience and show that even his seemingly non-prophetic poems display characteristics
analogous to those of the biblical prophecies. Chapter IV examines *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in which Blake presents a critical exploration of the prophetic career, defining the prophet's role, aim, methods, and heritage, and experimenting with diverse literary forms in search of the right medium for his prophecy. Chapter V examines *The Book of Urizen* as a representative book of Blake's "Bible of Hell" and demonstrates particularly his way of allusion which at once affirms the predecessors' visions and corrects their contexts. *Urizen* also implicitly points to the failure of the biblical and Miltonic mode of prophecy as Blake sees it, in contrast to his own heuristic mode of prophecy that attempts to induce a mental apocalypse in the reader's mind.
To the Memory of Mitsutoshi Imamura

and

to Keiko Imamura
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my adviser, Professor John T. Ogden. From the inception of this study, he offered constant encouragement, scholarly enthusiasm, and a host of critical insights. He also read material promptly and tirelessly, always raising thought-provoking questions. Above all, I am grateful for his wise tolerance and his heuristic approach to teaching, with which he fostered my scholarly independence. It has truly been a blessing to work with such a teacher and scholar.

I am also grateful to my readers, Professors Larry W. Hurtado of Department of Religion, Dennis Cooley of Department of English, and Mary Lynn Johnson of the University of Iowa. In their examination of this thesis, they raised challenging questions and offered valuable suggestions for improvement. Especially, Professor Hurtado, both in our discussions and in his reviews, pointed out errors in treatment of biblical matters and offered some stimulating, frank criticism.

I wish to extend my thanks to Professors George E. Toles, Judith Well, Robert E. Finnegan, John J. Teunissen, and Robert P. O'Kell, from whose excellent courses I was greatly benefitted.

My gratitude is also due to my mentor, Master Reiju Tsubaki.

Finally, I would like to thank a special group of friends for their interest and encouragement. Among these friends, I particularly thank Judith Owens, whose inspirational talk and acumen stirred my spirit during the period when little progress was made, and Moray McVey, whose unfailing support and sane perspective helped me to continue my effort. My greatest debt, as indicated in the dedication, is to my parents.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: POETICAL SKETCHES</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: SONGS OF INNOCENCE</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: SONGS OF EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V: THE [FIRST] BOOK OF URIZEN</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Critics generally agree that Blake belongs to a tradition of the prophetic poets in English literature who conceive of themselves as heirs to the biblical prophets both politically and aesthetically. Blake's ideas of God, the Creation, man, and prophecy radically differ from those of the Hebrew prophets; yet his poetry—in its visions and authorial stance, as well as in other ways—displays relevant affinities with the biblical prophecies, and Blake himself invites this comparison in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and other works. The comparison of Blake to the biblical prophets goes back as early as to his lifetime, and up through the 1960s such critics as Northrop Frye, Peter Fisher, Edward J. Rose, and Harold Bloom treat Blake primarily as prophet-poet, making "prophetic," "visionary," and "apocalyptic" key terms in Blake criticism. In recent years, critics such as Murray Roston, Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., Leslie Tannenbaum, Morton D. Paley, and Jerome McGann have traced the forms of Blake's prophecies to the rhetorical forms of the Bible as they are expounded in biblical exegeses by Joseph Mede, David Pareus, Robert Lowth, Johann Eichhorn, and Alexander Geddes, among others. According to these critics, Blake's prophetic writings display such characteristics of the Book of Revelation as dramatic structure, multiple perspectives, and non-linear narrative ordered in synchronic parallelism. Although none
of these critics suggests that these rhetorical parallels form the most profound connection between Blake's work and biblical prophecy, the more fundamental issues remain unanswered by these studies, for Blake's visionary perception of the world is evident even in his earliest works which do not have those forms and structures of the biblical prophetic books. What is it that makes the reader identify Blake as prophetic poet in the biblical tradition? It is primarily his visionary perception of the world as rendered in his style that makes the reader experience his poetry as prophetic. In his later prophetic books, from the Lambeth books to Jerusalem, these characteristics of the biblical prophecies are recognizable, but even there, as Wittreich remarks, "The question to pursue . . . is not so much whether Blake's poetry is informed by tradition but rather, assuming that it is, one should ask instead what Blake makes of the various traditions he invokes" ("Blake and Tradition" 9). This question enfolds another: how does the poet perceive these traditions? The use of traditions should be understood in the context of the poet's way of seeing the world.

This study, then, focuses on Blake's peculiar way of seeing the world and on reading traditions as registered in his style. Since the interest of this study lies in the signature, or the fundamental character, of his prophetic vision and style which prevails over diverse genres and
subject matter, the study investigates both earlier works which do not overtly display prophetic forms and those which represent different modes of Blake's prophecy. Through an examination of Blake's style from his earliest work to the Lambeth period when he established his prophetic mode, I seek to demonstrate how he makes his language prophetic, in order to redefine the terms that locate Blake in the biblical prophetic tradition in English literature. Blake belongs to this tradition not so much because of his use of the structures and devices of the Bible as because of his stance, his purpose of delivering humankind, and his transfiguring perception that simultaneously sees past, present, and future, the divine, the human, and the natural, the subject and the object, and the cause and the effect. These characteristics, which can be compared to features of the biblical prophetic writings, are embodied in his voice, his distinct metaphoric and grammatically ambiguous style, and his simultaneously critical and affirming use of allusions to the Bible and Milton.

Between the times Blake wrote Poetical Sketches and The [First] Book of Urizen, his chief ideas such as deliverance from physical and mental bondage, republicanism, and the centrally important role of the prophet-poet in society remained remarkably the same with a notable exception of his disillusionment with Swedenborg. Even this disillusionment derives not from a change of views but from a realization
that Swedenborg's ideas are not what Blake thought them to be. Few people's lives are so thoroughly integrated as is Blake's; every aspect of his life--his personal life, his craft, his role as poet-prophet, his religious, moral, or political vision, etc.--is oriented to his aesthetics and belief that the Poetic Genius is the supreme divinity, as expressed in his tracts of 1789 and in all subsequent major works.

The development of Blake's ideas during the period covered in this study is largely a matter of shift in emphasis. Although social-political concern never disappeared and he remained an ardent republican throughout his life, and although from his earliest days he always showed his interests in mental reality, gradually he focused on delineating the spiritual reality of the world, dramatically presenting that reality through characters, action, and landscape. Blake's emphasis moved away from political freedom to mental freedom. In Poetical Sketches the persona of prophet-poet condemns "the Kings and Nobles of the land," intensely sympathizes with the victims of oppression and war, and particularly in "King Edward III" attacks the king and nobles, clearly alluding to Blake's own time. By the time Blake wrote "A Song of Liberty," however, "the Kings and Nobles" have become predominantly symbolic characters who represent mental states of oppression although these symbolic characters continued to
allude also to contemporary political reality. Such a movement towards a greater focus on the internal heralds a later, more distinct, shift that occurred as Blake became disillusioned with the French Revolution.

From the very beginning, as in "To Spring," Blake sees the role of prophet-poet centrally important to society as the one who reveals visions of a transfigured world and points the way to regeneration. Yet in Poetical Sketches the personae of prophet-poet still wish to have a stronger prophetic voice and pray for heavenly assistance. In the Lyca poems of Songs of Innocence, no longer "timorous" ("Samson" E443), the prophet-poet proclaims the future regeneration of Earth, and in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell he boldly announces that he will initiate the first step of the Apocalypse. Finally, in Urizen, he is not a passive recipient of inspiration but a redeemer of even the Eternals. Thus we see a deepening of Blake's conviction in his prophetic role as reflected in the figure of prophet-poets in these works.

The biblical prophets in this study designate the so-called classical or "writing prophets": Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "Minor Prophets." These prophets were active between approximately 750 and 400 BC, "the really creative period of Hebrew prophecy." Starting with Amos, they offered new religious messages, scope, and objectives and used new rhetorical devices. Compared to
earlier biblical prophets such as Samuel, Nathan, and Elijah, in the writing prophets the scope expanded from kings and individuals to the whole nation and from the tribal to the universal. In his dealings with Israel's foreign nations, God no longer reveals himself chiefly in victory of his people. In Deutro-Isaiah, God is the Lord over the universe who will bring forth cosmic catastrophe and regeneration, ultimately for salvation of mankind. The prophets such as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah attack and reject empty sacrifice and worship; instead they teach ethical behaviour--justice, righteousness, and knowledge of God--as what God demands of his people. Amos is the first to reverse the traditional meaning of Israel's special status and God's manifestation in history; he asserts that Israel as God's people has greater moral responsibility than foreign nations and God will intervene in history not to bring about victory in battle but to judge Israel, who failed in her special responsibility. In addition, using the metaphor of husband and wife, such writing prophets as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel present new views of the relationship between God and Israel or Judah and offer comprehensive and revisionary interpretations of the nation's history, to demonstrate Israel's or Judah's consistent degeneration and adulterous rebellion against her husband, God. Furthermore, the books of the prophets, particularly those by Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, reveal
the inner conflict of the prophets and show the burden of a prophet who representatively or vicariously suffers from his people's sin and its punishment.

The written prophecies, like other biblical prophecies, display the prophets' perception of this world, "the perception," as Norman O. Brown defines it, "of the potentialities, both for 'good' and for 'evil,'" inherent in "that irreversible commitment of the human race to the city and civilization. . . " (367). While ordinary people's perception may be clouded and narrowed by their mental habits and conventional assumptions, the prophets' perception encompasses a clearer and fuller view of the world with divine, as well as human and natural aspects. The theoretical assumption that underlies such an inclusive view of history is called by Klaus Koch "metahistory," "a modern term for what Isaiah calls 'Yahweh's work' and Jeremiah 'Yahweh's way'" (Prophets 1.5). By "metahistory" Koch means not a timelessness beyond history [an alien concept to Hebrew thought], but a theory about the cohesion of all reality as a single, all-embracing though complex process, in which Israel and Yahweh form the two essential poles. . . . [B]eyond economic, legal and military causes, there is a more profound interaction . . . [B]ehind the outward face of a brutal reality, which is all that modern
times can see as history, is the inner aspect of reciprocal effects on a level where people find or lose themselves—the level, too, of Yahweh's activity, which interpenetrates all reality, and his potency, which creates time, retarding it or hastening it. (Prophets 1.73)

This lucid discernment of how natural and human occurrences are fused with divine activities enables the prophet to reveal what he interprets as the truth about the present: it is the vision of the world as God sees it. The prophet perceives destructive forces at work beneath a prosperous facade of society and proclaims the future disaster, the outcome of the present condition, as an already fulfilled event, for in his comprehensive vision, in the prophetic dimension of the world he perceives, the cause and the effect coexist. Amos, for instance, uses the genre of the funeral lament to proclaim the obituary of the people who are still alive; he sees the inevitable doom fully present in the guilt of the people (Koch, Prophets 1.44). For him, they are already judged when they are enjoying their ill-gotten worldly success.

Because the Hebrew prophets' perception is profound, their messages do not fit neatly into established religious categories of their times and cannot be satisfactorily rendered in the traditional forms in which divine messages are conveyed in Israel's religious institution. The
prophets, therefore, choose to employ a variety of traditional forms in radically new manners. Of this matter, Gerhard von Rad writes:

[T]he prophets' message thrust out at every side beyond each and all of Israel's sacral institutions, the cult, law, and the monarchy. In the same way, the very nature of prophecy also demanded the right to make use of what were entirely secular forms with exactly the same freedom as with religious ones, as if there were no difference at all between them, for ultimately prophecy moved in a direction which transcended the old distinctions: when it prophesied judgment, it also announced the end of the established sacral order, and when it foretold salvation, it spoke increasingly of a state of affairs in which all life would be ordered, determined, and sustained by Jahweh, and this would, of course, result in the removal of the old distinction between sacral and secular. (2.39)

This removal of traditional distinctions requires not only merely bold expressions but also subversive ones, for the prophet aims to dismantle the old and habitual and shock the audience into recognition of the divine truth. For this purpose, the writing prophets uses such literary genres as the funeral lament, visionary account, and parody of
priestly oracles and cultic hymns. The concern of this study involves an investigation of similar dialectical uses of traditions in Blake's poetry.

The present study considers each book of Hebrew prophecy, with the exception of Isaiah, as a piece of imaginatively unified literature. The treatment of the Book of Isaiah follows the current practice of biblical studies, for the divisions of the book into Isaiah, Deutro-, and Trito-Isaiah are basic and overt enough to be observed. None of the prophetic books in the Bible is a work or a record of a single prophet; all are works that passed through scribes and redactors. This study, however, treats each of these books as it has been treated in popular as well as literary traditions, as a book informed by a single prophetic consciousness regardless of the fact that that consciousness is a composition by several hands. In his introduction to The Great Code, Northrop Frye attempts to justify his approach to the Bible as a unified book:

Perhaps, then, there is no such entity as "the Bible," and what is called "the Bible" may be only a confused and inconsistent jumble of badly established texts.

However, all this, even if true, does not matter. What matters is that "the Bible" has
traditionally been read as a unity, and has influenced Western imagination as a unity.  
*Great Code* xii-xiii)

As Frye treats the entire Bible as a book on the basis that it has "some traces of a total structure" and "a unifying principle" among the body of images, so this study treats each book of prophecy as a book by a single prophet having a total structure and a unifying principle so that among the general readers it is understood as a single work. The prophetic book in this study, thus, can be described as the final redactors' vision of the prophet. To what extent the redactors are just to the historical prophet, we do not know; but in each book the prophet's action, his visions of reality, and his voice can be seen as being organically formed to present a total figure of the prophet.

The biblical text used in this study is the King James version. Although it would be most intriguing to compare Blake's prophecies with the biblical prophecies in Hebrew and to consider the biblical textual studies, I have neither the language nor the knowledge of the vast field of biblical scholarship. Nevertheless, the prophetic consciousness, visions, and theology are clearly discernible even in the text of the Authorized Version. It also is the version Blake used. The present study can therefore shed some valuable light, I believe, on the relationship between Blake's prophetic poetry and the biblical prophecy.
Two areas that could enrich this study of Blake as a prophetic poet are his visual art and the first-hand study of his historical background. Blake invents a unique mode of prophecy that combines the verbal and the visual; however, since the biblical prophetic tradition comes down to us as a verbal form, this study focuses on Blake's text in order to see how he stands among the poet-prophets in this literary tradition. Studies of his visual art and then of his "composite art" as prophetic art would contribute to our fuller understanding of his prophetic mode. Another area, primary research on the historical-political background, has already greatly enhanced our understanding of Blake as a prophet in his time, as has been shown by the studies of David V. Erdman and others. A further primary study of sermons and other religious writings of his time would offer a clearer picture of Blake against religious establishment. Such investigations, however, are beyond the scope of this thesis and must be left for a further study. For the purpose of the present study, the historical studies of Erdman and others offer sufficient information.

Basic to the methodology of this study is stylistic analysis of Blake's texts to show how his style renders his prophetic perceptions. Blake wrote about vision and prophecy, most notably in his tracts "ALL RELIGIONS are ONE" and "THERE is NO NATURAL RELIGION [a] & [b]" (E1-3), "A Descriptive Catalogue" (E541; 37), "A Vision of The Last
Judgment" (E544-66; passim), and marginalia on Watson's Apology (E617). Although these views are illuminating, writings about prophetic perception of the world are not necessarily themselves prophetic literature, for they may not embody the poet's simultaneous perception of divine, human, and natural dimensions of the world. How does a prophet-poet render such a vision?

Since some of the peculiar characteristics of Blake's style were pointed out decades ago by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. (112-14), quite a few articles have been written on Blake's vision and language. Following Wimsatt's observation that in Blake's poems of the seasons, the literal and the figurative are blurred, and that the ideas and materials are fused (112-14), Robert F. Gleckner's series of studies attempts to describe how the poet's imaginative perception is rendered in the texts. Similarly, Edward J. Rose shows how Blake's grammatical structure corresponds with his "symbolic system" so that one becomes what one beholds ("Visionary Forms"). Ronald Clayton Taylor, using a linguistic method, examines how Blake's semantic structure distorts ordinary temporal experience. More recently, Nelson Hilton demonstrates that Blake sees each word just as he sees the world— with his visionary perception (Literal). Blake uses a word as a living entity with a sphere in which meanings interact with each other and open up an infinite number of fresh meanings. The perception of this sphere, or
what Hilton calls the "force-field," and of the living
divine order in this "field" corresponds to what Klaus Koch,
through his form and stylistic analysis, finds as the
underlying order of the classical prophecy (Prophets 1.58-
66). None of these studies of Blake's style, however,
systematically connects Blake to the biblical prophetic
tradition.

This study, then, examines syntactical and semantic
ambiguities of Blake's text, his peculiar metaphoric style,
his distinctive use of allusions to the Bible and Milton,
and his non-linear, disjunctive narrative structure, in
order to demonstrate that Blake employs these devices to
render his prophetic perception and to expand the reader's
consciousness. Furthermore, I wish to show that his
prophetic perception, his purpose, and his strategies place
Blake in the biblical prophetic tradition more
systematically and thoroughly than previous studies have
done. In examining his text, this study avoids glossing
from his later works, especially from his expository
writings. As Frye points out, Blake displays an amazing
consistency throughout his works, but glossing of a work
with a later work potentially distorts his meaning and
obscures our perception of the development of his prophetic
mode (Symmetry 13). In focusing on vision as the chief
qualification of Blake's prophethood, in a sense this study
returns to an earlier view of Blake as prophet presented by
critics such as Frye, Fisher, and Bloom. This study, however, deals with vision not just as perception of eternal truth but as a unique mode of perception of the historical world. As such, the present study attempts to bridge the difference between the hitherto opposing approaches to Blake as prophet, namely, Erdman's historical approach and Frye's historical approach, for it focuses on how Blake's style renders a simultaneous perception of both historical and metahistorical dimensions of reality.

In order to extract the precise nature of Blake's perception and style that persists as well as develops towards the prophetic mode of his later prophecies, I shall examine in the first three chapters how his prophetic stance and purpose and his visionary perception are manifest even in his earliest works and in seemingly non-prophetic and conventional works. Chapter one studies Poetical Sketches, which not only is the earliest and most conventional work that we have of Blake but also conveniently is an eclectic collection of lyric, dramatic, and verse-prose pieces. It serves to show even the works written in his teens and most likely before his reading of the biblical exegeses and other esoteric works clearly display prophetic perception regardless of genre and subject. Chapter two examines how Songs of Innocence, although in an unlikely genre of children's literature, shows prophetic elements with a radically new rhetorical strategy. Also, its Lyca pomes
offers for the first time in Blake's work a comprehensive scheme of salvation through the myth of Earth's return to her maker. Chapter three examines *Songs of Experience*, which presents the figure of the Bard, the most explicit dramatic presentation of a prophet besides Los, and castigations of social evils, the castigations similar in mode to those of the biblical prophets. Next, chapter four examines a transitional work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which offers Blake's critical exploration of prophetic career and a medium appropriate to prophecy. And the short, concluding section "A Song of Liberty" serves to represent the mode of political prophecies used in *America: a Prophecy, Europe: a Prophecy*, and *The Song of Los*. Finally, chapter five examines *The [First] Book of Urizen*, which goes beyond the mode of political prophecy and introduces the rhetorical strategies, conceptions, symbolism, and narrative structures of his later prophecies, in the radically subversive counter vision to what Genesis and *Paradise Lost* present. As such, the work also serves well for an investigation of how Blake perceived and used literary works.
Notes

1. When he first met Blake, George Richmond is said to have felt "as if he were walking with the prophet Isaiah" (Gilchrist 342).


For other relevant studies that link Blake to the Biblical tradition, see Harold Fisch, Jerusalem and Albion:


All subsequent quotations from Blake's works are taken from this edition. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and The [First] Book of Urizen are cited by plate number, followed by a period and line number. All unetched works, Erdman's textual notes, and Bloom's commentary are cited, for clarity, as E, followed by the page number.


5. Although the prophets mention no theory, the modern scholars use theory to explain the prophets' ideas and assumptions. For further discussion of classical prophets and metahistory, see Koch's *Prophets* 1.70-6, 1.144-55, 2.71-80, and 2.171-74.

6. Koch further shows how Amos's and Isaiah's language suggests the prophets' perception of the sphere of Yahweh's activities in 1.57-76 and 1.144-56. In Amos, for example, *mispat* (justice) and *sedagua* (righteousness), the divinely given "productive powers which a person needs in order to live," "appear as spheres of power which already exist in advance of human actions" (*Prophets* 1.58).

7. By the prophetic dimension, I do not mean a transcendental realm but historical reality, here and now, seen from the divine point of view. Divine, human, and natural are integrated in the prophets' vision, but for our analysis of the vision, we refer to each of its aspects as a level or a dimension.
8. For example, Isaiah 18.7 is a later addition to an older oracle of judgment in 18.1-6 and converts it into an oracle of salvation. On this redaction, von Rad states:

There is in the Isaiah text a genuine sense of continuity, and a genuine belief that authority has been given to reinterpret an earlier oracle, even if in opposite terms, because of the very different historical situation. (2.47)


10. Some of the dissenters' writings and the influential Biblical exegeses of Blake's time are studied by Morton, Tannenbaum, and McGann respectively.

11. In the tracts Blake identifies the Poetic Genius with the Prophetic Spirit and as the source of all religions; for him, there is no conflict between truth and rhetoric since both derive from one and the same, supreme source, the Poetic Genius. In "A Descriptive Catalogue" he asserts the reality of the prophets' vision and defines it as clear, imaginative perception of the world "organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce" (E541). In "A Vision of The Last Judgment" he further
elaborates on vision in the prophets' writing. In his comment on Watson, Blake, rejecting the view of prophet as "an Arbitrary Dictator," defines a prophet as "a Seer" and "honest man"; in Blake's view, the prophet discerns the inner logic of both private and public affairs and speaks forth his opinion. The qualification of prophet does not depend upon whether his words come true or not, as in the case of Jonah (E617).


13. These two possible implications of this study are suggested by Dr. Mary Lynn Johnson and Dr. John T. Ogden respectively.
CHAPTER I

Poetical Sketches

Poetical Sketches, Blake's earliest work, is also his most traditional work. One hears echoes of the Bible, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and eighteenth-century poets throughout the collection. Yet as most scholars since S. Foster Damon and Margaret Lowery agree, this "irregular" "production of untutor'd youth" displays radically critical use of various traditions. Among them the most prominent presence is the Bible. Lowery, for instance, states that she finds the presence of the Bible in the rhythm, cadence, imagery and figurative nature, and parallelism or the antithetical character of style in the sketches (60-1).

Most recently, Robert F. Gleckner in his Blake's Prelude: Poetical Sketches studies the collection, focusing on Blake's use of allusions, and finds the sketches characterized by what the critic calls the technique of "significant allusions" or "iconoclastic manipulations" of traditions. According to Gleckner, while the sketches he considers "early" show less imaginative engagement with the precursors' works, "later" sketches such as the poems of the seasons display the highly rhetorical use of allusions and the dialectical structure which Blake explores in his subsequent works in order to awaken his reader to see eternity in this world, and "Samson," the last sketch, is "powerfully prophetic in its own right" (Prelude 147) in
that Blake with a strong sense of vocation reveals the truth of Samson's matter "falsified" in the Bible and Milton. While I am greatly indebted to Gleckner's observations and basically agree with his thesis, my study of *Poetical Sketches* starts where Gleckner leaves off: beneath the subversive allusions and the dialectical structures is a peculiar character of Blake's way of seeing the world that makes Blake an heir to the biblical prophets. *Poetical Sketches* displays the modes of perception that underlie the concerns and techniques of the biblical prophetic writings identified by biblical scholars: perception of the universe as the ongoing process of interaction between divine and human, perception of the shape of national as well as human history, perception of the present moment as pregnant with infinity, and finally the prophetic consciousness which delivers all from the bondage of mortality.\(^2\) Such perceptions find their expressions in Blake's often shockingly subversive use of traditions, his dialectical structures, his revisionary interpretations of national and religious history, and his strong thematic concern with liberty and deliverance.

The first six poems of the seasons and times of day (Morning and Evening) have received the most critical attention among the sketches in the collection.\(^3\) Common critical assent is that these seemingly conventional poems
that deal with nature are not lyric responses to natural phenomena but prophetic revelation of the order behind them. Gleckner, for example, in both his earlier and recent studies contends that the poems of the seasons at once describe a cycle of nature and "deny the viability of that cycle": they display a cyclical pattern of "the coming of Love (and perhaps imagination) and destruction of Love"; but at the same time "To Winter," at once a part of the cycle and an antithesis of "the imaginative fusion" of the first three poems, denies the temporality and sequentiality of the cycle. Irene Chayes and Michael J. Tolley, while agreeing with Gleckner's view that the poems are prophetic, reject the idea of antithetical design, pointing out a note of hope for deliverance at the end of the winter poem. Geoffrey Hartman, in contrast, finds a linear progression: the poems deal with the "Progress of Poesy" or "the Westering" of the poetic spirit (59, 61). Despite this disagreement as to whether the order Blake describes is cyclical, antithetical, or linear and progressive, the critics agree that he focuses on the imaginatively perceived sphere of reality, not on the physically perceived one.

Besides the representation of these patterns, Blake conveys this heightened perception of reality, it has been said, in two significant methods: through revisionary uses of conventions and allusions and through the fusion of literal and figurative. As Lowery, Paul Miner, and Tolley
have shown, the poems of the seasons and of morning and evening consist of words, images, and ideas from the Bible, Spenser, Milton, and eighteenth-century poets such as Thomson and Collins. Also, these poems employ conventions of such genres as epitaphamion, pastoral, and Spenserian sonnet form. Nevertheless, Blake uses virtually none of these elements in the customary way; he places them in new contexts and in so doing reveals at once the limitations of the precursor's visions and the truths that have been obscured by those limitations. Thus, by placing the traditional elements in a new semantic field, he defamiliarizes the familiar and illuminates a new facet of meaning. Another method, the "blurring of literal and figurative," or a "fusion of idea with material," is pointed out by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. in his study of the structure of Romantic nature imagery (114). He observes that in the spring and summer poems, spirits of the seasons descend to the landscape and are fused with it. This view has since become a critical commonplace and, for instance, forms an important part in Gleckner's argument.6 Although I agree with the focuses of these two methods--the revisionary use of tradition and the distinctive blending of literal and figurative--both modes of rendering visionary perception need more careful examination than they have received.

The critics note that the poems of the seasons despite all their traditional elements communicate freshness and
originality to the reader because of Blake's revisionary use of these elements: but what characterizes this re-vision? "To Spring," for instance, is a heavily biblical poem; "88 of the 92 words" are also found in the Bible, and the controlling imagery of the male lover is from the Song of Solomon."

O thou, with dewy locks, who lookest down
Thro' the clear windows of the morning; turn
Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!

The hills tell each other, and the list'ning Vallies hear; all our longing eyes are turned
Up to thy bright pavillions: issue forth,
And let thy holy feet visit our clime.

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumed garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy pearls
Upon our love-sick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languish'd head,
Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee!

(1-16)
Tolley attributes the freshness of the poem to the fact that Blake invokes not "a normal English spring" but "an apocalyptic spring," using the "exotic Hebrew" imagery instead of the more commonly used classical imagery ("Spring" 102). Moreover, further pursuing the apocalyptic theme of the poem, Tolley goes on to identify Blake's Spring as Christ on the ground that the Bridegroom of the Song of Solomon is traditionally interpreted as an allegory of Christ, and the Bride as that of the church: "Blake would have embraced this interpretation warmly . . . because it suited his ideals of love so well, and authorized them" (103). However, the freshness of "To Spring" derives from the very fact that the Oriental Bridegroom is not Christ, at least not the Christ of the commonly accepted view, but Spring as Deliverer. Blake's Spring as Deliverer is an intensely erotic, physical lover of the love-sick land. Indeed, Blake's identification, or recognition, of Spring as both Oriental Bridegroom and Deliverer emancipates the Bridegroom of the Song of Solomon from the context provided by the traditional allegorized interpretation. Blake's vision of Spring de-allegorizes the allegory of the Church Fathers. Thus, while they split the literal level (erotic lover) and the spiritual level (Christ, the Deliverer), Blake's perception of Spring heals the fissure, recovers the sensory dimension of life, and restores the totality of the
vision of Spring; Spring is at once an erotic lover and a deliverer in the same semantic field.

The second method, the "fusion" of literal and figurative, also needs further exploration: while spirits of the seasons are indeed "fused" in the landscape in the first three poems, what are the characteristics of Blake's fusion? Tolley states, "Basically, 'To Spring' is a rhetorical address by a British speaker to the spirit of Spring, who has the form of the male lover in the Song of Solomon, appealing to him to come to the waiting island, pictured as the female beloved in the Song" (101). Tolley's description overlooks important characteristics of both the Song's and Blake's styles. The underlying assumption of this statement is that the identity of the male lover with the spirit of Spring and/or with the deliverer is self-evident in the Song. This assumption, however, is far from true. Besides rich imagery, the most striking characteristic of the Song of Solomon's style is its insistent use of similes, or what Robert Alter calls "the poetics of flaunted figuration" (Poetry 196). Except for 4.12-16, 5.1-6, and a half a dozen other verses, the Song uses similes rather than metaphors and "foregrounds" the process of figurative comparison, with insistent reiteration of "as," "like," and "liken you to."

For instance, here is a verse that Blake's poem echoes:
Who is she that looketh forth \textit{as} the morning, fair \textit{as} the moon, clear \textit{as} the sun, and terrible \textit{as} an army with banners?

(emphasis added: Song of Solomon 6.10)

The extraordinary individuality of the woman who looks forth and who is fair, clear, and terrible derives from the things to which she is compared, and the comparisons are "flaunted" in similes, not implicit in metaphors. Likewise, the Bridegroom's qualities of deliverer and spirit of spring that the reader sees in the Song of Solomon do not derive from the immediate adjectival descriptions, such as "fair" and "clear," but from the similes. In stark contrast, Blake uses not a single simile in his poem; he uses metaphors to describe the appearances and actions of Spring and the land.

Indeed, Blake's metaphors evince his visionary perception of nature; his style insists that they are not merely a figurative way of describing the natural scene but the literal description of the prophetically perceived reality. While Blake retains his awareness of the natural scene (hills, vallies, winds), his perception goes further than that and approaches mythopoeic perception. The poem communicates to us not only the early spring landscape but also a distinct sense of a person of Spring; it registers a felt presence of Spring as an individual with all his unpredictability, a person with mind, emotion, and will of his own, who even might not "issue forth" from his "bright
pavillons." This anthropomorphocized Spring differs fundamentally from eighteenth-century personification which is animation of abstraction. A comparison of Blake's Spring and Thomson's Spring will illustrate this difference.

Like Blake, Thomson invokes Spring to descend upon his native land:

Come, gentle Spring, ethereal mildness, come;
And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
While music wakes around, veiled in a shower
Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend. (1-4)

Spring here is a personification of its abstracted quality—"ethereal mildness"—and projects no sense of a living person.

The strong sense of individuality in Blake's poem derives from the unifying perception of the spring landscape. As has been pointed out, besides the biblical words, Blake in this poem uses much threadbare eighteenth-century poetic diction, the diction about which John Aiken complained in the following manner in 1777:

Descriptive poetry has degenerated into a kind of phraseology, consisting of combinations of words which have been so long coupled together. . . . An ordinary versifier seems no more able to conceive of the Morn without rosy fingers and dewy locks, or Spring without flowers and showers,
loves and groves, than any of the heathen deities without their useful attributes.¹²

In Blake's poem, however, such poetic diction as "dewy locks" and "fair fingers" is not used in the conventional manner. Blake uses these images not to present a series of natural phenomena or abstracted qualities of the season: these images are organically unified in one dynamic human form and comprise the integral aspects of the Oriental Bridegroom. Indeed, the images even give us the impression that the character of the Bridegroom rather than the landscape is the tenor. Here the metaphors are as much a determining subject as are the natural phenomena. Again, a comparison to lines from Thomson will help to clarify this point:

Nor to the surface of enlivened earth,
Graceful with hills and dales, and leafy woods,
Her liberal tresses, is thy force confined.

(58; 130-133)

Thomson's restatement of "leafy woods" as "Her liberal tresses" indicates the two step process of his seeing the woods, first naturally and then metaphorically. In contrast, Blake's perception of the early spring landscape does not switch from one mode of perception to another. Also, while Thomson, switching from one mode of perception to another, lists his observations serially, and his season is an aggregate of locally observed diverse natural
phenomena, Blake's perception is seamlessly unified in a dynamic human form. The natural world is transfigured, forming the two gigantic human forms of Spring and the lovesick land in the process of wedding. Thus Blake's poems of the seasons embody his visionary perception of nature.

Besides the unified, humanizing perception of the world and a style that insists on the reality of that perception, the design of a group of sketches each simply titled "Song" also evinces Blake's perception of the prophetic dimension of reality and his concern with deliverance of the human soul. As Michael Phillips' studies show, contrary to the assumption of the earlier scholars, Blake was actively involved in the binding, correcting, and distributing of Poetical Sketches.\(^{13}\) With their common title, grouping, theme of liberty revolving around love, and more importantly genre and rhetorical design, these songs are clearly intended to be read together.\(^{14}\) Some of these songs such as those beginning "Fresh from the dewy hill" and "When early morn walks forth" are obviously designed to be read antithetically; other songs do not seem to have their obvious counterparts. Nevertheless, all these songs illuminate each other, attempting to reveal the truth hidden behind the speakers' words.

At our first reading, "Fresh from the dewy hill," despite the impression of something sinister in the last
stanza, appears to be a poem of "innocence, and holy joy," not unlike "I love the jocund dance." Yet, as Tolley observes, when we read "When early morn walks forth," this antithetical poem opens our eyes to the real condition of the love in the first poem. Tolley writes: "In retrospect, then, the first song betrays infatuation rather than ideal love: each field and village only seemed Edenic" ("Spring" 105). In fact, the second poem illuminates more than what Tolley finds: "Fresh from the dewy hill" is a poem of sexual repression. The speaker makes efforts to idealize his love, claiming that he is attracted to the black-ey'd maid because of her heavenly, angelic quality:

Fresh from the dewy hill, the merry year
Smiles on my head, and mounts his flaming car;
Round my young brows the laurel wreathes a shade,
And rising glories beam around my head.

My feet are wing'd, while o'er the dewy lawn,
I meet my maiden, risen like the morn:
Oh bless those holy feet, like angels' feet;
Oh bless those limbs, beaming with heav'nly light!

Like as an angel glitt'ring in the sky,
In times of innocence, and holy joy;
The joyful shepherd stops his grateful song,
To hear the music of an angel's tongue.
So when she speaks, the voice of Heaven I hear
So when we walk, nothing impure comes near;
Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;
Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.

But that sweet village where my black-ey'd maid,
Closes her eyes in sleep beneath night's shade:
Whene'er I enter, more than mortal fire
Burns in my soul, and does my song inspire.

(1-20)

In spite of his efforts, the speaker cannot contain his
desire within the realm of the sacred. In the second stanza
the speaker first blesses her "holy feet" and then blesses
her "beaming" "limbs." Although they are described as
"beaming with heav'nly light," beaming limbs belong to a
different semantic field from that of "holy feet": while
"feet" is figurative, "limbs" is literal. As Tolley
observes, "Blake repeatedly calls attention to the 'feet' of
his divine beings," recalling the beautiful feet of Isaiah
52.7-8 and Romans 10.15 ("Spring" 97-8). In the Sketches
alone we find the "holy feet" of angel-Spring in "To Spring"
(8), of Mercury in "Imitation of Spencer" (22), and the
"blessed feet" of Truth in "Samson." In "Fresh from the
dewy hill," "holy feet" occurs twice (7, 16), the first
referring to the maiden's feet compared to angels' and the
second to a divine being. "Holy feet" thus securely belongs
to the realm of the divine and is consistently used as a synecdoche for a divine being or a metonymy for divine presence. In contrast, the reference to the literal and the non-biblical "beaming" "limbs" tells of an altogether different response of the speaker: it evinces his actual observation of and attraction to her physical beauty rather than her spirituality. Furthermore, his repeated assertion that his love is innocent, holy, and pure indicates his self-consciousness and suggests something else: he protests too much. "[W]hen we walk, nothing impure comes near," he insists. A comparison with "To Spring" will further illuminate this separation of physical and spiritual and the speaker's attempt to spiritualize the sensual aspect of his love. While in "To Spring" the speaker's metaphors reflect his perception of sensual and spiritual as coextensive, in "Fresh from the dewy hill," the speaker's similes, as well as his repeated use of seems, reflect the discontinuity in his perception between the maiden and the holiness he attributes to her. In this light, the sinister last stanza reveals the speaker's elaborate efforts to sublimate his passion into spiritual devotion: it is the black-ey'd maid "in sleep beneath night's shade" that inflames the speaker with "more than mortal fire."

This insight into "Fresh from the dewy hill" in turn sheds new light upon the second poem, "When early morn walks forth," as the inevitable outcome of the first poem. The
perversity and violence in the second poem, as particularly evident in the last stanza, has been fully prepared when the speaker is still claiming to enjoy his love. Indeed, Blake's insight into the idealized love in these poems, in retrospect, anticipates his view that religion and sexual repression cause violence and war--the process he sees epitomized in courtly love.

Not only these antithetical poems but also other songs without obvious counterparts enable us to see reality hidden from the speakers. For instance, "I love the jocund dance," juxtaposed with "Fresh from the dewy hill," draws our attention to the highly rhetorical style of the latter poem, particularly noticeable in the last three stanzas. While the former poem shows innocent perception of the speaker, the latter declares innocence and holiness, going a long way to convince the reader, and perhaps himself. For another instance, "My silks and fine array," "Memory, hither come," and "Mad Song" clarify the outline of mental states in each other. Sentimentality, self-indulgence, and self-deception are evident in the first two poems even when read individually, but intense pain and grief in "Mad Song" sharpen the outline of experience in the former poems. Conversely, these poems highlight the urgency and the scale and intensity of anguish in "Mad Song," whether its speaker is self-deceived or not. Thus Blake presents the songs
in a way that directs our attention to "the mind-forg'd d
manacles" of the speakers.

What is highlighted in these songs, then, is the
"states" of the human soul and the soul's distinction from
those states. Although it takes another eleven years till
Blake first uses the term "states" in the title page of
_Songs of Innocence and of Experience_, the songs in the
_Sketches_ display the same way of seeing the human soul and
the same concern as well. His interest is not in the unique
individuality of the speakers. We do not know them as
historical beings capable of experiencing a wide range of
thoughts and emotions but as disembodied voices that can see
the world in no other way than their own, as the
representatives of the states the speakers are in. Thus,
clearly the same speaker expresses contrary views of the
same things, for example, in "Fresh from the dewy hill" and
"When early morn walks forth." Or in "I love the jocund
dance" and "Memory, hither come," the speakers may or may
not be the same person, but the songs, which are placed one
after another, strongly suggest that the joyful state of the
former and the melancholy state of the latter song may well
be different phases of experience by the same person. By
showing the implicit continuity of the speakers and the
self-contained world view of each song, Blake points to the
distinction of the individual soul from the states it is in.
The concern of the poet, then, is to deliver the individual
from the single state in which it is trapped, and the deliverance takes place in the poet's consciousness and in the reader, in their recognition of the soul's distinction from the state.

The particular character of Blake's perception and concern becomes evident when compared with the dramatic monologue of the nineteenth century, another form of lyric poetry that also depends upon the use of personae. Like Blake's songs, Browning's dramatic monologues, for instance, focus on the speakers' ways of seeing the world and their moral condition and psychology. Yet unlike Blake, Browning is interested in the unique experience of a unique individual; he captures a moment of a person's life that shows his individuality most vividly. Thus, in the last hours before death, the Bishop in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church" confides without inhibition his thoughts and desires to his children, revealing his whole character and life. Likewise, the Duke in "My Last Duchess" shows his whole character, as he shows the envoy from the future bride a picture of the deceased Duchess, telling the envoy what happened to her. The speakers' historical and social contexts--a bishop and a duke in Renaissance Italy--play a crucial role, and much of our appreciation of the poems derives from the particular texture of the speakers' experience within these contexts.
Browning, therefore, renders the speakers' universal human characteristics, or vices, such as egotism, greed, and jealousy, through revealing circumstantial details. For example, the Bishop describes a stone he stole and hid to be used for his tomb in the following manner:

Some lump, ah God, of lapis lazuli,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast...\[16\]

Besides the act of stealing, these particular comparisons--not simply "big" but "big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape," not simply "blue" but "Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast"--tell us almost endlessly about this Bishop: his appallingly unenlightened views of Jews and the Madonna, his vulgarity, sensual taste, desire, and life lived exclusively on the surface--all with particular relevance to Renaissance Italy. In contrast, Blake's songs are devoid of circumstantial details; both the language and details are general and elemental and, as in the Bible, used to emphasize the permanent quality of thoughts and emotions. For example, a speaker complains sentimentally in this manner:

My silks and fine array,
My smiles and languish'd air.
By love are driv'n away. ("Song" E413; 1-3)

The Bishop thinks of a piece of "\textit{lapis lazuli} / / / / Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast"; the speaker of
"Fresh from the dewy hill" loves his "black-ey'd maid."
The detail "black-ey'd" has a ballad-like impersonal and
timeless quality rather than individuality and evokes an
archetypal response rather than the novelistic and
humanistic interests. Thus, while Browning presents before
our eyes the historical moment and the breathing historical
individual with all his or her contingency, Blake focuses on
the timeless, impersonal states in flux separate from such
contingency.

Ultimately these differences between Blake's songs and
Browning's dramatic monologues derive from their different
scope and objective. Browning's scope is human, temporal,
and secular, but Blake's divine, timeless, and sacred.
Although we are aware of the humane poet's consciousness as
it calmly watches the Bishop and the Duke and presents them
as vividly as possible as historical beings, Browning does
not point to any cosmic order of things. Rather, the poet
chose these particular characters to illuminate Victorian
problems through the Renaissance Italian setting in which
the same problems are experienced in a less inhibited
manner, in a grander scale, and in a picturesque style. The
issues of double standard, marriage-market, patriarchy, and
aristocracy in need of money in "My Last Duchess", or the
issues of 'pious' life without understanding Christianity,
religion as ornament, and materialism in "The Bishop Orders
His Tomb," mirror the issues of Victorian society and make
the reader recognize the monstrosity of the problems. Yet this reformist purpose of the poet has no program to deliver the soul of the speakers from the bondage of this world: the problems are seen from the humanistic perspective. Blake, on the other hand, attempts to deliver the speakers from their states, from their mortality: the problems he presents are the fundamental problems of the human condition itself--in this instance, the problem of the loss of liberty that inevitably results from falling in love. His expanded consciousness makes his speakers express themselves in a way at once concrete and timeless. L. C. Knights rightly admires such characteristics of Blake's songs: "I do not know anything in English lyric poetry before Blake that has achieved this kind of dramatic presentation--something that 'places' as it expresses, and simultaneously invites sympathy and detached understanding" (383). It is this act of "placing" and our strong sense of presence of the consciousness behind this act that fundamentally distinguish these songs, and Blake's later poems, from works by other poets.

Furthermore, this "placing" of lyric voices directs our attention to the sphere of reality in which they are placed. It is a dimension of reality which is inherent in historical reality and yet fully visible only from the divine perspective which prevails over the movement of history. And in this prophetic dimension, all the states--the voice
of joyful innocence as well as the voice of grief and pain--exist at once as a variety of forms in which man's mental energy lodges, and through which it is expressed. This placing of the human voice in the ground of reality perceived from the divine perspective puts the youthful Blake in the league of great prophetic poets such as Dante and Chaucer. In The Divine Comedy historical individuals, like Blake's speakers, represent certain states of the soul, and Dante places these individuals vertically in Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. The poet fully presents lyric voices of Farinata or Paolo and Francesca eternally fixed in their respective states of sin. Revising Dante's hierarchical vision, Chaucer, like Blake, places the individuals horizontally on the road to Canterbury, or New Jerusalem, regardless of their states of the soul. In all three cases, the poets see at once the human truth and the divine truth: the human voices with all their urgency and the divine point of view that perceives the mortality of the voices. Blake achieves this double-vision and succeeds in presenting it in lyric poetry without Dante's traditional framework of the three realms and without Chaucer's framework of pilgrimage.

Like the biblical prophets and the great prophetic poets such as Virgil, Spenser, and Milton, Blake offers his interpretation of the national history, or visionary history of Britain, pitted against the accepted interpretation, in a
group of historical sketches, "King Edward III," "Prologue to King Edward IV," "Prologue to King John," and "A War Song to Englishmen." These sketches share the same theme of British liberty and war waged in the name of liberty and are clearly written to reveal what is to Blake the true nature of the historical course of British political action under the presiding goddess Liberty. As such, the sketches not only revise Shakespearean history that seems to applaud British military achievement and to focus on the temporal rather than the eternal, as Gleckner points out, but, far more fundamentally, these historical sketches expose the true nature of the goddess and attempt to reform the audience's sense of national identity as the protector of Liberty.¹⁷

The six scenes of "King Edward III" progressively reveal the reality of British Liberty, and the revelation culminates in the epiphany of the goddess at the end of the Minstrel's Song. In scene i the king's speech introduces Liberty as "the charter'd right of Englishmen" (i.9). It is for this divinely sanctioned right that the war of aggression is waged. The enemy's minds, lacking the cause of liberty, "are fetter'd" (i.14); the enemy, therefore, cannot "spring to battle o'er the floods of death" (i.16-17) like Englishmen, and need to be freed by them. The king's speech at first appears outrageously specious in its logic; yet when we realize the identity of his Liberty is in fact
the spirit of war, his speech is indeed logical. Liberty is both the cause and the animating force of the war; it "enerve[s]" the soldiers, "blaze[s] in each countenance, and fire[s] the battle" (i.10-11). The king describes Liberty's power and effect on warriors in terms interchangeable with those with which he describes military glory. Like Liberty, military glory "beam[s]," "fire[s]," "shine[s]," and "twinkle[s]," behaving like fire or light, animating both those who radiate and those who behold the glory. Furthermore, Gleckner finds that through allusions to *Paradise Lost* Blake exposes the Satanic nature of Edward's view. For instance, Edward's high-sounding descriptions and adoration of military glory echo Milton's descriptions of the fallen angels as in the reference to the heart sheathed "with triple steel" (i.19). Similarly, the King's analogy of military heroes and stars whose splendour amazes and inspires the beholders reminds the audience strongly of the splendour of Satan in his Plutonian hall (Gleckner, *Prelude* 106). This association of Edward and Satan highlights the king's ambition for personal glory and fame. Finally, the ironic view of the poet and the gulf between the glorious name and the reality of British Liberty become clear when the king proposes to "take a just revenge" (i.43) on the land not yet ravaged by war.

In scene ii Clarence and the Bishop reiterate the notion of Britain as a chosen nation and express their sense
of the identity of Liberty as commercial freedom. The Bishop defines Englishmen as "tradesmen" (ii.34) and "sovereigns / Of the sea" (ii.78-82), the right given by Heaven since the creation of the British Island. Again the same rhetoric is used to legitimize a war of aggression. Britain is characterized as a chosen nation "favour'd by Commerce" (ii.30), and created to be the sovereign of the sea; therefore, the Bishop claims, she needs to defend this divine right. As Erdman persuasively argues, the scene also offers Blake's analysis of the relationship between the court and the merchants of his time. Clarence proposes to aid the merchants and fight against France whose ships are reported to attack the merchants' ships. Clarence's reference to the French attack on the English ships, Erdman notes, alludes to the British government's "sensational revelation of French plans to invade England" in the spring of 1778. Through this allusion, "Blake replaces the early court's need of financial assistance from the merchants with the modern government's need to persuade merchants that a war which interfered with commerce was really good for commerce," for such a war expands commercial resources and markets (Erdman 80). Furthermore, Blake reveals the true nature of this mercenary motive through an allusion to Paradise Lost. Clarence depicts prosperous England: from the land of his expedition, Edward sees
His native shore, and sees commerce fly round
With his white wings, and sees his golden London,
And her silver Thames, throng'd with shining spires
And corded ships; her merchants buzzing round
Like summer bees, and all the golden cities
In his land, overflowing with honey, . . .

(ii.9-14)

The image and sentiment of the "golden London" and the
"silver Thames" with the winged Commerce are clearly ironic,
if not sarcastic, on the poet's part, as Erdman shows how
the city, the river, and the commerce were depicted
otherwise in Blake's contemporary manuscripts and his own
writings. Besides the reference to the vices caused by
the city as cited by Erdman, the image of the merchants as
buzzing bees summons up Milton's unforgettable, also
traditional, simile of the fallen angels "with the hiss of
rustling wings" swarming into Pandemonium,

As Bees

In spring time, when the Sun with Taurus rides,
Pour forth thir populous youth about the Hive
In clusters; they among fresh dews and flowers
Fly to and fro, or on the smoothed Plank,
The suburb of thir Straw-built Citadel,
New rubb'd with Balm, expatiate and confer
Thir State affairs.

(PL 1.768-775)
The vision of the city that Clarence glorifies, thus, recalls the glittering city of Hell and his "buzzing" merchants the fallen angels. The animating force of the country's economy that seems to prosper is in fact Satanic, destructive power.

Scene iii reveals another aspect of British Liberty—bloodthirsty jingoism—and further emphasizes her identity as the spirit of purely materialistic and selfish freedom to expand. Both Dagworth and the Black Prince consistently compare a battle to dancing and singing, acts of joy and celebration. The Prince is said to have danced "like the youth at morrice play" (iii.31), and Dagworth, upon hearing the King's intention to "reap rich harvest" (iii.137) in the field of Cressy, bursts forth:

> Now my heart dances, and I am as light
> As the young bridegroom going to be married.
> Now must I to my soldiers, get them ready,
> Furbish our armours bright, new plume our helms,
> And we will sing, like the young housewives busied
> In the dairy; my feet are wing'd, but not
> For flight, an please your grace. (iii.144-50)

Similarly, Dagworth describes the soldiers' hunger for battle as "the minds that glory in the battle, / and leap and dance to hear the trumpet sound" (iii.170-1). Indeed, Dagworth, who loves the war wholeheartedly and inflames others with hopes and expectations of glory, is, the Prince
says, "a genuine Englishman . . . / And hath the spirit of Liberty within him" (iii.189-90). And finally the Prince confides his love of war to Chandos:

In truth, I am too full;
It is my sin to love the noise of war.
Chandos, thou seest my weakness; strong nature
Will bend or break us; my blood, like a springtide,
Does rise so high, to overflow all bounds
Of moderation; while Reason, in his
Frail bark, can see no shore or bound for vast
Ambition. (iii.231-8)

Besides the love of bloody war, the scene offers Chandos' analysis of liberty's power over man:

Courage, my Lord, proceeds from self-dependence;
Teach man to think he's a free agent,
Give but a slave his liberty, he'll shake
Off sloth, and build himself a hut, and hedge
A spot of ground; this he'll defend; 'tis his
By right of nature: thus set in action,
He will still move onward to plan conveniences,
'Till glory fires his breast to enlarge his castle,
While the poor slave drudges all day, in hope
To rest at night. (iii.194-203)

Liberty, again, is the animating force of materialistic expansion, the force that inspires invasion for enlargement
of one's castle. Hearing this analysis, the King eulogizes Liberty:

O Liberty, how glorious art thou!
I see thee hov'ring o'er my army, with
Thy wide-stretch'd plumes; I see thee
Lead them on to battle;
I see thee blow thy golden trumpet, while
Thy sons shout the strong shout of victory!

(iii.204-9)

The King's vision of Liberty unwittingly reveals the real name of the goddess he worships--Minerva, the goddess of war.

Scene iv reveals yet another name for British Liberty--ambition--and offers the norm of the play. Dagworth tells William: "It [ambition] is a root that grows in every breast; / Ambition is the desire or passion that one man / Has to get before another, in any pursuit after glory" (iv.13-15). Ambition, in other words, acts as the animating force of war in the identical way as Liberty does. Furthermore, questioned by William, Dagworth admits that the cause that "brought over [their] King to France to fight for his right" (iv.21) is ambition. Liberty, the heaven-given "charter'd right of Englishmen"(i.9), is just euphemism for "ambition"; the power called Liberty by the King and his men in reality is ambition. The dialogue of Dagworth and
William also presents what can be seen as the norm of the play:

_Dagw._ Thou art a natural philosopher, and knowest truth by instinct; while reason runs aground, as we have run our argument. Only remember, William, all have it in their power to know the motives of their own actions, and 'tis a sin to act without some reason.

_Will._ And whoever acts without reason, may do a great deal of harm without knowing it. (iv.32-7)

In contrast to earlier bloodthirsty Dagworth, here he displays his ability to recognize not only William's wisdom but also the value of instinct over reason and the latter's dangerous deceptiveness. He articulates the norm that before acting, one needs to know one's motives and have just reason for the action, the principle, which, again, he never practices before or after this scene. In the ensuing scene Dagworth acts exactly opposite to this value by persuading Sir Walter Manny with clever argument. The glaring inconsistency of Dagworth's character may derive from Blake's designs either to show the enchanting power of the rhetoric of British Liberty over even a man of insight and wisdom like Dagworth or to show plainly his outrageous double standard.21

Scene v presents antithetical views of war and brings to the fore the enchanting power of the rhetoric of British
Liberty. Sir Walter alone in the play envisions war and death with all their destructive character and without glorifying rhetoric. Dagworth, on the other hand, justifies death and war with the flowery rhetoric of patriotism. Sir Walter laments the imminent deaths of thousands; Dagworth exalts death, for the souls of the thousands will be released from the prison of the body to heaven. Unaffected by this counter-argument, Sir Walter describes his almost apocalyptic vision of slaughter: "I seem to be in one great charnel-house" (v.43). Yet Dagworth offers another counter-vision. Heedless of his admission in the previous scene that the real cause of this war is ambition, he proclaims:

I'll fight and weep, 'tis in my country's cause;
I'll weep and shout for glorious liberty.
Grim war shall laugh and shout, decked in tears,
And blood shall flow like stream across the meadows,
That murmur down their pebbly channels, and
Spend their sweet lives to do their country service:
Then shall England's verdure shoot, her fields shall smile,
Her ships shall sing across the foaming sea,
Her mariners shall use the flute and viol,
And rattling guns, and black and dreary war,
Shall be no more. (v.51-61)

Dagworth aestheticizes the whole reality of war and relativizes the ghastly vision of Sir Walter, placing it in
a larger framework in which the apocalyptic destruction is followed by millennial prosperity. Although Dagworth's vision betrays its demonic nature (British isle and sea are to be fed with the blood of the thousands of dead soldiers) and commercial nature of prosperity (British ships and mariners) for which they die, the millennial and patriotic rhetoric is powerful enough to win Sir Walter over to the war of aggression. The scene thus displays how the idea of British Liberty could easily paralyze man's conscience. Indeed, British Liberty traps man's mind and robs it of its freedom.

Finally, the minstrel's song in scene vi, by tracing the origin of the national identity as the chosen protector of Liberty, reveals Blake's interpretation of British Liberty as a history of invasion, destruction, and plunder. The minstrel, hired and made squire by the Prince, exalts Edward III and his warriors, "sons of Trojans cloath'd in war" (vi.1), by recounting Brutus's bloody past, his arrival in Albion, his conquest of its giants, and his prophecy of the glorious future of his empire. Erdman points out that the minstrel bridges Edward III's and the eighteenth-century's attacks on France (72). The song, in fact, has an even larger historical scope, for Brutus before his arrival in Albion's shore devastates the land of Aquitaine, as recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth, clearly Blake's source:
Brutus was overjoyed at this victory. He enriched his comrades with the spoils of those whom they had killed, marshalled them once more into companies and then marched through the country in this order, for it was his intention to sack it completely and to load his ships with all its goods. He therefore burned the cities far and wide, heaping up fire upon fire. He carried away the goods which he had looted in these cities and he even ravaged the open fields. He wrought pitiable slaughter on both townsfolk and peasantry, for his plan was to exterminate this unhappy race down to the last man . . . Brutus had inflicted this devastation on almost all the regions of Aquitaine . . . (69)

By referring to Brutus, Blake points to a recurrent pattern of British history, the destruction of France. The history of Britain, Blake seems to say, is punctuated by her attack on France. The minstrel's song ironically shows Brutus and his crew as brutal, threatening, and predatory. Upon arrival, the Trojans with a kiss of death turn Albion into a "grave" (vi.16) and the land of night: "thou shalt be our grave; / The sepulchre of ancient Troy, from whence / Shall rise cities, and thrones, and arms, and awful pow'rs" (vi.16-17). And in the new cities, "Morning / Shall be prevented by their swords gleaming" (vi.50-51). The land
inhabited by "the enormous sons / Of Ocean" (vi.21-22), or Neptune's sons according to Milton's *History of Britain* (5.6), is to be turned into a threatening military nation. As Erdman notes, the minstrel's depiction of the sons of Ocean as "the savage monsters" totally contradicts Blake's positive view of the ancient giants of Albion, who were "overwhelmed by brutal arms." The diction and images used in Brutus's prophecy of a glorious future empire also betrays her predatory character: "cities shall sing," for the Trojan sons "shall roam / Like eagles for the prey" and bring forth plenty (vi.44-5). The minstrel makes Brutus "prophecy" the "future" course of the empire, but of course the prophecy is retrospective since, by implication, the minstrel has seen it fulfilled by Edward's reign or about to be fulfilled by the battle of Cressy. Such use of retrospective prophecy as well as interpretation of national history has always been, and is still, an effective political tool. By pointing out the divinely planned character of the nation and its course of development from the nation's origin to the fulfillment of its transcendental mission, the rulers legitimatize their governments and policies with unassailable authority. Virgil, for instance, through the prophecy to Aeneas reveals the national identity and its mission of Roman empire in *The Aeneid*, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, John Foxe, and Spenser those of Britain. Likewise, Brutus's prophecy, which is never mentioned in
antiquity, establishes the national identity as jingoistic protector of Liberty and, with transcendental authority that inspires Brutus, justifies and prescribes the empire's course of action.

At the end of the prophecy, finally the presiding goddess Liberty makes an appearance:

"Liberty shall stand upon the cliffs of Albion,
"Casting her blue eyes over the green ocean;
"Or, tow'ring, stand upon the roaring waves,
"Stretching her mighty spear o'er distant lands;
"While, with her eagle wings, she covereth
"Fair Albion's shore, and all her families."

(vi.55-60)

The real name of the power Edward worships has already been revealed as Minerva. Now the iconography of Liberty as shown in the above lines fully confirms her true identity, the ominous goddess of war. Thus, the minstrel's song exposes the reality of Britain ironically through reciting what the people wish to believe.

This popular view of the national identity was first established by Geoffrey of Monmouth and repeated and developed since by subsequent historians such as Holinshed and John Bale, by the Reformation writers such as John Foxe, by the writers of the Civil War such as Milton, and finally the government of Blake's own time.23 The idea of Britain as the chosen protector of Liberty, especially against Rome,
played a pivotal role both in the Reformation and the Civil War and is so deeply impressed upon the minds of the people that the rhetoric of British Liberty subliminally works on and moves even those who are humane and perceptive like Sir Walter Manny.

Blake, then, is not merely revising Shakespeare's history that seems to focus on the temporal rather than the eternal and to glorify military achievement of Britain; he is attempting something far larger in scope and in impact, and in the manner that shows his profound affinity with the Old Testament prophets. Just as Amos, Hosea, or Ezekiel, for instance, reinterpret Israel's history and reveal her alienation from the divinely given just way, so Blake reinterprets Britain's history and reveals her alienation from her Liberty. His revelation of the British Liberty that Edward III worships as Minerva is analogous, for example, with Amos's revelation of "the Day of the Lord," which Israelites glorify, as the opposite of what they believe it to be. As Koch explains, in ancient Israel the Day of the Lord was traditionally believed to be a special day in history when Yahweh would bring to Israel "light, salvation, victory over the neighboring peoples" (Prophets 1:63). Koch describes how Amos interpreted the Day:

Amos agrees that a day is imminent when God will appear in power. But he reverses the obvious conclusions: on that day Yahweh will not bring
salvation to the people who are so specially bound to him, but utter disaster, darkness and death.

(Prophets 1:63)

The Israelites' religion at Amos' time was oriented towards ritual. The Day of the Lord is one of the key ideas that are associated with Israel's being a chosen nation of Yahweh and with assurance of unconditional salvation in the imminent future. Because of the people's iniquities, however, Amos proclaims, this will be the day of destruction, instead of salvation. By reversing the meaning of the popular concept, Amos is not merely foretelling the imminent disaster in shocking terms. The reversal is not merely a rhetorical strategy but is the reality of Israel's conduct in the eyes of God and his prophet. To highlight in the clearest manner the Israelites' demolition of their God-given way of life that ensures spiritual and physical prosperity of the community, he picks up the centrally important concept that has been misinterpreted and perverted into a facile, unconditional assurance and has thus become one of the chief promoting forces of degeneration. Through this concept, Amos reveals the full weight of both the divine and the human reality: God's plan of salvation, the people's acts of perversion, and God's counter-action. Blake, in the same way, picks up British Liberty--the one concept that has been misinterpreted and perverted into worship of Minerva, the opposite of the meaning professed by
the establishment. The identity of the British as the protectors of Liberty is, Blake attempts to reveal, at once the divine design, the people's perversion of it, and ultimately, the corresponding disaster, which prevents Morning.

Likewise, in the "Prologue, Intended for a Dramatic Piece of King Edward the Fourth," Blake uses the concept of their rulers as God's "Ministers" (E439; 16) on earth. Using the same syntax—"When [X happens], who can stand?" he moves from the internal and individual oppression (souls and senses), to the collective and national (the souls of the oppressed) to the divine and international (the nations driven by God's "frowns"), and to the cosmic and apocalyptic (Sin, Death, and torment in Hell). His perspective on the war expands incrementarily until finally the disaster is pushed to the ultimate, to the divine judgement upon those who are responsible for all. At this point Blake uses the very concept that the establishment uses to justify its oppressive rules, the divine right of Kings and Nobles. Sarcastically, Blake repeats the title they assume:

O who can answer at the throne of God?
The Kings and Nobles of the Land have done it!
Hear it not, Heaven, thy Ministers have done it!

( Italics mine E439; 14-16)

Heaven's "Ministers," like "British Liberty," at once denotes what the Kings and Nobles should be, and ironically
points to what they actually are in contradiction to their divine duty. Thus, the final lines of the "Prologue" to Edward IV, are not "ambiguous" as to who caused the war, but push toward the tension between the divine and the human realities and condense it into one concept--Heaven's Ministers.

Blake's reinterpretation of national identity and history in a larger time span also connects him to the Old Testament prophets, Hosea and Ezekiel in particular. In castigating general lack of justice--"swearing, and lying, and stealing, and committing adultery" (4.2)--the corruption of priests and prophets, and the godlessness of kings, Hosea does not attack these problems as merely social and political ones, but sees these evils in terms of Israel's apostasy, her abandonment of "knowledge of God," and her unfaithfulness to her husband, Yahweh. Hosea traces Israel's special relationship with God and her adulterous career in order to show the historical root of the current apostasy. Against the Israelites' version of glorious salvation history, God reveals his version:

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

(Hosea 11.1-2)
Israel was a rebellious people, even from the very time they were delivered from Egypt. And the patriarch Jacob, Israel's namesake, "took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God" (Hosea 12.3): he was an overreacher even from the womb and strove with God. Two centuries after Hosea, Ezekiel even goes further than his predecessor's interpretation. The salvation history and the disaster history run parallel; Israel perverted into disaster every saving act of God the moment the blessing was given. The apostasy began not when the people were delivered from Egypt but when they were there: "[Jerusalem] had played the harlot in the land of Egypt" even though she was married to Yahweh (Ezek. 23.19). Jerusalem was an orphan baby-girl crying in the desert: she was adopted by God and raised to be his bride but turned into a whore (Ezek. chap. 16). God brought the Israelites from out of Egypt and gave them his statutes so that they might live; "But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes . . . " (Ezek. 20.13). Thus, Ezekiel sees no faithful moment in the history of Israel and reveals that her actual identity is a harlot. Both prophets deaestheticize Israel's comfortable views of herself and her history and reveal God's view as the reality which is the opposite of the aestheticized official version.
Furthermore, both Hosea and Ezekiel, like Amos, reveal the aberration of the Israelites by means of the very rhetoric and key concepts that the establishment relies on. The prophets' aim is to highlight the outrageous gap between what the people believe and what things actually are, the gap between God's intention and the people's actual behaviour when the people delude themselves that there is harmony between God's intention and their acts. Hosea picks up and subverts the established view of Jacob, who literally embodies Israel, and of the Exodus, the crucial event that represents the special bond between Yahweh and the Israelites. Likewise, Ezekiel picks up the earlier classical prophets' idea of Israel or Jerusalem as Yahweh's bride and exposes her to be a harlot. The version the people believed is in the most profound sense true since it was God's original intention and the ideal and potential state of Jacob, the Exodus, Israel, or British Liberty—what they should be and could be or could have been; yet it is not actuality since the people live in contradiction to this intention and the ideal state. Thus, Blake's and the Hebrew prophets' use of the crucial rhetoric and concepts of the establishment reflects not merely a matter of strategy to shock the people and subvert the establishment but more profoundly the lucid perception that sees the divine and the human reality simultaneously; it reflects the prophets' aim
to reveal simultaneously the monstrous aberration and the God-given, glorious potential of the people.

In "King Edward III" Blake shares with the Hebrew prophets another characteristic of the historical interpretation--a view of the present as the nadir of the national history. In the prophets' interpretations of national history, Israel's adulterous behaviour in her earliest days continues to form a descending linear course and to lead or have led the people to a catastrophe. Blake interprets British history in an analogous manner. Brutus' brutality and jingoism, invasion, and plunder in the name of his divine mission culminate in King Edward's and King George's acts, just as the apostasy of Jacob or the Israelites in Egypt continues in an increasingly degenerate form down to the time of Hosea and Ezekiel, until finally incurring an apocalyptic disaster. The prototypical events, then, are, in retrospect, "prophetic" of the prophets' own times, which in turn are "prophetic" of their ultimate outcome, disaster in a cosmic scale--the utter destruction forecast by the eighth century prophets and the terrifying vision of the world as "one great charnel-house" with the scent of "rotten carcasses"(v.43-44) seen by Sir Walter. Although Sir Walter's vision did not come true so far as the British army only is concerned, Edward's victory in the Crecy-Calais war was followed by the Plague spread from France to England. As Erdman observes, Blake's paintings
"A Breach in a city the Morning after the Battle," which depicts the siege of Calais, and the companion piece "War unchained . . . Fire, Pestilence and Famine following" suggest that Blake saw the apocalyptic Black Death as "the climax of the Crecy-Calais war" (75). Sir Walter's vision, then, may be the prophetic vision of the climactic Plague after the military glory and prosperity envisioned by Dagworth. Thus, like the biblical prophets, Blake sees a historical moment from a comprehensive perspective: the present is pregnant with both the past and the future from the very origin to the ultimate outcome.

Erdman suggests that to make Blake's ironic view of military glory clear, the play needs a "sequel" to present "first the furious war unchained at 'Cressy,' and then the Fire, Pestilence and Famine following" like the paintings mentioned above (74). But Blake's focus in "Edward III" is not so much on the war and its brutality as on the idea of British Liberty which inspires and glorifies the war and justifies British oppression. By the end of the minstrel's song, Blake shows that the animating forces of the British military operations are from the very beginning bloodthirsty and ambition for fame and economic gain: the forces in fact are opposed to liberty. As such, "King Edward III," though short, is complete.
Gleckner rightly observes that two sketches on war, "Gwin, King of Norway" and "Prologue to King John," are poems of cycles propelled by the antithesis of the oppressor and the oppressed (Prelude 116, 118, 119). "Gwin" starts with the desolate land preyed upon by the Nobles (stanzas 2 & 3) and ends with the desolate land covered with the dead preyed upon by the eagles. The process is devolutionary since by the end of the poem, despite the death of the tyrant Gwin, women and children perish by famine, men have either fled or are dead, and the land is overwhelmed by the flood of blood. Similarly, the speaker of the "Prologue to King John" tells us that the conflict of Tyranny and Patriot are recurrent: "full oft did Patriot rise, when Tyranny hath stain'd fair Albion's breast with her own children's gore" (E439).

These sketches as well as "Prologue, Intended for a Dramatic Piece of King Edward IV," however, are more than merely cyclical and antithetical: the antitheses in these sketches are of a special kind in which the opposing forces are connected, together making a whole. In "Gwin" the archetypal broad outlines of the poem bring this link to the foreground. The rise of the oppression corresponds with the rise of the oppressed. When Gwin oppresses the land, "Gordred the giant rouse[s] himself / From sleeping in his cave" (E417; 13-4). This symmetrical correspondence climaxes in lines 61-6:
Gwin lifts his hand--the nations halt;
"Prepare for war," he cries--
Gordred appears!--his frowning brow
Troubles our northern skies.

The armies stand, like balances
Held in th'Almighty's hand. (61-66)

The simile of "balances" held in God's hand makes clear the relationship of the two forces: they are opposite to each other and yet are connected. If the one rises high, the other falls and, in order to regain equilibrium, inevitably must bounce up. The fate of the one is vitally connected to the fate of the other. The singer treats Gwin and Gordred as not even conventionally valiant warriors, providing, for instance, not a single detail of their appearances, but as the embodiments of opposing forces; he focuses on the dimension of energies and forces. The war is caused by both the oppressor and the oppressed, and the oppressed vastly augments the disaster by responding to the oppression physically.

Blake's perception of the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed then penetrates into the dimension of the physical and mental energies of the collective life of the community. In "Gwin" he focuses on physical energy of the people; apart from death, hunger and famine are the only effects of Gwin's oppression and the war
that the poet represents. In the "Prologue" to Edward IV, the poet focuses on the oppression of "the senses" and "the souls" and discerns the conflict in its moral and spiritual dimension. In the "Prologue to King John," the war is seen as fratricide, a battle among Albion's children, and as recurrent clashes of energies. Blake condemns the war, then, not according to the established moral categories; his judgement is founded on his perception of the workings of the energies.

Furthermore, Blake discerns operation of a particular causality, and expression of the causality brings about curious ambiguities about the cause and effect of war, the ambiguities which Gleckner finds puzzling and unfortunate, as mentioned earlier (Prelude 114). For instance, in the "Prologue" to Edward IV, we are told, "the souls of the oppressed / Fight in the troubled air that rages." The air in which the oppressed fight is at once "troubled" and "rag[ing]," passive and active; the oppressed is at once the victim and the agent of the turmoil. Moreover, "troubled air that rages," which is caused by the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed, seems identical with "the whirlwind of fury [that] comes from the / Throne of God."

Indeed, the speaker tells us that it is God's anger that drives "the nations together" and causes international wars. Yet in the next four lines, Sin (that is, sins of the people) presides over the war, and in the final three lines
the speaker attributes all the responsibility to the Kings and Nobles. With a similar contradictory manner Blake begins the "Prologue to King John":

Justice hath heaved a sword to plunge in Albion's breast; for Albion's sins are crimson dy'd, and the red scourge follows her desolate sons! Then Patriot rose; full oft did Patriot rise, when Tyranny hath stain'd fair Albion's breast with her own children's gore. Round his majestic feet deep thunders roll; each heart does tremble, and each knee grows slack. (E439)

The syntax of the first sentence makes it clear that "Justice" or "the red scourge" descends on Albion and her sons because of her crimson sins. Yet the adjective "desolate" suggests that her sons are the victims, as well as the agents, of her sins. In the next sentence, "Then" signals temporal sequence and hence the rise of Patriot seems distinct from the "Justice" or the "red scourge." Yet the subsequent description of Tyranny's act of staining "Albion's breast with her own children's gore" is virtually identical with the description of the act by Justice or red scourge in the first sentence. Finally, in the third sentence the identity of the character with rolling thunders is again ambiguous. And if he is Patriot, the effect of his rise seems as negative as Tyranny's, causing terror.
physically (knees slacken) and emotionally (heart trembling).

These confusing accounts of war, however, are not unfortunate ambiguities; the seeming ambiguities result because the poet sees the reality of war in multiple dimensions. In the "Prologue" to Edward IV, Blake presents social, national, divine (also international), and moral (also cosmic) dimensions. The moment the Kings and Nobles start an oppressive rule, the conflict starts, and the conflict is at once the oppressors' tyranny and the oppressed's revolt, God's fury, and Sin's victory. In the "Prologue to King John," the cause of the war is at once divine act (Justice or red scourge), sins of the people, Tyranny, and Patriot's revolt, and the people are at once the victim and the agent. The ambiguities, then, are familiar ones for the reader of Blake's later prophecies, in which numerous versions of the Fall of Albion "on that day" are offered to form a comprehensive view of the event. In the sphere of forces--human and divine, destructive and life-enhancing--the forces are evidently all connected, the war is fratricide, and the cause of the disaster is also the effect of it. Blake's perception penetrates through what appears to be causally and chronologically connected matters into the divine dimension of reality which penetrates all reality.
The perception of the divine dimension of reality finds yet another form of expression in the prose-poem "Samson," the last piece in Poetical Sketches. With a strong sense of mission to reveal the truth about Samson's fall, the prophet-poet proclaims his theme:

Samson, the strongest of the children of men, I sing; how he was foiled by woman's arts, by a false wife brought to the gates of death! (E443)

From this announcement the reader naturally expects to hear about Samson's revelation of his secret and/or his subsequent downfall—blindness, captivity, and slavery, if not his final death. What follows the opening proclamation, however, is Dalila's accusation and pleading and Samson's account of the annunciation of his birth. Samson is yet in his prime, and he has not yet divulged his secret: in the account, he carefully omits the Angel's instruction to his mother that "no razor shall come on his [Samson's] head" (Judges 13.5). The account stops abruptly with the Angel's words, before the more conventional place to stop, the Angel's ascent to heaven in the smoke of Manoah's offering. After the theme, the poet-prophet invokes Truth: "O white-robed Angel, guide my timorous hand to write as on a lofty rock with iron pens the words of truth that all who pass may read" (E443). The last clause of the invocation suggests that Blake conceived the whole sketch as the epitaph on Samson, which indicates in brief compass the true,
comprehensive outline of his life. The subsequent scenes, however, present the beginning and the middle of his life—the annunciation and the prime—but not his actual downfall and death. Although in view of the poet-prophet's proclamations "Samson" thus seems fragmentary and incomplete, the sketch, like "Edward III" and the Prologues to Edward IV and King John, offers a comprehensive vision of Samson's life and death, as an epitaph ought to do.

Blake presents a moment of Samson's life when the champion of God is still in his prime; yet that moment is pregnant with both the past and the future of his career. Of course any moment of our life is the effect of the past and the cause of the future, but Blake chooses the pivotal point of Samson's career and represents the past, the present, and the future all at once. By using the genres of epitaph and elegy, Blake represents in a single moment of his career the complete life of Samson and infinity beyond.

"Samson" reveals that the champion of God is "by a false wife brought to the gates of death" long before his physical downfall. Gleckner thinks that "these gates of course are Milton's gates of the temple of Dagon, no mention of which is found in Blake's version (or in the Bible)" (Prelude 141). The gates in fact stand inside Samson; for Blake, the fall occurs when Samson's mind turns to Dalila from the divine calling. "[L]eaning on her bosom," Samson begins his story of the annunciation with this preface:
"Hear, O Dalila! doubt no more of Samson's love; for that fair breast was made the ivory palace of my inmost heart, where it shall lie at rest; for sorrow is the lot of all of woman born: for care was I brought forth, and labour is my lot: not matchless might, nor wisdom, nor every gift enjoyed, can from the heart of man hide sorrow."

(E444)

His "inmost heart" is already imprisoned in "the ivory palace" of Dalila's "fair breast"; he is blind to the glory of his birthright; his divine mission, deliverance of his people, is the "lot" of slave labour that brings only "care" and "sorrow."27 The lament is analogous to the one that Milton's Samson utters in the opening scene of Samson Agonistes at the bottom of his career. Gleckner thinks that the dramatic moment in "Samson" is "the moment before his [Samson's] fall into temptation" (Prelude 140). But in fact at the height of his career, before even revealing his secret, Samson is already "betray'd, captiv'd, and both [his] / Eyes put out . . . / Put to the labor of a Beast" (SA 33-37). Blake perceives that the condition of the coming disaster is already fully in operation in Samson's mind. Phillips believes that Blake chose the moment so as to be succeeded by Samson Agonistes ("Early Poetry" 19-20). On the contrary, by choosing this moment of Samson's inner turning from the divine mission to the repose with Dalila,
Blake revises the biblical and Miltonic view of Samson's fall: the inner reality is the reality.  

The account of the annunciation, which Samson tells Dalila to illustrate his point in the preface, further illuminates this condition; the discrepancy between Samson's purpose of telling the blessing, glory, and wonder that accompany the account unappreciated by the teller reveals the appalling spiritual blindness of Samson. His account differs significantly in two points from the account of the annunciation in Judges 13.2-18. First, in "Samson" the Angel in appearance and speech is far more numinous than the biblical counterpart. Judges gives no description of how the angel meets Manoah's wife; the angel simply appears to her out of nowhere and without any greetings announces his message. The Angel in "Samson," in contrast, is described as an awe-inspiring figure:

an angel from the fields of light entered the house! His form was manhood in the prime, and from his specious brow shot terrors through the evening shade! But mild he hailed her--Hail, highly favoured! (E455)

The Angel's greeting echoes the greeting to Mary by the angel of the Annunciation, in Luke 1.28 (Lowery 80). By making the Angel of "Samson" hail in these words, Blake seems to imply that in potential and blessing Samson as deliverer is equal to Jesus. Furthermore, another
difference from Judges also points to the Angel's holiness. When Manoah asks the Angel's name, in Judges the Angel replies, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (13.18), and Blake's Angel, "My name is wonderful; enquire not after it, seeing it a secret" (E445). Lowery first associates the Angel's answer to Isaiah 9.6: "for unto us a child is born, . . . and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Lowery 72, 80). She also points out that the Angel's message, "Israel's strength shall be upon his [Samson's] shoulders," echoes Isaiah's words "the government shall be upon his shoulder." Drawing on these observations of Lowery, Gleckner argues that the Angel is a false prophet chiefly because he assumes Christ's name "Wonderful," and the prophecy of Israel's deliverance does not come true (Prelude 143-4). However, in making the Angel reply that his "name is wonderful," Blake does not alter the words in Judges, nor does he allude to Christ, whose name is prophesied in Isaiah: he renders the Hebrew original more accurately than the Authorized Version does. The literal translation of the biblical angel's reply is "it [the name] is wonderful" as opposed to the Authorized Version's "it is secret." (Indeed the New Revised Standard Version has "it is too wonderful." ) In other words, the "wonderful" in the Angel's reply is not a proper noun but an adjective meaning
"ineffable, beyond comprehension," as *The Interpreter's Bible* explains the verse (5.779). The same Hebrew word is used in Psalm 139.6 for God's act which is "too wonderful" for man to comprehend (*Interpreter's* 5.779). Although there is no evidence that Blake was familiar with Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible when he was composing "Samson," it is not hard to imagine that Blake, intrigued by the angel's reply that his name is "secret," investigated its exact meaning and amplified the reply, adding the accurate meaning to the translation of the Authorized Version. In any case, the fact that the initial of *wonderful* is not capitalized--while, for instance, the initials of Deliverer and Angel are--indicates that the word is not meant for a proper noun as Lowery and Gleckner assume. Thus, the Angel's reply, his hailing, and his two announcements point to the momentousness of the coming birth of Samson and the immense potentialities of Samson as Deliverer.

Second, the account of the annunciation in "Samson" heavily stresses Samson's role as a Deliverer of Israel, while in Judges reference to a Deliverer is made only once, by the Angel. The account in Judges is essentially one of what Robert Alter calls the "type-scenes" of the Old Testament--the annunciation and the birth of a child to a barren woman (*Narrative* 49). Neither Manoah nor his wife shows any desire for a deliverer, and Manoah certainly displays no particular involvement with the plight of
Israel. In Blake's "Samson," on the other hand, desolation of Israel is described in detail, and anguished Manoah prays for a Deliverer rather than simply for a son. The account of Samson as the "long-wished deliverer" (E449) whose birth is announced in the manner that inspires awe and wonder thus unintentionally demonstrates blessing, glory, and the "wonderful" Providence. In so doing, the account reveals the antithetical visions of reality: the divine reality is "wonderful," full of blessing, and working on the deliverance of Israel, and the human reality is blind, full of sorrow and care, and ready to abort the Providential plan of deliverance and choose slavery. Indeed, Samson's "preface" to the account of the annunciation is a funeral elegy; for Samson, the annunciation of birth is a sentence of death, the existence of one long slavery, of sorrow, care, and labour that can never be redeemed by any gift from heaven. Together with the preface, the account, then, demonstrates an astounding feat of presenting the two antithetical visions at once: Samson's account is at once a funeral elegy and the annunciation of blessing. Furthermore, the account also shows Samson's life from before his birth through his prime to the disastrous downfall and death all at once. Thus, "Samson" attests to Blake's perception of the dimension of reality where the divine and the human, the past, the present, and the future
exist all at once: a moment in time indeed opens to infinity.

This perception and its modes of expression (that is, the use of the epitaph and the elegy) find their earliest prototype in the eighth-century Hebrew Prophecies. As Klaus Koch points out, Amos is the first to use the genre of the funeral lament, or the "woe-song," to convey prophetic perception of the world, and almost every prophet after him uses this mode of expression (Prophets 1:44,47). The funeral lament, which is marked by the beginning "woe to (you, them, etc.)," is "a genre which was otherwise only used in a lament over the dead", usually sung at graveyards (Koch, Prophets 1:47). Yet the prophet uses the lament to those who are alive and at the height of their prosperity. For example, Micah sarcastically laments the death of the iniquitous people: "Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds!" (2.1). He goes on to describe their iniquitous deeds in detail and proclaims God's judgement upon the people. Thus, for Micah, long before the divine judgement descends upon them, they are already dead. When they are enjoying their worldly success, the prophet's vision penetrates into the depth of reality; he perceives that the animating force of the people's prosperity is destructive, leading them to a disastrous end. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, the prophets perceive that the forces of destruction are fully in operation and only
waiting to be materialized as physical reality. Regardless of the visible reality, the prophets proclaim the reality of the people seen from the divine perspective. Blake's presentation of Samson's fall demonstrates beyond verbal echoes and beyond usage of symbols, imagery, and ideas of the Hebrew Prophets, that Blake shares with them the way of seeing reality and the modes of its expression.

Finally, Blake, like the Hebrew prophets, takes a high, authorial stance. In Blake's Prelude Gleckner has shown abundantly that the sketches only superficially resemble the poems by Blake's predecessors and contemporaries and that Blake deliberately uses their phrases, images, and ideas in a subversive manner in order to reveal inadequacies of these poets' works. Such a subversive use indicates that Blake stands far above the traditions he uses polemically: he places these traditions in his larger context. It is true that many of eighteenth-century poets adopted a similar high stance and assumed the role of the Bard. Like Blake, Thomson, for example, wrote poems of seasons and liberty with a lofty tone and a strong sense of authority. Yet Thomson's authority has its source in the traditional Christian views and the kind of patriotism that subscribes to the status quo. His Seasons or Liberty offers many imaginative perceptions of the natural world; yet these perceptions are placed within a context of eighteen-
century Christian theological, moral, and historical views. In contrast, Blake's authority derives not from the established values and ideas but from his own imaginative perception of the order of reality. His theological, moral, and historical knowledge brings about a radical revision of our understanding of the way things are ordered, and his perception reveals a new context, as well as local insights. His treatment of British Liberty or the political situation of his time is a case in point. Or in his poems of the seasons and times of day, his stance is above the natural world; from a comprehensive perspective he reveals the bondage of fallen cyclicality. His orientation is to truth beyond traditional wisdom and perceptions. Thus, while Thomson's Liberty is dedicated "To His Royal Highness Frederick, Prince of Wales" from "Your Royal Highness's most obedient and most devoted servant, James Thomson," Blake's "Gwin" is addressed to "kings" to teach them a lesson, his "Prologue" to Edward IV castigates "Kings and Nobles," and his "Samson," under the authority of "Truth, that shinest with propitious beams, turning our earthly night to heavenly day, from presence of the Almighty Father" (E443), attempts to correct the Bible. Just as Hosea and Amos stand out from the rest of the Israelites and their institutions, so does Blake from the rest of the world and its institutions.

Precisely because of this solitary position of authority, regardless of the genres, the singular, sublime
proclamatory tone of voice communicates to us the singers' prophetic identity. "To Spring," for example, is psalmodic in genre rather than prophetic, for the sketch is a supplication from man to the Heavenly spirit of Spring for blessing rather than a proclamation of a message from God to man. Like a singer of a psalm, the speaker invokes Spring to descend and deliver the Western isle, representing the people. Yet even as he locates himself among the people, as seen in his use of "us" and "our," his voice and his perception distinguish him from the people. Besides the radical perception of the world, the tone of lofty isolation and the urgent sense of mission unmistakably ally this sketch to the tradition of prophetic poetry. Arising from the consciousness of the eternal and temporal realities and from a strong sense of mission to deliver both the natural and human worlds, the voice is imbued with the peculiar tone of prophecy.
Notes


2. See the "Introduction" of this study.

3. For discussion of these poems, particularly the poems of the seasons, see, for example, Lowery; Gleckner, "Blake's Seasons," *Studies in English Literature* 5 (1965) and *Prelude* chap. 4; Geoffrey Hartman, "Blake and the 'Progress of Poesy,'" in Rosenfeld (Providence, 1969); Irene Chayes, "Blake and the Seasons of the Poet," *Studies in Romanticism* 11 (1972); Michael J. Tolley, "Blake's Songs of Spring," (Oxford, 1973) and his rev. of *Blake's Prelude,* by Robert F. Gleckner, *Blake/ An Illustrated Quarterly* 20 (Spring 1987) 146-51; Stuart Peterfreund, "The Problem of Originality and Blake's Poetical Sketches," *ELH* 52 (1985).

4. Gleckner, "Blake's Seasons" and *Prelude* chap. 4. The quotations are from pp. 539 and 546 of the first work.

5. Chayes, "Blake and the Seasons of the Poet"; Tolley, rev. of *Blake's Prelude* 150.

7. See Miner and Tolley. The quotation is from Tolley 102.

8. Song of Solomon is likely to have derived from Egyptian love poetry. See Michael Fox, The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry (Madison, 1985).

9. Tolley also observes this strong sense of presence behind the personification of Spring for a different point he makes in "Blake's Songs of Spring" 101.

10. For studies of eighteenth-century personification, see Bronson and Wasserman.


14. Although placed in the middle of the group, "Mad Song" alone does not seem to deal with love; the "madness" of the speaker seems to derive from something other than love, as Bloom, Phillips, and Gleckner also feel. Neither the poet nor the speaker is concerned with love. If the cause of "madness" be love, the cosmic scale of the speaker's anguish is clearly
far beyond the objective correlative of the love dealt with in the rest of the songs. The simple fact that Blake entitled the poem "Mad Song" instead of "Song" points to his distinction of this poem from the rest. For the tradition of mad songs and possible sources of Blake, see Lowery, Phillips ("Early Poetry"), and Gleckner (Prelude) 4.

15. For discussions whether the speaker of "Mad Song" is willfully self-deceived, indulgent, or deeply conscious of his plight, see Frye, Symmetry 179; Bloom, Apocalypse 19-20; Michael Phillips, "Early Poetry," 8-16; Gleckner, Prelude 48-54.


17. Until Erdman pointed out Blake's irony, these historical sketches, particularly "King Edward III," had been taken as Blake's celebration of British military glory. See Erdman, Prophet 63-83. For a concise but incisive reading of Blake's ironic treatment, see also Martin K. Nurmi, William Blake 42-43.


19. Erdman, Prophet 79-83. The quotation is from p.79.

20. Erdman, Prophet 81. See also Lowery for the
possible allusion to Thomson's *Liberty*, *Summer*, and "Rule Britannia" in pp. 141-3. Lowery does not think the allusion ironic.

21. The inconsistency may also derive from Blake's desire to point to a truth dialectically through the dialogue rather than solely through William as the mouthpiece of the poet.

22. Erdman, *Prophet* 73. The quotation is from the *Descriptive Catalogue*, v, quoted by Erdman (73).

23. Nennius in *Historia Brittonum* first briefly mentions a Roman counsel Brutus as the ancestor of the British people, but Geoffrey gives a fuller account of Trojan Brutus, devoting a whole part to his enterprise. With the Brutus and the Arthurian accounts, Geoffrey molds the British history. As Robert W. Hanning says, "until the sixteenth (and in some quarters the seventeenth) century, British history was Geoffrey's *Historia,*" and even Milton in *The History of Britain* published in 1671, though he omits the Arthurian account, repeats Geoffrey's account of Brutus as something of which the British "cannot so easily be discharg'd" (Hanning 174). Milton, *History of Britain* 8.

24. Gleckner finds it puzzling that the speaker attributes guilt to God, the Kings and Nobles, and the "Ministers": "The structure of the poem unfortunately accentuates the ambiguity one would normally expect it to resolve" (*Prelude* 114).
25. Lowery points out that the clause is "reminiscent of the epitaphs," 73.

26. For a view that "Samson" is unfinished, see, e.g. Lowery 76-8; Ehrstine 42.

27. Gleckner points out that Samson's "preface" is "his denial of his birthright" (Prelude 141).

28. Dr. John T. Ogden pointed out that Blake's choice of dramatic moment could be compared to Milton's choice of moment in Paradise Regained. For Blake, the fall of Samson occurs when he in his mind yields to the temptation; for Milton, the regaining of the Paradise, the resurrection, occurs when Christ triumphs over the temptation by Satan.

29. In typology, Samson, of course, is viewed as a prefiguration of Christ (Heb. 11.32).


CHAPTER II

Songs of Innocence

In *Songs of Innocence* Blake is far more self-conscious of his role as a prophet than in *Poetical Sketches*. Using the persona of the Piper who is inspired by a heavenly child and ordered to sing all the songs, Blake reveals the state of innocence, its power and its limitations, and implicitly criticizes the destructive order of society. The innocent speakers themselves are utterly unaware of their prophetic roles. Nor are they aware of social criticisms that ironically emerge from their songs. These criticisms are entirely implicit, unintended and undetected by the speakers, in contrast to the prophetic criticisms in the traditional form of direct castigation as seen in the Hebrew prophecies and *Songs of Experience*. Nevertheless, these songs of innocence are designed to carry out the same function of social criticism, and like Amos' attack of the rulers through the funeral lament, they present social criticism in such a way as to make the reader see beyond the normative and accepted. Indeed, Blake employs a radically different rhetorical strategy of dramatic presentation in order to reveal the divinity of innocence and the destructive order of society more powerfully than can the explicit proclamations and castigations. Thus, on the surface *Songs of Innocence* is a collection of lyrics which "every child may joy to hear," and its speakers are unself-
conscious of the prophetic implications of their visions and words; in design and in effect, however, it is a book of prophecy. Indeed, while Poetical Sketches, despite having the characteristics of prophetic writings, is not designed to form a single coherent book of prophecy, Songs of Innocence displays a distinct framework of prophetic writing: it begins with an account of the prophetic call, offers both subversive social criticisms and oracles of regeneration, and provides, through a myth that strongly evokes a biblical prophecy of reconciliation of Jerusalem-Israel-Judah with her Lord, a comprehensive vision of cosmic regeneration.¹ And true to his calling, Blake revises the visions of his Judeo-Christian predecessors including Milton: he naturalizes and humanizes the whole process of regeneration and the relationship between the divine and the human.²

The "Introduction" to Songs of Innocence clearly belongs to "the prophetic call account," a literary genre that appeared for the first time in the eighth century classical prophecies.³ Because most of the classical prophets attack the established religious institutions, and because the prophets' proclamations are subversive and violent, the prophets need to justify themselves and reveal the divine authority with which they launch their public career. The prophets, therefore, give accounts of their
call from God. The prophetic call of Isaiah (6.1-13), Jeremiah (1.4-10), or Ezekiel (1-2.21) consists of four major components: the visions, the commissioning, the encounter with the divine (the divine act of sanctifying the prophet's mouth), and the fortifying of the prophet against the earthly powers. Isaiah, for instance, sees a vision of the Lord on a throne with six-winged seraphim, Jeremiah has visions of an almond tree and of a boiling cauldron on a fire, and Ezekiel has a vision of the divine glory accompanied by the four living creatures.¹ The fantastic nature of Ezekiel's vision reflects a necessity to convince the disillusioned Israelites in exile of the prophet's power as a seer, as well as of God's omnipresence and unfathomable nature. Either after or before the commissioning of the respective prophet, a seraph touches Isaiah's lips with a glowing coal and purifies his sins, the Lord touches Jeremiah's mouth and puts his words into it, and the divine glory gives Ezekiel a scroll and tells him to eat it. These acts symbolically stress the identity between the prophets' and God's words as well as the purity of the prophets. They are then told to stand up against the obstinate Israelites and the earthly powers in general and deliver the divine message. This command also implicitly foretells the people's rejection of the prophet. Thus, in revealing a new understanding of God, the prophets attempt to authenticate the divine source of their words by demonstrating their
power of vision, sanctified state, and absolute commitment to their mission.

In the "Introduction," the Piper, like his biblical predecessors, establishes relationship with the divine in a unique manner, independent of religious institutions. "A child on a cloud" calls the Piper to "write" about a Lamb so that "all may read." Just as many of the speakers of Innocence experience God in the image of a Shepherd (or the loving Father who is "ever nigh"), a Child, or a Lamb, so the Piper, the singer of Innocence, receives his call not from an awesome God but from "a child on a cloud."

Although the child's appearance "on a cloud" clearly indicates his heavenly origin, significantly he remains unnamed: the child and the experience of the calling are free of any existing religious frameworks of the world. Indeed, unlike the biblical prophets, the Piper registers no awe towards the heavenly child and no awareness of the weight of the prophetic mission. The entire experience is seen in human and natural terms. The matter of fact tone in which he quotes what the child says and the use of the coordinating conjunctions ("and," "so"), which suggests absence of his need to make logical explanations for his experience, indicate that for the Piper heaven and earth, and the divine and the human (and the natural) are seamlessly continuous. Although he uses the coordinating conjunctions to link the incidents chronologically and does
not make causal connections between them to emphasize why he is chosen, the first two lines suggest that he is called because he is "piping songs of pleasant glee" in "the valleys wild," that is to say, because he is spiritually blessed in the midst of life's wilderness, the state attained by his ability to see with redeeming imagination an Edenic world in the midst of the valleys wild. While the child's responses to the Piper's songs indicate a discernment of deeper significance of the "song about a Lamb," the Piper himself seems unaware of the element that causes the child to weep in the second stanza. Although in the next stanza, the child is said to weep "with joy," the Piper is significantly silent about the cause of the child's first weeping. This silence, as well as the subsequent songs of the innocents, suggests that the child weeps recognizing both the blessed state and inevitable sufferings of the innocents in the fallen world. Thus, such an absence of awareness makes the Piper a voice of one singing in the wilderness. The poem, then, demonstrates the Piper's divine authority and personal qualification as the one who is capable of monistic vision, and at the same time suggests that he is untouched by knowledge of experience.

Since the Piper is not conscious of the divinity of his commissioner in the way the Hebrew prophets are, it may be argued that the poem cannot be an account of the prophetic call. The Piper, however, is unaware of the child's
divinity because unlike the prophets who feel impure before God, the Piper in his innocence feels no sense of "overpoweringness" or the consciousness of "creaturehood" towards his commissioner. Furthermore, the poem as the introduction to a book of poems that Blake wrote is clearly intended to reveal not only the Piper's but also more importantly Blake's divine inspiration and prophetic purpose of salvation of mankind. The poem, thus, has three of the four elements of the prophetic call: the vision (of the child on the cloud), the commissioning (by the child), and the encounter with the divine (the heavenly child). There is no fortifying of the Piper against the earthly powers, for his prophecies do not condemn earthly powers as do the Hebrew prophecies; as becomes evident, because his prophecies convey their messages dialogically rather than monologically, implicitly rather than explicitly, and because the social criticism is Blake's, not the Piper's, the Piper needs no fortification against the world. As well, his innocence requires neither purification nor protection from the oppressive powers of the world; as illustrated by the speakers of Innocence, the power of their imagination enables the innocents to be unspoiled by evils of the world. The absence of the fourth element as well as the Piper's lack of awareness do not undermine the core elements of the prophetic call, the commissioning and the encounter with the divine. Thus, the poem, despite its
variation from the biblical model, is an account of the prophetic call.

Like the Old Testament writings, *Songs of Innocence* is characterized by a strong sense of continuity between heaven and earth and between the divine, the human, and the natural. Especially in such poems as "The Shepherd," "The Lamb," "Spring," "The Ecchoing Green," "A Cradle Song," and "Infant Joy," the perceptions of the innocent speakers are firmly grounded in the concrete world and yet at the same time reach a deeper level of reality, the level that interpenetrates all ordinary reality. Such experience is conveyed by ambiguous syntax and phrases which in turn reflect the speakers' reasoning that appears confused in terms of our sense of logic, but which goes beyond our logic in its fusion of causes and effects, and its blurring of the distinction between the subject and the object.

The speakers of "The Shepherd," "The Lamb," and "A Cradle Song" implicitly or explicitly announce the analogies among the shepherd, God, the lamb, and the child—traditional analogies in orthodox piety. In "The Shepherd," for instance, the speaker praises the shepherd in language strongly reminiscent of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd":

How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot,
From the morn to the evening he strays:
He shall follow his sheep all the day
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs innocent call,
And he hears the ewes tender reply,
He is watchful while they are in peace,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh. (1-8)

The shepherd and his sheep in this speaker's eye are essentially interchangeable; they are indeed identical. The description of the shepherd's activity is interchangeable with that of the sheep. Like them, he "strays" and "follows" the sheep all the day. "His tongue shall be filled with praise" as he hears the lambs' and ewe's call and reply; his activity exactly reflects his flock's, including their passivity and receptivity, as the passive voice in line four suggests. Moreover, in the final two lines of the poem, what appears to be the speaker's circular logic evinces that he perceives the source of blessing in a way that transcends ordinary logic: the shepherd watches his sheep, when they are in peace; and they are in peace, for the shepherd is watching. The shepherd and the sheep are equally the source of blessing to each other. While firmly existing in this world, the shepherd and the sheep are seen as more than merely human and animal; they partake of divinity for this speaker. Of this poem and "The Lamb" Hirsch writes,
The poem . . . subtly expresses a religious perspective in which a man and God are not simply analogous but essentially one. God became a man; He became a little child; He is a Lamb. Man is a Child, a Lamb, and to others, a Shepherd. Ultimately, Shepherd and Sheep, Father and Child are the same. (29)

Blake's poem is religious, however, not so much because it expresses the idea of these identifications as because the language of the speaker embodies profound religious experience. Instead of naming the God-Shepherd-Sheep identification, the poem reproduces the sensations, feelings, and thoughts of the speaker as he or she unselfconsciously perceives the identification. While the poet clearly evokes these traditional identifications, the innocent speaker simply praises the actual shepherd and sheep he or she sees. The speaker, indeed, re-enacts the very perception that gave birth to the biblical symbolism of God as the Shepherd and Christ as the Lamb.

In "The Lamb," the speaker's ambiguous phrase which blurs the distinction between the subject and the object of an activity points to the continuity of the divine, the human, and the natural. The speaker questions the Lamb in the language that reflects catechism:

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.  
By the stream & o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing woolly bright:  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!  
     Little Lamb who made thee  
Dost thou know who made thee  
     Little Lamb I'll tell thee  
     Little Lamb I'll tell thee!  
He is called by thy name,  
For he calls himself a Lamb:  
He is meek & he is mild,  
He became a little child:  
I a child & thou a lamb,  
We are called by his name.  
     Little Lamb God bless thee.  
     Little Lamb God bless thee. (1-20)  
Again, it is not the religious idea pronounced by the speaker but his or her perception that makes this poem deeply religious. In response to W. H. Bateson's explanation that "clothing of delight" means "delightful clothing," Hirsch protests:  
     Surely, though, the lamb both has delightful clothing and is clothed by God with delight: the
phrase tries to identify the actual and the sacramental just as the poem identifies the child and the lamb. (178)

To this astute observation, one could add that the clothing is "delightful" to both the lamb and the child. The child's own experience of delight with the lamb's soft, bright wool is connected to the lamb's delight in its own clothing and God's delight in clothing the lamb. Similarly, in lines 8 and 9, an ambiguous syntax makes obscure the subject of "Making all the vales rejoice": it makes God and the lamb's "tender voice" interchangeable agents of the blessing. Furthermore, the poem embodies the process of transfiguration, for in the very act of such perception and blessing, the speaker partakes in the character of God—the Lamb he or she sings about.

In "A Cradle Song" Blake deliberately creates ambiguity of syntax to render a space in which ordinary distinctions between the subject and the object, the cause and the effect, the wish and the actuality, the past, the present, and the future, the divine and the human, and the literal and the figurative are merged. The awareness of the speaker in this poem is far more comprehensive than that of the child speakers in "The Shepherd" and "The Lamb"; unlike the latter whose knowledge of Christ is limited to his meekness and love, the mother captures his sorrow and purpose of the Incarnation. Indeed, "A Cradle Song" records a process of
deepening and expanding of her perception and consciousness. In the first two stanzas the syntax allows two different readings: imperative or indicative.

Sweet dreams form a shade,
O'er my lovely infants head.
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy silent moony beams.

Sweet sleep with soft down,
Weave thy brows an infant crown,
Sweet sleep Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sweet smiles in the night,
Hover over my delight.
Sweet smiles Mothers smiles
All the livelong night beguiles. (1-12)

The mother may be invoking or wishing sweet dreams or sleep to hover over her child, or she may be simply describing the child's sweet sleep. In the third stanza the same ambiguity continues, yet semantically the lines seem to be descriptive rather than imperative. The regularity and continuity of rhythm in these three stanzas suggest that the speaker herself is unaware of the transition. Indeed, as Heather Glen observes, "the mother's words are at once expressions of hope and statement of facts: they create a world in which
wishes are facts" (Visions 135). Furthermore, in the third stanza, it is not clear to whose smile the speaker refers. The "sweet smiles" of line 9 can be either the mother's, the Angel's, or the child's, and the second "sweet smiles" can be an appositive to "Mothers smiles" or the child's smiles which cause "Mothers smiles." Again, Blake succeeds in rendering the interpersonal relationship and the continuity of different realms, through the deliberate blurring of the cause and the effect or the subject and the object.

At the end of the third stanza with reference to the restorative effect of the child's smiles, which "all the livelong night beguiles," the darker aspect of life on earth is introduced in the poem. In the next stanza, the speaker notes the child's "moans" and "sighs"; despite the epithets "sweet" and "dovelike," the speaker's mind seems increasingly aware of the fallen condition of life, the aspect that needs to be "beguiled" by innocence. The gradual evocation of sufferings to come is exquisitely subtle and delicate, and perhaps is largely working on the subliminal level.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.
Sleep sleep happy child.
All creation slept and smil'd.
Sleep sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.  (13-20)

Clearly it is the epithet "dovelike" that reminds her of the conception of Christ by the Holy Ghost and, by association, the scene of nativity, as a sudden shift to the past tense in "All creation slept and smil'd" suggests. With the recognition of Christ's image in the child, the mother can no longer be beguiled about the fallen world by the sweet smiles of her infant. Instead, the fact of the inevitability of fall and suffering of her child asserts itself and moves her to tears. Moreover, the innocent child's individual suffering to come is confluent with Christ's vicarious suffering for all mankind; as she hears her child's "dovelike moan," the mother undergoes the archetypal experience of the mother of a dying-god, a recurrent archetype in Songs of Innocence. In so doing, she herself re-enacts Christ's sorrow, his weeping for the condition of man in the fallen world.

Stanza six records an amazing inversion of the roles of the mother and the child, the guardian and the guarded, the creator (the mother who gave birth to the child) and the created (the child).

Sweet babe in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe once like thee,
Thy maker lay and wept for me  (21-4)

As the mother's loving perception leads her to recognize in her child an image of the infant Christ, the double vision further leads her to see herself as a recipient of Christ's Redemption. In thus envisioning her child and herself, she is relinquishing her authority over her child and becoming its "creature," just as Christ relinquished his divine authority over man and became an offspring of man. In the next stanza, as her scope of Christ's love expands to the whole created world, the mother, the child, and Christ become essentially interchangeable:

    Wept for me for thee for all,
    When he was an infant small.
    Thou his image ever see,
    Heavenly face that smiles on thee.  (25-8)

Although the mother refers to Christ's face that smiles from heaven on the child, the description "Heavenly face that smiles" is applicable to all three characters. The image of Christ, "heavenly face that smiles," is visible both in the child and the mother: the child's face that reflects Christ's image and the mother's face which smiles on the child with blessing, reflecting Christ's love. Moreover, these two lines also register a perception that simultaneously sees the past, the present, and the future: in the infant's face (the present) the speaker sees the
infant Christ's image (the past) and wishes (and/or states) that her child will always see Christ's image (the future). The mother refers to the infant Christ and his redemption as past events, as evident in the adverb "once" (23) and the past tense used to describe these events; yet as she perceives the infant Christ embodied in her own child's face and venerates the child who is now seen as at once the infant Christ and her own child, past, present, and future merge together. The rift that exists in our ordinary perception, the rift between past, present, and future, is healed, not through transcendence of this world, but through the mother's experience of a dimension of reality in which all three exist at once. And at the same time, the rift between the divine and the human, between the subject and the object, and between the literal and the figurative is equally healed. The final stanza further confirms this sense of continuity:

Smiles on thee on me on all,
Who became an infant small,
Infant smiles are his own smiles.
Heaven & earth to peace beguiles. (29-32)

The mother's repetition that Christ wept "when he was an infant small" and that he "became an infant small" indicates how deeply and inseparably her experience of the divine is rooted in her relationship with the child before her eyes. Thus Blake dramatically represents, through the mother's
benediction on the child, the continuity of the divine and the human and the process of its discovery.

Although on the surface, false logic of the innocent speakers in such songs of innocence as "The Shepherd," "The Little Black Boy," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "Holy Thursday" are indicative of these speakers' limitation, what appears to the reader as confusion is never merely a symptom of faulty reasoning; on a deeper level, the confusion registers the speakers' transcendence over the logic, the rhetoric, and the inexorable causal law which governs the fallen world.

In "The Little Black Boy" both the mother's and the boy's logic is confused. To her child, the mother explains the meaning of the black bodies:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning joy in the noon day

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

(9-20)

In her attempt to explain by means of metaphors, she exchanges positive and negative qualities in the process of transference from the literal to the figurative. The parallelism in stanza three clearly indicates that both light and heat are something all creatures welcome as "comfort" and "joy." Yet in the next stanza, the "beams of love," later specified as "the heat," is portrayed as something we must learn to bear, presumably a metaphor for suffering inherent in life. Furthermore, although blackness absorbs light and heat, the mother compares the black bodies to a protection against the light and heat--"a cloud" and "a shady grove." Thus, the mother's analogical explanation confusedly inverts the meaning of the terms. It is important to note that she makes no reference to the white bodies, and that her explanation concerns exclusively the individual life of a black person. She does not discuss whether blackness is a greater blessing than whiteness, or a heavier burden imposed to encourage the soul to achieve higher integrity than the integrity a lighter burden of whiteness could allow.
Hearing the mother's general explanation, the child, however, applies it to a specific instance of his personal relationship with a "little English boy."

Thus did my mother say and kissed me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me. (21-8)

While the mother never talks of the black bodies in comparison to the white, the child envisions black and white clouds. And although the mother explains that the cloud will vanish when the "souls have learn'd the heat to bear," the child conceives that after the vanishing of clouds, the white boy will still have more learning to do while the black boy is all ready to rejoice round God's tent. Unaware of these contradictions, the boy continues making yet more contradictions. Although the boys' souls are now free from the clouds and hence from their skin colours, the black boy sees the need to change his own colour. The white boy assisted by the black boy learns to bear the heat and spiritually becomes like the black boy, and yet despite the black boy's greater integrity it is the black boy who
becomes like the white boy so that the latter may love the former. Even though both boys have learned to bear the heat and are free from any skin colour, the speaker seems unable to sort out these elements. These confusions show that despite the mother's explanation of the blessing of the black bodies, to her child the dualism of black and white and the dominance of the whites over the blacks, which so deeply grieves him as seen in stanza one, continue even in the realm of God.

In response to Bloom's and Zachary Leader's readings which point out the boy's acceptance of the dualism and the white dominance, Gleckner complains that such readings make this poem "in effect, a song of experience," for the speaker is seen hopelessly trapped in the rhetoric of the establishment ("Little Black Boy" 206). However, the boy's confused logic and uncritical acceptance of the established conceptions do not merely indicate his defeat by experience. While the boy is doomed, lacking power to change society, his selfless voice of love cuts through all the conventional rhetoric and categories he confusedly pronounces. He imaginatively expands the mother's explanation of personal salvation into an explanation of salvation of another, the one who is responsible for the subhuman treatment of the black boy. He envisions not merely his own freedom and joy but freedom and joy with the English boy, as a change made in the mother's generalized expression of line 20 indicates:
"And round the tent of God like lambs we joy." In fact, the black boy is more concerned with assisting of the poor little English boy, who would be woefully unprepared for God's intense beams of love. The confusion concerning the condition of the soul after death stems from the speaker's urgent concern for the English boy. In the entire final stanza, the speaker focuses on how to protect the English boy, by vicariously enduring the heat, and how to support and comfort him, by performing almost a parental act of caring. In loving, forgiving, and vicariously bearing the heat, in spite of, or even because of, the white boy's lack of love, the black boy partakes in the divinity of Christ. Thus although the black boy is unable to see through the false categories of the establishment, powerless to change society, and doomed to the "sub-white" existence, through his confused logic emerges the voice that offers itself for the salvation of the perpetrator of the crime of which he is a victim; the voice transcends, and implicitly subverts, the establishment and its logic.

In "The Chimney Sweeper" the innocent speaker also makes illogical statements, and his moral axiom in the final line points to his sad inability to discern the fallen reality of the world; however, the speaker's seemingly faulty reasoning and understanding in fact derive from his visionary perspective that cannot be neatly contained in ordinary logic. The chimney sweeper introduces himself:
When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue,
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep weep.
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep. (1-4)

The speaker is simply stating facts of his life without protest and without awareness of their brutal implications. Even the last line with "So" is not meant to indict his father or society that allows the inhuman practice but rather meant to indicate logical and natural progression of events, while "the unnaturalness of that progression" stands out for the reader (Glen, "Moral" 36). Nor is the biting indictment of the reader in "So your chimney I sweep" intended by the speaker who has no sense of being exploited. This inability of the speaker to penetrate the surface of social reality starkly contrasts with the visionary perspective he offers to a newly arrived fellow sweeper. While in the first stanza the speaker passively accepts the wretched condition of his life, here he actively redeems the brutality inflicted upon the younger sweeper:

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd, so I said.
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

(5-8)

As Gleckner points out, the speaker's words to Tom reflect more than a mere confusion of logic. In the speaker's
vision, the white hair unspoiled by soot remains on Tom's head (Piper 109). The desire to comfort Tom leads the speaker to see the situation from another angle and envision spiritual hair that replaces the original hair. To the corporeal eye, these sweepers are sub-human, "little black thing[s]" as described in the counterpart song of experience; yet to the innocent speaker's eye, the soot-covered child is a child shining white, untainted by the soot of experience. In perceiving the visionary white hair, the souls of the speaker and Tom are released from the dehumanizing clutches of experience. Furthermore, the visionary white hair is not simply an illusion. If Tom's "head / That curl'd like a lambs back" symbolizes his divine innocence, then, even as he is sold and sacrificed, and his head shorn, he still retains his divine innocence, just as the speaker does. The perception of the unspoiled hair, then, evinces more real, more comprehensive perception of Tom than the corporeal one, which cannot see the invisible yet existing aspects of reality.

As the speaker opens Tom's eye to the visionary dimension of reality, Tom ceases to be upset by the tangible reality of his shorn head and has a "sight" in sleep:

That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,
And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free.
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

(11-20)

Tom's sight roughly repeats the process of visionary
perception the speaker demonstrates in stanza two. Just as
Tom is spared from becoming a "little black thing" and finds
again his unspoiled whiteness, so are the boys locked in
black coffins released and restored in their original "naked
and white" state. The children retain corporeal
concreteness and yet at the same time are transfigured into
children with angelic freedom and power.

In contrast to this luminous vision, the Angel's
promise has a distinct flavour of conventional morality
which welcomes those who are obedient to the social norm, as
"good boys." Indeed, as Harriet Kramer Linkin observes,
while the speaker's own speech is characterized by the
simple or the compound sentence structures, the Angel's
promise is a compound-complex sentence in the subjunctive
mode, not Tom's and the speaker's habitual mode of thinking
and speech (7). This strongly suggests that the Angel's promise does not derive from the same source as that of Tom's and the speaker's visions but is a repetition of the indoctrination Tom received from some adults. The Angel of vision who saves all sweepers, releasing them into an Edenic field, is discordant with the Angel who promises salvation, only if Tom be "a good boy."

Unaware of this discrepancy, both Tom and the speaker are invigorated by the dream and the promise:

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm,
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

(21-4)

The speaker's conclusion for his song is a chilling irony, for what the speaker and Tom have gone through demonstrates that the axiom is far from the truth and will likely be a tool of destruction for them. As Linkin points out, the axiom, in contrast to the speaker's usual simple style of speech, has a sophisticated structure parallel to that of the Angel's promise:

Copying the verbal pattern of the Angel, who uses a conditional to elicit good behaviour from the children, the narrator parrots the subjunctive mode to voice a beadle-like threat: dutiful work promotes the absence of abuse. . . . [T]he new
voice in this last line horrifies the reader by extending a photographic negative of the Angel's hopeful words: promise turned into threats. (7) Thus, by juxtaposing the voice of the institutions and the voice of innocence which embodies the virtues the institutions profess to uphold, Blake exposes the destructiveness of the former and foreshadows the plight of the latter.

Blake's criticisms in *Songs of Innocence* are implicitly expressed and not explicit attack of social corruption as those in the biblical prophetic books and *Experience*; nevertheless, through the juxtaposition of the two voices, he subverts the key concepts of the establishment and exposes its real nature, as do the biblical prophets. The Hebrew prophets recurrently parody sarcastically the key liturgical speeches and subvert the central concepts of Israel's religion. Amos, for instance, reverses a *torah*, or an instruction about sacred matters—"Go into Bethel, bring your sacrificial offerings in the morning": "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning" (Amos 4.4). Or he sarcastically proclaims, "Seek ye me, and ye shall live: but seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal" (5.4-5), parodying another *torah*, "Seek Yahweh and ye shall live, / seek Bethel" (Koch, *Prophets* 1.51). Amos continues:
and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel. (5.5-6)

Bethel and Gilgal are locations of the Israelites' shrines from which God's blessing spreads. In Bethel God says to Jacob:

the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. . . .; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 28.13-4)

And Gilgal, Koch explains,

was the first stage in the promised land, the beginning of the consummation of salvation history in the early period. . . . There was nowhere in the Northern Kingdom where time-hallowed Yahweh worship could be better experienced.

(Prophets 1.52)

But Amos declares that not only is God absent from these places, but they are places of disaster. Amos thus denies the legitimacy of Israel's establishment.
Similarly, Hosea proclaims, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy" (9.1), reversing a psalm "Rejoice, O Israel, for joy." Or in Isaiah, contrary to the Pentateuch, God proclaims that offerings are useless: "Bring no more vain oblations" (1.13). In the pre-exilic prophets from whom we have books of oracles in the Old Testament, the God of Israel, who always has blessed and protected her and defeated her enemy nations, proclaims that he will bring the nations against her. These prophets do not simply castigate symptoms of social corruptions; they overturn the foundation of Israel's institutions as the cause of the corruptions. They attack the traditionally sanctioned understanding of God's way: God's blessing of Israel is not unconditional but depends upon her moral condition, and now contrary to what the priests believe and preach, God will bring her to destruction. Thus, the prophets denounce the religious institution as destructive to the society, as the institution that alienates the people from God.

In the Songs, Blake makes many of the innocent speakers pronounce conventional moral and religious ideas, in order to subvert the way of seeing and thinking that underlies these ideas. As we have seen, all the songs with conventional ideas are marked with a tension between these ideas and the speakers' perception of reality: a tension between the final moral axiom and the chimney sweeper's perception of Tom's unspoiled hair, between the traditional
analogy of God-shepherd-lamb-child and the speaker's perception of the continuity among them in "The Shepherd" and "The Lamb," or between the dualism and hierarchy and the little black boy's expansive perception that includes his own "enemy."

In "Holy Thursday," another poem of implicit social criticism, Blake again focuses on this tension in order to unveil one of the central Christian virtues, charity. On Holy Thursday the charity children attended a service at St. Paul's to celebrate the charity of God and of donors. The innocent speaker is unaware of the implications of the existence of the "multitude" of charity children or the exploitation by their "guardians," and is deeply moved by the sight and sound of the scene. The poem starts with non-figurative description of the scene, but from the third line the speaker's language gradually becomes metaphorical.

Twas on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean  
The children walking two & two in red & blue & green  
Grey headed beadles walkd before with wands as white as snow  
Till into the high dome of Pauls they like Thames waters flow

O what a multitude they seemd these flowers of London town (3-5)
The similes "wands as white as snow" and "like Thames waters flow" and the metaphor "flowers of London town" indicate increasing expansion of the scope of the speaker's perception. The transition of association from "snow" to "waters" and then to "flowers" also seems to underscore the speaker's growing sense of liberation from the rigid "wintry" corporeal vision. From the next line, the children are seen in terms of the biblical imagery, and the whole scene appears with luminosity and a tremendous burst of energy:

Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among
Beneath them sit the aged men wise guardians of the poor
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door (6-12)
In the last stanza the cathedral filled with the multitude of innocent children and their song is transfigured into a heaven, and even the gray-headed beadles are seen in their redeemed state as "wise guardians of the poor." As in "To Spring" in Poetical Sketches, every aspect of the scene figuratively described comprises one coherent and dynamic scene of heaven. This organic character of the transfigured scene suggests that the scene is a literal description of the speaker's vision rather than a mere comparison of the actual to a heavenly scene.

Such a perception of reality finds a precedent in the visions of classical prophets. In chapter 6 of Isaiah, for instance, the prophet describes a vision of the Lord towering over the Temple of Jerusalem:

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (6.1-4)
As Koch points out, this picture is not particularly unique to Isaiah and can be found in the Psalms, in which the Temple as the centre of the earth is the site of the footstool of the divine throne (Ps. 99.5, 132.7) and the spot where Yahweh appears in a rushing wind as the Lord of glory (Ps. 24.7-9) (Prophets 1.109). Yet the experience of Isaiah, Koch explains, differs from that of the ordinary Israelite:

Every participant in the Jerusalem cult was convinced that at the autumn feast on Mount Zion he himself experienced what Isaiah describes here. The only difference is that the prophet's gaze penetrated further than the gaze of the ordinary Israelite. The ordinary man perhaps perceived flames above the altar in the forecourt, and smoke inside the Temple; he was aware of a trisagion—the threefold invocation of God's holiness—which was echoed by the Temple singers, and he "believed" in the God who was present above all this. Isaiah, on the other hand, sees through the smoke the very garment of God; he sees seraphs above and hears celestial singing. The text makes clear in exemplary fashion what prophetic visions were considered to be, according to the prophets' own interpretation. They do not tell of seeing forces beyond this world. What they claim
is a profound vision, a seeing into the depths of the one human and divine reality, a reality in which earth and heaven, far from cleaving apart, belong together in an inseparable unity. A fourth dimension opens up beyond everyday perception.

(Prophets 1.109)

Just as Isaiah penetrates into the profound dimension of the actuality, so does the speaker of "Holy Thursday."

The moral platitude expressed as the conclusion of the song sharply contrasts with the speaker's redeeming perception that reaches the divine potentials of the children and even the beadles. The juxtaposition reveals terrible limitations of both innocence and conventional morality. In comparing the children to "multitudes of lambs," the speaker perceives the divinity of the children and the continuity between lamb, Christ, and children, but is unaware of the irony that these children are indeed sacrificial lambs of the fallen society. Nor is the speaker aware of the ironic truth in the observation that the aged beadles sit "beneath" the children. Blake also exposes the static and reductive way of seeing and thinking that underlies conventional morality, here represented by the final moral. The speaker's dynamic, expansive perception releases the object of perception (children) from the established categories (the poor, the charity children) and creatively draws out the potentials of the children. In
this transfiguring perception, what is perceived with the corporeal eye becomes a portion of the total meaning of the scene.

Thus like the Hebrew prophets Blake attacks the fundamental concepts and view of the established social order, but he uses a different rhetorical strategy. The Hebrew prophets attempt to shock the people into recognition, by taking an aggressive stance and using subversive parodies and abrasive language. Blake in Songs of Innocence aims at the same goal of opening people's eyes but not by sarcastic parodies or straightforward castigation but by the dramatic presentation of the two contrasting voices. In comparing social criticisms in Innocence and Experience, Brian Wilkie observes that Blake's "concern comes through more powerfully in Innocence" than in Experience despite the latter's strong indictment:

The reason is partly that children are portrayed concretely there, in the minute particulars of their lives and visions and not used as occasions for generalizing rhetoric, however well-meant by the personae. Another reason is that our concern with the sufferers in Innocence is naked and our own; it is not expressed for us by speakers who anticipate and articulate our feelings. (128)

Ultimately Blake's aim is to activate, indeed, to resurrect the reader's imagination, the capacity to see the divine and
eternal in the here and now. The reformation he seeks is liberation of our perception from the static way of seeing, a radical transformation of our way of perceiving reality.

The most significant elements of Songs of Innocence for the present study are, first of all, the emergence of a comprehensive vision of the universe, and second, the rendering of this vision by a myth strongly evocative of what is, from a literary point of view, a central motif in classical prophecy, Jerusalem-Israel-Judah's return to her Maker. In Blake's comprehensive vision, the present condition of man and nature is in a state of sleep. Earth, or man and nature, is asleep, separated from her Maker; in the future, however, as in the past, she will be reunited with her Maker, and the world will be transformed into a garden. Such a vast scope in both time and space is neither in Poetical Sketches nor in the songs of the other innocents. Three poems "The Little Girl Lost," "The Little Girl Found," and "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" reveal man's place in the universe on the physical, spiritual, and historical levels, just as the Hebrew prophets, through the extended allegory of Jerusalem (Zion, Israel, or Judah), the bride of the Lord, reveal God's dealing with his people in diverse aspects of their life in past, present, and future.
The twin poems "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found" comprise a prophetic proclamation of Earth's return and the mythic narrative of Lyca and her parents, and it is in the introductory prophecy that Blake for the first time in his poetry presents a vision of cosmic regeneration. The speaker proclaims:

In futurity
I prophetic see,
That the earth from sleep,
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek:
And the desart wild
Become a garden mild.  (1-8)

This prophecy displays two characteristics relevant to the present study. First is the prophet's extraordinary conviction in the power of his words: the earth shall arise and seek, and the desart wild shall become a garden mild. Furthermore, the pun on "grave" in the parenthetical element indicates, as Robert N. Essick and Nelson Hilton show, the prophet-poet-engraver Blake's belief in the power of his art to induce the regeneration of the earth. The line has multiple meanings. If we take the "grave" as adjective used in Miltonic inversion, the line is indicative, meaning that the sentence (Earth shall arise and seek her maker) is grave
(serious) and deep (profound). The line also is a prophetic command to en-grave deeply in the reader's mind the sentence or the prophecy of Earth's awakening. From the etymological associations of grave as noun and verb, (also engrave and graven), to grave is also to dig a grave and to entomb. Hence, to grave the sentence, or the divinely inspired prophetic words, is to entomb the Holy Word, the Messiah, awaiting for the Resurrection. The line also literally describes the process of etching the illuminated songs. The sentence deeply etched in relief will literally arise on the page, offering a vision of regeneration to the beholder: Blake's words are "laid deeply into the ground of the plate to await their sure resurrection in our eyes and minds" (Hilton, Literal 21). The words en-graved arise to awaken our consciousness, activating and partaking of our redeeming perception, and lead us to actualize the future envisioned in the prophecy.

Blake shares his belief in the power of his words with the biblical prophets. A prophetic speech has an effect similar to what linguists call the "performative utterance." Such utterances as "I curse you," "I promise you," and "I forbid you" perform the actions to which the utterances refer. When a prophet proclaims God's words, these words are, as Koch calls it, an "anticipatory speech event," for they will come true and mould history (Prophets 1.71). Thus says the Lord to Jeremiah:
Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. (1.9-10)

And thus says the Lord in Deutro-Isaiah:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (55.10-11)

Unlike the biblical prophets, Blake does not claim magical power of his words; but for him, his poetry has a power to actualize what it proclaims as it engages the reader's imagination and expands his or her consciousness, which then will work to fulfill the proclamation, as I shall discuss in more detail in chapters 4 and 5.

The second characteristic is that by using the metaphor of Earth, Blake offers a vision of regeneration of the total universe, which comprehends past, present, and future, and the natural, the human, and the divine dimensions of reality. The speaker identifies the present condition of man with the state of sleep, the concept which is developed
into Albion's six thousand years' sleep in Blake's major prophecies. The entire history of creation corresponds to a cycle of night and day, and Earth's transfiguration indicates that man's awakening and turning to the Creator, or the creative force, redeems not only the human but also the natural.

Although different in scope, Blake's prophecy in the Lyca poems follows the Hebrew prophecies of earth's return to her Lord. The reunion of God and Jerusalem-Zion-Israel-Judah, who is sometimes addressed as "earth," is from a literary point of view a central image in the classical prophecies. By "earth" the Hebrew prophets do not mean the whole of mankind and nature as does Blake, but specifically the people and/or the land of Israel or Judah, as discussed later in more detail. Nevertheless, despite the difference in scope, in envisioning a restoration of both the people and the land in terms of the reconciliation and reunion of the wayward wife and her Maker, Blake is an heir to the prophets.

The Hebrew prophets repeatedly use personification of Yahweh's people as his wife to reveal the monstrous extent of their unfaithfulness, proclaiming that God has turned or will turn Israel into a wilderness or a garden according to her marital fidelity. In Hosea, for example, God orders the prophet to marry a harlot Gomer so that he may experience and represent symbolically God's relationship with his
adulterous wife Israel. Using Hosea's experience as illustration, God denounces Israel and proclaims punishment in order that she may repent and become faithful again. Then, he will betroth her for ever (1.2-2.23). Throughout the book, Hosea personifies Israel alternately as wife or as child or children of the Lord, to reveal the condition of her relationship with the Lord in past, present, and future: Israel is lost and punished temporarily so as to be reunited with the Lord "for ever" (2.19). Following Hosea, Jeremiah uses the metaphor of wife and children. Jeremiah points out how faithful a wife Israel was to the Lord in the wilderness after the Exodus (2.2) and how unfaithful she has become afterwards. The Lord, therefore, divorces the harlot Israel (3.8). Then, Ezekiel combines the metaphors of wife and child into one: Jerusalem is the orphan baby-girl adopted by the Lord and brought up to become his bride (ch. 16).

Adorned by him, the wretched foundling becomes a "perfect" beauty (16.14) but turns into a harlot. After the proclamation of punishment exactly corresponding to her behaviour, a prophecy of reconciliation, of "everlasting covenant" between her and the Lord, follows (16.60). Similarly, Deutro-Isaiah proclaims Israel's restoration, "For thy Maker is thine husband" (54.5). (From this to the split images of Jerusalem, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," and the Great Whore of Babylon, "Abominations of the Earth," in Revelation is only a matter of course.) It has been
suggested that such sources as the Neoplatonic version of the myths of Persephone, Sleeping Beauty, and the "Romantic archetype" are models for Blake's Lyca poems. These analogues might have influenced Blake, but clearly the chief source of inspiration is the biblical myth of Earth-Israel-Jerusalem's return as, for example, in Hosea 14.1 and Jeremiah 22.29. Later in the "Introduction" to Experience Blake even uses words of these prophets: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. 22.29), and "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God" (Hos. 14.1).

The Hebrew prophets' use of the personification of earth reflects a perception of a particular relationship between man, nature, and the Creator. In the Bible, God, in recounting Jerusalem's harlotry and return, repeatedly points to the fact that he bestowed on his bride both natural and man-made wealth and made her into a fruitful land. When she rebels against him, he takes away all that he has given to her, by making her neighboring nations devour her. But as she is humbled and purified, he will restore her prosperity, giving back her vineyards, orchards, gold, silver, linen, silk, and jewelry. As Walter Brueggemann shows, Israel or earth in the Bible refers to the land, "actual earthly turf" (2) inhabited by the people, rather than to a more generalized sense of "Earth," the planet or the world or mankind (its inhabitant), the last of which is used in Blake's songs. The prophets' scope is
comprehensive; but their focus is firmly on the land of Israel; the issues of land—homelessness, promise and gift of land, exile, and return—are the primary concern of the Bible itself (Brueggemann 2). For the prophets, the gift, destruction, and restoration of Israel depend on the people's moral condition. This correspondence between the land and the people's ethical behavior reflects the prophets' view of the relationship between the natural, the human, and the divine, what Koch terms "concentric monanthropology": that is, human acts are "the focal point" from which disaster and blessing spread all over the land (Prophets 1.13-4). Indeed, all life depends upon human acts; fertility of nature, political, economical, and religious prosperity of the nation, and even God's acts, which are responses to the people's acts, derive from people's ethical behavior. In short, the natural, the human, and the divine are continuous, and there is a constant movement to maintain moral and physical health of all levels of life. Thus, the metaphor of the land including all her inhabitants and their activities and the myth of her turning and returning convey a vision of a total reintegration of every dimension of life.

Blake's version of Earth's return, however, differs from the Hebrew prophets' vision in significant points: his Earth is not an abominably defiled harlot, nor is her separation from her maker conceived as sin or the Fall.
Blake also focuses on meekness of her maker; in comparison, in the Hebrew Prophecies although God does demonstrate his tenderness, mercy, and love, he never fails to castigate and punish violently his adulterous wife. Furthermore, while the regeneration of Jerusalem in the Old Testament is brought about by God through his acts of punishment and salvation, in Blake the regeneration of Earth does not depend upon her maker's action, judgement or salvation. Earth, it seems, will wake up, arise, and seek for the maker by herself. In the metaphor of sleep and awakening, the whole process is presented as something natural, an occurrence morally and spiritually neutral, and the same impression continues in the ensuing narrative of Lyca and her parents despite the description of their grief. Thus, just as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel successively revised their respective predecessors' visions of Israel's apostasy as explained earlier, Blake revised the myth: he naturalized and humanized it by centralizing Earth in the drama of her return and liberating her and her maker from the sin-punishment complex.

The story of Lyca is tantalizingly problematical, and no convincing reading beyond the essential framework suggested by the titles and the introductory prophecy has been, it seems to me, offered yet. Without source hunting, a reading based on internal evidence elicits a rewarding
understanding of the poem, especially of the relationship between the prophecy and the story of Lyca.

The twin poems "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," as well as "The Voice of the Ancient Bard," first appeared among the earliest copies of Songs of Innocence. But Blake later transferred these poems to Songs of Experience when it was first issued, combined with Songs of Innocence in 1794. Since then, although on exceptional occasions "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" appeared in Innocence, the Lyca poems continued to appear in Experience throughout Blake's career. As this transference suggests, the Lyca poems present a transition from innocence to experience and prophesy a recovery of innocence. Lyca shares the characteristics of the innocent speakers of Songs of Innocence. She is selfless, trustful, and spontaneous. But she is also on the verge of sexual awakening, and like the speakers of Experience, she is aware of the conflict between her passion and her parents' view of it. Although she is a "little girl" "seven summers old," in the context of the poem's fairy-tale like world, "seven" seems to indicate a completion of a certain phase, as seven days of the week, and symbolizes the fact that Lyca has reached a new phase of her maturation. The design of the poems' three plates also support this reading. The three figures who correspond to the descriptions of Lyca are all full-grown young women. And in a related poem "A Little Girl Lost," a
"The Little Girl Lost & Found"

The Little Girl Lost

In very early morning, when the sun was up,
And the dew was on the grass,
A little girl was lost,
And the sun was up.

She had tears in her eyes,
And she cried for her mother,
But her mother was a long way off,
And the little girl was lost.

The Little Girl Found

A man in a green cloak,
He found the little girl,
And he took her to his house,
And he gave her bread and milk.

He said to her,
"What is your name?"
And she said,
"I am little girl lost.
I was lost in the woods.
But now I am found, and I am safe."

He said,
"You shall not go home alone.
You shall stay with me.
And I shall teach you to read and write."

And she said,
"Thank you, dear sir."
little girl Ona is a young girl whose sexuality is denounced by her father. As in the Hebrew prophecies, the transition from innocence to experience is thus symbolically represented by a young woman's encountering the conflict between her pursuit of passion and her parents' values, but in Blake's Songs, as becomes evident, the former is superior to the latter.

The narrative of Lyca begins with her lying underneath a tree in a desert. She has wandered long away from her parents; yet her wandering is not a willful rejection of her parents but a result of her spontaneous and fearless following of her passion and her trust in nature, as suggested by the lines, "She had wanderd long, / Hearing wild birds song." Birds in Songs of Innocence consistently symbolize innocent sexual delight as seen in "The Blossom" and "Spring." Also, the design in the first plate of "The Little Girl Lost" supports the reading that Lyca followed "the wild birds song" rather than happened to hear it as she wandered: a young woman, embracing a young man, points up to a bird, as if to lead him to follow the bird for a greater happiness.

A remarkable contrast to the boy in "The Little Boy Lost," Lyca is neither fearful, nor helpless, nor upset about being lost. She is concerned not with herself, her being lost, but with her parents' sorrow:
Sweet sleep come to me
Underneath this tree;
Do father, mother weep--
Where can Lyca sleep.

Lost in desart wild
Is your little child.
How can Lyca sleep,
If her mother weep.

If her heart does ake,
Then let Lyca wake;
If my mother sleep,
Lyca shall not weep.

Frowning frowning night
O'er this desart bright,
Let thy moon arise,
While I close my eyes. (17-32)

Lyca's speech revolves around the conflict between her sleeping and mother's weeping. Sleep is "sweet" and called out "in the manner of a lover" (Leader 186). Sleep in the "desart" seems to symbolize a grown girl's following of passion. As Hirsch puts it, "in her trust she does not feel lost; she feels at home in the 'desart bright'" (223). Her "sweet sleep" in the "desart" is a natural act on her part.
and, in her perception, the cause of sorrow on her parents' part.

Furthermore, Lyca's speech displays a process in which Lyca develops an independent mind of her own distinct from her mother's. In the first three stanzas of the speech, Lyca's and her mother's consciousness are not clearly distinguished. The question "Where can Lyca sleep," for instance, seems to be asked by her parents, or Lyca, or, as Michael Ackland suggests, "her projection of them [her parents' thoughts]" (12). In the next stanza, Lyca refers to herself in the third person, seeing herself from her parents' point of view: she is "your little child" and worries "if her mother weep." In the third stanza, the reference of "her" in "If her heart does ache" can be to Lyca or her mother, as if they share the same heart. It is only in the third line of the stanza, the mother is finally called "my mother," seen from Lyca's point of view. Lyca is now able to see things from her perspective instead of her mother's: she goes beyond the parents' framework. Significantly, the agents of sleeping and weeping are switched at this point as if Lyca's choice of sleeping is no longer an issue: "If my mother sleep, / Lyca shall not weep." Thus, in the next stanza, Lyca is fully settled to surrender to her sweet sleep. Again, a remarkable contrast to other speakers of Songs of Innocence, Lyca, having established her own view distinct from her parents', resorts
neither to a conventional moral axiom nor to hope for a deus ex machina solution as seen in "The Little Boy Found": she chooses her own path beyond the conventional framework.

As Lyca falls asleep, the wild beasts of prey emerge from "caverns deep" and celebrate her visitation. Evidently, it is a sacred event to the beasts, as their ferocity is converted into joyful play and the ground is "hallowd" by her presence.²² Her fearlessness and open trust in nature, uninhibited by conventional morality represented by her parents, is prophetic of universal deliverance of passion now condemned as sin. Thus, Lyca's life begins and foreshadows the total regeneration of the universe, Lyca's life begins and foreshadows the transformation of the "desart" into the garden as proclaimed in the introductory prophecy.

In "The Little Girl Found" Blake reveals the inadequacy of the conventional way of seeing which prevents man from achieving redemption. The poem is about perception; it represents three stages of perception until finally the parents find sleeping Lyca. While they trace the "desart," their perception of reality is largely a projection of their own fear. Thus, the "desarts" are seen to "weep," and in stanzas three and four, the parents, asleep or awake, are controlled by their "fancied image."

Pale thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays,
Famish'd, weeping, weak
With hollow piteous shriek

Rising from unrest,
The trembling woman prest,
With feet of weary woe;
She could no further go. (12-20)

In these lines Blake uses syntactical ambiguity to represent a particular state of the mother's perception. The description of "the fancied image" corresponds to that of the mother as well as of Lyca, and "Famish'd, weeping, weak / With hollow piteous shriek" "Rising from unrest" may refer either to "the fancied image" or to "the trembling woman."
The ambiguity reflects that the mother's perception is a projection of her own state, and suggests that she is unable to see her daughter as an independent being. In the next stanza, the parents or one of the two is said to be "arm'd with sorrow sore," again suggesting an obstructed perception. In this state, they meet a lion:

Turning back was vain,
Soon his heavy mane,
Bore them to the ground;
Then he stalk'd around,

Smelling to his prey. (25-9)
This perception of the beast of prey ready to devour them changes completely when the lion licks their hands:

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise:
And wondering behold,
A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down,
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care. (33-6)

The lion is transfigured into "A spirit arm'd in gold"—because the parents come to "behold" it with "wonder" instead of fear. The fact that they encounter the lion after searching for Lyca for seven days and nights also suggests that the parents have come to a new phase of their search for the lost child, just as Lyca has reached a new phase of her maturation at seven summers old. Indeed, they attain a higher perception of reality. What has been believed to be a devouring beast is now revealed to them a kingly "spirit" who leads them to their lost innocence.

Lyca is found asleep "in [the lion's] palace deep," for despite their achievement of imaginative perception, her parents are yet to achieve an even more liberated way of seeing in order to recognize the meaning of her life. "The Little Girl Found" shows the reader symbolically how the
conventional morality, well-intended and deeply concerned with life as it may be, is unable to see what Lyca's life points to. Even though the parents are consoled and comforted as they come to see Lyca is alive, they are unable to awaken her and reintegrate her in their life, for awakening and retrieving of Lyca involves deliverance of the wild beasts among which she sleeps. The parents, however, are resigned to live with the howling beasts and remain unfulfilled "in a lonely dell." As long as Lyca remains asleep in the "palace deep," the infinity her life points to remains "deep en-graved" and is yet to be resurrected in the parents' mind. And as long as the infinity her life points to remains "the sentence deep en-graved," the infinity Lyca's life points to is yet to be resurrected in the reader's and in mankind's mind. When these happen and Lyca is resurrected, Earth's regeneration is under way, and the lonely dell with howling beasts will be transformed into "a garden mild."24

This reading of the Lyca poems is supported by another prophecy originally in Songs of Innocence, "The Voice of the Ancient Bard." The Bard prophesies the dawn of a new age:

Youth of delight come hither:  
And see the opening morn,  
Image of truth new born.  
Doubt is fled & clouds of reason.  
Dark disputes & artful teasing.
Folly is an endless maze,
Tangled roots perplex her ways,
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead;
And feel they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others when they should be led.

(1-11)

The new era, as the restoration prophesied in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, is characterized by knowledge, understanding, and discernment. The old age is conceived as the age of folly, in which the benighted leaders are at once oppressors of the people and victims trapped in mazes of folly. They are well-intended, wishing to guide others, but their conventional knowledge and way of seeing and thinking only obscure their vision. In the new age, all the mental obstacles are cleared away so that man may recognize truth. Instead of a regeneration in terms of purification of sin, or restoration of a prosperous nation, or miraculous transformation of the world, the Bard envisions the time when man discerns the truth, as symbolized by Lyca's life, by resurrecting the deep, engraved sentence.

The Lyca poems and "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" offer an underlying structure of Songs of Innocence: innocence depicted in it, as symbolized by Lyca, is prophetic of the cosmic regeneration. Innocence will be
inevitably lost in the "desart wild" of experience, but it is not dead: it is asleep and buried deep. But if the world recognizes the divinity and spiritual power of innocence as it is and follows it, then the "desart" will become a garden mild. The framework is indeed subversive, for it turns upside down the hierarchy of the parents and the child and all that hierarchy symbolizes. As such, the Lyca poems in particular can be described as a dramatization of Christ's radical words, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mk 10.15; Lk 18.17).

_Songs of Innocence_ demonstrates the divine appointment of the poet, criticizes the established way of seeing and thinking, and, revising the Judeo-Christian and the Miltonic visions, proclaims the regeneration of Earth. Innocence, despite its limitations, is seen as prophetic of the future, fulfilled state, for innocence partakes in the divine through imaginative perception. Through the juxtaposition of convention and innocence, Blake attempts to activate the reader's imagination to begin the first step towards the total regeneration of man and nature. Blake presents his radically new vision through an equally radically new rhetorical strategy, which makes the book appear to be a collection of innocent lyrics. Nevertheless, in its purpose, scope, components, and revisionary relationship to
its biblical predecessors, *Songs of Innocence* is a book of prophecy.
Notes

1. For the prophecies of Jerusalem-Israel-Judah's loving relationship and reconciliation with her husband-Lord, see, for instance, Isaiah 54.5-8, Jeremiah 2.2-3, 3.1-14, and 31.3-4, and Hosea 2.14-20. Yahweh's people are variously addressed as Jerusalem, Zion, Israel, Judah, Jacob, and earth (that is, the land), among others, and their gender is inconsistent even within a book. Nevertheless, imaginatively seen, Yahweh's people seem to be most powerfully represented by the metaphorical figure of his wife Jerusalem-Israel-Judah as attested by the two polar figures of Revelation, the Great Whore of Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, who capture the evil and good potentials of the people.


3. For the genre of the prophetic call account, see von Rad, Old Testament Theology 2.50-69; Koch, Prophets 1.21-44, 108-113, 2.86-92.

4. Koch feels that the vision of Isaiah in chapter 6 is not the very first vision that the prophet saw. Prophets I.113.


6. A dialogical text presents multiple voices with equal status and is concerned with liberation of the voices. In contrast, a monological text controls multiple voices by subordinating them to a single authoritative voice. See Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics and The Dialogical Imagination.

7. See, for example, "The Little Boy Found" and the stanza three of "On Another's Sorrow," in which the selfless mothers lament for their children's sufferings. For the
archetype of the mother of a dying-god, see Neumann, *The Great Mother*.


9. On the absence of the article before the "little English boy," R. B. Kennedy writes: "The omission of the article before 'little English boy' and of the verb in the next line suggests that Blake may be using a touch of pidgin English. There was already a convention that Africans spoke like this." Kennedy, notes, *William Blake* 148.

10. See my discussion of "To Spring" in Ch. 1. 25-29.

11. The motif of Jerusalem-Zion-Israel-Judah's return to her Maker or the reconciliation of God and His people which brings about harmonious existence to both the people and the land can be found, in variants, in many classical prophecies. One could see, for instance, the final vision of Revelation—the marriage of the Lamb and New Jerusalem—as the culmination of this recurrent motif. See also 135n.1.

12. All three poems belong to *Experience* in Blake's final arrangement, but since this study is to trace his development, here they are considered as part of *Innocence* as originally grouped.

13. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* 208; Hilton,
Literal Imagination 20-21. For the ensuing explication of the line, I am indebted to Hilton.

14. See also, for instance, Ezekiel chapters 20 and 23.


16. In these addresses, both Jeremiah and Hosea refer to the land of Israel rather than the planet Earth.

Another obvious source of inspiration is the Biblical motif of a transformation of a desert into a garden as in Isaiah 11 and 35 and Deutro-Isaiah 51.3.

17. See, for instance, Deutro-Isaiah 51.3.
18. This revision, of course, is in accord with the Romantic movement of internalization, humanization, and naturalization of the traditional scheme, as M. H. Abrams shows in his *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (NY, 1971).

19. For the publication history, see Erdman's textual notes in E 790-1 and 800. Another poem "The Schoolboy" also transferred from *Innocence* was not moved to *Experience* for some time.

20. See the illustrations 1, 2, and 3. The Illustrations are reproduced from Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 76-8.

21. See the design and commentary by Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 76.

22. For an illuminating discussion of the relationship between innocence and play, see Glen, *Vision* ch. 4.

23. The two possible Greek roots for *Lyca* also support this reading. As Raine and Stuart Peterfreund respectively suggest, *Lyca* may have derived from *luke*, "light" (Raine, "Little Girl" 26n), or *laikas*, "a harlot" (Peterfreund 134). *Luke* is an old term whose root meaning may have included "light" from which other words that mean "light" derived. *Laikas* is also an old term. *Laikas* is a more likely etymology, but in naming Lyca, Blake might be thinking of both
roots. From the point of view of conventional morality, following passion makes her a lost woman, "a harlot," but from Blake's point of view, she is a "light" to the world. Another Greek root "she-wolf" has been suggested, but Damon (Philosophy 279) and Peterfreund (134) respectively point out this etymology contradicts line 51 of "Found": the parents of a "she-wolf" have no reason to fear "wolvish howl."

24. Blake's allusion to the story of Una in The Faerie Queene also supports this reading. Among all other possible sources and analogues, Una and her lion protector parallel Lyca and the lion most closely in characterization, action, situation, and imagery. Una, or One Truth, is an unblemished virgin whose heavenly grace astounds the beholders and hallows the grounds she stands on. In Book I, canto iii, like Lyca, Una is alone wandering in "desert Wyde" (10.1), and yet is "she of nought affray'd" (3.7). As she lies in a shade, which her grace illuminates, "a ramping lyon" comes forth but, amazed at the sight of the heavenly beauty, forgets his fury. The lion becomes her guard, and "when she slept, he kept both watch and ward" (9.5).

More important than her relationship with the lion and her situation in the desert, however, Una's role in Book I as a whole illuminates Lyca's role. Una, as we recall, is the only child of the king and queen in the land of Eden, and allegorically the pair is Adam and Eve. With Red Cross
Knight, Una is on a mission to rescue Adam and Eve, who are beseiged by a dragon. As the parents are freed from their bondage and reunited with their daughter, order and prosperity are restored to the ravaged land of Eden. In Blake, too, although it is the parents who set out to rescue their daughter, on the spiritual level, it is clearly the daughter who holds the key to the parents' regeneration. Thus, by alluding to Una and her lion, Blake seems to point to the role of Lyca in the restoration of Eden.

Una and her lion as a possible source of Lyca and the lion is first pointed out by Damon (Philosophy 279), and since then referred to passingly by Chayes, Ackland, and Grecó among others, and discussed most extensively by Wagenknecht. On the ground of cantos two and three and without reference to the significance of Una's parentage and mission, Wagenknecht focuses on "the archetypal encounter between lion and virgin" in Spenser and Blake, which for him "represents a pastoral fiction, mediating between chastity and passion, in which dependent virgin and her devouring lion lie down together, each without losing his essential identity" (123). Wagenknecht contends that Lyca, who tries "to make it [the Female Will] good in Generation" (127), is Blake's revision of Una, who is the "Devourer" and represents the Female Will of "the courtly love tradition and worship of the Virgin" (125). His focus of the connection betweenUna and Lyca differs from mine.
25. The prophets castigate Israel (e.g. Hos. 4.1-6, Isa. 1.3ff, and Jer. 3.15) or envision her regeneration (e.g. Isa. 11.9, Jer. 31.31ff, and Ezek. 36.26ff) in terms of knowledge of God.
CHAPTER III

Songs of Experience

In *Songs of Experience* Blake employs the Bard who hears the Holy Word to present all the songs. In contrast to the Piper in *Innocence*, the Bard is keenly aware of his calling and the truth of his vision. The Bard has close affinity with the writing prophets, in proclaiming his divine authority and addressing Earth to return to the Creator. Besides the Bard, *Songs of Experience* has two kinds of direct speakers. The first comprises the speakers who, like the Bard, reveal the hidden reality in oracular voices. Some of these speakers may well be the Bard himself. The second comprises those who are trapped in experience and have no perspective that transcends it. Despite these disparate kinds of speakers, all songs are informed by the Bard's lucid awareness of the life-negating forces that undermine mankind from within. The Bard uses either the prophetic speakers to reveal directly the diseased state of experience or the lapsed speakers to display dramatically the workings of the mind bound in manacles that it has forged for itself.

Earlier critics saw in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* the dialectic of innocence versus experience progressing into a higher, or organized, innocence; however, recent critics tend to argue that Blake affirms the innocent speakers but is critical towards all the experienced
speakers. For these critics, the experienced speakers, be they the oppressors, the oppressed, or the critics of the oppression, lack the imaginative engagement with the world, the engagement which the innocent speakers display. These critics, however, fail to recognize the genre of the critical songs and Blake's design of *Songs of Experience* as a whole. *Songs of Experience* is informed by a prophetic purpose and perception: the purpose of awakening Earth from her sleep and the perception of the disastrous state of man and society. Furthermore, *Experience* attempts to reveal the traditional Judeo-Christian view of God, man, and reality to be, according to the poet, the chief illusion that prevents man from wakening: *Experience* reveals a new theology. As such, like *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, despite its appearance as a collection of lyrics, is a book of prophecy.

Unlike the "Introduction" to *Innocence*, the "Introduction" to *Experience* does not directly record the scene of the prophet's call; nevertheless, the poem implicitly serves as the prophetic call of the Bard. The Bard's "Introduction" explicitly has none of the four components of the biblical genre of the prophetic call—the visions, the commissioning, the encounter with the divine, and the fortifying of the prophet against the earthly powers; however, in an indirect and implicit fashion, all
the components except the last are recognizable in his poem. In authenticating prophethood, while the Piper simply recounts the scene of his calling without offering interpretation of his experience, the Bard declares his qualifications as a prophet:

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

Calling the lapsed Soul
And weeping in the evening dew:
That might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew! (1-10)

He first justifies his authority by appealing to his comprehensive vision of time and space (Eden and the present fallen world) and his source of inspiration—the Holy Word. The declaration that the Bard has heard the Holy Word serves as the commissioning and the encounter with the divine, and the declaration that he sees "Present, Past, & Future" and, as becomes evident, his language that embodies his visionary perception serves as the vision. In contrast to the Piper's account which shows no awareness of the weight of his
mission, the Bard's proclamation is marked with his awareness of his role and authority.

Although some critics feel that the Bard is an unreliable seer, if not a deluded Urizenic figure, Blake clearly meant his Bard to be as authentic a prophet as the Piper. In Bloom's view, for instance, the tenses in lines three and five ("have heard" and "walk'd") indicate that the Bard is a false prophet who does not hear the living Holy Word now (Apocalypse 130-2). The non-present tenses, however, need not discredit the Bard's authenticity. Just as the classical prophets indicate what inaugurated their career in the past tense, the Bard simply indicates what has made him a divine prophet: he has heard the Holy Word in his vision of Eden after the lapse of the Soul. Another critic, following Leavis, suggests that Blake undercuts the speaker by using the term "Bard": the Bard and the Holy Word heard by him are associated with Druidism rather than Christ-Logos (Leader 133-46). Yet the fact that we find in the opening song of Milton the same image of Christ as the Holy Word, walking upon the ancient land, should suffice to show that the image of the divine in the "ancient" land is not necessarily negative to Blake. Indeed, this image is crucial in his later prophecies. Also, the persona of the Bard is appropriate for songs of experience, as is the persona of the shepherd-piper for innocence. The two personae are employed to correspond to the worlds they
prophetically see, one Edenic in the midst of the chartered
England and the other hellish in the midst of the rich,
fruitful land. In fact, it is entirely fitting that the
term "the Bard" is used, precisely because it is associated
with "a Dark Age of religious and military barbarism," as
Leader puts it, for such is the world the Bard sees and
attempts to reform (139). If the scene in which the Holy
Word walked among ancient trees appears "Druidic" and non-
Christian, perhaps that is precisely what Blake intended,
since he is walking in the fallen garden now transformed
into the Druidic forest and since Blake is revising Judeo-
Christian views.

Furthermore, the syntactical ambiguities in stanzas two
to four embody the Bard's visionary perception and justify
his divine authority: the Bard is not merely asserting his
visionary power but does experience visions. A majority of
critics think that the subject of "calling" and "weeping" is
the Holy Word, for the lines 5 to 7 echo the description of
the Lord God's action in Genesis 3.8-9:

   And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking
in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and
his wife hid themselves from the presence of the
Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the
Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him,
Where art thou?
The lines also echo *Paradise Lost* Book X, in which the Son descends to the Garden of Eden in the "Ev'ning cool" (PL 10.95):

Came the mild Judge and Intercessor both
To sentence Man: the voice of God they heard
Now walking in the Garden, by soft winds
Brought to thir Ears, while day declin'd, they heard,
And from his presence hid themselves among
The thickest Trees, both Man and Wife, till God Approaching, thus to Adam call'd aloud.
Where art thou Adam, wont with joy to meet
My coming seen far off? I miss thee here,
Not pleas'd, thus entertain'd with solitude,
Where obvious duty erewhile appear'd unsought.

(PL 10.96-106)

Blake clearly draws upon both versions of the garden scene for the image of the divine who calls the fallen soul. The "calling" and "weeping," however, also refer to the Bard both syntactically and semantically: he, too, in the dewy evening land calls the lapsed Soul in deeply pained tone, as the bearer of the Holy Word. "Calling" and "weeping" then refer to both the Holy Word in Eden at the time of the lapse and the Bard much later in history. Blake deliberately uses this syntactical ambiguity to render the fusion of the two moments of history thousands years apart into a single moment, as the Bard at once recalls the Holy Word and re-
enacts his action. Thus the Bard's declaration that he sees "Present, Past, & Future" is fully authenticated by the vision he presents.

The name and characterization of God seem to indicate that Blake follows Milton's version that Christ, not Jehovah, called man after the Fall. Although in character the Holy Word is certainly closer to Milton's Messiah than to the Lord God of Genesis, Blake's Holy Word differs significantly from the Miltonic "mild Judge," as Northrop Frye points out:

Neither in the Biblical story nor in Paradise Lost where we might expect it, do we get much sense of Christ as deeply moved by man's fate, except in theory. Blake is making a much more definite identification than Milton does of Adam's "gracious Judge, without revile" with the Jesus of the Gospels who wept over the death of man as typified in Lazarus. ("Blake's Introduction" 59)

In fact, the Bard, who has actually heard the Holy Word, attempts to correct both the biblical and the Miltonic views of the Creator of Earth as her "judge," whether he be mild or not. Milton's "mild judge" "call'd aloud" "Adam" and, after reminding him of his "obvious duty," gave the same sentence as that of the Lord God in Genesis, although, like the Lord God in Genesis 3.15, the Messiah through Michael gave the promise of future salvation to Adam. In contrast
to such an authoritarian image in the Bible and Milton, the Holy Word weeps for Earth in the garden now transformed into dewy land and, through his prophet the Bard, calls her to return to him in a deeply wounded tone of voice:

O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv'n thee till the break of day. (11-20)

Indeed, in his address to Earth rather than to man or Adam and in his wooing manner of address, the Holy Word has a much stronger affinity with a divine image revealed in the classical prophecies than with the Christ who weeps over Lazarus, or with the Messiah in Paradise Lost. The Holy Word resembles the loving and anguish God who is the husband of the adulterous Israel and is the father of the wayward child Israel: he is characterized by the loving aspects of God in the classical prophecies. Critics tend to neglect this loving aspect of God in the Old Testament, all too easily identifying him with the other aspect, the
wrathful lawgiver, who relentlessly castigates and punishes. Blake focuses on God as the loving maker whereas the divine love in the Old Testament is often manifested as the wrathful acts of purification. In the "Introduction" Blake is presenting a new theology.

Another syntactical ambiguity in stanza two, the ambiguity of the subject of "controll" and "renew," also reflects the prophetic perception of the Bard. The grammatical subject of these two acts may be the Holy Word, the Bard, or the "laps'd Soul." Judging from the address to Earth in the ensuing stanzas, semantically the acts seem to belong to her rather than to the Bard or the Holy Word. As in the Lyca poems, the regeneration of Earth is seen dependent on her returning rather than the Holy Word's act of restoration. Earth is to "arise from out the dewy grass" to regain her Edenic state by turning to the Holy Word and by recognizing that "the starry floor" and "the watry shore" are providentially given to be controlled by her. In the light of this address, then, Earth is the one "that might controll / The starry pole; / And fallen fallen light renew." Blake's use of the biblical expression "return" and "turn away" (11, 16, 17) also reflects his view of Earth's capacity to move towards regeneration. In Hebrew, "turning" and "returning," or "turning away" and "turning to," are the same word shuv. Like the Hebrew prophets, Blake in this poem uses the expression to suggest that in the very freedom
of Earth to turn away lies her freedom to turn to the Holy Word. Blake, using the "return" and the "turn away" in syntactically parallel positions (11 & 17), emphasizes Earth's capacity to reverse the condition she is in: by answering the call of the Holy Word, she will be able to become a garden again.

The agent of controlling and renewing is, however, ultimately left ambiguous by Blake so that while he stresses Earth's capacity, he can also point out that her self-regeneration is at once her own act, her Creator's, and his prophet's. As in the Lyca poems, in making Earth or "the lapsed Soul" a central force of her own regeneration, the poem displays the distinctive view of the universe that is called concentric monanthropology: man's spiritual condition is the centre of the universe, and all levels of reality live in response to his condition. As such, Earth's and the Holy Word's actions are interlocked, and indeed her regeneration occurs as the result of her reunion with him. The syntactical ambiguity which allows both the Holy Word and Earth to be the subjects of a single action suggests that the moment she turns to him, she will be reunited with him as his bride, and restored to the Edenic state, as she rises "from out the dewy grass" (emphasis added). Blake deliberately avoids saying that either the Holy Word or the lapsed Soul might restore the world, for the action of the one simultaneously involves the action of the other.
Essentially, the two actions are one. Furthermore, the Bard, too, is another possible subject of "controll" and "renew": as in "The Little Girl Lost," his prophetic words, like those of the Hebrew prophets, have the power to mould history in so far as they constitute an anticipatory speech event. In revealing the divine truth, correcting illusion, and activating Earth's and the reader's imagination, the Bard "might controll the starry pole" and "renew" fallen light. Thus, the ambiguity embodies a radical perception of the prophetic words and of the relationship between the divine, the human, and the natural. The Bard's prophethood is justified not so much by his declaration of it as by his power to perceive the Holy Word both in the past and the present--the power that transcends the barriers of time and space--and by his power to make words an action that fulfills itself.

Moreover, the poem conveys the Bard's extraordinary sense of mission. The Bard singlehandedly calls Earth to return to the Holy Word even though he clearly sees her rejection in present and in future, as evident in the ambiguity of the "wilt," which could indicate future tense or present willfulness, in his question, "Why wilt thou turn away." The Bard is identified with the Holy Word he bears, and his voice is marked with profound sadness, for he discerns the suffering of Earth and her inability to recognize her potential. As in the Lyca poems, with neither
denunciation nor reference to sins, he urges her to arise and return from her lapse in the watery shore and the starry floor by controlling these providential gifts.

Blake in *Experience* presents a comprehensive vision of the universe through the myth of Earth's return. The myth in the "Introduction" is in accord with that in the Lyca poems. In both poems, the divine is seen in the benevolent image of "her maker meek," to whom she is to return by rising from her sleep. Her "lapse" is seen as morally and spiritually neutral, and hence there is no castigation by the divine or the prophet. She has the freedom and power to regenerate herself, rather than being a purely passive recipient of the divine salvation. This centrality of Earth in turn suggests the underlying assumption of concentric monanthropology, the continuity of the human, the natural, and the divine. Furthermore, her awakening and return is conceived in terms of discerning truth and casting off illusory ways of seeing reality. In *Songs of Experience*, Blake further develops this myth of Earth. Probably for the first time in the biblical prophetic tradition in English literature, Earth is given a voice of her own to protest against the Creator. Blake shows that Earth's perception of reality is in direct conflict with the Bard's, and suggests that the image of God as a forbidding lawgiver and
judge is an illusion--the "cruel, jealous, selfish" image invented by "the ancient men."

"Earth's Answer" displays that Earth hears but understands not, sees but perceives not. Her echoing of the Bard's words suggests that she hears him and sees what he refers to--the starry floor and the watery shore. But out of these elements she constructs a totally different picture of reality. The condition of Earth depicted in the first stanza is far bleaker than her image evoked in the "Introduction." In contrast to the land with "dewy grass" on the verge of dawn, Earth is a frozen land of stone and frost-covered grass in complete darkness.

\[
\text{Earth rais'd up her head,} \\
\text{From the darkness dread & drear.} \\
\text{Her light fled:} \\
\text{Stony dread!} \\
\text{And her locks cover'd with grey despair.} \\
(1-5)
\]

In direct rejection of the Bard's address that the watery shore and the starry floor are providentially given to her and subject to her will, Earth complains that she is bound to them by the Creator.

\[
\text{Prison'd on watry shore} \\
\text{Starry Jealousy does keep my den} \\
\text{Cold and hoar}
\]
Weeping o'er
I hear the Father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower?
Sow by night?
Or the ploughman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound. (6-25)

In the second stanza, again Blake uses grammatical ambiguities to embody the perception of Earth that binds her in the lapsed state. Syntactically, "cold and hoar" and "Weeping o'er" may refer to "Starry jealousy" or "I [Earth]," and semantically, too, both subjects fit the descriptions. In the "Introduction" the Holy Word, as well
as the Bard, is said to be weeping, and Earth's term "the Father of the ancient men" evokes the image of an old man "cold and hoar." In the same way, "Prison'd on watry shore" can modify either "Starry jealousy" or "I." While Earth clearly intends to accuse "the Father of the ancient men" of her imprisonment and wretched condition, these ambiguities reveal that the image of the divine she presents is a projection of her own state, or that she is possessed by the image she believes to be the divine. Although the jealous Father imprisons her on the watery shore, in perceiving the divine as such, she, too, imprisons the divine, that is, her conception of the divine, on the watery shore and keeps him "cold and hoar."

Besides these ambiguities, the fact that both Earth and the Creator are transformed into the old figures from the more youthful figures evoked in the "Introduction" suggests that the condition of the one simultaneously involves the condition of the other. While the Holy Word of the "Introduction" is the husband figure to Earth, who still has "dewy grass," in "Earth's Answer" he is aged into the hoary "Father of the ancient men," who imprisons Earth whose grass has turned into the locks of grey despair. When the divine is perceived as the hoary, cruel father rather than the loving husband, the relationship between Earth and the Divine is inevitably altered into the binding hierarchical one. Blake fuses the subject and the object, the cause and
the effect, and the oppressor and the oppressed in these ambiguities, in order to reveal that the lapsed state is a mutual creation by Earth and "the Father of the ancient men" she is led to believe is God.

Earth, as if to challenge the Bard who proclaims his having "heard the Holy Word," claims to "hear" "the Father of the ancient men" forbid love and joy natural to Earth. The image of the Creator she offers is a direct opposite to the image offered by the Bard. Indeed, the father of the ancient men, the jealous God, is the aspect of God from which Blake separates the Holy Word. In the Hebrew prophecies, God condemns Israel's harlotry, the metaphor of the Israelites' worship of the pagan gods, which sometimes included temple prostitution, and severely punishes her, demanding absolute obedience for the sake of her own salvation. This wrathful, castigating, and demanding aspect of God, totally removed from his love and larger purpose of salvation, appears to Earth as "cruel, jealous, [and] selfish." What Earth holds to be God is not the real God, the Holy Word, but what Blake regards as the false image of the divine invented by "the ancient men" and fostered by established religion ever since. The cause of her lapse from the Edenic condition, in which love and joy are celebrated, is, in Blake's view, this mistaking of the false image for the real. Despite other alterations in the arrangement of the plates in Songs of Innocence and of
Experience, Blake never separated the "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer." By juxtaposing the Bard's and Earth's views Blake attempts to reveal what he sees as the true state of affairs concerning man, nature, and God in the lapsed universe.

In "The Garden of Love," "A Little Boy Lost," and "A Little Girl Lost," Blake symbolically presents the process of the lapse from the Edenic state: in these poems Blake reveals what he believes as the true account of the Fall of man. "The Garden of Love" describes how organized religion turns "the Garden of Love / That so many sweet flowers bore" (7-8) into a graveyard filled with tomb-stones where flowers should be:

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
   And binding with briars, my joys & desires. (10-12)

The poem revises the account of the Fall in Genesis and Paradise Lost; it reveals that the priests, not the Creator, forbid and bind natural spontaneous joys and desires of man and transform the Garden into the land of death. Yet the priests are not the only culprit of this transformation, for the speaker's joys and desires are bound precisely because he accepts the law, "Thou shalt not."

In "A Little Girl Lost," the Bard shows how the mind that has accepted this law can cause others to fall. The poem, like the related song "The Little Girl Lost," begins
with an introductory prophecy followed by a story of Ona and "her father white." The Bard's denunciation of his age that regards love as "a crime" indicates that the Bard sees love and its repression in essentially the same way as Earth does in her "Answer," but unlike her, he attributes the source of repression not to God but to man-made morality. Like "The Garden of Love," the account of the Fall of Ona replaces the accounts of the Fall of man as depicted in Genesis and Paradise Lost and suggests that the conventional morality derived from "the holy book" is the true source of the Fall. The poem is set parallel to these accounts:

In the Age of Gold,
Free from winters cold:
Youth and maiden bright,
To the holy light,
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair
Fill'd with softest care:
Met in garden bright,
Where the holy light,
Had just removd the curtains of the night.

There in rising day,
On the grass they play:
Parents were afar:
Strangers came not near:
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet
They agree to meet,
When the silent sleep
Waves o'er heavens deep
And the weary tired wanderers weep. (5-24)

The garden illuminated by "the holy light" and the pair's innocence and naked glory parallel the image of the unfallen Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Unlike them, however, the maiden and youth are not the primogenitors of mankind; they have their parents, and fear strangers' presence, as the pair make love "in rising day." Nor is the world without care and tears as seen in line 24. The Age of Gold in this poem, then, is a state of mind of the lovers who are yet free from the clutches of social codes. The pair's fear of parents and strangers, however, proves to be valid.

To her father white
Came the maiden bright:
But his loving look,
Like the holy book,
All her tender limbs with terror shook.

Oho! pale and weak!
To thy father speak:
O the trembling fear!
O the dismal care!

That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair

(25-34)

When she comes to her father, she is still an unfallen "maiden bright"; but guilt and fear are imposed upon her, as he denounces her spontaneous love and delight. The comparison of his look to "the holy book" suggests that his thoughts and emotions are moulded according to the morality projected by the book. While "the holy light" of nature blesses the lovers, "the holy book" perpetrates their Fall. Furthermore, his speech which is solely concerned with his own fear and care reveals that possessiveness, jealousy, and selfishness are the true motives of the morality of "the holy book."

The story of Ona differs from Blake's predecessors' visions in three significant areas. First, man did not fall by eating the forbidden fruit. Second, the Creator neither forbids nor punishes man. In fact, the story of his forbidding and punishment is, the poem implies, a false account projected by "the holy book" and motivated by jealousy and selfishness. Blake distinguishes the Holy Word from the forbidding God invented as a function of organized religion to control man. Finally, the story reveals that there has never been such an event as the Fall of man that caused the divine punishment and binds man to the fallen
condition of life. The fact that Ona with her possessive, selfish father, in the world where cares and tears exist, can still be innocent and live happily in the Age of Gold interprets the Fall as a state of mind rather than the historical event that determined the destiny of mankind. Like the morality and the image of a forbidding God, the concept of the Fall is an invention which unnecessarily binds man to the lapsed condition. When Earth recognizes the Holy Word contradistinguished from this deified morality, she will be liberated from the bondage and be reunited with her maker.

The loving Creator, however, is not the only true image of the divine Blake reveals in Experience; in "The Tyger" he offers the image of the Creator as dreadful, powerful, ambivalent, and unfathomable. This awe-inspiring image nevertheless essentially differs from the cruel, jealous, selfish "Father of the ancient men," who binds Earth in "Earth's Answer," and from the God of the Old Testament who violently punishes the sinful in order to purify Israel.

*Songs of Experience* presents two kinds of destructive force. The first causes Earth's lapse from the Edenic state: the repressive power of established religion and conventional morality, attacked in almost all the songs of Experience. Invented and fostered by man, this power, symbolized by the image of the jealous, punishing God,
causes sickness among its believers as exemplified in "The Sick Rose," by perverting natural spontaneous joys and desires. The operation of this power involves moral law and the sin-punishment complex. In short, this power, opposing passion, negates life.

The second is represented in "The Tyger." In contrast to the first kind, the destructive force of the tiger is natural expression of the tiger's passion, and has nothing to do with the sin-punishment complex. This power is morally neutral and not a power of vengeance: the tiger would destroy regardless of the victim's moral condition. Despite the destructive effect, the purpose of this power is not negation of life any more than other creatures' feeding on any organisms for maintenance of life. The tiger's power represents the cosmic energy of destruction necessary for renewal of life and for any creative activity.

This ambiguity—destruction necessary for creation—is also embodied in the description of the creator-smith's work in "The Tyger":

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? (1-24)

The description presents at once the images of destruction and creation. The creator-smith is framing, burning, seizing, twisting, grasping, clasping with dreadful power and shaping with the fire, the hammer, the chain, and the
anvil. And the constant pounding rhythm suggests his powerful beating of the tiger throughout its creation. In the fourth stanza, the creator is imagined to clasp the tiger's "deadly terrors": paradoxically the new life created is an agent of death. In the problematical first two lines of the next stanza, the imagery of the defeat of the army of stars suggests the destruction of the establishment. The stars in Songs of Experience are associated with established religion and the illusory view of reality it projects. In "Earth's Answer" the "Starry Jealousy" of the Father of the ancient men imprisons Earth, but the Bard in the "Introduction" reveals that she will be released from the imprisonment when she realizes her ability to control the "starry floor" and the "watry shore." The lines in "The Tyger" also evoke the fall of the Angel in Paradise Lost, the event which precedes the Creation of the world by the Messiah. Thus, the defeat of the stars symbolically refers to the destruction that prepares for the creation. Indeed, this ambiguity is the heart of the poem. The poem consists entirely of questions, and these questions revolve around the ambiguity that lies in the creation of the destructive force. Furthermore, this ambiguity implicitly points to the more fundamental ambiguity: inherent in creation is destruction. Any creation, in giving a new form to the existent material, destroys its old form, and in offering a fresh perspective on reality, destroys the already existent
perspectives. Informed by the powerful critical spirit and creative perception, Blake's poems are at once the creation of a new vision of life and the destruction of the status quo. Thus, by revealing the paradox of creation, Blake distinguishes what he regards as the true image of the awe-inspiring powerful and imaginative Creator from the illusory, life-negating image of God as law-giver he sees in Genesis and Paradise Lost.

Crucial to our understanding of "The Tyger" are the character of the speaker and Blake's attitude towards him. Critics such as Hazard Adams and Bloom contend that Blake heavily undercuts the speaker, and that the illusory view of the speaker is the highlight of the poem. Adams, on the ground of Blake's earlier drafts, suggests that the speaker is a deluded "Urizenic questioner," and Bloom identifies the speaker as "The Bard of Experience in mental darkness," who in self-induced fear and frenzy creates the dreadful image of the tiger and its creator. The critics who agree with this ironic view of the speaker usually point to the discrepancy between the fearful image of the tiger in the text and the poem's design that shows a not-at-all-fearful picture of a tiger. In addition, his inability to answer his questions, his view of the creator as dreadful and distant, and his fragmented image of the creator are cited as the evidence of his fallen state. Although he imagines that the creator has eyes, wings, hands, shoulders, and
feet, the speaker seems unable to envision the whole image. This limitation, however, does not necessarily make him the target of Blake's criticism. As I hope to demonstrate, the speaker of "The Tyger" displays the characteristics quite opposite to the deluded speakers of other songs of Experience. He is limited, just as the speaker of "The Lamb" is limited: in both cases the limitations are evident but not brought to the fore.

The speaker of "The Tyger" is characterized by his daring critical spirit and creativity; in envisioning the creation of the tiger and inquiring about the creator, the speaker, like the speaker of "The Lamb," re-enacts the creator's act and partakes of the divinity. In contrast to the innocent speaker who unquestioningly accepts the traditional image of the Creator, the experienced speaker aspires to know him beyond it, with the wings of his visionary power, alternately gazing at the tiger and envisioning the creator at work. In gazing at the tiger, however, the speaker is not merely observing a corporeal tiger but perceiving its visionary form; he is discerning the form of the tiger which the Creator framed and which remains the tiger's eternal identity--its fearful symmetry. In discerning it in the tiger, the speaker, like the creator, is daring to frame the fearful symmetry of the tiger. In envisioning the creator, the speaker presents the image that differs from the traditional Judeo-Christian
image. The creator of the tiger is a blacksmith, and his method of creation—smithery—is not in accord with those in Genesis and Paradise Lost. Also, as Gillham observes in the second stanza, the tiger's creator "might be a subordinate being using materials taken with great daring from remote and dangerous parts of an already existent universe" rather than *ex nihilo* (7): the creator is said to "aspire"—which suggests that he is not perfect in himself, and he is imagined to seize the fire that does not seem part of his creation. In addition, the defeat of the army of the stars in stanza 5 refers to an event not in the Bible, though evocative of the fall of the Angels in Paradise Lost. The speaker's visions of the tiger and its creator parallel the creator's unsettling art.

The speaker also shares the ambiguity of the creator. As mentioned earlier, the speaker's questions, which comprise the entire poem, centre on the ambiguity that destruction is inherent in creation. The ambiguity is not only the theme of the questions but also the nature of the questions: the questions are at once destructive and creative. Destructive in their critical spirit, the questions deconstruct the established framework; creative in their pursuit of knowledge, they attempt to construct the tiger's visionary form and the scene of its formation. The speaker's visionary power partakes of the creator's power, and the poem—with its beauty, power, ambiguity, scope, and
fearful symmetry—partakes of the tiger and its creator.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, the speaker’s powerful vision penetrates the surface of reality and implicitly replaces what Blake regards as the illusory view of the destructive aspect of God propagated by established religion, in order to show truth about the creator: by making the speaker reflect the character of the creator, Blake reveals, in his view, the truth about the destructive image of God.

Blake’s new theology shown in the above poems revises the traditional Judeo-Christian theology. The Creator in Blake’s vision has these two contrary aspects—the profoundly sympathetic lover of Earth who does not punish the beloved, and the awesome creator of the destructive power the tiger, the power which has no moral implications. While the Bible presents God as law-giver, Blake insists that God in fact is not a law-giver who plans to save man by demanding obedience to him and his law. For Blake, the law, the sin-punishment complex, and the image of the stern God originated not from God himself but from the ancient men. Moreover, these visions of the ancient men are, in Blake’s view, the exact opposite of what they claim to be; instead of being beneficial to mankind, they are the very cause of the lapse of man from the Edenic state.

In presenting this theology, which subverts traditional views, Blake is anticipated by such eighth-century Hebrew prophets as Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. When the
Judaeans believed that through the Davidic covenant God had unconditionally promised their eternal prosperity and security, Isaiah and Micah revealed a new theology. God is not merely the tribal God who protects Judah but the Lord of the universe, who will bring the foreign nations and natural disasters to punish and purify her. Likewise, while the people believed in reaching God through the priests and the institutional prophets and through sacrificial offerings, and Israel's prosperity seemed to prove efficacy of these institutions, Hosea and Amos proclaim the contrary divine messages:

Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

(Hosea 5.1)

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

(Amos 5.21-4)
The welfare of the nation depends not on ritual but on the people's ethical behaviour: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6.6). Blake goes even further in humanizing God, by removing the sin-punishment complex from his acts. Thus, just as the Hebrew prophets reveal the true words of God which reject his image projected by the institutions, so Blake reveals the Holy Word.

While in Songs of Innocence Blake's social and religious criticisms are entirely implicit, in Experience they are explicit in a majority of the songs. Critics, however, tend to see that the speakers of such songs of Experience as "Holy Thursday," "London," and "The Chimney Sweeper" are more limited than the speakers of the counterpart songs of Innocence. The denunciations of the experienced speakers, for these critics, lack imaginative engagement with actuality, the quality that the innocent speakers display in song after song. While the innocent speakers transform the wretched world in which they live into the luminous world infused with mercy, pity, peace, and love, the experienced speakers focus on the wretched reality and refuse to accept the comfortable providential view projected by established religion. These critical speakers are, according to Hirsch, Wilkie, or Glen, for instance, trapped in the world of experience and unable
to attain a prophetic perspective. Although the effect of the explicit criticism in Experience may not be as powerful as the implied criticism in Innocence, in order to give full credit to the imaginative achievement of these critical poems of Experience, we need to recognize the stance of the speakers and the genre of these songs of Experience, as well as the perception underlying the language the speakers use. The songs belong to a biblical genre, the oracle of judgment, as they subvert the very concepts that are the foundation of the establishment, that is, the established social, political, and religious order, revealing them to be the destructive forces that undermine human life.

Just as the Hebrew prophets, in the midst of the people cherishing the expectation for the Day of the Lord, denounce the Israelites' complacency and proclaim that the Day of the Lord will be not the day of glory but the day of disaster, so does the speaker of "Holy Thursday," in the midst of the celebration of charity, denounce it as the exact opposite of what people believe, a proof of social injustice:

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurious hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?

It is a land of poverty! (1-8)

In subverting the commonly accepted view, the speaker uses the same strategy as that of the Hebrew prophets. He reverses the key terms and concepts of establishment as exemplified by a report of Ascension Day service in The Times June 6, 1788:

... the glorious sight of 6000 children, reared up under the humane direction of the worthy Patrons, and supported by the public contributions of well disposed persons ... aiding to the nurture of a future generation to fight his [majesty's] battles--carry forward the commerce and manufactories of Great Britain and assist in maturing infant arts, to the honour and prosperity of the country.

The scene was the most pleasant to be conceived to every friend of Orphan innocence, in seeing so many adopted children of public benevolence brought together, and skreend from the rude hand of misery and shame.

(qtd. in Erdman, Prophet 122)

Using the rhetorical questions, the speaker inverts the very rhetoric of the establishment in order to deny its validity and to show the contrary as true: the celebration of what people call charity is not a "holy thing to see." The
speaker attacks the complacency of the people who see the charity children as evidence of the benevolent spirit of the prosperous nation, by exposing the exploitation of the children by the "cold and usurious hand." Their "song of joy" is really a "trembling cry" for release from their wretched condition. It should be observed that the speaker is not satirizing the innocent speaker of the other "Holy Thursday," whose sentiment differs essentially from the complacency of "the worthy Patrons" and the reporter of The Times. While the reporter's response is self-congratulatory for the charitable acts, the innocent speaker's response is entirely selfless: the speaker is genuinely moved to pity the children. The experienced speaker is attacking the very system of society that produces poverty and patronizes the poor for self-serving purposes. Here the speaker's imaginative perception is employed not to transform the wretched condition into a luminous one as does the innocent speaker of "The Holy Thursday," but to penetrate the facade of beneficial institutions and uncover the children's cry for help in their songs of praise.

Having dismantled the rhetoric of the establishment, the speaker describes the land of the charity children:

And their sun does never shine.
And their fields are bleak & bare.
And their ways are fill'd with thorns.
It is eternal winter there. (9-12)
Just as the speakers of such songs of *Innocence* as "The Echoing Green," "Spring," and "The Blossom" discover the Edenic order existing as potential in the depth of actuality, so does this speaker penetrate into the barren order of the world in which these charity children live. Through a metaphoric way of seeing, the speaker uncovers an order that hinders and denies every human aspiration, an order of poverty and the dehumanizing institution. While the reporter of *The Times* believed that the charity schools "skreend" the children "from the rude hand of misery and shame," the speaker denounces the institution as blighting the world of the children. He then compares this world to the land where a healthful order of existence is truly maintained as the establishment claims to be the case in England:

> For where-e'er the sun does shine,  
> And where-e'er the rain does fall:  
> Babe can never hunger there,  
> Nor poverty the mind appall.  

(13-6)

The description points to the root of the problem--poverty--which produces so many charity children. If there be a weakness in this poem, it is not the attack of the speaker as suggested, but the absence in the last stanza of explicit criticism of the social order that causes the mind-appalling poverty.
It has been suggested that the speaker, while perceptive concerning social injustice, is blind and deaf to any positive aspect of the spectacle before him. Indeed, the speaker's language is characterized by the use of hyperbole, the superlative forms, and categorical expressions, and his tone is aggressive and even could be described as obsessive. However, these characteristics are not a sign of the speaker's inadequacy; they derive from a prophet's stance and purpose. While a prophet's range of vision is deep and wide, his criticism of social injustice is informed by his vision of the divine order and focuses on the spiritual condition of actuality. Thus, in actuality the charity children occasionally see the sunshine and green fields and have moments of joy; but the speaker's focus is not on the contingent but the underlying order. The insistent use of "their" in the third stanza to qualify "sun," "fields," and "ways" indicates that he is talking about not a natural but a symbolic landscape. The institution in which the children live, despite the appearance of benevolence, is ordered in a way that would not allow them to develop their potential. The speaker aims to disillusion the reader from the aestheticized view of reality constructed by the rhetoric of the establishment. Contrary to people's comfortable view that they are contributing to nurturing of the poor children, the institution the people subscribe to and celebrate now in St.
Paul's on Holy Thursday in fact functions to destroy the children. The abrasive tone, the hyperbole, and the superlative language derive from the speaker's awareness of the intolerable gap between what ought to be or what could be and what actually is: these verbal characteristics are necessary to show the ultimate implications of the scene on Holy Thursday and to shock the people into recognition.

Just as he subverts institutional charity in "Holy Thursday," in "London" Blake subverts the charter--a concept "at the centre of Whig ideology" and a recurrent term in the eighteenth century constitutional rhetoric."15 The concept of "Liberty, the charter'd right of Englishmen" is already attacked by Blake in "King Edward III" in Poetical Sketches (E 424; 1.9); the King uses it to justify his commercially motivated invasion and exploit of France, whose right is not "charter'd." By the end of the play, Blake reveals the true identity of the Goddess Liberty that the King worships--Minerva. Likewise, in "London" Blake reveals that charters are the exact opposite of what the state claims them to be--they are a tool of oppression:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe. (1-4)
Deriving from the Magna Carta, charters are to ensure freedom of the people. But as Thomas Paine wrote, about the same time as Blake was writing this poem,

It is a perversion of terms to say that a charter gives rights. It operates by a contrary effect—that of taking rights away. Rights are inherently in all the inhabitants; but charters, by annulling those rights in the majority, leave the right, by exclusion, in the hands of a few. . . . The only persons on whom they operate are the persons whom they exclude. . . .

(Rights of Man qtd. in Thompson 10)

Blake, by repeating the "charter'd" and qualifying with it the streets and even the river, shows the true nature of a charter to be a manacle. In his study, "Blake's Verbal Technique," Gleckner observes that while in Innocence simple adjectives such as "merry," "tender," and "mild" are extensions rather than modifications of the nouns, in Experience the adjectives are no longer extensions of their nouns and instead are "warped, perverted, turned upside down and inside out" (327), radically modifying the nouns and becoming mind-forged manacles on them (321-32). Indeed, the adjectival form "charter'd" renders the passive position of the streets and the river and the sense of pre-emptedness on the speaker's part since they are, as Gavin Edwards puts it, "always already owned and named, trademarked, an abstract
and schematic geography where everything is already (with the help of the OED) charted, marked out" (33).

In the last two stanzas, Blake moves on to subvert church, state, and the institution of marriage, which is sanctioned by both.

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

The church, which claims to be divinely appointed to minister to the poor and the oppressed, is revealed to be the perpetrator of the oppression. As the ambiguous syntax of "blackning church" suggests, not only the smoke of the city blackens the church, but also the church blackens the chimney-sweepers by allowing the exploitation of young children, and even by closing the door to them, as Martin K. Nurmi shows in his study of the condition of the chimney-sweepers' life ("Facts" 252). Similarly, the Palace, or the King, who claims to be divinely appointed to ensure the nation's welfare, is revealed to be the agent of unnecessary
deaths of his people. As Erdman suggests, the soldiers' "sigh" which "runs in blood down the Palace walls" is likely to refer to the "curses" that were "often chalked or painted on the royal walls" in 1792-3 (Prophet 278). The dying soldiers, instead of cursing the foreign enemies, curse their own king. Finally, the most basic unit of society and the source of its fertility--marriage--supposedly an occasion for blessing as two lives are united before God under the sanction of church and state, is revealed to be the disaster that prepares the pair, and even their children, for death. It is well-known that marriage in England since the days of Moll Flanders or earlier was commonly seen as commercial transaction and a means to obtain material security and social advancement, that wives virtually had no rights, and that divorce was available only to the rich. Such marriage binds the pair in a loveless match infected with spiritual and physical malaise. The condensed image of "the Marriage hearse" blighted by the harlot's curse points to the perversion of the matrimonial institution from a life-enhancing union of lovers to a deadly embrace of the disease. Thus, instead of attacking the instances of social injustice--child labour, war, and prostitution--Blake reveals the source of these problems, the central institutions of society.

Nevertheless, ultimately the target of Blake's attack in this poem is not these institutions. The real culprit of
cries, fears, and deaths is not the political and religious rulers of the nation themselves but the way of seeing and thinking that produces and accepts them—the mind-forg'd manacles. In the second stanza, the speaker observes:

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear (5-8)

Although the speaker first notices cries of the victims, by the end of the stanza, he hears the mind-forg'd manacles "In every voice: in every ban." The line suggests that the manacles bind both the authorities who proclaim bans and those at the other end of society upon whom the bans are imposed. The cause of the nightmarish condition of London and its citizens is the mentality of both the oppressor and the oppressed who accept and rely on the status quo as the nature of things. Blake's vision penetrates into a much deeper level of reality than even the substratum of society, as I later discuss in more detail.

As in the case of "Holy Thursday," some critics suggest that the speaker of "London" is not a prophetic speaker but a prophet manque or, worse yet, a critic who is imposing his own views on what he sees. Bloom, suggesting the poem is a revisionist text of Ezekiel chapter 9, contends that the speaker is a visionary who offers an apocalyptic vision but, overwhelmed by what he sees, fails to become a prophet like
Ezekiel, who can publicly "speak forth" divine messages ("Revisionism" 40-4). Glen, following Bloom's ironic reading, suggests that the speaker unintentionally joins the society he attacks, by "imprinting his own damning stamp ["marks"] on everything" ("Moral Thinking" 63).

The speaker certainly is deeply involved in what he perceives; however, his involvement does not disqualify him as a prophet. Almost all Hebrew prophets, Christ, and the Apostles display such involvement. Indeed, Ezekiel in chapter 9, upon which Bloom bases his argument, responds to God's judgment on Israel in this way:

I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? (9.8)

The same Ezekiel elsewhere attacks his people violently, but like other prophets he also has moments when he is overwhelmed by the vision of the disaster his people are facing. Similarly, Jeremiah agonizes over the vision of Judah's doom:

My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou has heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents
spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? (4.19-21)\textsuperscript{a}

Likewise, in Lamentations, the work traditionally attributed to Jeremiah, the persona of Jeremiah expresses pain, grief, and dismay, as his people fall into captivity. Thompson rightly observes that in "London" the voice of honest indignation "is held in equilibrium with the voice of compassion" (20). The speaker, perceiving fear, cries, and sighs, and their ultimate cause and effect, is deeply moved, just as the Holy Word and the Bard are moved by the plight of Earth in the "Introduction," and the speakers of "The Sick Rose" and "Ah! Sun-flower" by the plight of these flowers. Indeed, precisely because he discerns the plight of the people in such a wide range of vision, the speaker is so profoundly affected.

Similarly, in a deeply involved tone of voice, the prophetic speaker of "The Sick Rose" reveals that concealment of desire and joy is the destructive force that blights life from inside. The poem centers on the tension between appearance and reality, between Rose in full bloom and death within her. In an oracular voice, the speaker proclaims:

\begin{quote}
O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy. (1-8)

After the initial diagnosis of Rose's condition, the speaker reveals the ultimate doom; when Rose is at the peak of her beauty and youth, her life is already destroyed. Her fatal sickness is secrecy, or the impulse and effect of hiding her love. In an illuminating essay, "The Self-sufficient Text," Michael Riffaterre shows how the hiddenness of the worm is overdetermined in this poem. Besides the fact that "an important feature of the worm is precisely its 'hiddenness,'" the worm in this poem is "invisible" and flies in the darkness of night and the confusion of storm, and his love is both "dark" and "secret" (Riffaterre 65). Blake's revisions of the last two lines also indicate that the hiding of love and joy causes her destruction. The first manuscript reading, "O dark secret love / Doth life destroy" (E793), centralizes secrecy rather than the worm or Rose. Next, Blake changes the penultimate line to "And his dark secret love," and then, before the final version, to "And her dark secret love" (emphases added: E793). Thus, secrecy darkens her "crimson joy," which belongs to the
daylight world as Hirsch points out (235). In attempting to keep her integrity as dictated by such conventional moral virtues as modesty and chastity, Rose hides her love and joy, and in so doing demolishes her life.

The symbolic imagery of the invisible flying worm is strongly evocative of Satan, who flies through the realm "where eldest Night / And Chaos, Ancestors of Nature, hold / Eternal Anarchy" (PL II.894-6) into the Garden of Eden. After expelled by Gabriel, Satan flies around the Earth, returns to the garden at midnight (IX.51-8). In the form of a serpent he spies Eve standing among the roses "Herself . . . the fairest unsupported Flow'r, / From her best prop so far, and storm so nigh" (emphasis added. PL IX.432-3). The singularity of the image of invisible flying worm, the strength of flying in the howling storm, the association of the "storm" and the worm, and the darkness of his design and power all contribute to the association, on the subliminal level, of the worm with the arch-fiend, the author of the Fall, Sin, and Death. Through these suggestions, the poem points to the magnitude and primordiality, indeed the Satanic origin, of secrecy's dark power.

In this way, in almost all the songs of Experience Blake criticizes conventional morality as injurious to life, and shows their morality is not what it is supposed to be—wholesome values and rules that ensure well-being of individuals and community. Such commonly-cherished virtues
as charity ("Holy Thursday"), chastity ("Ah! Sun-flower," "The Lily," and "The Angel" among others), and forbearance ("A Poison Tree"), when they are not spontaneous states of mind as displayed by the innocent speakers, become oppressive and prevent man from being fulfilled.

As in Songs of Innocence, Blake portrays the dimension of reality in which the cause and the effect, the subject and the object, the past, the present, and the future, and the natural, the human, and the divine are coextensive in such songs of Experience as the "Introduction," "London," "The Sick Rose," and "Ah! Sun-flower." Although these elements are ordinarily perceived as dichotomous or trichotomous, they are continuous because they all are seen as partaking of divinity. They are interchangeable in their mutual blessing. In the world of experience, in contrast, these elements are locked not in blessing but in offence against life, and consolidated in the inexorable offence-doom complex. In Experience, the prophetic speakers perceive the depth of reality and find that the ultimate disastrous effect is already fully present in the cause.

In "London" the fusions of the cause and the effect, the subject and the object, and the past, the present, and the future reveal that the oppressors are destroying themselves in the very process of destroying others. For instance, in the third stanza, the ambiguity of the syntax
in "blackning church" embodies the fusion. The church is blackened by the smoke of the city which leads to the employment of the chimney sweepers. But the church also literally and spiritually blackens the chimney sweepers by not only not saving the young children from the exploitation but indeed sanctioning the social system that thrives on the brutal exploitation. In spite of the example Christ shows in blessing children, the church drives away the chimney sweepers because their blackened subhuman appearance, as Nurmi documents, offends the sensibility of the church and literally "appalls" (horrifies or "makes pale") the church. As well, by sanctioning the exploitation and shutting the door on the sweepers, the church is blackened morally, and the sweepers' cry, as an implicit accusation of the church's terrible moral failure, "appalls" the church. But on the level of destiny, the chimney sweepers' cry "weep, weep" is a proclamation of judgment upon the church, even as the "woe" song of the classical prophecies or the cry of an angel in Revelation delivers judgement on the iniquitous. A Hebrew prophet takes up the "woe" song, "a genre which was otherwise only used in a lament over the dead," and delivers the funeral lament over the rulers of Israel still living and at the height of their prosperity (Koch, Prophets 1.47). He reveals that the divine judgment has been already passed on them: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . " (Amos 6.1). So does the angel cry,
prior to the last judgment: "Woe, woe, woe, to the
inhabiters of the earth by reasons of the other voices of
the trumpets of the three angels, which are yet to sound!"
(Rev. 8.13). Similarly, the last two lines of the second
stanza in "London" show the self-reflexive nature of the
offence against life. The palace causes the soldiers'
deaths by leading them to the battlefield, but in so doing
the palace is stained and marked by their blood. The stain
on the walls may be literal: as it may refer to the curses
written on the royal walls (Erdman, Prophet 278). But also,
as has been suggested, the lines may allude to Daniel
chapter 5, in which the writing on Belshazzar's palace wall
prophesies the doom of the kingdom. Thus, every offence is
prophetic of the doom to come.

As Thompson astutely observes, the poem registers "a
thickening of sensual perception":

> Until this point [stanza 3] we have seen and
heard, but now we "sense", through the sounds (the
'cry' and the 'sigh'), the activities that these
indicate: the efforts of the chimney-sweep, the
blackening walls of the churches, the blood of the
soldier. (19)

And in the final stanza of the "midnight world," the
speaker's perception penetrates into the prophetic dimension
of reality. Marriage is the moment of life when the man and
the woman biologically and spiritually reach the highest
potential to create new life. Yet, like an X-ray vision, the speaker discerns that the sinister, life-negating forces are the principle of the marriage as commonly practiced in Blake's time. In the culminating imagery of "the Marriage hearse," the speaker perceives the ultimate effect in the cause--the death-bed in the marriage-bed. And the new life to be born is doomed even before its conception, at the moment the pair is united. The pair's life, too, is blighted physically and spiritually as the double standard governs their life, even as it led them to the diseased marriage. In producing and exploiting the young harlots, at the same time the people are doomed to death.

In the poem "Introduction" of *Experience*, as I discussed earlier, the syntactical ambiguities reflect the fusion of the two moments--the time of the Fall in the Garden and the time of the Bard's address--and the fusion of the Holy Word and the Bard, as well as the continuity of Earth, the Holy Word, and the Bard. Similarly, in "The Sick Rose" the Bard also reveals a destructive force at work beneath the prosperous surface, and the ultimate effect of that force. When Rose, unaware of her sickness, is content in beauty and youth, the speaker, as with X-ray vision, penetrates into the hidden sphere of reality and discerns death fully present. After the initial sentence that proclaims Rose's condition, the speaker reveals the inevitable doom to come and the simultaneity of the offence
and the doom in a single breath in a single sentence. These fusions imply the existence of the order of justice underlying reality: an offence to life, even as it is being committed, activates self-reflexively the corresponding doom on the offender. As Hirsch writes on "London,"

Blake's technique throughout is to compress the horror and its cause into a single image that enforces a grim justice by showing the way in which the horror appalls, defaces, and blights the very tyranny that has caused it. (264)

An oppression of life is a sowing of disaster, both for the oppressor and the oppressed.

In contrast to the innocent speakers who believe in and rely on the conventional framework of the divine providence, the prophetic speakers of *Experience* discern the operation of the order of justice that radically differs from the traditionally accepted one. Although on the surface this order may appear to be the same as the sin-punishment complex claimed to be the order of justice in the Bible, Blake's offence-doom complex differs from it in two significant points. First, it does not require God for passing judgment on the offender: the self-reflexive offence-doom complex is a fundamental principle in the universe, as it were, like the principle of the conservation of energy. Second, as discussed earlier, an offence is not seen as a sin against God. From the divine or prophetic
point of view, the subject and the object are continuous and
interchangeable, for the oppressor and the oppressed are
alike the victims of the offence. In the world of
Experience, ultimately everyone is the victim of the single
life-negating mechanism—the mind forged manacles. As the
speaker of "London" says, "In every voice: in every ban /
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear." Instead of Sin born of
Satan's mind, we have the manacles born of the mind that
plague their own author.

Unlike the Old Testament prophets, the prophetic
speakers of Songs of Innocence and of Experience humanize
the whole process of the offence and the doom; the offence
is not against God but against man's own life, and the doom
is not divine punishment descending from above, but the
logical outcome of man's act that demolishes his or her own
healthful existence. The "mind forg'd manacles" are the
offence and the doom in such poems as "London,"
"Introduction," and "The Sick Rose." And a divine being
that exists separately from man, whom man is to obey, and
from whom man may receive punishment for his or her
iniquities is non-existent in the prophetic speakers' scheme
of things. Furthermore, although the speakers implicitly
and explicitly attack hypocrisy and social injustice in such
songs as "Introduction," "The Sick Rose," "London," "The
Little Girl Lost," and "Ah! Sun-flower," these ills are
never castigated as sin. As Heather Glen rightly points
out, Blake's concern is not so much with the individual cases of hypocrisy and social injustice as with the "moral thinking" that underlies them ("Moral thinking" 33). His purpose is to expose how certain ways of thinking and seeing reality harm life regardless of the ordinary distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed. His fusions of the subject and the object, the cause and the effect, and the offence and the doom in Songs of Experience reflect the view that the demolition of life is a human and natural act of self-destruction.

In "A Poison Tree" and "The Human Abstract," Blake focuses on the operation of the mind bound by the mind-forged manacles. In these poems, instead of using the prophetic speakers, he uses the speakers whose minds are manacled and dramatically represents the process of dehumanization. He also makes the speakers use allegorical language to render their mental world and illuminates the way of seeing and thinking when moral virtues are artificially imposed upon the mind, or when rationalism takes control of it. In so doing, Blake reveals the life-negating functions of moral virtues and rationalism.

In "A Poison Tree" Blake claims that the literally life-negating effect of the concealment of anger is the true nature of "Christian Forbearance," the poem's original title. The poem begins with a healthy way of thinking and
behaviour and ends with the destruction of both the speaker's enemy and the speaker himself: as the speaker destroys his foe, the speaker himself is destroyed in the process.

I was angry with my friend;
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see;
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree. (1-16)

The moment anger is withheld, inevitably the life-negating operation of the mind is set in motion which then
leads to the ultimate outcome--death. The organic metaphor of the tree reflects the inevitability of this process.

"A Poison Tree" displays a demonic version of the continuity we find in the songs of Innocence. In Innocence simple adjectives are extensions of the nouns, the literal and the figurative merge into each other, and the adjectives and the figurative render the imaginatively perceived dimension of reality. In "A Poison Tree," instead of this fluid continuity, we find a consolidating continuity. Phillip J. Gallagher incisively observes that in this poem "tenor and vehicle are completely interchangeable, or rather the one becomes the other as the poem proceeds and anger becomes a poison tree" (239). He explains the unique characteristic of Blake's parable:

In the "typical" parable tenor and vehicle are clearly separable. For example, when Jesus says that the kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32), he knows perfectly well that the similitude stops infinitely short of an identity: the kingdom of Heaven (tenor) will never become a mustard seed (vehicle). But this is precisely what happens in Blake's parable. (239 n.7)

The concealed anger is like a poison tree and becomes a poison tree. This continuity, however, is not "completely interconvertible" (239) as Gallagher thinks, for the process of becoming a poison tree cannot be reversed. As he puts
it, the concealed anger "incarnates" itself as a living tree. Instead of being converted into some constructive ends, the anger consolidates into a destructive entity and becomes a life independent of its author. Glen observes that in the first stanza, "I" is in control, but the recurrence, from the second stanza, of "And" that starts the lines indicates that the process of growth takes control of "I." The concealed anger which is transformed into nameless, abstract "it" in the second stanza now has a life of its own, and "the confident free agent ["I"] of the opening has become a servile attendant" to "it" (Vision 191). The poison tree born of the mind is now the master of the mind. Displacing the healthy "I" of the opening two lines, "it" makes the speaker impervious to his own spiritual life. The gleeful report of the successful murder at the end registers the utter dehumanization of the speaker. The horror of this song derives not so much from the murder of the "foe" as from the sinister process of the mind being taken possession by its own product, and from the speaker's rapid metamorphosis from the one capable of honesty and friendship to the one totally alienated from life.

Furthermore, "A Poison Tree," through allusions to the myth of the Fall, asserts the Satanic origin of the biblical myth and the concept of Christian forbearance. Gleckner was the first to note that "the speaker performs all of God's
roles in the Creation" (Piper 256). Gallagher then argues that this poem "is a counter-myth which exposes the biblical narrative of the Fall as a fraud by giving the 'true' etiology of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" (237-8): the human act of vengeance exemplified in this poem is distorted by the priests into the account in Genesis, deifying the perpetrator and transferring the blame of temptation onto the serpent and the "foe." Blake may not consciously counter the biblical narrative point for point as Gallagher suggests, but the poem certainly is strongly evocative of the account of the Fall not only in Genesis but also in Paradise Lost. Indeed, the speaker is much like a composite of the Creator in Genesis and Satan in Paradise Lost, who lures man to eat the forbidden fruit, and who gloats over the success of the plot. Through this association, Blake implicitly shows what he sees as the true nature of the Lord God's action as depicted in Genesis.

In "The Human Abstract" the speaker attempts to subvert the virtues of mercy, pity, peace, and love, and yet his subversion self-reflexively reveals the deadly process of his thinking. With all his cynicism, the speaker, an Angel in the Notebook draft, does display insights into moral, religious, and psychological workings of man and society in the fallen world. In lines 1 to 6, the speaker dismantles these virtues by portraying them as essentially artificial
values adopted by the established society for its self-satisfaction:

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody Poor:
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;

And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish loves increase. (1-6)

He then reveals how these artificially induced virtues prey upon man. Up to this point, he presents them in terms of people's self-serving relationship with others, but now the scene is internalized, focusing on the mental landscape:

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

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

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpiller and Fly,
Feed on the Mystery.
And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree
But their search was all in vain
There grows one in the Human Brain (7-24)

The personification of Cruelty reflects its status and power: now independent of the man, Cruelty has will ("he knits a snare") and emotion ("fear") of its own and takes possession of the whole man. The Raven's settlement in the penultimate stanza suggests the infestation of superstition, ignorance, and death. As in "A Poison Tree," the concealment, this time of fear, inexorably leads to the entrapment of the mind.

In spite of his insight, the speaker is heavily undercut because he utterly lacks awareness of positive alternatives exemplified in Innocence. This lack of the alternative vision distinguishes the speaker from the prophetic speakers of Experience whose criticisms of the fallen reality is informed by their lucid awareness of the healthful order of reality. In songs of Innocence mercy, pity, peace, and love are natural spontaneous virtues of not only children, adults, and God but also beasts, birds, and
insects. The innocent speakers unconsciously possess these virtues which comprise the integral part of their identity. As the speaker in "The Divine Image," the counterpart to "The Human Abstract," says, "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love / Is" God and man--"the human form divine" (emphasis added: 5-8, 11). As the structure of the phrase "the human form divine" shows, the form (in the sense of the ultimate identity) of the human and the form of the divine are interdependent, define each other, and ultimately are one. The speaker of the "Human Abstract," on the other hand, sees these virtues as purely abstract concepts independent of both humanity and divinity and argues about these concepts in purely abstract reasoning without any reference to the actual situations that involve these virtues.

Moreover, as Linkin brilliantly demonstrates, in presenting his analysis, the speaker inverts the standard form of logical argumentation:

The speaker . . . reverse[s] grammatical causality in underlining similar reversals in social reasoning. In the first eight lines the speaker describes the qualities of pity, mercy, peace, and care as parasitic attributes that feed on the negative elements of social existence--poverty, unhappiness, fear, selfish love--just as the caterpillar and fly feed on the poem's tree. His
sentences mirror his thinking in borrowing—and inverting—the language of logical argumentation.

He switches two 'if A, then B' clauses to place consequences before probable causes. Complicating these equations through negation, he makes it possible to reduce his words to disturbing mathematical formulas: "then no poverty, if no pity;" "then no mercy, if no unhappiness." Echoes of this initial linguistic inversion pattern the rest of the poem. . . . Transposing cause and effect, the speaker's idiolect reveals how abstractions reorder causality. (15-6)

This overdetermination through the inversion and abstraction reflects the mind trapped and pressured by mechanical reasoning.

Thus, in these poems, "A Poison Tree" and "The Human Abstract," Blake highlights the workings of the lapsed mind—the workings that he develops in his later prophecies into a character, the Spectre, who hungers to devour Humanity. Indeed, the coolness of the tone and the appearance of rationality, with which the speakers explain the process of destruction as a matter of course, betray their insanity. They are totally closed to any possibility for a positive alternative outside the frameworks of their reasoning. In direct contrast to the prophetic perception that transcends
the barriers of time and space, of the natural, the human, and the divine, of the subject and the object, and of the cause and the effect, these speakers' perception is dominated by what they believe to be the iron law of causality.

Radically subversive in vision and purpose, Songs of Experience uses such devices as dialectic design, dramatic presentations of the manacled minds, fused or condensed imagery, syntactical ambiguities, and mythic, symbolic, and allegorical language. Blake uses these devices to render the prophetic dimension of reality, to reveal his new theology and his view of the order of justice in the universe, and also to activate the reader's imagination, avoiding a monological mode of discourse, or the one-dimensional axiomatic instructions and castigations. Infused with the single aspiration of awakening our imagination and expanding our consciousness, the combined Songs makes the reader see the state of experience in a larger perspective and become free from the bondage of that state. Thus, instead of delivering a direct criticism from a vantage point and from outside, Blake gives voice to Earth so that her anguished mind trapped in an illusory view of reality may be dramatically represented. The same strategies also reflect another important revelation in Experience: the order of justice in the universe or the
offence-doom complex. The lapsed minds are seen at once as the offenders of life and the victims of the offence who are bound by the mind-forged manacles, and the processes of the offence and the doom run parallel to each other. Thus, Blake, in his view, redeems God and the order of justice from the sin-punishment complex presented in the Bible and Milton. In Songs of Experience Blake's vision of reality humanizes and morally neutralizes the Creator and the universe.

Compared with Poetical Sketches and Songs of Innocence, Songs of Experience displays most of the characteristics of prophetic literature that we found in these earlier works; these characteristics in Experience, however, are informed by the reformist spirit and purpose much more strongly than in the earlier works. In all three works, Blake focuses on the prophetic dimension of reality, revises the traditional ways of seeing and thinking, turns upside down the key concepts of the establishment, offers a comprehensive vision of the universe and history of mankind, presents prophetic speakers, and uses a dialectic design to bring the reader's perception to a higher level. The prophetic speakers in Songs of Experience are the individuals who retain an innocent vision of reality as the potential alternative to their vision of actuality and who gain from experience understanding and insights into the workings of the human
mind and society. Equipped with such insights and ability
to use both innocent and experienced modes of vision, the
speakers reveal the prophetic dimension of reality to expose
destructive ways of life, as seen, for example, in the
"Introduction," "London," and "The Sick Rose." Because
these speakers recognize the problems and intend to reform
the lapsed condition of man, criticisms in their songs are
explicit. The other songs by non-prophetic speakers, too,
display the lapsed conditions far more transparently than do
the earlier works, for all the songs are presented by the
Bard, whose vision penetrates the barriers of time and
space, and of the divine, the human, and the natural, with a
single purpose of awakening Earth.

In contrast, the Piper in *Innocence* has no awareness of
the critical task he performs, and even the prophetic
criticisms in *Poetical Sketches* are not as explicit as those
in *Experience*, having no such strong unifying purpose to
expand the reader's perception. For example, in "King
Edward the Third" in *Poetical Sketches*, Blake subverts the
key concept of the state--the national identity of Britain
as the land of Liberty. But the criticism is subtle enough
to lead critics prior to Erdman to believe that the dramatic
piece is Blake's bona fide celebration of patriotism.
Similarly, in the "Prologue" to King Edward IV, Blake openly
attacks the "Kings and Nobles of the land" (E439; 15), but,
as in "King Edward the Third," the attack is set in a remote
past. Blake uses the past typologically, at once to reinterpret the national history, to reveal a certain pattern underlying it, and to attack the political scenes of his own time through allusions. The criticisms of the contemporary establishment are thus profound yet indirect, and they tend to be submerged in allusions. In Songs of Innocence the powerful criticisms of the institutional charity in "Holy Thursday" and of the racial hierarchy in "The Little Black Boy," for instance, remain entirely implicit and could well be missed by some readers.

In Experience the subversive criticisms are brought to the fore and placed in the contemporary setting, even while the poet is showing the timeless significance of the problems. Thus, in "London," the prophetic speaker attacks the charter, the centrally important concept of eighteenth-century England, as he wanders in late eighteenth-century London streets, marking the destructive effects of the charter. Again, in "Holy Thursday" and "The Chimney Sweeper," the speakers openly criticize the late eighteenth-century British institutions. Blake chooses the contemporary setting, partly because the shortness of lyric form is unsuitable for political criticism by means of historical allusion which requires a more fully developed context (as in "King Edward the Third"), and partly because Blake wished to reveal the problem of his age as directly as possible. The pressure of the destructive, immediate
environment seems too much for the poet to attack the
problems indirectly, transposing them to distant eras.

In attacking the establishment, *Songs of Experience* has
a new target—organized religion. *Poetical Sketches* focuses
on the political institutions, and the speakers of *Innocence*
generally accept the traditional Judeo-Christian piety
although their perceptions of the world register the
experience beyond the framework of traditional piety. In
*Experience*, religion is presented as the dominant agent that
prevents man from fulfillment. In Blake's view, almost all
exploitation and repression are sanctioned by morality
propagated by organized religion, its sinister priests, and
its God—the cruel, jealous, and selfish "Father of the
ancient men."

Blake's view of the problem of the world in *Experience*,
however, is even more radical. He identifies the real
culprit of the lapse of man as the mind-forged manacles.
Blake attempts to extract the cause of all kinds of
oppression. The idea of the self-reflexive relationship
between the mind and the world perceived by it is of course
not new. We find a prime precedent, for example, in Milton,
when Satan says, "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell"
(*PL*. IV.75). Yet the peculiar genius of Blake is his ability
to extract a mechanism or a system (especially a
psychological one) from the world and envision a dynamic
symbol for this mechanism. He represents this mechanism as
a sort of living character with a will of its own, as exemplified by the net of religion, the chain of jealousy, the Emanations, and the Spectre in his later works. In Experience Blake for the first time gives a name and a shape to the sinister operation of the mind that victimizes both the oppressor and the oppressed, in order to make the reader recognize and cast off the error. Furthermore, Blake shows the true order of justice in the universe, correcting, in his view, the traditional theodicies of the Bible and Milton. Implicit in the self-reflexive offence-doom complex is Blake's perception of corporate life: one cannot negate another's life without negating one's own. The emergence, in Experience, of the concepts of the mind-forged manacles and the self-reflexive order of justice reflects the expansion of Blake's scope.

In the combined Songs Blake also identifies and names the contrary modes of vision before and after the lapse as the states of innocence and experience. His focus on the states of the soul distinguished from the individual is evident in Poetical Sketches; and in Innocence (as well as in Tiriel, The Book of Thel, and Visions of the Daughters of Albion), he attempts to present the clear outlines of the diverse states and show the correspondence between the world and the state of the soul that perceives the world. But when he finished Experience, combined the two groups of Songs, and gave the collection the subtitle "Shewing the Two
Contrary States of the Human Soul," not only the concept and naming of states (derived from Swedenborg) enable us to recognize the reality of our soul's condition, but also the dialectic design helps us to break through the state of experience, by bringing us to the mode of vision that comprehends both innocence and experience. The presentation of the states and the dialectic design thus reflects Blake's commitment to expand the range of the reader's perception.

In revealing a comprehensive vision of the universe and history of mankind, Blake further develops the myth of Earth and attempts to show the place and the condition of man in the lapsed state. Earth's awakening and return to her maker is already prophesied in *Innocence* in the brief introduction to the Lyca poems. The figures of the love-sick land and her deliverer-Spring in "To Spring" also anticipate vaguely the Bard's vision of Earth and the Holy Word. But in *Poetical Sketches* the land is envisioned as entirely passive in her regeneration, in accordance with the biblical view of the relationship between Jerusalem-Israel-Judah and God. In the combined *Songs*, through the Bard and through the dialectic design, Blake claims that what is traditionally called the fallen state of man and the fallen world is not an irrevocable destiny imposed by God but is in fact reversible through the recovery of the innocent mode of vision. Blake thus relativizes the Fall by identifying the fallen condition as the state of experience without the
alternative vision, even as, for instance, Isaiah relativizes the Davidic Covenant by identifying the conditions of God's blessing as ethical behaviour of the people. Also emergent are the distinct characters of Earth and the true and false images of God--Holy Word and the maker of the tiger on the one hand, and the Father of the ancient men on the other. The figure of Earth becomes well-defined with a suffering and rebelling voice of her own and with a distinct relationship with the one whom she believes to be God, the Father of the ancient men. We also hear the direct message of the Holy Word delivered through the Bard. Significantly, in contrast to the Old Testament prophecies which deliver the castigating words of God, Experience offers no voice of the Father of the ancient men because Blake believed that the forbidding character of God and his laws is an illusion conjured up by men.

Most importantly, Experience presents a figure of the prophet-poet, the Bard. Like the innocent speakers, the Bard, as well as the other prophetic speakers of Experience, perceives the world in a way that transcends the barriers of time and space and of the divine, the human, and the natural. But, unlike the innocent speakers, the Bard is conscious of his ability to penetrate these barriers, and he uses this ability, as well as his power of insight, to reform the condition of society and mankind. Although Poetical Sketches already presents the prophetic speakers in
such sketches as "Samson" and the "Prologues" to King Edward IV and King John, and the prophetic speakers of Experience show far greater conviction in the truth and power of their vision than do the earlier speakers. The speaker of the "Prologue" to King Edward IV, for instance, begins his prophecy with a prayer, wishing to have a stronger voice and tongue: "O For a voice like thunder, and a tongue / To drown the throat of war!" (1-2). Or the speaker of "Samson" invokes Truth to "guide [the speaker's] timorous hand to write . . . the words of truth" (E443). In Experience, the prophetic speakers are fully confident of the authority and power of their words, as the Bard's proclamation best exemplifies: "Hear the voice of the Bard! / Who Present, Past, & Future sees / Whose ears have heard / The Holy Word" ("Introduction" 1-4). The divine truth does not have to "visit" the speakers and "guide" their hands; the speakers are united with the divine power of imaginative perception. Indeed, fully united with the Holy Word and capable of the mode of vision that synthesizes innocence and experience, the Bard embodies man in the awakened state Blake advocates.

Thus, Songs of Experience and the combined Songs register the development that reflects the sharpening and deepening of Blake's vision and sense of mission to awaken the dormant humanity.
Notes

1. For the critics who find the dialectic in the Songs, see, for example, Wicksteed, Blake's Innocence and Experience and Gleckner, Piper. Hirsch objects to this progressive system and suggests Experience satirizes Innocence. For the critics who see all the experienced speakers trapped, see, for example, Wilkie, and Glen, Vision.

2. For the genre of prophetic call account, see my chapter 2, pp. 86-8.


For other important readings of this poem, see also, Robert Gleckner, "Point of View and Context in Blake's Songs," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 61 (Nov. 1957): 535; Northrop Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience," Huntington Library Quarterly, 21 (1957): 57-67; Ackland, 3-17; Leader 136-47.

4. See, for instance, the calls of Isaiah 6.1-13, Jeremiah 1.4-10, and Ezekiel 1.2-21.

5. The "dewy" grass could refer to the unfallen Eden described in Genesis 2.5-6: although there was no rain in Eden, "a mist from the earth" "watered the whole face of the ground." But the predominantly dark imagery and tone of the "Introduction," the frost-covered Earth in her "Answer," and
the underlying association of tears and dew suggest that the "dewy" land refers to the fallen Earth.

6. In line 11 Blake uses words of Jeremiah 22.29, Hosea 14.1-2, and Micah 1.2, but he reverses the contexts. The Hebrew prophets address earth to hear and return to God, to castigate Israel's apostasy; Blake picks up the anguishing tone of the prophets' addresses and uses them to woo Earth.

For other instances of classical prophecy in which the loving and anguishing aspects of God are shown, see, for instance, Hosea 11.1-4, Isaiah 40.2, 51.22, Jeremiah 3.14, 3.22, 4.1, and Ezekiel 16.4-14.

7. See, for instance, Gleckner, "Point of View" 534.

8. For the idea of "concentric monanthropology," see my chapter 2, pp. 125-6.

9. In the Bible, Israel speaks in Isaiah 49.1-5 but in humble obedience to the Lord.


11. As has been observed by critics, the creator and the creature share the same aspects since the tyger reflects its creator's image (e.g., Hirsch 249). In the third stanza, the twisting shoulder of the creator forms the twisting sinews of the tiger's heart. And Blake's alteration in one copy B from
"What dread hand? & what dread feet?" to "What dread hand formed thy dread feet?" and another alteration, very likely with Blake's approval, to "What dread hand forged thy dread feet?" in Malkin's printed version of the Songs, indicate aspects of the creator and the tiger are indeed interchangeable. As in "The Lamb" the speaker and the tiger are partaking of the creator.

12. See for instance, Hirsch, Wilkie, and Glen on these songs of Experience.

13. For another illuminating study of the background of "Holy Thursday," see Gleckner, "Irony in Blake's 'Holy Thursday,'" Modern Language Notes 71 (June 1956).


16. For the historical context of this concept, see Erdman and Thompson loc. cit.

18. See also his "complaint" (12) and "laments" (8.18-9.11, 20.6-18).

19. See Ferber 325-6 for a discussion of the meaning of the word "appalls."

For Christ's teaching about children, see Mat. 19.13-5, Mk. 10.13-6, and Luk. 18.15-7.

20. Here I am using "typology" in a loose sense, as an approach to history that sees a person or an event as a paradigm.
CHAPTER IV

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell begins with the roaring of Rintrah, the spirit of prophecy. Written in the turbulent period of the French Revolution and reactionary England, the work registers a sense of imminent Apocalypse, a sense that the repressed energy of mankind had reached the time for revolt. The Marriage also is a critical response to Swedenborg. As late as 1787, Blake and his wife attended meetings at a Swedenborgian society in London and signed their approval of Swedenborg's doctrine as "genuine Truths revealed from Heaven." Yet soon Blake came to recognize the essentially conventional character of Swedenborg's writings. In 1790, the year Blake chose for the date of composition of The Marriage, a new spiritual dispensation Swedenborg announced to have begun in 1757 (the year of Blake's birth) reached thirty-three years old. That year the apocalyptic fervour of the age, Blake's outgrowing of Swedenborg, and Blake's reaching the Christological age of thirty-three all came together. Blake felt that an uncovering of truly revolutionary dispensation was in order. Whereas in his political prophecies from the same period or earlier, Blake attempts to reveal the continuity and apocalyptic significance of the American and the French Revolutions, in The Marriage he proposes a way of healthful existence and announces himself as a prophet who will
undertake the task of inaugurating the Apocalypse as he conceives it. Attacking Christian dualism and its underlying principle as the discipline that limits human potential, Blake suggests the principle of contraries as the proper way of experiencing life, the way which could bring about the total restoration of the world. He also offers a critical exploration of the prophetic career; he explains, defines, and justifies his aim, authority, method, and heritage of prophethood and experiments with diverse forms in search of a proper vehicle for his prophecy. Although Blake's criticism of Christian dualism as the conventional approach to life is biting, the objective of his work is not so much to attack the dualism itself as to expose the self-destructive nature of conventional mental habits and to demonstrate the creative power of the dynamics of contraries. Like traditional satire, The Marriage is informed by a reformist spirit, but the reform The Marriage proposes is not according to a set of established standards; its objective is to encourage the reader to go beyond the received wisdom, to exercise his or her own potential, and to create a fresh relationship with the world at every encounter. The Marriage thus attempts to inspire and induce the reader to see the world as the poet-prophet does. As such, the work is primarily a book of prophecy in which its prophetic purpose subordinates its satire. Thus, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is at once Blake's critical
exploration of prophethood and his attempt to subvert the Christian dualism and reveal the principle of contraries through satiric devices.

The narrator of *The Marriage* has a far more active role than the prophetic speakers of Blake's earlier poems. The prophetic speaker of "Samson" writes "the words of truth, [so] that all . . . may read" (E443), the Piper sings to give joy, and the Bard of *Experience* proclaims the Holy Word to persuade Earth to return to her maker; the narrator of *The Marriage* proclaims in plate 14 that he is to begin the long-awaited Apocalypse by enlarging man's consciousness, by delivering his mind from the conventional way of seeing the world. The narrator affirms the traditional view that the Apocalypse would occur six thousand years after the Creation, but he interprets the event in perceptual terms. The plate is worth quoting fully.

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true. as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.
This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away and displaying the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

(E39; 14)

Thus for Blake the Apocalypse involves neither the Last Judgement that divides the sinners from the faithful nor the end of history and the physical world as traditionally believed; rather it is primarily a mental event, and the transformation of the world originates from man. Human perception is cleansed and expanded, restored to its original capacity, so that man will be able to see the whole spectrum of each being he or she encounters. Blake reverses the ordinary view that visionary perception is abnormal; for him, this transfiguring perception is the norm, the proper mode of human perception which recognizes everything as it is: holy and infinite.
Blake's view of apocalyptic transformation that centers on man is anticipated by Jeremiah and Ezekiel: both prophets place great emphasis on the human changes in the divine act of salvation and envision Israel's salvation--her return to the ancestral land, and her reconciliation with God--in terms of the inner transformation of man.

In Jeremiah the revolutionary element in the saving act of God emerges: instead of the world, man will be transformed miraculously. Compared with, for instance, Isaiah's vision of the miraculous restoration in which "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb... and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (11.6, 7), the changes in the world envisioned in Jeremiah are much more sober: the peoples of Israel and Judah will return from the exile and will be able to resume normal life with fields, commerce, marriages, cattle, and the anointed ruler (Jer. 31.42-33.26). Yet it is the inner changes of the people that God will bring about, as well as the anointed ruler, that make Jeremiah's vision as miraculous as the vision of Isaiah. Jeremiah proclaims the Lord's plan:

I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all
know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them. . . . (31.33-34)

God will write his law in the human hearts so that the knowledge of God's will and the divinely designed healthful way of life may be natural to the people. This inner change is again described in social terms:

I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. . . . I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (32.39-40)

As von Rad reminds us, in the Old Testament "the expression 'the fear of God' is the equivalent of obedience to the divine will" (2.215). Jeremiah also describes the anointed ruler with an emphasis on his spiritual nearness to God: "I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me?" (30.21). The rhetorical question in the later half of this verse means "who is it who gives his heart [that is, his life] in pledge to come near to me?" (von Rad 2.219). Not the military skill, nor the political skill, but the inner quality--the recognition of God and desire to identify with God--characterizes this new ruler.

In Ezekiel, the emphasis on the human transformation is even greater. As in Jeremiah, the changes in the world are far more realistic than in Isaiah 11: "the desolate land
shall be tilled . . . and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited" (36.34-5). Although the tilled land is to become "like the garden of Eden" (36.35), the comparison seems to refer to the fertility and the cultivated state rather than to the paradisiacal state. The divine work on man's inner life, on the other hand, repeats God's original creation of man in his likeness and with his breath. While Jeremiah envisions, to use von Rad's metaphor, "creative grafting of the will of God on the hearts of men" (von Rad 2.215), Ezekiel envisions a heart transplant:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statues, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

(36.26-27)

The "Spirit" of God is not merely a spiritual understanding but an actualizing power, the power that enables the prophets to prophesy and the judges like Samson to perform superhuman deeds; it is a power that enables man to act beyond ordinary capacity to carry out the divine task as God's agent. While in Samson and other prophets, the Spirit of God occasionally descends to make them perform God's work, in Ezekiel's vision of recreation, the Spirit of God
put in the human heart becomes the innate informing or animating spirit of man. Thus the human and the divine are fused in this new creation.

Furthermore, as a result of this recreation, Ezekiel continues, Israel will be able to see herself clearly. When God cleanses her "from all [her] filthiness, and from all [her] idols" (36.25) and gives her the new heart and the spirit, her perception of herself changes:

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. (36.31)

She will no longer be accused of her past iniquities. Yet the guilt of the past is not simply dismissed or repressed but is given its proper place, creatively incorporated into her view of herself, and dialectically used for the present.

In both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the divine salvation thus culminates in a reorientation of man to the divine will through a cleansing of old iniquities. Although God remains outside man and transcendental, the spirit of God and the divine way of life designed for man are internalized in each individual. Thus the Hebrew prophets' conception of the recreated state of man anticipates Blake's conception of the restored condition of man who fulfills his divine self through the transfiguring perception.
Whereas the prophets conceive that God must give man the divine spirit, Blake conceives that man already has the divine spirit or the Poetic Genius within himself; yet unlike in his Lyca poems, in *The Marriage* Blake, like the prophets, shows little faith in the capacity of the fallen man to recover by himself from the lapsed condition. Jeremiah and Ezekiel's visions of man's restoration derive from the deep conviction that man is utterly incapable of obeying God's will and that only through a recreation of the human heart by God will man be able to follow God's will (von Rad 2. 216-7, 221). In contrast, Blake internalizes the divine as the transfiguring perception of man, or the Poetic Genius, as both Blake's tractate "ALL RELIGIONS are ONE" and his Ezekiel in *The Marriage* call it. This divine power of human perception is now blocked by "the covering cherub." Blake identifies the cherubim who are ordered to guard the tree of life from man in Genesis 3.24 with the cherubim woven in the veil that divides people from "the most holy," the ark of the covenant, in Exodus 26.31-33, and with Ezekiel's Temple cherubim (ch.1), his Vision cherubim (10-11), and "covering cherub" (28.11-19). Ezekiel denounces the Prince of Tyre, calling him the "covering cherub," whom Tertullian and subsequent Church Fathers interpreted as Satan (Damon, *Dictionary* 93). All cherubim in one way or another stand between man and the divine source of power; hence, to Blake's imagination, they become
a single character, "the covering cherub," who blocks man from reaching the foundation of life, the tree of life. As Blake develops in his later prophecies, the Covering Cherub is the Selfhood or the Antichrist (Jerusalem E248; 89.10) from whom issue all the errors of the Christian Church. In Blake's view, the human mind, taught by the Church to live according to the established moral codes and values, has lost its infinitely dynamic and creative character and is now confined within the cavern or skull with narrowed inlets of the five senses. Man, therefore, cannot be united with his own divine power; he needs to discover his divine identity. However, man, alienated from his own true self and conditioned to perceive in a conventional way, is incapable of waking from his lapsed state, as Earth's answer demonstrates in Songs of Experience. Thus, in his conception of man's incapacitated state, Blake accords with the prophets.

Before the recovery, the chief blocking conventional notion, the dualism of body and soul, "is to be expunged" (E39; 14). This task Blake as prophet announces he will undertake. For him, the prophet is not merely a messenger of God but one in whom the divine potential is realized and who therefore has the power to perform, or at least inaugurate, what is entirely God's work in Jeremiah and Ezekiel--the re-creation of man and the world. As discussed in earlier chapters, the Hebrew prophets' words have a power
to shape history. Jeremiah, for instance, is conferred an enormous power over the world by God:

See, I have this day set thee [Jeremiah] over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. (1.10)

This verse, however, is preceded by another divine statement: "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (1.9). The prophet's power is presented not as his individual power but as the power of the words put in his mouth. The biblical text stresses the status of the prophet as a vehicle of God. In contrast, the narrator of *The Marriage* declares that by using "the infernal method," or the corrosive methods both of engraving and iconoclasm, he will prepare mankind for the full recovery of their transfiguring perception; he will corrode "the apparent surface" of the dualism with the acid bath of engraving and will reveal the infinite which is hid beneath the surface. Furthermore, through his provocative poetry, he will remove what Blake later calls the Spectre, or "Incrustation" (*Milton* E142; 40.34-5) over immortal spirit or that which prevents man from seeing reality "as it is: infinite." The intention, the power, and the strategy all derive from Blake the prophet's own imaginative perception, or what he calls the Poetic Genius. In Blake the prophet, the divine and the
human are united according to his own terms for such a union.

Blake presents this radical idea of prophethood and justifies it in the two "Memorable Fancies" placed before and after his proclamation of the imminent Apocalypse in plate 14. In the second "Memorable Fancy," through the characters of Isaiah and Ezekiel, Blake elaborates on his view of the prophets' role, qualification, method, authority, and heritage. In the third "Memorable Fancy," through his vision of the Printing House in Hell, he further reveals the six-stage process of his prophetic method and demonstrates the perception of the infinite and holy in everything.

In the second "Memorable Fancy," using Isaiah and Ezekiel as his spokesmen, Blake dramatically presents his definition of prophet and prophecy. First, Isaiah explains his prophetic calling:

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

The statement that identifies the voice of honest indignation with the voice of God is often quoted out of context. Before making this statement, Isaiah explicitly
describes his extraordinary ability to see what is invisible to the corporeal senses and implicitly tells us that he saw and heard God with his transfiguring perception that "discover'd the infinite in every thing." Blake's Isaiah has the capacity of perceiving the sacred "in every thing," just as do the innocent speakers and the prophetic speakers of Experience. The voice of honest indignation is dependent on the ability to see the world "as it is": the voice emerges from this lucid perception of the gap between the prophetically discovered holy and infinite world and the mundanely seen corrupt and finite world in which people are imprisoned. Although with his courage, honesty, and transfiguring perception, every man has the potential to be a prophet, only a few actualize this potential.

The prophets' subsequent explanations make clear that this transfiguring perception is the central source of prophecy. When the narrator asks Isaiah, "does a firm persuasion that a thing is so, make it so?", the prophet replies, "All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm persuasion of any thing" (E38-9; 12). As Blake presents him here, Isaiah regards himself as a poet. Blake has him allude to Christ's words that faith could remove a mountain, and that with faith nothing shall be impossible (Mat. 17.20, 21.21, Mk. 11.23). The prophet interprets those words in terms of imaginative perception
that creatively transforms the world, as the Just man in "the Argument" transforms "the perilous path" into a garden. Faith in truth and reality of imagination can indeed remove "the vale of death (E33; 2.5). Isaiah's view of the "ages of imagination" is in agreement with the narrator's own description, in plate 11, of the age before poetry was consolidated into organized religion:

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity. (E38; 11)

Yet as the poetry is abstracted by the priests, "men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (E38; 11). It was the poets who, by the power of enlarged senses or animating perception, discerned "all sensible objects" as they are in their totality and animated them by describing them in their holy and infinite plane as "Gods or Geniuses," as demonstrated by Blake, for instance, in his poems of the seasons. The poet's transfiguring perception is the origin of pagan gods and demi-gods; they reside in and are issued from the poets' breasts. Finally, Blake's Ezekiel expounds
upon this idea of the imaginative perception as the ultimate source of all deities:

we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative . . . prophesying that all Gods [PL 13] would at last be proved. to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius. . . . (E39; 12-13)

God, or the supreme principle, is fully and explicitly identified as the Poetic Genius.

Moreover, Blake introduces not only the Hebrew prophets but also "[their] friend Diogenes the Grecian" (E39; 13) in order to show another heritage of the poet and universality of the prophetic character. By making his Isaiah state that the strange acts of the prophet were prompted by the same motive as that of Diogenes, Blake suggests that his purpose and his method find precedents in both the biblical prophetic tradition represented by Isaiah and Ezekiel and the Greek prophetic tradition represented by Diogenes.

Blake was yet to come to the point when he presents the unity of all individuals' Poetic Genius throughout time and space as Jesus, the Divine Vision. But by making the great ancient prophets affirm his source of inspiration and his view of prophet and prophecy, Blake attempts both to justify his own prophethood and to reveal that the Poetic Genius
always has been, is, and will be the **primum mobile** though called in different names in different times and places.

Blake does not merely assert this divine power of transfiguring perception: his metaphor of "the infernal method" and vision of the Printing House in Hell embody his perception that sees the world as it is, infinite and holy. He uses the metaphor of "printing in the infernal method" with several levels of meaning. First of all, the method represents the engraving of Blake's work by corroding the surface of the copper plate with acid to make his text and design rise and to print them on paper. The infernal method is also an activity of the Devils in Hell who corrode the established order of civilization. As well, the method refers to Blake's subversive poetry. Finally, the method is the first step of the Apocalypse, which Blake undertakes to bring about, breaking open the "narrow chinks of [man's] cavern" or narrow windows of the five senses through which man perceives the world. The corrosive nature of the method also refers to intellectual struggle that the reader of Blake's prophecies has to go through; thus, plate 14 serves as a justification of the tremendous demand that Blake chooses to place upon the reader. By seeing metaphorically, Blake discovers infinite and holy meanings and potentials in his craft of engraving and method of illuminated printing. The process of engraving is not merely a metaphor in a sense of transference (A for B) but is an actual means that brings
about the Apocalypse." What seems a prosaic process of engraving literally partakes of the ultimate divine act of Apocalypse.

Blake's vision of the Printing House in Hell equally demonstrates his prophetic perception. The activities in the six chambers of the Printing House have received diverse interpretations, but two readings in particular stand out among all. Bloom reads the description of the Printing House mainly in terms of transformations that occur in the artist's mind at work (Apocalypse 89; E898-9).

This six-chambered "Printing house in Hell" is an allegory of artistic creation, and begins "by an improvement of sensual enjoyment", as prophesied on the preceding plate. The Dragon Man, a phallic emblem, clears away the mental rubbish that impedes our sense of touch, while the Dragons enlarge our other senses. The Viper of restraint and custom folds round our fallen state, while others seek to conceal its reality by the adornments of wealth. The Eagle of imagination (see Proverb of Hell 54) defeats the Viper by making our potential infinite, while "Eagle like men" create their works "in the immense cliffs" of our temporal ruin, even as the Devil Blake cut the motto to the Proverbs into the rock. In the fourth chamber the metals of fallen appearance,
introduced by the Vipers of restraint, are melted down into materia poetica, the living waters of life, by the raging Lions who are the flaming archetypes of all imaginative conception. The fifth chamber is like Yeats's "golden smithies" in "Byzantium", where "Unnam'd forms" break the flood of spirit, and cast the metals into a sixth chamber, where the class of men next to be named "the Prolific" complete the creative process. (E898-9)

Bloom interprets the "cave" of the first chamber as the human body, seeing a direct continuity from the ending of the previous plate: "For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (E39; 14). The activity in the first chamber, thus, is the expansion of the artist's own senses. Erdman, on the other hand, suggests that the activities in the Printing House describe the making of the illuminated books. The "cave," as well as the rock that a Viper folds round, is the plate of engraving, which a Dragon-Man engraves and the Vipers illuminate. Erdman thinks that in describing the six chambers, Blake departs from the natural order of his work process, "to cause the inside of his allegory of a printing house 'to be infinite'. . ." ("Postscript" 411). Thus, the third chamber refers to the ideas and visions of the Poetic Genius; the fourth, to etching; the fifth is "the pressroom,
from which the finished work is 'cast into the expanse,'" or published; the sixth shows that the plates are "collated into 'the forms of books' and are received by customers .. . into their chambers or 'libraries'" ("Postscript 412).

The peculiar character of Blake's vision of the Printing House is that it allows the above two readings simultaneously: this vision fuses the subject and the object of a perception in the single metaphor of "cave" for both the engraving process and the lapsed human mind. As in the previous plate, the cave is the human skull which has the inlets of four of the five senses, or the entire human body (as the traditional Platonic metaphor of the body as the tomb-cave for the soul) with the five inlets. The cave also is the copper plate for Blake's illuminated works, the plate previously identified with the mind conceived by the Lockean empiricism in the first "Memorable Fancy," (as the mind not yet experienced is compared to a tabula rasa). Blake engraves his text and design in this plate, illuminates the plate with colour, inks it, and makes prints. Furthermore, this process is simultaneously the process of enlarging or cleansing of the reader's senses as the reader encounters the illuminated work. Thus the vision of the Printing House embodies at once the process of creation as it occurs in the artist's mind, the process of engraving and printing the illuminated works, and the process of enlargement of consciousness in the reader as he or she reads the
illuminated works. As such, the vision demonstrates the perception of the infinite and holy significance in everything.

In the second "Memorable Fancy," by having his prophets explain their strange acts recorded in the Bible, Blake justifies his means of prophecy: the illuminated printing, and the rhetorical strategies employed for the poetic texts, and the purely visionary mode of his prophecy. At the end of the "Memorable Fancy," the narrator respectively asks Isaiah and Ezekiel the reasons for their singular actions. In the Bible, God explicitly indicates the meanings of these acts: each of the acts symbolically represents a specific future plight of Israel, Judah, or the neighboring nations on which Israel chooses to depend politically. Blake, however, has the prophets perform these acts by their own initiative and makes the two explain the motive behind their singular acts. Isaiah explains that his eccentric act has the same motive as that of Diogenes, who dramatized his philosophy of life to make the people think and to shock them into recognition, breaking the barriers of conventions and habitual ways of thinking. As Ezekiel puts it, the prophets are impelled by "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite" (E39; 13). Blake's interpretation of the biblical text is very personal, and yet the interpretation put in the mouths of the prophets
penetrates into the essence of the writing prophets' symbolic acts, as do many of his other seemingly idiosyncratic interpretations of the Bible. As a graphic mode of ruah, or the divine word, the symbolic acts of the prophets strike the human psyche with an impact beyond what spoken language alone can give.\textsuperscript{12} The replies of Isaiah and Ezekiel thus serve as Blake's own reason for the graphic and the symbolic presentation of his prophecy and the use of rhetoric.

Instead of using text alone, Blake employs both text and design and uses the latter not as a representational illustration of the text but as the dialectical half of his "composite art." The design complements the text, by showing symbolically at one time spiritual forms, at another the ultimate implications of the text, at yet another a totally enigmatic picture. Since most of the pictures do not visually delineate the texts, the designs, free from the imposition of the single authoritative meaning, evoke a wide range of meanings and responses and, together with the texts, enlarge the reader's sensory perception. For instance, at the end of the main text, preceding the final line "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (E44; 24), Blake presents a picture of Nebuchadnezzar crawling, although the text has no specific reference to the king. The picture symbolizes, among other meanings, the ultimate condition of man as he obeys his reason and oppresses the
rest of his being. The irony is that the king, by governing with "One Law", is in fact enslaved to his animal nature and fears energy's revolt. The strangeness of the design, which does not appear to have any relation to the text, as well as the ambiguity of the design's meaning and the power of the design itself, breaks the reader's habitual mode of thinking and engages her or his imagination to create a fresh meaning through a dialectical reading of the text and the design. Thus Blake uses the graphic and the symbolic modes to raise the reader's perception.

The replies of the prophets also serve to justify Blake's rhetorical strategies: he attempts to expand the reader's consciousness by means of shockingly provocative ideas and expressions, as exemplified in "The voice of the Devil" or in the vision of the monkey house, and by means of a visionary mode that does not make concessions to comfortable, conventional mental habits and literary tastes, the mode exemplified in the Printing house in Hell. Finally, the replies of these two great predecessors serve to justify his choice: Blake sees himself as being firmly in the tradition of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Thus in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, especially in plates 11 to 15, Blake dramatically expresses his conceptions of prophethood and justifies his mode and method of prophecy.
Like earlier works, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* attempts to deliver the reader's mind from conventional ways of experiencing life, but *The Marriage* is characterized by the diversity of the means Blake uses to attain this goal. He seeks to ignite the mental apocalypse, proclaiming and demonstrating the principle of contraries and dismantling conventional ways of thinking, by means of an abrasive manner, a visionary mode, the dramatic presentation of multiple perspectives, the revisionary use of literary genres, and allusions to the Bible and Milton. Because of this mixture of diverse literary genres and voices, most critics, following Frye, identify *The Marriage* as a Menippean satire mixed with prophecy (Frye, *Symmetry* 200–201). The medley of forms in *The Marriage*, however, is a result partly of Blake's responses to Swedenborg's works and chiefly of Blake's experiment with the media that suit his prophetic purpose rather than his adoption of the Menippean form. In *The Marriage* Blake uses these diverse devices in order to experiment with them, searching for the right medium for his prophecy, until finally he finds a suitable voice in "A Song of Liberty."

Blake proposes to inaugurate the mental apocalypse by expunging the conventional way of thinking exemplified in Christian dualism, and Swedenborg's works in particular, and by showing the principle of contraries as the wholesome way of thinking. The principle of contraries constitutes the
art of transfiguring perception, which Blake endeavors to reinstitute in the reader as the normative way to seeing the world. A dynamic of progression through a creative conflict of opposites, the principle of contraries affirms both sides of the contraries and leaves them open for the perceiver to make fresh meaning out of the two. Through a consciousness of this larger objective, or a larger context in which one is placed against one's contrary, the conflict moves in a creative direction. The dynamic of contraries, according to Blake, is the principle of universal forces, as shown in plate 16. In Blake's view, the forces of the world consist of the Giants "who formed this world into its sensual existence" and "are in truth, the cause of its life & the source of all activity" and the "weak and tame minds" who bind the Giants in chains (E40; 16). Thus, "one portion of being, is the Prolific. the other, the Devouring" (E40; 16). Furthermore, every human being belongs to one of these two "classes" and participates in the dynamic of the universe. These two classes are, however, not of equal value, and the conflict is not the Hegelian dialectic. For this dynamic to function properly, the Prolific, and not the Devouring, needs to be in charge of it because by nature the Prolific alone can allow the operation of contraries. The Devouring, by nature, is the one which attempts to order life according to an established system, usurping the dynamic with a static system of values, or what Blake later comes to call the
principle of "negation." Thus, the Just man and not the Villain, the Devil and not the Angel, or the Poet and not the Priest practices the principles until the latter of these pairs consolidates the dynamic relationship of contraries into the static hierarchy of dualism, in order to cease the perpetual battle for fresh creation. In so doing, the Devouring prevents man from participating in the life-producing dynamic of the universe, repressing "the producer" (E40; 16) of life. The Prolific, on the other hand, usurped from its proper place and denied its existence, becomes the raging wild voice, what is traditionally called the Devil, who to regain his proper place, constantly assaults the established order of civilization. The principle of contraries for Blake is indeed the foundation of life, a divine truth revealed by the Poetic Genius.

Yet to restore this principle to its proper place, Blake must dismount the Devouring from its reigning place. He sets out to dismantle Christian dualism and negation, or the way of thinking that underlies the dualism, using an abrasive, often shocking manner of criticism. He introduces the voice of the Devil and the proverbs of Hell, both of which boldly denounce traditional piety, and shows the picture of the monstrously perverted "religious" in the fourth "Memorable Fancy," in order to expose the ultimate implication of denying the one half of reality.
Although Blake needs to reveal the truth about the principle of contraries and its contrary, the principle of negation, his anxiety of becoming of the Angel's party by proclaiming the truth is so strong, and his commitment to deliver the reader's mind from every kind of monolithic imposition so thorough that Blake presents every voice in The Marriage as one of the many voices placed in a dramatic context and, furthermore, as one of the contraries.

For instance, the narrator's voice that proclaims the necessity of contraries and the errors of Christian dualism is immediately juxtaposed with "the voice of the Devil":

All Bibles or sacred codes. have been the causes of the following Errors. . . .

But the following Contraries to these are True

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

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

3. Energy is Eternal Delight (E34; 4)

The Devil's view is sometimes identical to the narrator's and at other time slightly different and slanted. The first of the Devil's "True" principles, for example, agrees with the narrator's statement in plate 14 that "the notion that
man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged" (E39). The Devil's second principle appears to be partisan as it claims that Energy alone is life; nevertheless, again, this statement is roughly repeated by the narrator in his account of the Giants and the Prolific as the producers of life in plate 16: "The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence . . . are in truth. the causes of its life & the sources of all activity" (E40). Also the Devil's description of the relationship between Energy and Reason approximates the narrator's explanation of the relationship between the Prolific and the Devouring (E40; 16). The Devil's third principle is clearly a partial truth since to be "Eternal Delight," Energy needs Reason as the contrary. The narrator inconsistently agrees with the Devil, as if unsure of the degree of irony to use.

The Devil's vocabulary, categories, and provocative tone are so close to those of the narrator that it is almost impossible to determine to what extent the narrator is ironic, speaking as a Devil. Dan Miller even suggests that "the Devil reasons as contrarily as the speaker on plate 3; he combines a defense of the energetic against the rational contrary with a claim to the higher truth that embraces both parties" (496). The Devil, however, has the advantage of appearing to embrace both parties because his argument is presented in the form of counter-argument to that of the religious. But Miller is right in sensing the affinity
between the Devil and the narrator. Part of the narrator's and the Devil's accounts could have been spoken by either of them. After all, of the two classes of men—"the Prolific" and "the Devouring"—the narrator belongs to the first as his use of the infernal method and his opposition to the Angel clearly indicate. During the journey in Hell, the narrator appears to be the double of the "mighty Devil," who with corroding fire is engraving lines drawn from Chatterton on "a flat sided steep" (E35; 6). The "flat sided steep" is the tabula or the human mind as conceived by the Lockean empiricists. Instead of imaginatively seeing the world, animating and adorning it, in Blake's configuration the Lockean mind, like a flat sided cliff, rigidly faces the world only to register the data of the narrowed five senses. The mighty Devil corrodes the cliff and engraves the sentences, attempting to awaken the mind to its power of imagination; just as the narrator announces he will do in plate 14. Finally, the narrator is a diabolical interpreter of the Bible and the author of "The Bible of Hell." Thus, he is clearly "of the Devil's party" (E35; 5). The narrator's statement, be it on the principle of contraries or on Swedenborg's conventionalism, is presented as a partial truth.

In the fourth "Memorable Fancy" Blake dramatically shows the "eternal lots" of the narrator and the Angel according to each other's "metaphysics," in order to reveal
the ultimately self-destructive nature of conventional piety; yet this revelation is placed within the context of contraries. At the end, the narrator remarks, "we impose on one another" (E42; 20), implicitly acknowledging that the vision just shown is after all from his point of view. The narrator further provides a proverb to sum up this "Memorable Fancy": "Opposition is true friendship" (E42; 20). Moreover, the narrator's ironic voice in his conversation with the Angel considerably affects the vision he describes. The peculiarly detached, matter-of-fact tone of the narrator's voice well might have derived from Swedenborg's tone in his "Memorable Relations." Swedenborg reports his visions and dreams, except for the occasional "lo's" and "behold's," in the deliberately matter-of-fact tone that is somewhat condescending to the reader for whom visionary experience of the author is a source of wonder. Blake adopts this tone to criticize Swedenborg's conventional views of the Angels and the Devils, or Heaven and Hell, yet the tone seriously undercuts the poet-prophet's central claim for the truth of his visionary perception. By presenting his vision of "the eternal lot" of the Angel in this dialogical and ironic manner, Blake avoids becoming another Angel by judging and defining others with another set of values. Yet at the same time by presenting his statement and vision as half truth, as one of the contraries, Blake reduces the power of his message,
probably far more than he would like. Whether it is the principle of contraries, or the discourse of Isaiah and Ezekiel, or the vision of the Angel's eternal lot, all is dramatically presented in the context of contraries. The result is a remarkably open text--so much so that discussion of any idea presented in The Marriage as idea is extremely difficult since it is never presented to be taken as what the poet believes to be a whole truth. On this open character of The Marriage, Steven Shaviro writes:

The discourse of The Marriage is consistently dramatic and ironic, limited to the perspectives of specific speakers... but to the extent that that discourse refers back to and founds the very perspectivism or doctrine of Contraries, within which and by means of which it is itself situated, it validates itself as a transcendent principle of authority. Blake's logic thus at once remains within the ironic limits of perspective and context, and yet escapes beyond them. (233)

Although "Blake's logic" and his reader may be free from determining impositions, this consummately indeterminate, ironic mode ultimately lacks the prophetic power necessary to inspire the reader. The fact that Blake abandoned this mode indicates his dissatisfaction with it. He needs a voice that is at once open and strong: at once a voice of a conviction--"a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make[s]
it so" (E38; 12)—and a voice that is not a tyrannical imposition, at once a voice that proclaims the divine truth and a voice that does not negate the contrary.

Indeed this tension between monological and dialogical characterizes Blake's prophecies throughout his later works. Vincent De Luca is, to my knowledge, the first to point out this inherent tension in Blake's prophecy, a tension between a visionary poet who dramatically presents his visions and a didactic poet who repeatedly proclaims, "Mark well my words! they are of your eternal salvation" (Milton E96; 2.25 & passim)(De Luca 3). Likewise, Shaviro describes this tension as a tension between "Blake as systematizer, as sage and teacher, as essentially doctrinal poet" and "Blake as dramatic poet and master of irony who rarely or never speaks in propria persona" (230). In The Marriage, in search of a single authoritative voice that satisfies both impulses and that can encompass the whole range of his vision, Blake experiments with diverse literary genres, tones, and devices until finally he finds an appropriate mode in "A Song of liberty."14 He uses lyric in "The Argument," religious, philosophical, historical, psychological, and mythic discourses in plates 3, 5, 11, 14, 16, and 21-22, proverbs in the "Proverbs of Hell," visions in the "Memorable Fancies." True to his principle of contraries, each time Blake adopts a genre, he never slavishly follows its decorum. Even as he adopts the form, he revises it so as to
present his ideas in a way that does not constrict the readers to the perspective he offers. Nevertheless, each of these genres has its own limitation and proves to be unsuitable for Blake's prophetic need.

Despite having obvious limitations for prophetic writing, "The Argument" in the form of lyric offers one important element: an intense and direct voice of the poet-prophet. As also seen, for instance, in "The Sick Rose," Blake's lyrics can convey astounding complexity and different meanings through symbols and allusions. "The Argument" dramatizes the usurpation of the dynamic of contraries by negation, alluding to Jacob and Esau, the archetypal story of usurpation. Through the repetitions, in strategic places, of "the perilous path," allegorical naming and the numerous allusions to biblical characters and events, the poem succeeds in illuminating the critical condition of the present state of man: the life-producing, dynamic way of living enabled by being "just" to both contraries has been usurped by the static way of life that thrives on conforming to what has been already accomplished. As in "The Sick Rose," the symbols and allusions create almost endless levels of meaning. Yet more than this depth and complexity, "The Argument" is important for the intense lyric voice of the prophet, the voice natural to Blake, the voice with which he began his poetic career. Nevertheless,
by itself, lyric lacks multiple perspectives indispensable for a dialogical text.

In the section "Proverbs of Hell," Blake creates a new mode of proverbs which could be called oxymoronically the "prophetic proverb." Proverbs, as those in the Bible, aiming at stability and comfort, express received wisdom which appeals to traditional values such as common sense, prudence, and moderation. Especially the biblical Book of Proverbs is designed to instruct young men in upper-class families how to live successfully in the world. Thus proverbs by nature diametrically oppose prophetic literature, which denounces man's dependence upon worldly wisdom. But Blake turns this genre of wisdom literature into prophetic literature. His norm is not prudence and temperance but "excess," or liberation of energy without the restraint of conventions: "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (E35; 7.3). He also uses a highly metaphorical language that activates the reader's mind, and that cannot be rendered in single-dimensional language of rational discourse. And many of the proverbs expressed in non-metaphorical language refer to a visionary plane, as in the case of "One thought. fills immensity" (E36; 8.36), or challenge traditional values, as in "Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius" (E38; 10.66). Blake uses the form of "binary proverb, which is composed of two members or phrases
drawn together into a sort of parallelism" (Williams 270). For instance, in the fourteenth proverb, "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction" (E37; 9.44), by presenting both sides of the comparison ("the tyger of wrath" and "the horses of instruction"), the proverb allows an expression of both contraries, even as it favors one over the other. Like lyric the proverb is a mode that allows Blake to speak in a way habitual to him. As Michael E. Holstein reminds us, not only did Blake read Lavater's Aphorisms on Man but also he commented on it, as well as other books, in the aphoristic style (29-31). The cryptic, oracular mode of expression is congenial to him. As well, Holstein also points out, Blake creates "a situation out of which proverbs emerge," presenting them in the dramatic framework that the narrator collected them to introduce the character of Hell (31-2). The proverbs are one of the many voices in The Marriage and not meant to be taken as the authoritative voice of wisdom. Thus, through the prophetic norm of dynamic living, the metaphorical language, the binary form, and the dramatic presentation, Blake created a mode of proverb that is at once didactic and visionary with directness and intensity equal to those of lyric.

Furthermore, besides the sharpness and pith of aphoristic style, the traditional way of presenting the proverbs offers an important element to Blake's prophecy—the juxtapositions in flashes of disjointed visions. The
structure of the "Proverbs of Hell" approximates that of his later prophecies in which visions are presented with only loosely connected narrative threads, and the sequence can well be altered. Nevertheless, proverbs by themselves are too short a form to convey complex themes.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is punctuated with discourses--religious, philosophical, historical, psychological, mythic, and literary--which satisfy the poet-prophet's didactic or systematizing need. Each of these discourses also forms a dialectical relationship with the "Memorable Fancy" that precedes and/or follows the discourse. Blake took this structure that alternates discourse and vision from Swedenborg's writings. But whereas Swedenborg "cites" his "Memorable Relations" "to illustrate" his discourses and subordinates his visions to his theories, Blake employs discourse and "Memorable Fancy" in equal terms. It is the reader's task to relate the visions and discourses to produce fresh meanings.

Furthermore, by placing these discourses in a larger framework and in the context of the contraries, Blake prevents his statements from becoming a monolithic constriction. Yet this dramatic framework, as well as the possible irony of the narrator, undermines the status of divine truths that Blake wishes to stress; it undermines such proclamations of the narrator as contraries "are necessary to Human existence" (E34; 3), or "If the doors of
perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite" (E39; 14), and these are the kind of statement which, as Blake instructs us in Milton, the readers must "mark well," for their "eternal salvation" (Milton E96; 2.25 & passim).

Blake's vision within the framework of each "Memorable Fancy" embodies his transfiguring perception and reveals multiple levels of significance all at once--religious and eschatological, philosophical, historical, psychological, and artistic. In the third "Memorable Fancy," for instance, the vision of the Printing House in Hell, as shown before, demonstrates the poet-prophet's perception that sees the infinite and holy in everything. The vision shows that the humble craft of engraving and printing has an apocalyptic meaning and is indeed a tool to begin the Apocalypse. Philosophically, the vision shows a process of removing the habitual and repressive mental habits and of expanding consciousness. Psychologically, it is a process of releasing energy through removing the repression of convention. As well, the vision implicitly criticizes the traditional notion, Swedenborg's in particular, that Hell is a place of torment and destruction, showing the place to be the foundation of regeneration.

In the fourth "Memorable Fancy" the two journeys into "the infinite Abyss" and the house of monkeys respectively represent "the eternal lot" of the narrator according to the
Angel's view and that of the Angel according to the narrator's. After the narrator's provocative statements that attempt to dismantle traditional piety, the Angel, a conventional believer, volunteers to show that the narrator is destined to eternal torment in Hell. The vision of "the infinite Abyss" unfolds the scene of the Last Judgment that, the Angel believes, the narrator will have to face. Out from the spot that the Angel designates as the narrator's lot emerges Leviathan with striped forehead like a tiger's. The Leviathan rushes towards the two, and the Angel flees while the narrator remains undisturbed. When the Angel who provides this vision is gone, the Abyss turns into a pleasant bank where a harper is singing a song with a theme that "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind" (E42; 14).

On the philosophical and psychological levels, the whole vision demonstrates the outcome of repression and negation. As the Angel judges in terms of the established moral categories and negates energy, or what is judged evil, he faces assaults by the repressed element which is seen as the monster Leviathan. The narrator, being just to the contrary, sees the Leviathan bred by the Angel's mind as no threat but affirms the energy of this "reptile," as evident in his description:
we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire and not many stones throw from us appeard and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent. at last to the east, distant about three degrees appeard a fiery crest above the waves slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks till we discovered two globes of crimson fire. from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke, and now we saw it was the head of Leviathan. his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tygers forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward [PL 19] us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.

(E41; 18-9)

The description reflects the narrator's sense of the sublime: the narrator recognizes beauty and spirituality in the vitality of the Leviathan.

On the artistic level, as Morris Eaves shows, this vision, like that of the Printing house in Hell, represents the process of artistic creation, especially the creation of the illuminated book of The Marriage (81-116). On the historical or political level, as Erdman and Nurmi respectively show, this emergence of Leviathan "to the east, distant about three degrees" (E41; 81) from the two spectators refers to the rise of revolutionary spirit in
France, particularly in Paris, which is in latitude three degrees east of London (Erdman, *Prophet* 180; Nurmi, *Marriage* 51).

Finally, on the religious and eschatological level, the vision indeed shows both the Angel's and the narrator's mental states in their ultimate implications. Ironically, it is the Angel who faces the perpetual assault of what is rejected as evil according to the established categories. The narrator, in contrast, is in a paradisiacal state since he embraces and blesses both ends of these categories as the contraries. The vision thus corrects what is to Blake the erroneous categorization and mentality of traditional views.

The vision also fuses the subject and the object of the perception. The subject in this case is the narrator, and the object the Angel. The Abyss is the product of the Angel's mind, yet it is the narrator who describes what he sees. Thus the vision embodies at once the Angel's and the narrator's perspectives. The spectacle of Hell meant to terrify the narrator is imbued with beauty and vitality, for his transfiguring perception liberates the energy condemned by the Angel's conventional dualism to the Abyss. The conventional image of Hell is transfigured into a magnificent vision of the locus of energy. In so doing, the narrator is redeeming the reptiles bred in the Angel's stagnant mind.
These powerful visions, however, are undercut by the framework of the "Memorable Fancy" and by its use of the narrator as a character. Blake uses this framework partly to present his visions together with his discourse and partly to expose Swedenborg's conventional values. While in Swedenborg the Angel imparts celestial knowledge, in The Marriage Blake exposes the Angel's metaphysics. Or in the fifth "Memorable Fancy," the Angel is converted and becomes a Devil. This Swedenborgian convention is an effective tool of subversion but is not the best way to present prophetic visions. The label and framework of the "Memorable Fancy" are redundant and constricting for a presentation of a longer, more complex visionary drama. Indeed, together with the context of contraries, the framework undercuts the power of the visions, stressing, perhaps unintentionally, their anecdotal status. Furthermore, the use of the narrator as a character in the vision, another Swedenborgian element, also causes a problem, making the vision an account from memory rather than an account of immediately perceived visionary events. As well, the condescending and sometimes ironic voices of the narrator both outside and inside the "Memorable Fancy" undermine the status of the visions. The prophet's vision needs to be presented, unmediated by such tones, with the directness and immediacy of lyric and aphorism.
Blake thus experiments with lyric, proverbs, discourse, and vision until finally he finds an appropriate voice in "A Song of Liberty." The "Song" is a condensed version of the main text, as becomes evident; it synthesizes the relevant elements that each of the genres offers in the main text, as well as overall rhetorical strategies, to form a unique mode suited to his prophecy. The poet-prophet now presents his visions and proclaims eternal truth with the intensity, directness, and urgency that the lyric and the aphoristic forms make possible, while keeping his text as open as before. Unlike the earlier prophetic modes of Tiriel and The French Revolution, the mode of political prophecy in the "Song" fuses the eternal (mythic and spiritual) and the historical into one, allowing the prophet-poet to express at once all the levels of reality he sees.

In the action of the "Song, Blake reverses the process presented in "The Argument." In "The Argument" the villain usurps the Just man from his path and drives him to the wilderness where the meek Just man becomes a raging voice; in the "Song" the Just man overthrows the usurper's reign and restores freedom both for man and the world.

The "Song" begins with the birth of a child from the Eternal Female. The long repressed Energy, or what "the religious" call Eternal Hell, breaks through the reign of Reason. This emergence of the new born is a volcanic eruption of the Leviathan who is pent up in the Abyss and
ready to assault the Angel in the fourth "Memorable Fancy." The birth also is the rise of revolutionary spirit all over Europe, England, and America.

The moment "the new born terror" (E44; 25.8) appears, he encounters "the starry king" (E44; 25.8). The king hurls the child but this attempt to stifle the opponent leads to a coincidentaneous collapse of both. As in the conflict between Gwin and Gordred in "Gwin, King of Norway," or as in the conflict between "the Prolific" and "the Devouring," the opposite forces are continuous, and the limiting of the energy limits both the oppressor and the oppressed. The collapse of the starry king illustrates, by a negative example, the narrator's assertion in plate 6 that Reason needs Desire to build upon (E35). Erdman suggests that the king's attempt to remove the new-born refers specifically to the growth of the counter-revolutionary power in Europe of 1790-2. In July 1790 the Duke of Brunswick issued a Manifesto which threatened to "exterminate all inhabitants of Paris" unless they would submit to their king, and subsequently the Duke's army, with the French Princes and Austrian and Prussian majesties, mustered on the border of France. But, the revolutionary army dethroned the French king and hurled back the counter-revolutionary army, as the rejection of the new-born terror overthrows the starry king and his army.
Having failed to maintain his place by force, the starry king then attempts to control people by law. Erdman suggests that the king's act refers to the French royalist priests' effort in London to win British politicians' sympathy in the summer of 1790. The new-born fire, however, not quenched by the sea in which he sinks, destroys the king's "stony law" and releases "the eternal horses" from the stable. Thus, the energy and inspiration trapped in the stable of convention is now free to run and is about to bring forth a truly new dispensation. As prophesied in Isaiah chapters 34 and 35, to which Blake directs the reader's attention in plate 3, the destruction of the kingdom is followed by the restoration. Blake sees this restoration in terms of deliverance of oppressed Energy. As Energy is released, the lion and wolf cease to rage and are ready to "dwell with the lamb" (Isa. 11.6).

The visionary drama in the "Song" is as open as is the main text with the evocative characters, the non-linear, disjointed structure, and the multiple levels of meaning. Each character in the "Song" is the essence of the variously presented characters of the main text who are analogue to each other. For instance, the raging Just man, the Devil, the Giants, the Prolific, and the Leviathan find their rebirth into "the new born terror." Likewise, the Villain, the Angel, the religious, the weak and tame minds, and the
Devouring find their prototype "the starry king." As Jackson succinctly explains, these new characters are unnamed forms for fundamental, universal patterns. . . . each represent[ing] the essential mentality or spiritual state (which Blake treats as universal forces) that creates its representative mundane phenomena. (218)

At once traditional and idiosyncratic, these characters are powerfully evocative of the analogous characters in the Bible, Milton, and classical mythology, such as Jehovah, Satan, and Phaethon, and yet resist simple identifications with these traditional characters. Even the designation of the characters in the "Song" shifts from line to line. The new-born child is called "the new born terror" (v.7), "the new born fire" (v.8), "the new born wonder" (v.10), "the fire" (v.11), and "the son of fire" (v.19). The king is also variously called "the starry king" (v.8), "the jealous king" (v.15), and "the gloomy king" (v.17), and in each designation the epithet is given the status of a proper noun. Each of the characters thus has at once a clear outline and fluidity, with an infinite number of meanings.

Moreover, like the main text, the visionary mode of the "Song" is disjointed and loosely connected by a narrative thread. Although far more overt than that of the main text as a whole, the action of the "Song" does not have a simple linear progression. The "Song" sometimes juxtaposes and at
other times fuses the timeless and the historical realms, switching from one to the other and back or merging them into each other without explanations. For instance, a scene in the timeless realm, the conflict between the new-born fire and the starry king on the Atlantis (verse 11), is immediately followed by a scene in the historical realm. The citizens of London, the Jews, and the Africans are urged to "look up" and see the new-born fire fall from the mountain of Atlantis (v. 12). Then the "Song" returns to the timeless realm to describe the new-born fire sinking into the sea (v. 13). The events in the two realms are thus juxtaposed, but they are also fused since the people are urged to see the fire from the eternal realm, just as in the opening verses the Eternal Female's groan is heard all over the historical realm. Thus, free from a determinate linear or cyclical framework, the "Song" heavily depends upon the reader's imagination for a synthesis of the juxtaposed elements and a creation of a fresh meaning. Nevertheless, the "Song" is not so dialogical as Blake's major prophecies are. We hear no voices of the Eternal Female, the starry king, and Urthona directly. In the midst of the counter-revolutionary England and in the wake of Blake's own discovery of his prophetic voice, the new-born fire's triumph is still unambiguous to Blake, and, as Graham Pechey incisively observes, the poet-prophet could proclaim the end of empire "in unison" with the new born-fire.18
The voice Blake found in the "Song" is far more intense than the lyric voice of "The Argument" and is closer to the oracular voice of the Devil in the Proverbs of Hell. Indeed, the "Song" retains the characteristics of the "Proverbs of Hell"--the short verse-prose form that is cryptic, pithy, and oracular. As Pechey writes on the exclamatory intonation of the "Song," "even the diegetic passages have a 'vocative' cast, differing from the manifestly apostrophic addresses only in that act of invocation is not explicit" (71). The poet-prophet's voice is almost ecstatic not only because the dawn of the Apocalypse is near, but also because he has found the voice to proclaim the divine truth freely without the anxiety of consolidation and monolithic impositions on the reader. It is the voice that is natural to him, not ironic, and yet also appropriate for singing visionary truths. The persona of the prophet-poet is almost transparent; the disembodied voice reports the vision with conviction and exhorts people to rise from the oppression of convention.

The visionary mode in the "Song" also allows multiple levels of meaning. To name a few, on the psychological level, the action depicts the conflict between Reason and Energy; on the religious level, the conflict between the institution and the divine within each man; on the political level, the conflict between the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary powers in Europe and England of 1790-
2; on the level of the total form of history of mankind—or the prophetic level—, the conflict is the final battle that ushers the total consummation of the created world. In the main text, these levels of meaning are conveyed both through diverse discourses on the principle of contraries and through visions especially in the third and fourth "Memorable Fancies." In the "Song" the vision alone conveys all these levels. In particular, the last two levels—the political and the prophetic—are far more prominent in the "Song" than in the main text, for the "Song" focuses on the present moment (that is, 1790-1792) as the critically pregnant moment in the history of the universe.

Blake attempts to illuminate the eternal significance of the present by juxtaposing and fusing the political and the prophetic levels and by conveying the prophetic level through evocation of the biblical and Miltonic characters and events. In so doing, Blake attempts to show how the conflict of the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary powers of his time is, from the prophetic point of view, the crucial stage of the total history of mankind.

By virtue of combinations of key elements, the action of the "Song" evokes analogous action of Revelation 12 and 19. For instance, the combination of the mythic female of cosmic proportion, her agony in delivery, and the birth of a male child who confronts the present ruler and ushers a new era calls forth Revelation 12, in which "a woman clothed
with the sun" "cries, travelling in birth" (12.2) and delivers "a man child," who is to "rule all nations" (12.5), and who eventually emerges triumphantly and is identified as "the Word of God" (19.13). The "Song" does not explicitly allude to Revelation, nor is the new-born terror an imperial ruler "with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12.5) but one who is himself long-pent-up energy, and who releases pent-up energy symbolized by "the eternal horses" imprisoned in "the dens of night" (E44; 27.v.20). (Significantly, Blake's new-born terror only releases the eternal horses and does not ascend to the sky on a chariot of the Sun, as Orc does in Blake's later prophecies.) Nevertheless, as in the case of "The Sick Rose" or "The Tyger," analogous actions, imagery, motifs, settings, and combinations of these elements evoke the vision and the context of Revelation 12.

What is evoked in the "Song," however, is not a simple correspondence to Revelation 12; Blake evokes simultaneously more than one character and event of the Bible and Paradise Lost, in order to show, from his point of view, the true meanings of both predecessors' visions and the contemporary political situations. For example, the new-born terror elicits both the man child of Revelation, who is to become the Messiah, and Satan of Paradise Lost, who is thrown into hell by the Messiah. The new-born terror, unlike his counterpart in Revelation, is not "caught up . . . to the throne" (12.5) of God but stands before the starry king on
the mountain of Atlantis. The new-born then is "hurl'd . . . thro' the starry night" (E44; 26. v.10) into the ocean by the king, just as Satan is cast off through night and Chaos into hell by the Messiah in Paradise Lost Book VII. This presentation of the new-born terror suggests that he is Energy as the narrator sees it in plate 6, or the Satan who has been usurped from his home by the Messiah of Paradise Lost whom the narrator identifies as Reason (E35; 6). Likewise, the fall of the starry king evokes the fall of the Dragon Satan in Revelation 12, who attempts to devour the man child and is thrown down to the earth by the Angel Michael; the fall of the king also evokes that of Satan in Paradise Lost. With this association of the king and Satan, Blake indicates that the king, not the new-born terror or the revolutionary spirit, is the arch-rebel who has usurped the rightful ruler, the one who is just to contraries. After the fall, the Dragon Satan attempts to control the earth by waging war on offspring of the woman clothed with the sun, just as the starry king attempts to control the earth, though not by war, but by law, "promulgat[ing] his ten commands" (E44; 27. v.18). In this last action, the king alludes at once to Satan, Jehovah the law-giver, and Moses. Through what the Eassons call "interconnected layering of allusion" (94), Blake suggests that the true identity of the law-givers, Jehovah or Moses, is the opponent of life, "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev.
12.10), who must be overthrown by the true divine power. At the same time, Blake illuminates the nature of the French Royalist priests' activity in London of 1790: the Dragon Satan's plot against people. Through these layerings of allusions, Blake suggests that the new-born fire is the Messiah, who liberates the repressed energy and restores the proper operation of contraries, that the proclamation is the Word of God, and that the triumph of the revolutionary spirit in 1790 signifies the dawn of the Apocalypse. Thus Blake, in his view, reveals the significance of the historical moment from the divine point of view, and his juxtaposition and fusion of the historical and the visionary together with his allusions to the Bible and Milton register the prophetic perception of the infinite and holy in the world.

"A Song of Liberty" is thus a condensed and intensified version of the main text. It integrates those elements of the main text which Blake needs for his prophecy: the lyric and oracular voice with the sharpness and pith of the proverbs of Hell; the disjointed, non-linear narrative; the multiple levels of significance in various discourses and visions now all conveyed in a visionary drama; the juxtaposition and fusion of the historical and the visionary; the biblical and Miltonic allusions to render the prophetic significance; and the vision which embodies the transfiguring perception of the poet-prophet. By
synthesizing all these elements, Blake achieves a mode which is open, mind-expanding, and yet informed by a strong conviction in the truth of the vision he presents.

Critics generally accept that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* belongs in the tradition of great satire" (Frye, *Symmetry* 200). With the "blistering ridicule" and "rowdy guffaws," *The Marriage* attacks Swedenborg and what he stands for, conventional approaches to life (*Symmetry* 200). However, as Frye points out, condemnation of errors is only part of *The Marriage*. Critics, feeling that the work is more than a satire, call *The Marriage* a variety of names. Edward J. Rose, for instance, contends that *The Marriage* belongs in the tradition of "the satire of the enthusiast, a kind of satire distinct from that of Dryden, Pope, or Swift," but that Blake made his satire informed not by reason but by imagination. Bloom suggests that the work has a form of the Menippean satire and "is both an intellectual satire and a prophecy of imminent apocalypse" (E896). Leslie Tannenbaum argues that Blake fuses the satire of the Lucianic tradition and the Christian prophetic tradition, creating a "prophetic satire" ("Blake's News" 74-99). While undoubtedly abrasive as the traditional satirists' works, *The Marriage* as a whole is more than a formal satire: the satiric elements are entirely subsumed by the prophetic purpose and message, and the characteristics
of satire derive from a greater objective than the condemnation of intellectual errors.

At first, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell appears to be a formal satire, for it does share common elements with the genre. Blake exposes and attacks the life-negating views of "the religious" by means of denigrating images. For instance, the fifty-fifth proverb compares the priest to "the catterpiller [who] chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on" (E37; 9). The fourth "Memorable Fancy" portrays the Angel as a sanctimonious hypocrite, and his and his fellow conventional believers' "eternal lot" as the chained monkeys engaging in rape, incest, fratricide, and cannibalism in a stench-filled house. Blake's Isaiah offers a view similar to the Juvenalian saeve indignatio, that "the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God" (E38; 12). And the parable in "The Argument" that the meek Just man is driven to become the raging just man crying in the wilderness seems to dramatize the conventional rhetorical premise that the satirist is a tolerant good man who is forced to speak out by his conscience. More specifically, The Marriage does display characteristics of the Menippean satire, a medley of genres and devices, a loosely connected narrative thread, and a concern with intellectual errors.

Moreover, as Tannenbaum contends, in setting, rhetoric, themes, and fictional framework, The Marriage shows relevant features of a branch of the Menippean satire, the Lucianic
tradition. Tannenbaum argues that The Marriage uses the fictional framework of Lucian's "underworld satire," which parodies "serious literary versions of the underworld" ("Blake's News" 77). As well Blake's work shows Lucian's rhetorical motif of the interview with dead authors ("Blake's News" 80). Finally, Blake uses "the most significant satiric device in the [Lucianic] tradition" "an eschatological viewpoint": as in Lucian's satire the dead are ridiculed and judged by "the satiric tribunal that has the power of dispensing divine justice," so in the fourth "Memorable Fancy" the Angel faces his eternal lot ("Blake's News" 82).

However, in The Marriage all these characteristics grow out of a ground different from that of satire. As seen in the Hebrew prophets, the abrasive descriptions in Blake are not merely satiric use of hyperbole; from the perspective of the prophet, who is united with the divine, the condition of the world, without exaggeration, is a monstrous aberration from its holy and infinite potential.

The Old Testament prophecies abound in satire. Thomas Jemielity, for instance, finds in them such satiric devices as name-calling, insulting, denigrating images, the parody of forms, the funeral dirge, excremental and sexual motifs, and fantasy. Just to list the names and images of Israel and Judah is enough to illustrate the satiric vein of the prophets: Israel is like "a backsliding heifer" (Hos.
4.16); she is a "dromedary" (Jer. 2.23), or "a wild ass" in heat (Jer. 2.24). Above all, she is a shameless harlot, as Ezekiel, among others, bitterly attacks her, for instance, in chapter 16. As discussed in earlier chapters, the prophets parody the traditional forms of worship and deliver the funeral dirge to those who are alive at the height of prosperity. Derision and scorn are thus crucial elements of the Hebrew prophecy. Nevertheless, Jemielity misses an important difference between the traditional satire and the prophetic satire. To the prophets, the grotesque stupidity, bestiality, obscenity, ugliness, and absurdity are not merely satiric exaggerations; they are the real state of those who are alienated from God, seen from God's perspective which the prophets adopt. From the Prophet's point of view, the ordinarily normative view of these same people--their flattering appearance--is a delusion, a fantasy, a gross exaggeration. On the use of fantasy as a satiric device, Jemielity refers to Isaiah's Temple vision and Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures as instances that "reveal prophecy's capacity to draw on the fantastic, as an integral part of prophetic utterance" ("Derision" 62). The prophets, Jemielity contends, "can employ fantasy satirically as well" ("Derision" 62). These visions, however, are not mere fiction or rhetoric to the prophets.23 While the ordinary people see only the physical world, the prophets see through it into the depth
of reality, and many of their visions of political future of Israel and the neighbouring nations came to be fulfilled precisely because the prophets accurately discerned the hidden logic and structure of history. Their visions are not fantasy; on the contrary, they are real in the sense that while the ordinary sight perceives a mere appearance of things, the prophets' visions uncover the real state of the things as, the prophets believe, seen by God.

In the same way, Blake's satire derives from the poet-prophet's perception of the real state of "the religious." Blake's voice of honest indignation emerges from the perception not of the gap between the moral, rational-normative way and the folly and vices of the people, but of the gap between the holy and infinite reality and the moral, rational normative approach to it. Thus, although Blakean satire may resemble Swiftian satire in that both aim to shatter delusion, they differ in their norms; the norm of traditional satire is precisely the target of Blake's satire.

Furthermore, while a satire may attack and dismantle the established systems and ideas, it does not claim to be a revelation of a new truth. On the contrary, the satirist appeals to what the reader already knows very well to be the universally true standard. The satirist's attack depends upon this received standard and the implicit community of the satirist and the reader who hold this same standard.
The Marriaqe, in contrast, attacks the ordinarily normative way of seeing and at the same time reveals a standard hitherto unknown to the reader. Similarly, the Hebrew prophets shock the audience by shattering their commonly held belief and revealing new meanings of Israel's history; Amos, for instance, reverses the meaning of the Day of the Lord and proclaims that it is not the day of celebration but the day of destruction.

Another element of satire found in The Marriage, the medley of genres and devices, as we have seen, is largely a result of Blake's experiment with diverse forms to find an appropriate medium for his prophecy. The variety also is to offer multiple perspectives on central issues, such as the necessity of the principle of contraries, the Poetic Genius, and the Apocalypse as Blake conceives it. Whereas the Menippean satire uses this medley and the loosely connected narrative thread in order to offer an "anatomy," "a dissection or analysis" of the diseased conditions of human life (Frye, Anatomy 309-12), Blake uses the characteristics to enlarge the reader's sense perception, to deliver the mind from constraint of reason and common sense. For instance, Blake presents the Poetic Genius, or the transfiguring perception, from a variety of perspectives: in "The Argument" as the Just man's transforming "the vale of death" into a garden, in plate 11 as the account of ancient Poets' animation of the world with gods or geniuses, in the
first "Memorable Fancy" as Isaiah and Ezekiel's explanation of the source of their prophecy, in plate 14 in the biblical and apocalyptic terms, and in the Third "Memorable Fancy" in the vision of the Printing House in Hell, as the vision which embodies the transfiguring perception, to list only the readily recognizable instances. The purpose of this multiplicity is not to analyze the concept of the Poetic Genius but to expand the reader's mind by activating the imagination; it is to switch the reader's mind from analytical seeing to aesthetic seeing.

The Marriage also fundamentally differs from the Lucianic satire. Both the framework of the journey into the underworld and the motif of conversation with the dead are more likely derived from the "Memorable Relations" of Swedenborg, who reports his journeys into Heaven and Hell and his conversations with the supernatural beings. Blake is also known to have had visitors from spiritual realms as recorded by his biographers. The conversation with the prophets could well have been drawn from his own visionary experience. Indeed, the fact that the language of his vision of "the infinite Abyss" embodies his transfiguring perception reflects his visionary experience of the underworld rather than a mere adoption of a convention, be it of Swedenborg or Lucian. As for the eschatological perspective, in Lucian, the use of an individual eschatological point of view, as well as the use of divine
justice, is fictional—a rhetorical device to ridicule and
dismantle the object of his satire. His norm, as Tannenbaum
acknowledges, is reason, common sense, and well-established
philosophical ideas ("Blake's News" 83). Blake's norm, in
contrast, is the Poetic Genius, and his objective the
Apocalypse and no less. The eschatology in The Marriage is
not a rhetoric but the actual objective of the poet; seeing
things in terms of the ultimate, from the divine point of
view, is normative to Blake, as shown in the earlier
chapters. Thus in its scope, purpose, and norm, The
Marriage of Heaven and Hell is primarily a book of prophecy
in the biblical tradition, with a strong satiric spirit
directed against the way of life cherished by traditional
wisdom.

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Blake explores the
prophetic career—its aim, its source of inspiration, its
heritage, its method, and its medium of prophecy—, and he
finally finds the right voice for his prophecy in "A Song of
Liberty." His exploration ends with an ecstatic
proclamation of "the new born fire": "Empire is no more! and
now the lion & wolf shall cease" (E45; 27). The roar of
Rintrah (the ruah of God, the roar of the lion in Amos 3.8)
finally is delivered from the oppression of convention, as
the roar is articulated through the prophetic mode of "A
Song of Liberty."
Notes


2. In this study, for convenience, I refer to the plates 1 to 24 of The Marriage as "the main text" and the plates 25 to 27 as "A Song of Liberty."

Scrivener, "A Swedenborgian Visionary and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Blake / An Illustrated Quarterly 21 (1787-88).

Getting a lead from John E. Grant's comment that The Marriage is "about the education of the Prophetic Character" (Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic 64 n. 17; qtd. in Wittreich 189), Wittreich also argues that The Marriage is a prophecy because it employs the seven-panel structure of the Book of Revelation, is "built on units of 22" "in accordance with the Hebrew alphabet," and "has all the external features that Bishop Lowth points to as hallmarks of prophecy," such as "bold elliptical expressions" and "abrupt change of person" (Wittreich, Angel 195). As becomes evident, my argument has different bases from Wittreich's.

3. Cf. William Holladay, Jeremiah (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) 198. Basing his argument on the usage of the "inward" (or "interior") and the "heart" in the other sections of Jeremiah, Holladay suggests that "the inward parts" and the "hearts" both refer to "the city within the land and the temple within the city." He reads 31.33-4 metaphorically and contends that the verses mean "a renewal of worship in the temple."

4. These verses repeat almost verbatim Ezek. 11.19-20.

5. For Blake's fuller explanation, see, for instance, Milton 37.8ff and Jerusalem 89.10ff.

6. Blake expressed the same views earlier in the form of
tractate. See "ALL RELIGIONS are ONE" and both versions of "THERE IS NO NATURAL RELIGION" (E1-3).

7. This statement is often quoted out of context in conjunction with Blake's other statement in his annotation (1798) to Watson's An Apology for the Bible (1797):

Prophets in the modern sense of the word have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense for his prophecy of Nineveh failed. Every honest man is a prophet; he utters his opinion both of private & public matters. Thus if you go on so, the result is so. He never says such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. A prophet is a seer not an arbitrary dictator. It is man's fault if God is not able to do him good for he gives to the just & to the unjust but the unjust reject his gift. (E617)

This annotation ought to be read in the light of Isaiah's remark in The Marriage, not vice versa.

8. See Hazard Adams' illuminating studies of this plate: "Blake and the Philosophy of Literary Symbolism," New Literary History 5(1973), which is later expanded into a section in chapter 4 of his Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic, (Tallahassee, 1983).


10. See his "Postscript: The Cave in the Chambers," 410-
413 of his "A Temporary Report on Texts of Blake" in Rosenfeld and *The Illuminated Blake* 112-3.

11. God orders Isaiah to go naked and barefoot for three years to show symbolically the future plight of Egypt and Ethiopia, on whom, rather than on God, Israel depends politically (Isa. 20). God orders Ezekiel to lie on his left and right side for specific periods to represent and bear the iniquities of Israel and Judah (Ezek. 4.4-8). Furthermore, he orders Ezekiel to eat the cake baked with cow's dung as a fuel to represent the defiled food the Israelites are to eat in exile (4.9-15). In the last case, Blake changes this biblical account; instead of using cow's dung as a fuel, his Ezekiel "ate dung." For interpretations of this change, see Howard and Helms, "Why Ezekiel Ate Dung."

12. For symbolic actions of the biblical prophets, see Robinson, "Prophetic Symbolism" and von Rad 2.95-98.

13. Critics generally see this indeterminacy of *The Marriage* as entirely positive and intentional; see, for example, Miller and Pechey. Only Wittreich suggests that the work "may not be, artistically, a wholly successful one," for Blake "does not fully identify" "with the principal voices" (*Angel* 198). Wittreich, however, does not pursue this point.

14. I am indebted to Mary V. Jackson's observation that the diverse elements of the main text, each of which is expressed in a different genre, are integrated in the mode of "A Song of Liberty." Jackson sees *The Marriage* in terms of
the concept of contraries and suggests that Blake uses seven "genres," as she calls them, to express it: "parable" (Argument), "proclamation" (pl. 3), "argument" (the voice of the Devil), "critique" (on PL), "history" (pl. 11), "allegory" (Printing house), "philosophical statement" (pl. 16). Although the principle of contraries is crucially important, Jackson's strict focus on it leads her to exclude from her consideration important sections of The Marriage such as "the Proverbs of Hell" and the second and fourth "Memorable Fancies." The four genres I find--lyric, proverb, discourse, vision--cover the entire main text.

12. chap. 1.1.12.5. The English translation was available to Blake since 1784 (Erdman, Prophet 176-7, n.3).

16. Here and after in this section, for the historical background and allusion of "A Song of Liberty," I rely on Erdman's Prophet 191-3.


19. Randal Helms also notes that the "Song" is "a
recasting" of Revelation 12, 13.14, and 15.34, Exodus 15.1-4, and II Kings 23.6.

20. Rose, "Good-bye to Orc and All That," *Blake Studies*, 4 (1972): 142. By "the satire of the enthusiast," Rose, I believe, refers to the mode of satire exemplified by such poets as Skelton and Donne, or the satire of the Renaissance and earlier periods when the name of the genre was erroneously thought to have derived from *satyr*.


21. Earlier in *Blake's Apocalypse* Bloom suggests using Frye's term an anatomy (that is, the Menippean satire) for the form of *The Marriage* (71).


23. It is of course difficult to prove that the prophets' visions are not a rhetorical device. But at least these visions are not meant to be taken as "fantasy" or as
rhetorical devices, whereas the satirist's "visions" are meant to be recognized as a rhetorical device.

24. See Koch, Prophets 1.1-35.

25. See, for instance, Gilchrist 298-304.
CHAPTER V

The [First] Book of Urizen

The [First] Book of Urizen is the first book of the "Bible of Hell" that Blake promised the reader at the end of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Designing his text in the standard form of the Bible with chapters, verse numbers, and double columns, Blake presents Urizen to counter the first book of Moses, Genesis, and attempts to revise the biblical and Miltonic interpretations of God, Man, the Creation, and the Fall. Recently, Leslie Tannenbaum and, following him, Jerome McGann argue that the chief ideas, techniques, and form of Urizen largely derive from Blake's reading of the biblical exegetical tradition ranging from the Gnostics to late eighteenth-century German biblical scholarship.1

While I do not deny the likelihood that Blake learned from the exegetical works, it seems hasty to conclude, based on the parallels between them and his work, that Blake's mode derives from them. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake presents a prophet's struggle to find his own prophetic voice. And in Urizen Blake's view is conveyed through the prophetic mode he discovered in The Marriage, the mode which is at once oracular and dialogical: oracular, in its lyric and epigrammatic voice, and dialogical, in its multiple dramatic voices, its dialectical juxtapositions of disparate units, and its layered allusions. And as in his earlier poems, Blake renders a perception that
simultaneously captures cause and effect, subject and object, time and eternity, and space and infinity. He does this by means of grammatical ambiguities, juxtaposition of disparate points of view, metaphors that fuse the mind and the world, layered allusions to the Bible and *Paradise Lost* that show the prophetic dimension, and various combinations of these elements. Moreover, these devices and characteristics are thoroughly organic to Blake's theology, psychology, cosmology, and, most importantly in *Urizen*, epistemology; they are rooted in his own sophisticated mode of perception. In this chapter, then, I shall argue that *The Book of Urizen* belongs to the biblical prophetic tradition not because it imitates the forms and devices of the Bible, especially as they are expounded by the biblical exegeses with which Blake was probably familiar, but because it challenges and revises the traditional view of God, man, and the world, embodies a prophetic perception of the world, and attempts to induce a mental apocalypse in the readers as he prophesied in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In these ways, *The Book of Urizen* displays the same power that can "rouze faculties" as that of the symbolic acts of Blake's Isaiah and Ezekiel explained in *The Marriage*.²

As in his earlier works, Blake endeavors to replace with his view the traditional theology as presented in the Bible and *Paradise Lost*. According to Blake, these
predecessors interpreted their visions of the Creator, the Creation, and the Decalogue erroneously as visions of a benevolent transcendental deity and his production as beneficial to man. Blake, therefore, offers to reveal what is to him the truth about these visions: the vision of the Creation is a vision of the fall. He conveys his revisionary view by using chiefly two methods: by providing a larger perspective than the traditional ones and by layering allusions to the predecessors' visions.

The first method, the placing of established views in a larger context to show their true significances, finds precedents both in the Bible and Paradise Lost. As shown in the first chapter of this study, Hosea and Ezekiel progressively expand the scope of Israel's history, each prophet predating his predecessor's view of the earliest instance of Israel's apostasy. Hosea rejects the traditional, glorious view of Israel founded in Israel's experience of God in the Exodus and proclaims that the very moment Israel was delivered from Egypt, the people committed idolatry (Hos. 11.1-6). Two centuries later, Ezekiel expands the scope of the disaster history and proclaims that the people were already rebellious in Egypt. Similarly, Milton attempts to justify the ways of God by presenting a vision that predates the events recorded in Genesis; he places the Bible in a larger chronological framework in Paradise Lost, envisioning the war in heaven and its
preceding events, the period before the Creation. Indeed, the scope of *Paradise Lost* stretches from the time when God is coextensive with Chaos to the time when finally both the Father and the Son retire from their regal positions and, as Milton's God proclaims, "God shall be All in All" (III.341). By placing the biblical visions within his own larger context, Milton implicitly, and subtly, revises such traditional Christian beliefs as the divine omnipotence, the Creation *ex nihilo*, and the form of the ultimate realm as a kingdom rather than a democratic community.

The other method, that of layered allusions to the Bible and Milton, is an ironic device used in the "Song of Liberty" and, to my knowledge, a way of re-vision unique to Blake. He removes elements--words, phrases, images, motifs, events, characters, and setting--from the original contexts and freely places these elements in new contexts that are often opposite in meaning to the original ones. By placing a minute particular of his predecessor's work in a new context, Blake sets a new lighting on the item and reveals a new significance buried under an established system which has hitherto supplied the meaning of that item. The item, however, shows a new significance not only because it is placed in a new environment but also because it is layered with other elements from these predecessors' visions. For instance, in a description of Urizen, images of Satan are fused with those of the Messiah, or in a description of
Eternity, images of Hell with those of Heaven. By these superimpositions, Blake implies that those visions of the Messiah in Milton are true visions of Satan the adversary to life but are misinterpreted and mislabeled, and that Milton further placed these misinterpreted visions in a wrong context, which Blake attempts to dismantle with the first method. Thus, Blake, in his view, corrects Milton's moral contexts while at the same time affirming the aesthetic truth and power of Milton's vision and drawing out a new meaning. This process, which is an aesthetic way of seeing the elements, is also the normal way of life in Eternity as envisioned by Blake. Bloom's disappointment in Blake that the poet's vision is a borrowed glory from Milton thus misses the point of Blake's work. Blake uses Milton's visions precisely to redeem them from their erroneous context as Blake sees it.

In most cases, Blake's allusions are implicit: words, syntax, imagery, characters, actions, and setting strongly evoke the biblical and Miltonic counterparts but are rarely direct quotations or explicit references. These allusions are also thoroughly organic to both the literal and figurative senses of the text so that it is impossible to separate the allusions from the rest of the text without totally destroying its meaning. Although the references are implicit and thoroughly assimilated into his own texts, the evocation of the biblical and Miltonic visions and their
contexts, as well as the reader's recognition of these subtexts, is vital to the meaning of the book. Also, Blake's title and arrangement of the text after the standard form of the Bible clearly indicate that the poet intended his book to counterpoint Genesis.

By rendering his version of the creation of the world through those allusions, Blake suggests that the biblical and Miltonic versions depict not the supreme expression of the creative impulse of a benevolent God but the rise of the primeval priest and the fall of man from his immortality; according to him, the traditional vision of the Creation delineates, theologically, mistaken acts of the immortals, psychologically a disintegration of the human faculties, cosmologically a production of chaos and hell, and epistemologically a loss of imaginative perception of the world.

Blake attempts to revise the biblical and Miltonic versions of the Creation by presenting his vision of the universe that precedes the emergence of the creator of the world; placed in this larger context, the vision of the Creation is shown to be that of the disintegration of the original dynamic form of life in Eternity. Urizen begins with a withdrawal of an immortal in Eternity into his world of introspection from the life of vigorous interaction with his fellow Eternals. Before his withdrawal, in Eternity
I. Earth was not: nor the globes of attraction
The will of the Immortal expanded
Or contracted his all flexible senses.
Death was not, but eternal life sprung[.] 

(3.36-8)
The "will" of the immortal, or the corporate identity of the
Eternals, controls "his all flexible" sensory perception.
The mind and what later is to be perceived as the physical
world are coextensive because the creative spirit has
control over the world. To Urizen, however, this
ceaselessly vigorous mode of living appears as life-in-
death:

I have sought for a joy without pain,
For a solid without fluctuation
Why will you die O Eternals?
Why live in unquenchable burnings? (4.10-3)

Urizen attempts to stabilize ever-changing Eternity. In his
inner world the minute particulars which the Eternals
continually transfigure by contracting and expanding their
sensory perception are now abstracted and, after a long
struggle against Urizen, confined in the abstraction:

3. For he strove in battles dire
In unseen confictions with shapes
Bred from his forsaken wilderness,
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent & element
Combustion, blast, vapour and cloud. (3.13-7)
This formation of Urizen's inner world is, from the Eternals' point of view, a formation of a "petrific abominable chaos" (3.25). Thus, according to Blake, contrary to the traditional account, chaos is not the primordial condition of the world ordered into its present shape, but it is brought into being as this world by Urizen's rejection of the dynamic mode of living.

Blake presents his reinterpretation of the traditional accounts of the Creation through ironic allusion also. In describing Urizen's withdrawal and production of chaos, Blake evokes at once Satan's secret plot in heaven, God's creation by contraction, and the Holy Spirit's fertilizing the Abyss in *Paradise Lost*.

1. Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
   In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!
   Self-closed, all-repelling: what Demon
   Hath form'd this abominable void
   This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?--Some said
   "It is Urizen", But unknown, abstracted
   Brooding secret, the dark power hid. (3.1-7)

The setting of Eternity, the rise of hitherto unknown horror, the secrecy and alienation, and the designations "Demon" and "the dark power" all evoke Milton's image of Satan in his first conspiracy. Also, the formation of vacuum in Eternity recalls to mind Satan's drawing a third of the Angels in heaven into the north. In addition,
together with the context of the first rebellion against the community of the Eternals, the description of Urizen's rise as "Unknown, unprolific" (double epithets with the negative prefix, un) evokes Satan's first resolution to "leave / Unworshipt, unobey'd the Throne supreme" (PL V.668-70) (see also Urizen 3.11). Yet at the same time, Urizen's "Brooding secret" in the "void" which he "Hath form'd" evokes the image of the Holy Spirit, which "Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'ist it pregnant" (PL I.21-22). Also, Urizen's formation of shapes in his world of abstraction (3.13-37) calls forth God's act of creation in the Bible and in Uriel's and Raphael's accounts in Paradise Lost Books III and VII. Just as Milton's God forms the foundation of the Creation by withdrawing his dominion from Chaos which was coextensive with him (PL VII.163-73), so Urizen forms his world by withdrawing himself from the dynamic body of the Eternals. Moreover, like Elohim, Urizen shapes his "deep world within" (4.14) by division and measuring: "Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by space in his ninefold darkness" (3.8-9). By thus superimposing Satan's, the Holy Spirit's, and God's acts on Urizen's, Blake implicitly claims that the visions of the creation by the Holy Spirit and God in Milton and Genesis mark a lapse in Eternity, just as does Satan's rebellion, of which Urizen's withdrawal is the archetype. In Blake's view, the ordering of chaos as presented in these works
describes a disordering of Eternity and production of chaos; the formation of the prelapsarian world describes a petrification of living forms in Eternity; the benevolent God's and the Holy Spirit's bringing new life into existence describes a Satanic plot against the living principle in Eternity. The visions in the Bible and Milton are accurate but, Blake suggests, misinterpreted.

Urizen's withdrawal is not the only instance of the creation; Urizen, Los, and the Eternals all fall short of repairing damages and call the world, man, woman, the Tent of Science, and the Net of Religion into being, forming the fallen world as we have it. The Creation, to Blake, is not a one-time event that occurred in the remotest past but a mental event that occurs every time man makes the error of imposing a reductive order upon life. The scene of creation recurs throughout The Book of Urizen as the characters make the same error, repeating the archetypal error of Urizen: cessation of interaction, imposition of a law upon the now objectified world, or throwing of nets over it, and further reduction of the object. For example, the Eternals, separated from Urizen and Los, "the eternal mind" (10.19) and "the Eternal Prophet" (13.35), weave "the Tent of Science" and enclose the two, Enitharmon and Orc, so that Los beholds Eternity no longer (20.2) and accepts Urizen's religion. In another example, Urizen, as he explores his dens, spreads the Net of Religion over the inhabitants of
his cities who are immortal giants and reduces them into ordinary mortal men and women. Blake presents each creation as a hideous deformation of the original form in Eternity. With the primordial unity of being intact, the Eternals and Los "the eternal prophet" could have resurrected Urizen, as the ancient poets are said to have animated the world in plate 11 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; but as Urizen or "the eternal mind" (10.19) stops informing Eternity, neither Los nor the rest of the Eternals can restore the original integrity of Eternity in an immediately effective manner, and their attempts for restoration lead to further deterioration.

In describing Los's creation of Urizen which transforms Urizen into the world and the body of man, Blake attempts to show further ironic significance of the biblical and Miltonic visions by evoking not only the Creation of the world as presented both in Genesis and Paradise Lost but also the fall of Nebuchadnezzar and the Crucifixion (Simmons 155). Seeing that Urizen, rent from Eternity and Los's side, has become a clod of clay, Los when his own wound is healed sets out to stop degeneration of Urizen by binding him in chains. As the creation in the Bible takes seven days, so the formation of Urizen's body takes seven ages, and the refrain at the end of each age parodies the refrain in Genesis at the end of each day of the Creation. In Blake's version, the shaping of the world is a vain attempt
of an impaired Eternal to revive Urizen, an attempt which results in "a state of dismal woe" (ch. IV [b]). The "seven Ages" also refer to the "seven times" that pass over Nebuchadnezzar in bestiality and madness: "he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Dan. 4.33). Blake recurrently painted Nebuchadnezzar in this condition as a symbol of man as conceived by Locke and the Deists; the fallen Babylonian king symbolizes man who depends on nature alone, devoid of imagination. By superimposing these visions upon Los's creation, Blake suggests that the biblical vision of the Creation depicts not a divine formation of the living world and man but their degradation. Furthermore, Blake represents the final stage of the creation of Urizen's body in the iconography of the Crucifixion (Simmons 155):

12. Enraged & stifled with torment

He threw his right Arm to the north
His left Arm to the south
Shooting out in anguish deep,
And his Feet stampd the nether Abyss
In trembling & howling dismay.
And a seventh Age passed over:
And a state of dismal woe.       (13.12-9)
This fusion of the two events of sacred history, the Creation and the Crucifixion, implies Blake's view that the latter finds its archetype in the Creation of the world and man, and that the Creation is a slaying of the divine, a binding of the immortal onto mortality. At the same time, through this allusion Blake suggests that the binding of Urizen is ultimately a providential event which leads both Urizen and Los to the reunion with the Eternals, as depicted in the ninth Night of The Four Zoas.

This providential nature of Los's erroneous work is also suggested by another biblical allusion, Michael's binding of Satan. Together with the Eternals' rejection of Urizen, Los's binding of Urizen with chains and hammering him into the shape of the world evoke the image of Michael in Revelation 12.7-9. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon-Satan and "cast [him] out into the earth." Similarly, in Revelation 20.1-3, just as Los is sent from Eternity, so an angel comes down from heaven and "with a great chain" lays hold on Satan and binds him a thousand years. Although in Revelation 12 there is no reference to Michael's use of chains, Blake, in his painting "Michael Binding Satan," depicts the angel "with a great chain." This allusion carries implications that Los's binding and shaping would ultimately point to the final elimination of the archetypal error.
Urizen reinterprets not only the creation of the world and man but also the creation of woman. At the completion of the shaping of Urizen, Los shrinks in terror from his creation and pities "Urizen deadly black, / In his chains bound" (13.50-51). Instead of transfiguring Urizen and integrating him into a total form of the universe that the eternal prophet imaginatively constructs, Los accepts what he passively sees as the given and pities its "horrible forms of deformity" (13.43). This acceptance of the division between himself and the object of his perception results in splitting of originally androgynous man into male and female, or the separation of Enitharmon from Los. Blake describes this formation of the first female by evoking the birth of Eve in Genesis and Paradise Lost. Just as Eve from Adam and Sin from Satan are separated, so is Enitharmon from Los. And just as Los sees the formation of Enitharmon as "dark visions" (15.12), so does Adam see the formation of Eve in vision: Adam's eyes were closed, but open is "the Cell / Of Fancy [his] internal sight, by which / Abstract as in a trance" he sees the creation of Eve (PL VIII.460-2). Blake's image of "the globe of life blood trembling" calls forth Milton's image of the rib taken from Adam's left side, "with cordial spirits warm, / And Life-blood streaming fresh" (VIII.465-6). Moreover, the association of Enitharmon with water as "in tears & cries im-bodied" and the description of her as if she were a reflection on water as
in "A female form trembling and pale / Waves before [Los's] deathy face" (18.6-8) evoke Milton's description of Eve's first self-image as a "smooth wat'ry image" (IV.480). By thus layering these allusions onto the birth of Enitharmon, Blake suggests that the biblical and Miltonic visions do not portray a benevolent creation of "a help meet" for man.

Whereas Genesis and Milton interpret the formation of woman as a gift of God to man, and especially Milton emphasizes the fact that Adam and Eve complement each other, Blake presents the birth of the first female as a yet further disintegration of an Eternal.

The birth of Enitharmon also reinterprets Milton's vision of the birth of Sin: according to Blake, Milton's vision of the first female in heaven describes not Sin born of evil but Pity born of Los's error. The response of the Eternals to the birth of Enitharmon clearly alludes to the response of the rebel angels to the birth of Sin, the birth which parodies that of Eve. As Sin emerges from Satan's head, "amazement seiz'd / All th Host of Heav'n"; at first, they were "afraid" and "recoil'd" from her "and call'd [her] Sin" (PL II.758-60). Similarly, at the birth of Enitharmon from Los, "Wonder, awe, fear, and astonishment, / Petrify the eternal myriads / at the first female form now separate" (18.13-5) and "They call'd her Pity and fled" (19.1). As in "London," "The Little Girl Lost," and The Marriage, Blake rejects moral dualism of good and evil and the concept of
sin. The primordial separation of the female from the male occurs not as a result of an evil conspiracy but as a result of a failure of imagination. In Blake's view, what separates man from Eternity is not sin but an erring acceptance of the object of perception as given and forgetting of man's own power of imagination.

Like the birth of the female, the birth of a child, Orc, by the sexual union of Los and Enitharmon marks a further fragmentation of man. Los and Enitharmon's union does not heal the division of male and female but merely leads to "Man begetting his likeness, / On his own divided image" (19.6-7), producing another male or female. At the sight of this "birth of the Human Shadow" (19.43), the Eternals in terror close the Tent of Science, which they have built at the division of the sexes, in order to separate themselves from Los, Enitharmon, Orc, and Urizen. Thus, Blake's version contradicts Genesis's account that God blessed man to "Be fruitful, and multiply" (1.28), and Milton's account of what the divine voice taught Eve:

hee [Adam]

Whose image thou art, him thou shalt enjoy
Inseparably thine, to him shalt bear
Multitudes like thyself, and thence be call'd
Mother of human Race. (PL IV.471-5)

Blake's Eternals, in effect, curse natural reproduction and multiplication of man as a monstrous perversion of
production in Eternity. Nevertheless, Blake's calling Orc "a man Child" (19.40), which alludes to the "man child" of Isaiah 66.7 and Revelation 12.5, seems to suggest that the child is an agent who will bring about the apocalypse. For Blake, merely natural union does not lead man and woman to Eternity, and yet the natural life, symbolized by Orc, is vital for man's restoration.

In Urizen's exploration of his dens, which is yet another instance of the creation of the world, Blake, by alluding to the fallen Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel and the Creation by division in both Genesis and Paradise Lost, presents his view that the scenes of the Creation record a fairly advanced stage of the fall. When Los and Enitharmon chain their child Orc to the rock as a sacrificial offering to Urizen, the voice of the "man Child" awakens Urizen. Like the fallen Nebuchadnezzar, Urizen "craving with hunger [and] / Stung with the odours of Nature" (22.30-1) starts exploring his dens, forming a variety of measuring tools:

7. He form'd a line & a plummet
   To divine the Abyss beneath.
   He form'd a dividing rule:

8. He formed scales to weigh;
   He formed massy weights;
   He formed a brazen quadrant;
   He formed golden compasses
And began to explore the Abyss
And he planted a garden of fruits (22.33-41)
Urizen explores "the Abyss" by measuring and dividing, just as Elohim in Genesis creates the world by dividing and measuring time and space. The repetition, "He formed. . . ," parodies the repetition in the description of Elohim's creation in Genesis. With this allusion Blake implies that the biblical vision does not represent an act of creating a living world as traditionally interpreted, but that it represents an act of forming rules and tools of measuring an already existent fallen world. Urizen's tools of measurement also allude to the tools that Milton's God employs. To prevent a catastrophic battle between Satan and Gabriel in Eden, God "Th' Eternal . . . / Hung forth in Heav'n his golden Scales," (that is, the constellation of Libra) "Wherein all things created first he weigh'd" (PL IV.996-7, 999). And in Book VII, Raphael recounts that with "the golden Compasses" (225), God
circumscribec[d]
This Universe, and all created things:
One foot he centred, and the other turn'd
Round through the vast profundity obscure,
And said, Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds,
This be thy just Circumference, O World.
(226-31)
Milton's God forms and controls the world by dividing, weighing, and circumscribing according to his own measuring rules and devices; Urizen attempts to do the same.

Significantly, Urizen's formation of the tools of science and his exploration of "the Abyss" directly follow his Nebuchadnezzarean bestial response to Nature. By layering these allusions, Blake attempts to show that scientific approaches to the world are a direct consequence of, or rather, the opposite side of the same coin as Deism. In Blake's view, the biblical and Miltonic visions ought to be interpreted as visions of man who labours to order the chaos that his own fallen mode of perception has created. As David Punter, writing on Urizen's exploration in The Four Zoas VI.71.35-72.1, states, Urizen finds these scientific devices "necessary for the preservation and extension of his own mode of perception" (557). He perceives the world depending solely on the natural light symbolized by the "globe of fire" with which he lights his journey (22.47). To man who forgets his power of imagination, to measure, to divide, and to compartmentalize according to set systems of measurement what is passively perceived by the natural organs is the only way to form a coherent view of the world. Thus, Blake's allusions suggest, whereas the Deist's view of man is symbolized by the bestiality of Nebuchadnezzar, the scientific or the Lockean way of seeing is symbolized by the madness of the fallen king. The scientific approach is a
desperate attempt for survival; it is an attempt verging on insanity.

Although Blake's two creators, Urizen and Los, err and create deadly worlds, they are opposite to each other in purpose, informing spirit, and method. Both make mistakes in believing that by stabilizing they could ameliorate life, and by the end of Urizen both fall prey to rationalism. Yet while Urizen deliberately forms his world, "a solid without fluctuation" (4.11), seeking to make Eternity conform to his laws, Los forms the world of Urizen as a saving measure, seeking to stop further deterioration of Urizen. During his labour, Los holds the interacting mode of life in Eternity as the norm, while Urizen attempts to replace it with his own norm of stability and uniformity. As Punter writes, Los, while he beholds Eternity, "[b]uilding 'from Particulars to Generals' reverses the architectural procedures of Urizen," who builds by imposing his laws on particulars (551). Los fails to revive Urizen and reintegrate him into the body of the interacting Eternals due to a lack of a direction from "the eternal mind" Urizen, or reason. Terrified at the sight of the completed forms of Urizen, Los is led to accept the material world as the given and begins losing his sight of Eternity until finally at the birth of Orc the Eternals close the Tent of Science over the world of Los: "No more Los beheld Eternity" (20.2). Thus, the vision of Eternity being no longer his norm, Los, like
Urizen, sees the world according to the scientific system, falls "[b]eneath Urizen's deathful shadow" (20.25), and attempts to bind life, as symbolized by the sacrifice of Orc.

Noting the different modes of creation by Urizen and Los, Tannenbaum argues that Blake, gleaning from the eighteenth-century German scholar Johann Eichhorn's study, modelled Urizen after Elohim and Los after Jehovah. According to Eichhorn, Elohim's style of creation is abstract and repetitive, and he forms man in his own image, while Jehovah's style is anthropomorphic, and he forms man out of the earth ("Crypsis" 145). Thus, Tannenbaum contends, "from these distinctions Blake derives his conception of Urizen and Los"; "Urizen initiates the Creation-Fall by the process of abstraction; Los completes the Creation by hammering it into human form" ("Crypsis" 146). Choosing between these two modes of creation, however, was from the beginning of his career a vital issue for Blake as an artist who grew up in the age of neoclassicism and whose craft of book-illustrating and engraving largely involved copying in many forms. His earliest poems in Poetical Sketches, which at once follow and revise convention, attest to his awareness of the two contrasting modes of artistic creation. Also, the fact that Blake makes Los's creation of Urizen's body correspond to both Elohim's creation of the world and Jehovah's shaping of
the human form suggests that Eichhorn's study might have helped Blake to sharpen his conception, but it is an overstatement to say that his conception derives from that study. Instead of being a source, Eichhorn's study, if Blake indeed knew it, might have suggested to him the idea of presenting multiple scenes of the creation of the world to comment on each other.

The Book of Urizen also tries to subvert traditional interpretation of the Decalogue as the divine law bestowed upon man for his well-being. Emerging from his initial withdrawal, Urizen announces that he has written his laws, "the Book of brass," to control "terrible monsters Sin-bread: / Which the bosoms of all inhabit; / Seven deadly Sins of the soul" (4.28-30). As he opens the Book, "Rage seiz'd the strong" "And enormous forms of energy; / All the seven deadly sins of the soul / In living creation appear'd" (4.44, 4.48-5.1). What appears to Urizen's abstract mind as seven deadly sins is the natural exuberance of the Eternals; it appears as sins only according to the categories Urizen has formulated. Dorothy Plowman writes that "it is this very restraint [imposed by Urizen's laws] which actually calls sin (bursting of restraining bonds) into being." Thus, the vision of God the law-giver in the Bible, Blake claims, is not of the true deity but, rather, of the author of sins. As in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake thinks that the moral dualism of "the religious" erroneously
condemns energy as evil and sin, and that this very repression of energy turns it into a raging force that constantly tries to assault every order that is established upon moral dualism. The criticism is not so much of the content of the Decalogue as of the attempt to govern life by monolithic rules and reduce the dynamic of contraries into a static hierarchy.

Not only the Decalogue but the monolithic divine justice in general as conceived in the Bible and in Paradise Lost is presented in Urizen as erroneous; it brings forth a disastrous consequence upon both the enforcer and the recipient of justice. When Urizen attempts to govern the Eternals with his laws, they respond to his error with fury by tearing him from their body. Instead of expanding their body to incorporate Urizen's disruption constructively, the Eternals, driven by rage, attack Urizen with "the flames of Eternal fury" (5.8) and confine him in the north of Eternity. This impaired judgement brings about the monstrous degeneration of Urizen and consolidates the disintegration of the body of the Eternals. Without the healthy regulation of reason, responses of the Eternals are largely emotional, and they later repeat the same error by exiling in fear another deteriorated Eternal, Los.

Blake delineates the Eternals' erroneous reactions by superimposing the acts of "Eternal Justice" in Paradise Lost (PL I.70) onto those of his Eternals: in so doing, Blake
exposes, in his view, the true context of Milton's vision of the divine justice. He describes the Eternals' departure from Urizen, evoking the image of the heaven's disburdening of the rebel angels in *Paradise Lost* VI.858-66. When Urizen unfolds his Book of brass, the Eternals are seized in rage:

3. Sund'ring, dark'ning, thund'ring!
Rent away with a terrible crash
Eternity roll'd wide apart
Wide asunder rolling
Mountainous all around
Departing; departing; departing:
Leaving ruinous fragments of life
Hanging frowning cliffs & all between
An ocean of voidness unfathomable. (5.3-11)

In *Paradise Lost*, with thunder, the Messiah

pursu'd

With terrors and with furies to the bounds
And Crystal wall of Heav'n, which op'ning wide,
Roll'd inward, and a spacious Gap disclos'd
Into the wasteful Deep; the monstrous sight
Struck them with horror backward, but far worse
Urg'd them behind; headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of Heav'n, Eternal wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomless pit.

(*PL* VI.858-66)
And after the fall of the angels, the breach in Heaven's walls is "soon repair'd, / . . . returning whence it roll'd" (PL VI.878-9). Eternity "roll[s] wide apart" to leave Urizen behind just as the Heaven's wall "roll[s] inward" to cast out the rebel angels. Through this superimposition, on the Eternals' attack, of Milton's version of divine justice upon the rebel angels, Blake purports that what is upheld as divine justice in Paradise Lost is as erroneous as the Eternals' act in Urizen.

As a result of the Eternals' departure from Urizen, he is confined in his desert which now has turned into a place of torment, and Blake describes this place, evoking Milton's image of Hell. Urizen is deserted in his place, the north of Eternity:

4. The roaring fires ran o'er the heav'ns
   In whirlwinds & cataracts of blood
   And o'er the dark desarts of Urizen
   Fires pour thro' the void on all sides
   On Urizens self-begotten armies.

5. But no light from the fires. all was darkness
   In flames of Eternal fury[.]

The roaring fire that imprisons Urizen and his armies, the tempestuous wilderness, and the flames without light are some of the elements found in Milton's Hell:
The dismal Situation waste and wild,  
A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible  
Serv'd only to discover sights of woe[..]

(PL I.60-4)

As Hell is created by "Eternal Justice" (PL I.70) in Milton, so the dens of Urizen are transformed into a place of torment by the Eternals' error.

Moreover, in the subsequent description of Urizen's frantic attempt to shield himself from the raging fires of the Eternals (5.19-27), Blake further tries to highlight what is to him the flawed justice of Milton's God, by evoking the description of the second day of the war in heaven in Paradise Lost VI.639-74 (Bloom E906). Michael and his angels throw mountains upon the opponents, and although the rebel angels run in terror to hide themselves beneath hills, they are buried beneath the thrown mountains. "Long struggling underneath" the mountains, the rebel angels grow "gross," deteriorating from their former condition as "Spirits of purest light" (PL VI.659, 660, 661). In Urizen not the Eternals but Urizen himself piles up mountains and hills to hide himself from the furious attack of Eternal flames:

6. In fierce anguish & quenchless flames  
To the desarts and rocks He ran raging
To hide, but He could not: combining
He dug mountains & hills in vast strength,
He piled them in incessant labour,
In howlings & pangs & fierce madness
Long periods in burning fires labouring
Till hoary, and age-broke, and aged,
In despair and the shadows of death. (5.19-27)

As the rebel angels grow "gross" underneath the mountains,
so Urizen, an Eternal, turns "hoary," "age-broke, and aged"
and degenerates into "a clod of clay" (6.10). Through
superimposing these fusions of the acts of Eternal Justice
in Paradise Lost onto those of the Eternals in Urizen, Blake
suggests that the divine justice in Milton--and by extension
in the Bible--which punishes and casts out the rebelling
forces negates an integral part of life.

Blake's criticism of the biblical and Miltonic view of
divine justice is based on his vision of the ideal order in
Eternity. Milton's Heaven is hierarchically organized,
consisting of God the Father as the supreme deity, his Son
next in order, and the angels in different ranks ranging
from the seven archangels to the lower seraphim. For Blake,
as well as for Milton, this hierarchically ordered heaven
depicts a less than ideal realm, though Blake did not seem
to think that Milton, too, saw shortcomings in the hierarchy
in heaven." Blake's Eternity, in contrast, is organized as
the human body of which each Eternal is an integral part, as
Blake later explains explicitly, for instance, in *Jerusalem* 34.17-22. Even in *Urizen*, Blake's descriptions suggest that the total organized form of the Eternals is the human form. For example, when Urizen is separated from the Eternals, he is described as "Unorganiz'd, rent from Eternity" (6.8) and "rent from his [Los's] side" (6.4). Urizen is "the eternal mind" (10.19) of the total body of the Eternals. The birth of Enitharmon from Los as the division of female from male, or branching out from Los, also suggests the organically integrated community of the Eternals as the androgynous human form. Indeed, since the entire universe comprises the human body like Adam Kadmon, there is no place to cast out the rebelling force. Casting out a disrupted Eternal, therefore, does not restore the original order but only disintegrates the living *form*, or the animating principle of Eternity. The only healthy way to deal with the disruption of the original order is reintegration of the disrupted element through an enlargement of the initial framework.

Thus, in *Urizen* Blake attempts to revise the traditional interpretations of God, man, the Creation, and the Fall that the Bible and *Paradise Lost* present. For Blake, the God in the Bible is a fallen deity, the creation of the world and the Fall of man are the same event, the unfallen man has all the capacities we attribute to the supreme deity, the vision of heaven in *Paradise Lost*.
portrays a fallen realm, and, as shall be discussed later, heaven, hell, earth, and chaos are one space seen from different perspectives. Many of these ideas, as has been suggested, appear to derive from Boehme, the Gnostics, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and a variety of biblical exegeses.

The Gnostics believe that the deity is "absolutely transmundane," and that this world is the work of fallen deities (the Archons) or their leader, the demiurge, who is often characterized "with distorted features of the Old Testament God." The universe is "a vast prison whose innermost dungeon is the earth," from which the spirit of man is to ascend to the realm of the true deity (Jonas 42-43). Man achieves salvation enlightened by an emissary from the divine realm, who reveals knowledge of God and "knowledge of the way, namely, of the soul's way out of the world" (Jonas 45). This abstract alone shows strong resemblance to Blake's ideas implicit in *Urizen*.

Nevertheless, Blake also differs substantially from the Gnostics. While the Gnostics consider themselves as spiritually elite and their teachings involve rituals and magic, Blake rejects any mystification and elitism as priestcraft which deludes man. While the Gnostics envision two distinct realms of the true deity and of the mundane, Blake envisions the traditionally separate realms of heaven, hell, earth, and chaos as one realm: for Blake, there is no
separation between the divine and the mundane. Blake sees the distinction between the two purely in terms of epistemology. For him, the fall and subsequent continued divisions of the immortal beings, who are originally unified in one identity, is a matter of perception: the world is fallen because man fails to see it with the proper mode of perception. When perceived with enlarged senses, or the transfiguring perception, the world is the divine realm to which the Gnostics aspire to ascend.\(^2\)

This epistemology, which counters the Lockean epistemology, distinguishes *Urizen* and the rest of Blake's works from the diverse traditions the poet uses or is alleged to use.\(^2\) He certainly shares elements with these traditions, but unlike them he treats these elements in terms of modes of perception. For example, the identification of Urizen's body and the world finds many analogues in various traditions. But Blake's rendering the creation of man and that of the world coextensive through the creation of Urizen's body reflects the poet's view that the whole scene of the Creation in the Bible and Milton represents a lapse in epistemology from poetic perception to the Lockean empirical perception of the world. The creation of Urizen's body is identical with that of the world because when Urizen loses a healthy interaction with the rest of the human faculties and becomes the sole faculty with which man orders his passive perception of the world, the world
perceived takes the shape of reason. Meanwhile reason, without influences of emotion and imagination, becomes bound to the physical world. Thus, Blake suggests, the world and the isolated reason are coextensive.

To Blake, the underlying norm, the ideal order of life, is the mode of perception that can redeem the disruptive elements like Urizen's attempt to control Eternity. In failing to transfigure Urizen's laws aesthetically, the Eternals are as much responsible for the fall of Urizen as is Urizen; they reject his attempt unlike the narrator of the Fourth "Memorable Fancy" who transfigures the Angel's vision of Hell and Last Judgment into a vision of a sublime beauty and power. This redeeming mode of perception is the divine vision, as Blake's later works call it, which is the living form or identity of Eternity. This redeeming vision could also be described as forgiveness as understood in the New Testament, not in terms of morality but in terms of perception that reintegrates disruptive elements into an imaginatively organized whole. This implied ideal (neither castigating nor rejecting but reconciling with the offence aesthetically) is completely humanized and internalized as the proper human mode of perception. Man is divine, not only because his spirit emanated from the true God as the Gnostics conceive him, but primarily because his perception in its proper mode has the infinite power of transformation that we attribute to God.
It has been suggested that Urizen owes its ideas and forms to the late eighteenth century biblical exegeses. As mentioned earlier, Tannenbaum contends that in Urizen Blake transforms the first three chapters of Genesis, "exploiting" the interpretation and literary analyses offered in the exegeses, particularly that by Eichhorn ("Crypsis" 143). More recently, Jerome McGann proposes that the "disorderly text" of Urizen derives from Blake's reading of Geddes' work (323). Geddes believed that the Bible should be read with intellectual honesty and, accordingly, interpreted the Bible as showing that the Creation of the world was by a fallen deity and that the God of Moses reflects the ideas of primitive, uneducated people (McGann 315, 317-8). Geddes, in the preface of his work, outlines Eichhorn's documentary theory that Genesis consists of an Elohist and a Jahwist strand of narrative, and suggests an alternative theory that each book of the Bible is a disorderly conflation of textual fragments from diverse origins and dates (McGann 311). McGann contends that Blake's view of the Creation derives from Geddes and that the variances within and between copies of Urizen and repetitions and contradictions in the text parody Genesis as viewed by the new biblical criticism, especially that of Geddes (323).

Both critics convincingly show the accessibility of these exegeses for Blake through his publisher Joseph Johnson, his friends, their works, and book reviews. As
well, the critics remind us that Blake in his other works refers to Adam Kadmon, Paracelsus, and Boehme and that Blake's friends noted astounding breadth of his reading. While Blake might be indebted to interpretations and insights of these exegetical traditions, in Urizen the characteristics of the biblical prophecies found by these exegeses are not merely employed to imitate the form of biblical prophecies but are organically connected to Blake's epistemology, psychology, theology, and cosmology. What makes Urizen a prophetic work in the biblical tradition is not only Blake's use of certain ideas and characteristics but more importantly the way he uses them to render his peculiar vision. In The Book of Urizen, besides the superimposition of the visions of the Bible and Paradise Lost onto his own, Blake uses the metaphors that fuse the perceiver and the perceived, grammatical ambiguities, and juxtaposition of different points of view, in order to present his vision of the creation of the world as a timeless, epistemological event that involves at once the individual and the cosmos, time and eternity, and heaven, hell, earth and chaos.

The time scheme in the narrative of Urizen, as W. J. T. Mitchell points out, has the same structure as Paradise Lost with the three time phases: the pre-creation (the war in heaven and the fall of the rebel angels), the Creation, and the lapsarian world (the Fall of man, the exile from Eden,
and the beginning of history with the promise of the Redemption) (123). Blake evokes diverse moments of the sacred history presented in Paradise Lost, but he deconstructs Milton's and the Bible's chronology and events, and places these moments in a new dramatic framework.

For instance, as shown earlier, Urizen's withdrawal from the body of Eternals evokes at once God's creation by contraction, Satan's secret plot in heaven, the Holy Spirit's fertilizing of the Abyss, God's formation of the world, Satan in Hell, and the Messiah in the war in heaven. By superimposing the diverse moments from the two time phases--of the first conspiracy, the war in heaven, the angels in Hell, and the creation of the world--onto a single moment of Urizen's secret withdrawal, Blake attempts to point out not only that Urizen is Satanic but also that these moments in Milton are identical in nature and find their archetype in Urizen's withdrawal.

Similarly, by means of allusions, metaphors, and similes, Blake fuses the moment of the creation of Urizen's body with the moments of the creation of the world, the Fall of man, the Crucifixion, and the Apocalypse. The creation of man's body is presented as the Fall of an Eternal from his infinitely flexible state. The creation of Urizen's body is also coextensive with the creation of the world. At the time Los starts forging, Urizen is "the dark globe" from which the Eternals stand "wide apart, / As the stars are
apart from the earth" (5.41-6.1). As is often the case with Blake, the simile becomes a literal fact; Urizen is the earth, around whom Los (whose name is an anagram of Sol) howls with "a fathomless void for his feet; / And intense fires for his dwelling" (6.5-6). In presenting Los's shaping of Urizen, Blake uses metaphorical descriptions that simultaneously embody the human body and the world.

2. And Urizen (so his eternal name)
   His prolific delight obscur'd more & more
   In dark secrecy hiding in surging
   Sulphureous fluid his phantasies.
   . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

3. The eternal mind bounded began to roll
   Eddies of wrath ceaseless round & round,
   And the sulphureous foam surging thick
   Settled, a lake, bright, & shining clear:
   White as the snow on the mountains cold.
   (10.11-4, 19-23)

The "sulphureous fluid" in which Urizen hides his "phantasies" is at once a metaphor for his foul, muddled, and deadly mentality and literally the fluid in a primordial volcanic lake. As well, together with a preceding comparison of Urizen to "a dark waste stretching chang'able / By earthquakes riv'n, belching sullen fires" (10.3-4), the description evokes the image of Satan floating over the
infernal flood "with ever-burning Sulphur" (PL I.69).
Moreover, as discussed earlier, Blake fuses the creation of
Urizen's body and the Crucifixion in 13.12-9 (Simmons 155)
and the Apocalypse, by superimposing Michael's binding of
Satan onto Los's binding. Thus Blake fuses in a single
moment the crucial events of the sacred history from before
the beginning to the end.

Not only different times but also different spaces are
fused, merged, or rendered continuous--probably the chief
factor that disorients the reader's sense of setting. The
realm of the action in Urizen is at once the mental and the
physical worlds, at once what are traditionally called
heaven, hell, earth, and chaos or the Abyss, at once an
organ of the human body, the whole human body, and the
cosmos.

The action in Urizen takes places simultaneously inside
and outside of the human mind. Urizen's first withdrawal,
for example, is described in this way:

6. His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen
Prepar'd: his ten thousands of thunders
Rang'd in gloom'd array stretch out across
The dread world, & the rolling of wheels
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds
In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains
Of hail & ice; voices of terror,
Are heard, like thunders of autumn,
When the cloud blazes over the harvests[.]  

(3.27-35)

Through semantic ambiguities, Blake presents "The dread world" of Urizen as at once his mental landscape and his physical environment—if we could describe Eternity as physical. Verse four which describes Urizen's self-contemplation makes Urizen's preparation of thunders and his mountains in the above quotation an occurrence in his inner world and a metaphor for his mental activities. However, the preparation also describes his activities in the world external to himself; Urizen is preparing thunders for dominion over Eternity, just as God in the Old Testament and Zeus on the Olympus use thunders as their weapon. In Chapter II verse 3, these thunders and mountains are outside Urizen: his thunders roll "on the tops of his mountains" (4.5) by which "myriads of Eternity" muster (3.44). Similarly, in the description of the creation of Urizen's body quoted above (10.11-14, 19-23), the "sulphureous fluid" is at once inside and outside his mind, and at once the brain and the lake water. Throughout the book, such continuity of the internal and the external characterizes its visionary space.

This visionary space is also at once heaven, hell, earth, and chaos—the four distinct realms of the Miltonic universe (Mitchell 129). By evoking Milton's images of
these realms and events that take place in them, Blake renders a visionary space that dissolves these traditional boundaries between the four realms. Urizen addresses the Eternals:

I have sought for a joy without pain,

For a solid without fluctuation

Why will you die O Eternals?

Why live in unquenchable burnings? (4.10-13)

This description of life in Eternity closely echoes Milton's description of Hell as the rebel angels' "fit habitation fraught with fire / Unquenchable, the house of woe and pain" (PL VI.876-7). Just as Hell appears a place of "torment and insanity" to Angels and is a place of "enjoyment of Genius" to Devils in the first "Memorable Fancy" of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, so Eternity in Urizen appears to Urizen and to traditional minds a place of pain, of "unquenchable burning." In Chapter III, when Urizen unfolds his Law and creates furor among the Eternals, Eternity is transformed, even from the Eternals' point of view, into a place with sin and torment:

2. Rage, fury, intense indignation

In cataracts of fire blood & gall

In whirlwinds of sulphurous smoke:

And enormous forms of energy;

All the seven deadly sins of the soul
In living creations appear'd

In the flames of eternal fury. (4.45-5.2)

Eternity, then, like the walls of Milton's heaven, rolls wide apart to disburden Urizen. But unlike Milton's heaven which disburdens the rebels, in Urizen Eternity moves away from Urizen the rebel, "leaving ruinous fragments of life" (5.9). Urizen remains in his quarter, the north of Eternity, but as the fires of the Eternals attacked him, his abode becomes a place of torment, the description of which closely corresponds to that of Milton's Hell created by "Eternal justice" (PL I.70). Yet Urizen, in the subsequent action, to escape from the assaults of the quenchless flames, buries himself underneath mountains and hills: this event, as mentioned before, evokes the war in heaven. Furthermore, as Urizen frames a roof all around himself to keep away from the fire, he becomes "the dark globe" (5.38) which, later we find, is the earth. As well, Urizen's domain from Eternals' point of view is "the void" (5.15), Urizen himself, "the formless unmeasurable death" (7.9) "in whirlwinds & pitch & nitre" (8.5). Thus Urizen's domain in Eternity is heaven initially, hell as the Eternals attack Urizen, earth as he is formed by Los, and chaos from the Eternals' point of view.

Moreover, in the visionary world of Urizen, an organ of the human body is the whole body and the world. Seen by Blake's transfiguring perception, Urizen, the eternal mind
of the body of Eternals, is at once a human brain in the skull, a womb, a heart, an embryo, an entire human body, and the earth, when deserted by the Eternals. In describing Urizen's efforts to escape from the Eternals' fire, Blake envisions Urizen as a giant in the form of a man; Urizen runs, digs, piles up mountains and hills, labouring "till hoary, and age-broke, and aged" (5.26). In the next verse, however, Blake envisions Urizen as a variety of human organs and as the world. For instance, the description of his framing "a roof, vast petrific around, / On all sides" (5.28-9) suggests that he is seen as the human brain in the skull. In the same line, Blake tells us that Urizen is like a womb;

Where thousands of rivers in veins
Of blood pour down the mountains to cool
The eternal fires beating without
From Eternals[.] (5.29-33)

Blake compares Urizen to a womb not merely because the englobed form is similar in appearance to a womb. Urizen, ironically, is a womb from which all creatures of the earth derive, although this process of birth is seen as a process of death. Blake next tells us that Urizen is "like a black globe / View'd by sons of Eternity" (5.33-4). As discussed earlier, this simile later becomes a literal fact. In the next verse, Urizen is compared to "the earth" (6.1), and in the subsequent verses, as Simmons suggests (153), Urizen is
the earth, around which Los, (anagram of Sol), howls with "a fathomless void for his feet;/ And intense fires for his dwelling" (6.5-6). As well, in the same verse in which Urizen is likened to a brain, a womb, and a globe, he is also "the vast world" which is "like a human heart struggling & beating" (5.37,36). The comparison to the human heart also suggests an image of an embryo in an early stage of gestation, as Urizen is indeed an embryo, a globe from which a full human body develops--ironically again, since this development of the embryo is a devolution to death.13 Blake's metaphorical perception endlessly draws out fresh significance from Urizen as the poet sees him in different contexts: the text of Urizen thus embodies Blake's perception of "the infinite in every thing."

Such a way of perceiving differs from ordinary metaphorical perception. For example, in Paradise Lost hell is a physical realm as well as a metaphor of Satan's mental state, as Satan discovers in Eden: "Which way I fly is Hell: myself am Hell" (PL IV.75). Yet Hell within and Eden outside of Satan are neither continuous nor fused: mental and physical realities remain distinct. In Urizen, on the other hand, the same space is sometimes hell, at other times, the body, a womb, the earth, or the void, and a single action takes place at once in mind, in body, and on the earth. The different spaces are not merely parallel to each other, as is the case with metaphors as transference (A
for B), but are continuous and coextensive in Blake's visionary world.

Like Blake's earlier works, The Book of Urizen embodies Blake's simultaneous perception of the cause and the effect and of the subject and the object. The poem begins with an epic convention, an announcement of the book's theme:

Of the primeval Priests assum'd power,
When Eternals spurn'd back his religion;
And gave him a place in the north,
Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary[.](2.1-4)

As Mitchell points out, the use of "When" in the second line suggests the simultaneity of Urizen's rebellion and the Eternals' rejection, and Urizen's rise can be the cause or the consequence of the Eternals' behavior (128-9). The action in the poem proper testifies that the error belongs to both parties: the disintegration of the body of the Eternals is caused by Urizen's attempt to dominate Eternity but also by the Eternals' attempt to restrain Urizen. The next two lines tell us that the Eternals gave him "a place in the north," but in the poem proper, the north of Eternity is Urizen's domain to which he voluntarily withdraws and from which he proclaims his laws, just as Satan takes his legions to the north of heaven for his rebellion. Still in another part of the narrative, the Eternals confine Urizen in his domain, in order to avoid infection. Thus Urizen's withdrawal to the north is also the Eternals' assignment and
confinement of him to the north. The fourth line of the Preludium, the description of this northern domain, again blurs the distinction of the cause and the effect. It is not clear whether the place is given to Urizen because it is "obscure, shadowy, void, solitary," or the place becomes so because it is assigned to Urizen; the agent who darkened the place is not readily identifiable. The ambiguity is deliberate to render the division in Eternity simultaneously from two opposite points of view--Urizen's and the Eternals': the responsibility lies in both parties. In the same way, Blake renders the opposition of the two when Urizen's proclamation of his laws against the Seven Deadly Sins is countered by the Eternals. Seen from the Eternals' point of view, sin is forced upon them by Urizen: Sins come into being only because Urizen invented them. Seen from Urizen's point of view, sins materialize because the Eternals with all their infinite energies assault his laws. Thus the cause and the effect are presented as the single event seen from two opposing perspectives. In so doing, Blake not only presents these events from a timeless perspective but also avoids a monological narrative that establishes a moral hierarchy.

Similarly, all descriptions of creation in Urizen embody such a perception of causes and effects and simultaneously present opposing perspectives. From the point of view of a creator, the act of formation is an act
of creation in the ordinary sense, an imaginative organization of a new, better form out of the given material; yet from the point of view of the Eternals, all the acts of creation in Urizen are disorganization, an imprisonment of the immortal in crude matter, an imprisonment that is also disfigurement and fragmentation. To render both perspectives at once, and to criticize the traditional view of the Creation depicted in the Bible and Milton, Blake renders the scenes of the creation as disorganization with the image of the formation of an embryo and of birth, as the Eassons show (71-81); the formations of both Urizen and Orc correspond to the gestation of a human fetus. The birth of Enitharmon is another example in which opposing perspectives are presented at once. As shown earlier, in describing this birth, Blake evokes the two opposing scenes of the birth of the first female from the male: the birth of Eve from Adam in Genesis and Paradise Lost, and the birth of Sin from Satan in Paradise Lost. By superimposing the births of Eve and Sin onto the birth of Enitharmon, Blake simultaneously presents the contrary views of the birth and attempts to show its underlying meaning as he sees it—a further disintegration of man.

Thus, these fusions of different moments in time and Eternity, of different spaces, and of the cause and the effect, or the subject and the object, register Blake's visionary perception of time, space, and events. Placing
his predecessors' visions in his visionary universe and making them interact dialectically to generate fresh life, Blake critically reveals, in his view, true meanings of these visions.

A revelation of the true meaning of the Creation, however, is not the sole purpose of Blake in *Urizen*: more importantly through these fusions and through the dialectical presentation of his design and text, and through the non-linear, disjointed narrative structure and multiple perspectives and levels of meaning, Blake attempts to induce a prophetic vision in the reader.

In *The Book of Urizen* Blake's view of prophecy clearly differs from that of earlier prophets. The fact that no two copies of *Urizen* have the same sequence of plates alone is enough to illustrate that Blake's interest does not lie in a presentation of a single definitive narrative about the Creation.\(^2\) Not only does each copy have its own unique ordering of plates, but also certain plates appear in some copies and are absent in others. Although the sequence of the text is largely determined by the chapter and verse numbers, those copies which have both plates 7 and 8 have two Chapters IV. Moreover, the locations of the plates that carry only the designs shift from copy to copy, so that in each copy unique juxtapositions of the designs and the texts generate unique meanings from both.\(^2\) In addition, Blake
colors differently from copy to copy. The Eassons describe the variations of the coloring of plate 14 of Copy G, the plate which presents a single human figure:

In copy G this figure is the youthful Los embedded in what looks to be a flaming sun, with mouth open and uprolled eyes. In Copy B the figure is still the youthful Los, but Blake has closed his mouth in a sorrowful frown and tears fall from his narrowed eyes. In Copy A, however, Blake gives the figure a white beard, turning him into an aged Urizen. (89)

In this way Blake draws out fresh meanings from a single figure.

Mollyanne Marks argues that the state of the text of Urizen represents man's fragmented fallen perception (581), and similarly McGann contends that the "disorderly state" of the text parodies the corrupt state of the biblical text as conceived by Geddes (323). The "disorderly state" of the text, however, does not represent fallen perception; on the contrary, it reflects Blake's transfiguring perception. The state of the copies demonstrates how Blake sees the world and reads books. He removes an element from its original context and places it in a variety of contexts. In each context the same element--be it a grain of sand, a person, a hand, the universe, an image from Milton, or an idea from the Bible--generates a new meaning and at the same time is
transfigured to form an integral part of the new framework. The different arrangement of his plates in each copy indicates that the chief objective of Blake's work is the act of transfiguring the world.

The openness of the text is also the poet's strategy to "rouze [the reader's] faculties to act" (E702). Reading Urizen involves a removing of preconception and a replacing of normal logical sequential thinking with imaginative making of fresh meanings out of a disjoined, supra-natural narrative. The text prompts our minds to discover meanings through processing the layers of seemingly contradictory allusions, the disorienting fusions of inside and outside, and cause and effect, and to recognize the pattern of error recurrent in all activities of all spaces. Thus, in our efforts to read and reread Urizen, we exercise the mode of perception with which the poet-prophet sees the world. Of such experience of rereading Urizen, Hilton writes:

[We] find ourselves each time slightly changed and each passage slightly different because of richness of the text. . . . [W]e bring more and more to the text, but, at the same time, the text becomes increasingly out of focus, or, rather, multifocused. . . . Urizen helps us, finally, to appreciate the power and will of an Original Poetic Genius that went into its creation and that goes into our creating of it. ("Zen" 195-6, 197)
In this way, Urizen has a power to activate our mind to see the world from an enlarged perspective.

This activating power of Urizen, however, differs from that of the Hebrew prophecies, for unlike them Blake's prophecy does not actualize its literal sense. In Urizen, the words are used in such a way as to engage the reader's mind and expand it to perceive the errors that prevent him from fulfillment. Thus, the power of prophecy with which Blake aims to liberate the reader is analogous to the power of the symbolic acts of the prophets as expounded by Blake's Isaiah and Ezekiel in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

With this power to rouse the reader's faculties, The Book of Urizen is Blake's critique of the Hebrew prophets and Milton as well as of Blake himself as prophet; Urizen, Los, and the Eternals dramatize the approach of the biblical and Miltonic prophecies which Blake adopted in his early works, such as the "Prologue" for King Edward IV and "Holy Thursday" in Songs of Experience. The attempts of Urizen, Los, and the Eternals to reform the status quo or rebellion by governing with laws, by condemning and attacking, and by stabilizing, disintegrate man only further. Blake seems to suggest that the biblical mode of prophecy which, as he sees it, attempts to reform the people by making them conform to monological messages repeats the primordial error of Blake's Eternals. In the episode of Los's chaining of Orc "Beneath Urizens deathful shadow" (20.25), Blake offers another
critical view of the monological mode of prophecy, "its obsession with moral 'absolutes'" (Mitchell 121). Los fails by becoming a "dictator" of moral absolutes which, in turn, are dictated to him by Urizen. Monological prophetic messages, in spite of their intention to awaken the people's mind, fail to cause the mental apocalypse, which is Blake's goal.

Robert F. Gleckner, citing Jerusalem 88.3-5, which describes the mode of communication in Eternity, writes that the Word in Eternity is "an event, a sharing, an act of love, a coming together" ("Most Holy Forms" 565): the Word is the living form in Eternity. The disintegration of Eternity, therefore, is "the fall of the Word into words, the degeneration of 'Visionary forms dramatic' into language . . . a time-bound, space-bound syntax that passively mirrors the shattered mind and the excruciatingly finite limits of fallen sense of perception" (Gleckner, "Most Holy Forms" 557). Urizen, in proclaiming his laws with "words articulate" (4.4), thus turns the Word into words. The prophet must, then, restore the Word, but he must do so through the use of fallen language. In order not to be enslaved by the fallen language, Blake avoids a monological mode of discourse; instead, through his mode of visionary drama, or what he calls as "Visionary forms dramatic" (Jerusalem 98.28), Blake attempts to "annihilate the very temporal and spatial confines" (Gleckner, "Most Holy Forms"
of fallen language and reintegrate the mode of communication in Eternity, the living Word.

In the second stanza of the "Preludium," Blake particularly demonstrates how he uses the unfallen mode of communication in Eternity. He writes of his unconventional muses:

Eternals I hear your call gladly,
Dictate swift winged words, & fear not
To unfold your dark visions of torment[.]

(2.5-7)

As the Eassons point out, the "swift winged words" allude to the "swift wings" (PL II.631) Satan puts on for his flight from Hell (92). The allusion suggests that the Eternals' words derive from their experience of an infernal torment, but it also suggests that their "words" are not the Word but the fallen, fragmented words. Moreover, the prophet comforts the Eternals, using the form of the oracle of weal or assurance, which begins with "fear not," suggesting his role as a redeemer rather than a passive recipient of dictation. Unlike the biblical prophets, who proclaim the words put in their mouths, or Milton, whose "unpremeditated Verse" is "dictate[d]" by his celestial Muse (PL IX.23, 24), Blake, even as he receives dictation, is not less enlightened than are the Eternals. His role, like that of the eternal prophet Los, is a redeemer of the dark visions of the rest of the Eternals rather than their servant or
messenger. In describing the Eternals' words as "swift winged" and in comforting the Eternals, Blake shows that he is aware of the status of their words and that his task is not a mere proclamation of the received words but a restoration of the "swift winged words" into the Word, or the dynamic form, which manifests itself in "Visionary forms dramatic."

The Book of Urizen attempts to debunk the established views of the Creation and man's place in the cosmos and subvert the Lockean epistemology; Blake tries to achieve his goal not by means of what he sees as the biblical and Miltonic mode of prophecy through monological messages, but by means of the heuristic mode of prophecy with the same motive as that behind the Hebrew prophets' symbolic acts as Blake conceives it. Through the errors and anguish of Urizen, Los, and the Eternals, Blake presents one area of the prophetic career he has not yet explored--the burden of the prophet's task, his alienation from both the power that appoints him and the world he strives to reform, and his anguish in failing to achieve his goal--the facet of the prophet's life best exemplified in the Bible in Lamentations, traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah. The career of the eternal prophet Los is developed in Blake's later works. In The Book of Los Blake recounts the same event as that of Urizen from Los's point
of view. In *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, Blake incorporates his vision of *Urizen* and further explores the prophet Los's task to reintegrate Urizen and other fallen Eternals into the body of the Eternals identified as the giant Albion. In these works, Los is guided all through his career by the now clearly envisioned saviour of the living human form, the Divine Vision. Although this vision of the divine is not yet fully developed in *The Book of Urizen*, it is implicit in Blake's "Visionary forms dramatic," by means of which Blake will deliver the predecessors' visions and the reader's mind from the confines of established conceptions and conventional modes of thinking and will awaken our dormant capacity for perception of the infinite in the world.
Notes


Human Understanding," Interpreting Blake (Cambridge, 1978);

I am particularly indebted to Mitchell's Composite Art, and many of Kittel's interpretations affirm mine both in this and early chapters.

2. My treatment of Urizen in this chapter is necessarily repetitious, because I am attempting to analyze layer by layer what Blake presents all at once by means of his distinct poetic and stylistic devices, which I hope to identify.

3. See The Anxiety of Influence and A Map of Misreading.

4. The Holy Spirit, of course, does not form the Abyss, but combined with the secret brooding, Urizen's act of forming calls forth the image of the Spirit in the act of impregnating.

   For the image of the Spirit's "brooding," see also PL VII. 235.


7. See how Milton presents God's ultimate goal, described in PL III. 315-341: after the resurrection of the Son, God will
retire passing the scepter to the Son, who, following the Father, will, after the Apocalypse, "lay by" his "regal Sceptre," "For regal Sceptre then no more shall need, / God shall be All in All" (339, 340-1). This vision of democratic community of the divine beings suggests that to Milton the hierarchical structure of not only heaven but also the entire cosmos as presented in PF is not the ultimate ideal condition. Blake's Eternity thus closely resembles Milton's ideal. For Milton's view of God, see, for instance, William Empson, *Milton's God* (London, 1961); Joan Webber, "Milton's God," *ELH* 40 (1973), and *Milton and His Epic Tradition* (Seattle, 1979); Dennis Danielson, *Milton's Good God* (Cambridge, 1982).


In pursuing sources of Blake's ideas and symbols, it should be remembered that gnosticism, Hermeticism, Orphism, Neoplatonism, Cabala, alchemy, and several other occult traditions share common sources and interact with each other. For a brief, informative discussion of these traditions in


10. Besides these ideas, the Gnostics' idea of the seven seats of the Archons and the exalted view of man, among many others, find parallels in Blake's later works.

11. For a different approach to Blake and Gnosticism, see Horn.

Hermeticism, another tradition with ideas similar to those of Urizen, sees man as a divine being, having the divine creative power over the world. Yet unlike in Urizen, in Hermeticism the Father, the supreme deity, and his creature, man, are distinguished hierarchically.

12. For studies of Blake's epistemology, see Frye, "The Case Against Locke," Symmetry 3-39 and Kittel.

13. See the Eassons' interpretation that "the imagery of the nine chapters of The Book of Urizen is derived from the nine-month gestation cycle of a human being" (71). On nine-month gestation cycle, see also Dorothy Plowman, "A Note on William Blake's Book of Urizen," The Book of Urizen (London, 1929).
14. The two births, of course, are parodies of the birth of Athena from Zeus.


16. For studies of the relationship between the designs and the texts, see Kroeber, Mitchell, the Eassons, and Warner.
Summary and Conclusion

From the earliest period of his poetic career, Blake displays characteristics that align him with the biblical prophetic tradition. Although, as critics have pointed out, the rhetorical strategies and devices of Blake's later prophetic writings may be attributed to his reading of the Bible and of diverse biblical exegeses, the single most important feature of his prophetic writings is his prophetic perception of the world. This feature is evident even in his earlier work, his lyrics, his verse dramas, and his poetic prose, which do not contain the obvious strategies and devices of his overtly prophetic later writings. Long before he first employs, for example, a synchronic structure, which is identified as the unique structure of Revelation by some exegetes, Blake renders his prophetic perception of the world through his own stylistic and poetic devices such as syntactical and semantic ambiguities, and organic and revisionary uses of religious, political, and literary traditions. As well, his prophetic stance, which situates him between heaven and earth and both above and within national and human history, his anguished voice that calls for deliverance of earth, and his dialectic design that attempts to expand the reader's consciousness characterize even his seemingly conventional poems. Blake belongs to the biblical prophetic tradition more because of
these fundamental characteristics than because of his employment of literary forms of the Bible.

His earliest and most conventional poems in *Poetical Sketches* display these characteristics of the biblical prophetic tradition. The persona of prophet-poet is evident in "To Spring," the "Prologues" to Edward IV and King John, "Samson" and many others. In all these poems the speakers see the world from an elevated stance while at the same time speaking in a deeply concerned tone as they watch the fallen condition of the world. In the historical sketches, with this prophetic stance the poet attempts to expose the traditional view of the history and national identity of Britain as an illusion, opposite to what he perceives as the truth. In the "Prologues" and "Samson" the syntactical and semantic ambiguities render the poet's prophetic perception that simultaneously registers the cause and the effect, the subject and the object, and the past, the present, and the future. Thus, the war is seen at once to be the oppression of the tyrant and the revolt of the oppressed, and at once divine and human acts. In "Samson," revising the biblical and the Miltonic versions, the poet presents Samson's birth, prime, captivity, and death existing all in one moment when Samson tells Dalila the story of the annunciation of his birth as the story of a sentence to a life of care, sorrow, and labour. Thus from the beginning, Blake's poems render
the perceptions that go beyond ordinary temporal and spatial categories.

In *Songs of Innocence* the innocent speakers are totally unaware of their prophetic roles, and the poems' criticisms are never explicit as in the biblical prophecies; nevertheless, *Innocence* implicitly but powerfully presents the account of the prophet's call, subversive criticisms of establishment, and oracles of regeneration of the world. The innocent speakers' transfiguring perception reveals a luminous Edenic reality in the depth of the fallen world and demonstrates the perception of "the infinite in every thing" (E38; 12). In "The Shepherd," "The Chimney Sweeper," "The Little Black Boy," "The Cradle Song" and others, syntactical ambiguities and circular logic--what appears to be the naive speakers' confused reasoning--render the speakers' perception of the divine reality, in which the past, the present, and the future exist all at once, the cause and the effect are layered, the subject and the object are merged, and the divine, the human, and the natural are continuous. In the Lyca poems, Blake for the first time offers his vision of a comprehensive drama of salvation through the myths which strongly evoke the biblical allegory of the reunion of Jerusalem-Israel-Judah and her husband, God, the myths of Earth and her return to her maker and the transformation of a desert to a garden. Unlike the biblical prophets, however, Blake envisions Earth's separation from
her maker and her return to him, not in terms of human sin and divine punishment and restoration, but in morally neutral terms of Earth's sleep, awakening, and return. Like the allegorical interpretations of Israel-Jerusalem in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Lyca's story symbolically reveals, in Blake's view, the true account of man's place in the history of salvation.

*Songs of Experience* displays more visibly the characteristics of biblical prophecy than the earlier poems. Blake further develops the myth of Earth's return in the "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer." Unlike the Piper, the Bard is lucidly aware of his mission and power; he proclaims his divine source of authority and attempts to awaken Earth. But the Bard's prophetic role, like Blake's own, is justified not so much by his assertions as by his language which registers his prophetic perception of the past, the present, and the future all at once. Strongly informed by a reformist spirit, *Experience* like the biblical prophecies offers explicit criticisms of religious, political, and social institutions. Blake, however, reveals that the ultimate cause of social evils lies not in the institutions but in the "mind-forg'd manacles," the mentality that accepts established systems and values as the nature of things. The dramatic presentations of diverse voices and the dialectic design of the combined *Songs* as indicated by its subtitle induce the reader to recognize the "states"
distinguished from the soul, produces in the reader a vision that encompasses both states, and deliver the mind from its own manacles.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake presents not only the principle of contraries, which is, in his view, the proper way of seeing the world, but also a critical exploration of the prophetic career. In order to bring forth in the reader the mental Apocalypse, *The Marriage* attempts to dismantle conventional approaches to life through the principle of contraries, the disjointed structure, the juxtapositions of disparate elements, and biting satire. The prophet-poet-engraver examines, defines, and justifies his purpose, his source of inspiration, his strategy, and his heritage in the biblical and Greek prophetic traditions. He also experiments with diverse media to find a proper vehicle for his prophecy: lyric, discourse, proverb, allegory, myth, and vision. In "A Song of Liberty" his exploration culminates: in the newly-found mode of prophecy which is at once dialogical and oracular and at once timeless and historical, the poet-prophet proclaims, together with "the new born fire," that the end has come to the oppression by all conventions.

*The Book of Urizen*, the first of Blake's "Bible of Hell," attempts to debunk the Lockean epistemology and reveal, in Blake's view, the true contexts of the God, the man, the Creation, the Fall, and the cosmology presented in
the Bible and *Paradise Lost*. In identifying the biblical vision of the Creation as that of the Fall of man, Blake presents the event in terms of epistemology as Urizen's withdrawal from the Eternal mode of perception in favour of the Lockean mode. Blake demonstrates the proper mode of perception through a unique way of allusion. He evokes his predecessors' imagery, setting, characters, events, and so forth, and places them in contexts contradictory to the original ones; he also layers his predecessors' visions, for instance, of Satan, the Messiah, Jehovah, and Moses, to present his own vision. Through this organic use of allusion, Blake causes a traditional vision, as it is placed in a new environment, to generate new meaning, even as he implicitly criticizes the old context of this vision. Thus, Blake is able to affirm the aesthetic power of the vision while at the same time revealing, to him, the erroneous or exhausted framework in which the vision was placed initially.

Like the earlier works, the text of *Urizen* embodies Blake's visionary perception through syntactical ambiguities and layers of allusions to different events, realms, and characters of the Bible and Milton. The causal relationship between Urizen's withdrawal and the Eternals' spurning of him and between Urizen's announcement of sins and the Eternals' rejection of his laws, for instance, is blurred, suggesting the simultaneity of the actions. Blake also
offers a critique of a mode of prophecy--the monological mode of castigation and instruction--used by the biblical prophets, Milton, and Blake himself in some of his earlier poems. Urizen, Los, and the Eternals attempt to save their respective objects by governing with laws, by condemning and attacking, and by stabilizing, and their attempts only further disintegrate man. In order to make the reader experience the mental Apocalypse, the prophet uses a dialogical or heuristic mode of prophecy. Furthermore, through the character of Los, Blake, like Jeremiah, begins to explore the burden of a prophet's career--his labour and his alienation both from the power that appointed him and the world he strives to save. His exploration continues in his later prophecies until Blake fully develops the scheme of salvation that is guided by what he calls the Divine Vision.

Blake uses models of the biblical prophets, Milton, and even Swedenborg; yet he is not a mere imitator. He sees these prophets just as he sees everything else in the world --prophetically, by transfiguring them. This transfiguring perception, as well as his stance, purpose, and revisionary relationship with his predecessors, links Blake with the biblical prophets whose books also embody their simultaneous perception of past, present, and future of their people and land. In his later prophecies, this transfiguring perception is designated as the Divine Vision and presented
as the true identity of man. The drama of man's fall and regeneration, in one sense, is presented in terms of Albion's alienation from and reunion with the Divine Vision, and in another, in terms of Los's struggle to keep it as the informing spirit, against his Selfhood: "the Sons of Eden" praise Los "Because he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble" (Jerusalem E255; 95.19, 20). It is this vision and the language that embodies it that locate Blake most profoundly in the biblical prophetic tradition.
Works Cited

**Primary Works**


Secondary Works: Biblical
Secondary Works: Literary

Abrams, M. H. "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age."
Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the

---, Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in

Ackland, Michael. "Blake's Problematic Touchstones to
Experience: 'Introduction,' 'Earth's Answer,' and the
3-17.


Bronson, Bertrand H. "Personification Reconsidered."

Chayes, Irene. "Blake and the Seasons of the Poet."
---, "Little Girl Lost: Problems of a Romantic Archetype."
579-592.

Cheskin, Arnold. "The Echoing Greenhorn: Blake as
Hebraist." Blake/ An Illustrated Quarterly 12 (1978-9):
178-83.

Damon, S. Foster. A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols
---, William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols. Boston:
Houghton, 1924.


De Luca, Vincent. "Ariston's Immortal Palace: Icon and
1-19.


Eaves, Morris. "A Reading of Blake Marriage of Heaven and
Hell, Plates 1-20: On and Under the Estate of the


