SUMMARY

The Gates of Paradise occupies a special place in Blake's work for two reasons: because it was his first attempt at a work which would convey its meaning primarily by pictorial means, and because it was the only work of his earlier years which he chose to reissue in a substantially altered form during the period of the later prophetic books. Unfortunately, the meaning of the earlier series has remained, until now, largely obscure. The commentators have dealt at length only with the later issue, and indeed have chosen to concentrate almost exclusively on what it shares with the prophetic books. The purpose of this thesis is to bring to light the meaning of the Gates of Paradise as Blake originally intended it, and to do so I have concentrated mainly on the earlier issue.

In Chapter One of Part One I offer a detailed description of each plate of the Gates. In Chapter Two of Part One I discuss previous criticism, showing its general deficiencies with respect to the Gates, but also pointing out the important contributions of Sampson, Tinker, Beer, Erdman, and others.

Part Two establishes the meaning of the Gates of Paradise. In Chapter One I outline the immediate contemporary context of the Gates, showing how two literary traditions are united in the work, the one of the emblem tradition, and the other of the literature of melancholy. In the following twelve chapters I show something which has never been understood previously: that the Gates of Paradise, if understood as Blake originally intended, can be seen to be a gothic vision of melancholy. As I demonstrate by drawing on a poetic and graphic tradition distinguished by Melencolia I, The Anatomy of Melancholy, As You Like It, 'Il Penseroso' and its eighteenth-century imitators, and the criticism of Hurd and the Wartons, each plate of the Gates is a meditation on one facet of the theme of melancholy, and the series as a whole depicts human life as a wretched cycle turning on frustration, defeat, and despair. At the same time melancholy contains its own sustenance and cure, for plate 13 suggests, paradoxically, that this very condition can be transmuted into creative vision. In Chapter Fourteen I discuss how, when Blake reissued the series, he severely qualified this view, replacing the paradigm of the melancholy genius with a vision of plurality.

In Part Three I follow a number of digressions too lengthy to be included in the body of the thesis. In Appendix One I point to a number of errors in a recently published critique of the Gates which relied on some of the same sources I use, and I raise the problem of poetic influence. In Appendix Two I suggest that Blake's character Urizen was closely modelled on the nexus Saturn-Melancholy-Geometry. In Appendix Three I trace the probably indebtedness of the title of the series to the bronze doors in the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence by Lorenzo Ghiberti, known as 'the Gates of Paradise'. In Appendix Four I offer some suggestions for future iconological study of the Job series.
Trembling & pale sat Tharmas weeping in his clouds

Why wilt thou Examine every little fibre of my soul
Spreading them out before the Sun like Stalks of flax to dry
The infant joy is beautiful but its anatomy
Horrible Ghast & Deadly nought shalt thou find in it
But Death Despair & Everlasting brooding Melancholy

Thou wilt go mad with horror if thou dost Examine thus
Every moment of my secret hours Yea I know
That I have sinned & that my Emanations are become harlots
I am already distracted at their deeds & if I look
Upon them more Despair will bring self murder on my soul
O Enion thou art thyself a root growing in hell
Tho thus heavenly beautiful to draw me to destruction

Sometimes I think thou art a flower expanding
Sometimes I think thou art fruit breaking from its bud
In dreadful dolor & pain & I am like an atom
A Nothing left in darkness yet I am an identity
I wish & feel & weep & groan Ah terrible terrible

— The Four Zoas, Night the First,
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Acknowledgements

The errors of fact and deficiencies of judgment which no doubt remain in this thesis are my own responsibility, but if it proves to be a substantive contribution to Blake studies, some acknowledgement must be made to my supervisor, Dr. Michael Phillips. He guided me through the early stages of research, pointing out such crucial works for my argument as Warton's edition of the minor poems of Milton, and in the final stages he helped me to condense my findings into a brief and readable form.

Some of the material in this thesis was presented in a paper to a Symposium on Blake sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities of the University of Edinburgh; and for their many criticisms and comments on my paper I wish to thank John Beer, Timothy Duffy, David Erdman, James Ferguson, Helen McNeil, Michael Tolley, and Janet Warner.
A Note on References

The following abbreviations will be used for commonly cited references:

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N T [Followed by a numeral]  Blake, William. Illustrations to Night Thoughts, 1795 - 7. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings


In addition to these abbreviations, the standard abbreviations for learned journals are used: e.g., J W C I, for Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.
The purpose of the present chapter is to establish the text of the Gates of Paradise, and to identify the objects, persons, and actions depicted in the designs. It may appear at first that this rather prosaic task is hardly worth the effort, but the reader should bear in mind that much of the controversy in the critical literature about the meaning of Blake's designs can be traced to disagreements not about what a particular motif is intended to mean, but about what is actually depicted in the plate. More accurate observation can, therefore, resolve some disputes without requiring a lengthy debate.

Following this introduction, there is a description and a photograph of each of the plates of For Children The Gates of Paradise, and of the plates added to the series when Blake reissued it as For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. For those plates to which Blake made major alterations, a photograph of a later state of the plate is included. The photographs have been enlarged from facsimile approximately two and one-half times in order to make obscure details more evident. At the end of this chapter there is a brief overview of Blake's alterations in the series, and some suggestions about their meaning.

Blake worked intermittently on the Gates of Paradise for a period of at least twenty-one years, and he made alterations in the text and the designs throughout this period. One may divide the number of issues of the Gates into two works, For Children The Gates of Paradise, issued in 1793, and For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise, issued sometime between 1806 and 1818. The major changes between
the two are the addition to the second version of two plates of explanatory verse, entitled 'The Keys of the Gates', and the addition of a third plate entitled 'Epilogue'. These changes have been duly reported in the critical literature. But it is also evident that Blake made alterations both in text and in design within each separate issue of the work, and some of these prove to be significant.

It would be difficult to understand the intent and the achievement of the Gates, or Blake's changing attitude toward the series, without taking some account of the variants. And yet there has never been a critical study which faces this task squarely. Even in the three most complete accounts of the series, the Blake Trust facsimile edited by Sir Geoffrey Keynes, the facsimile of Blake's notebook edited by David Erdman, and Erdman's The Illuminated Blake (1974), the reader is left to draw his own conclusions about the meaning of the variants and alterations, having been offered the suggestion that there is little difference in meaning between the two works. In this chapter that oversight will be corrected.

It has been beyond my resources to examine all of the extant copies of the Gates of Paradise, but it is apparent from Keynes' census of copies that the copies and facsimiles available in Great

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1. For an account see Bentley and Nurmi, Bibliography, numbers 45 - 9; and Keynes, G P., 1, pp. 47 - 51.

2. Keynes, loc. cit.
Britain are the crucial ones for understanding the work as it was originally conceived, and for an insight into Blake's major alterations. Of the five copies of *For Children*, I have seen four plates in facsimile of copy A, the entirety of copy B, and copy D in facsimile. Of the twelve copies of *For the Sexes*, I have seen the earliest extant copy, copy B, copy C, a facsimile in photogravure of copy C, a facsimile of copy F, and six plates in facsimile of copy G.
Text

Notebook, p. 68: What is Man that thou shouldst magnify him & that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him

Job

1793 Engraving: What is Man!

1818 Engraving: What is Man!

The Suns Light when he unfolds it Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

'The Keys of the Gates': The Catterpiller on the Leaf Reminds thee of thy Mothers Grief

Designs

Notebook, p. 68: The pencil sketch depicts two oak leaves sprouting from a common branch. A worm crawls on the upper leaf, and a child with an innocent and contented face, sleeps, wrapped in a chrysalis, on the lower leaf.

1793, 1818 Engravings: The design is not reversed. The background is now visible, consisting of a dark section of sky at the top, a bright swath in the middle, immediately behind the upper leaf, and a grey swath at the foot of the plate. The sun shines full onto
the sleeping child and his bed, casting only a small shadow behind the child's head. A tendril elaborates the serif on the 'W' of 'What is Man!'
For Children  The Gates of Paradise. Frontispiece. Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
Text

1793 Engraving: For Children
The Gates
Of
Paradise

1818 Engraving: For the Sexes
The Gates
Of
Paradise

Mutual forgiveness of each Vice
Such are the Gates of Paradise
Against the Accuser's chief desire
Who walked among the Stones of Fire
Jehovah's fingers wrote the Law
Then Wept! then rose in Zeal & Awe
And in the midst of Sinai's heat
Hid it beneath His Mercy Seat
O Christians Christians! tell me Why
You rear it on your Altars high.

Copy B, et. seq.

\[ \text{the same as above}\]
Jehovah's Finger Wrote the Law
\[ \text{the same}\]
Copy C, et. seq.  

And the Dead Corpse from Sinai's Heat  
Buried beneath his Mercy Seat

 Designs

1793 Engraving:  
A tiny floating figure near the top of the plate, between 'For Children' and 'The Gates'

1818 Engraving:  
In copy B, there is another, symmetrical floating figure, in a reversed position, on the opposite side of the page. Underneath each floating figure, there are four similar figures, floating with clasped hands, in a swirl. Between 'of' and 'Paradise', there is an angel in a prayerful posture, one flanking each side. In copy C, there is a rising sun over 'Paradise'.
For the Sexes

The Gates of Paradise

Mutual Forgiveness of each Vice
Such are the Gates of Paradise
Against the Accusers' chief desire
Who walked among the Stones of Fire
Jehovah's Finger Wrote the Law
Then Went: then rose in Zeal & Uproar
And the Dead Corpse from Sinai's heart
Buried beneath his Mercy Seat,
O Christians: Christians: tell me why
You rear it on your Altars high.

For the Sexes  The Gates of Paradise.  Titlepage.  Copy F.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 1
8 x 6.5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 63: I found him beneath a tree in the Garden
\[\text{Cf. As You Like It, III, ii, 232, 3.}\]

1793, 1818 Engraving: I found him beneath a Tree

'The Keys of the Gates':
My Eternal Man set in Repose
The Female from his darkness rose
And She found me beneath a Tree
A Mandrake & in her Veil hid me
Serpent Reasoning us entice
Of Good & Evil: Virtue & Vice

Designs

Notebook, p. 63: The pencil and ink sketch depicts, on the right margin in the foreground, a weeping willow. Underneath the branches of the tree a woman in vaguely neo-classical gown, bends over, and with her left hand plucks a child out of the ground by his hair. His arms are raised above his head. With her right hand she holds another smaller child (or perhaps two children) in a pouch.

1793, 1818 Engravings: The design is reversed. A broken sky is now the background. What appeared to be the woman's pouch, now contains definitely one child, not two. The pouch resembles the swaddling clothes of the child, which
is wound like a hank of yarn or the wool on a distaff. The child no longer raises his hands above his head, for he is now more deeply buried than in the notebook sketch, and his arms are imprisoned at the shoulders by the earth. There are distant shadows behind the woman’s left leg and behind the child. There are some slight marginal illuminations: a curling tendril on the 'd' of 'found', and a regular curve after 'Tree'.

As E. L. Cary notes, 'The woman's figure is long and slender and exceedingly spirited in action, as though she had been running in her eagerness to reach the spot and had stooped to the mandrake almost before slackening her speed. Her flying hair lends to this effect of swift motion hardly checked. In the sketch the tree beneath which the mandrake child is growing occupies less room in the design than is the case in the printed books, and cuts more decoratively across the space.' And, she continues, on the later impression of *For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise* 'the figure is much more vigorously defined, though still missing the lithe grace and energy of the sketch; the muscular development is more strongly indicated, and the left leg is freed from the encroaching drapery and its outline is now continuous. The foot is worked into a much more beautiful form and the face has become attractive, although slightly blurred and without the graciousness of expression found in the sketch. The head has become quite classic in shape and the hair has been drawn into a Greek knot instead of flying
loose as in the sketch.\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} Cary, \textit{Art}, pp. 11 - 12. Cary's comments, quoted throughout the present work, always refer to copy D of \textit{For Children}, and copy D of \textit{For the Sexes}. 
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 1, Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. Plate 1. Copy F.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 2
8 x 7.5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 95:

O that the Everlasting had not fixd
His canon gainst Self slaughter

Shakespeare

Hamlet, I. ii. 131 - 2

1793 Engraving:

Water

1818 Engraving:

Water

Thou waterest him with Tears

'The Keys of the Gates':

Doubt Self Jealous Watry folly

Designs

Notebook, p. 95:

The pencil sketch is badly
rubbed out. The design consists of a single naked man, without
genitalia, sitting on a rock with his head sunk down between
his hunched shoulders. He is looking down, toward his feet, of
which the left is foremost. His hands, with fingers spread
wide apart, rest on, or in front of, his knees. Erdman suggests

1. In copy B these words have been written in pen and ink
over a section which appears to have been erased. Sampson
does not list a variant in copy A.
that the man is contemplating his own reflection in the water.

1793, 1818 Engravings: The design is not reversed. The man is sitting on a rock, and he is indeed gazing down at the water, so that he may be gazing at his own reflection, although the tilt of his head is not consonant with such a reading. From the right margin a bare tree spreads a leafless branch over him.

For Children The Gates of Paradise, Plate 2. Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
Text

Notebook, p. 93: Rest Rest perturbed Spirit
Shakespeare

Hamlet, I, v, 183

1793 Engraving: Earth

1818 Engraving: Earth
He struggles into Life

'The Keys of the Gates': Struggling thro Earths Melancholy

Designs

Notebook, p. 93: The pencil sketch depicts a strong nude man in a cave or beneath a pile of rocks, struggling to free himself. He carries his weight on his right leg for the most part, and he also pushes upward with his left leg. His left hand is on the back of his head, and his right hand is in front of it, on the crown of his skull.

Erdman suggests that the figure 'is using his arms partly to clutch his anxious head,' but this interpretation is by no

1. Erdman, Notebook, p. 29.
means beyond doubt, since the figure's right hand is closed in a fist, not the best position for clutching his head. The expression of his face, with its roughly hewn features, is dejected, in despair.

1793 Engraving: The design is reversed. Blake has added great contrasts in tone; he has also highlighted the man's face, left forearm, chest, and left knee.

1818 Engraving: Blake has muted the overall contrast, highlighted the rocks surrounding the man's upper torso, and elaborated the man's facial expression. The man now appears to be struggling against the great weight of the rock, but he is no longer so utterly dejected as he was in the notebook sketch, and as he was, to a lesser degree, in the 1793 engraving.
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 3. Copy D.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. Plate 3. Copy F.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 4
8.5 x 7.5 cm.

Text
Notebook, p. 94:
Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God -- Ezekiel

1793 Engraving:
Air

1818 Engraving:
Air
On Cloudy Doubts & Reasoning Cares

'The Keys of the Gates':
Naked in Air in Shame & Fear

Designs
Notebook, p. 94:
There are two sketches.
The one in wash on the left depicts a naked man sitting among the clouds. He sits in a hunched posture, and he rests his elbows on his knees. He is pressing his head with his hands, peering intently straight out of the page, with a tormented look on his face.

1. This is one of the few cases in which the photograph used for the facsimile of the notebook (1973) does not do justice to the original. In heightening the contrast for the facsimile, perhaps in order to emphasize detail in the pencil drawing, some detail in the wash has been lost. For example, the space
The pencil sketch to the right depicts an equally tormented figure, whose body is compressed even further, now squeezing the head between the two clasped hands and the knee. The figure now looks to one side rather than full-front.

1793 Engraving: The design, taken from the pencil sketch, rather than from the wash, is not reversed. The background is of a night sky with stars. The man's expression suggests a mind troubled by indecision.

1818 Engraving: In copy B the expression on the man's face is altered, so that he appears less troubled than he was in copy D of For Children. The differences are minute, and difficult to locate, but the overall change in expression is clearly evident. In copy C Blake has again reworked the features of the man's face, so that his expression is further relieved. Blake has lessened the severe drooping at the edges of the mouth, softened the angular contortion of the brow, and opened the man's eyes, with the result that the figure appears to be less a prisoner of inner torment. He is, to be sure, still in a state of doubt, but he no longer appears on the verge surrounding the figure is not black as it appears in the facsimile, but grey. His left leg casts a shadow. Details of the inside of his thigh are clearly visible. And the left side of his face is not in total shadow, but clearly delineated. His expression, when seen in full, is bemused, worried, perhaps even nauseous, rather than simply troubled. In the facsimile little of this detail is visible.
of despair. Blake has also reworked the man's anatomy, but without any noticeable change in meaning. The night sky is much darker. In copy D, as Cary points out, 'the face is unlike any other version -- additional lines about the eyes soften the look of terror conspicuous in the earlier print, and the corners of the mouth are changed to a milder curve'.

For Children  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 4.  Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 4.  Copy F.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 5
9 x 7 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 91:

Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature

Milton

Paradise Lost, I. 221 - 27

1793 Engraving:

Fire

1818 Engraving:

That end in endless Strife

'The Keys of the Gates',

Copy A, B:

Blind in Fire with shield & spear
Two Horn'd Reasoning Cloven Fiction
In Doubt which is Self contradiction
A dark Hermaphrodite I stood
Rational Truth Root of Evil & Good
Round me flew the Flaming Sword
Round her snowy Whirlwinds roard
Freezing her Veil the Mundane Shell

Copy C, et. seq.

the same

A dark Hermaphrodite We stood

the same

Designs
Notebook, p. 91: The pencil sketch depicts a vigorous nude young man standing with his feet wide apart and his arms outstretched. He wears a shield on his right arm and he raises a spear in his left hand. His left foot is foremost, and from the point on which it rests, as well as, to a lesser degree all round him, flames rise. As Erdman notes, the flames have a 'flower-like division'.

1793 Engraving: The design is reversed, so that the man holds the spear in his right hand, the shield in his left. His expression, as Keynes says, is 'almost benign, although mistaken'.

1818 Engraving: Blake has altered many details. He has covered the man's eyes, blinding him, and added a knot of hair on his forehead, which may well, as Keynes suggests, have been intended to be horns. His expression is no longer benign, but revelling and denunciatory, owing to a more open mouth and an angry furrowing of the brow. In copy B Blake has added bodily weight to the man's figure, chiefly in the torso, and he has added scales, or chain mail, over the

1. Erdman, Notebook, p. 91
3. Ibid.
genital area and over the flames. The plate as a whole has been given finer gradations of tone. In copy C the scales over the genital area are further delineated.
For Children The Gates of Paradise, Plate 5, Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. Plate 5, Copy F,
Blake Trust Facsimile.
Text

Notebook, p. 69:

At length for hatching ripe he breaks the shell

Dryden

"The Knight's Tale, III, 1069"

1793, 1818 Engraving:

At length for hatching ripe he breaks the shell

'The Keys of the Gates':

I rent the Veil where the Dead dwell
When weary Man enters his Cave
He meets his Saviour in the Grave
Some find a Female Garment there
And some a Male woven with care
Lest the Sexual Garments sweet
Should grow a devouring Winding sheet

Designs

Notebook, p. 69:

The pencil sketch depicts a winged Cupid-like figure breaking out of an eggshell, looking upward.

1793 Engraving:

The design is not reversed. Some details are more clear. The Cupid-like figure steps out of the shell with his right foot foremost, and he looks up in expectation, with a knowing expression in his eyes.
His eyes are focused somewhere in the sky, and his mouth is just beginning to open, as if he were ready to speak. He, his egg, and the space in front of both, are bathed in a pool of light, and the sky behind him is broken by portions of two clouds.

1818 Engravings: In copy B the figure is virtually unchanged, (though less heavily inked), save for the darkening of outlines around the egg and around the pool of light in front of it. In copy C however, there are many changes in the face of the Cupid-like figure. The poise of the expression has been lost. The features are misaligned on the face, especially the eyes, and the mouth has almost got the beginnings of a sneer. Many of the finer lines are already broken. In addition, Blake has added darker shadows to the contour of the egg and round the pool of light. The effect of so doing is to isolate the two so that the reflected light appears to be a solid body, like the egg itself.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise. Plate 6. Copy D.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. Plate 6. Copy F.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
Ah luckless babe born under cruel star/
And in dead parents baleful ashes bred/
Pull little weenest thou what sorrows are/
Left thee for portion of thy livlihed

Spenser

\[\text{Fairie Queene, II. ii. 12}\]

1793 Engraving: Alas!

1818 Engraving: What are these? Alas! The Female Martyr/
Is She also the Divine Image

'The Keys of the Gates': One Dies Alas! the living & Dead
One is slain & One is fled

Designs

Notebook, p. 19: The pencil sketch
depicts a boy in the middle of the plate, running and swinging his hat over his head with his right hand in order to trap a floating figure in front of him. The figure is in contraposto, looking back to the boy and gesturing (perhaps, 'stop!') with the left hand. The right hand holds an indistinguishable object, a
pointer of some sort. On the right foreground, in front of the boy is a figure similar to the floating one, only much larger, and apparently unconscious. Keynes and Erdman identify the two small figures as females, following the legend of 1818. In the background is a forest, leading to the horizon at the top of a slight incline. The source of illumination is from the left.

1793 Engraving: The design is not reversed and all the details follow the notebook sketch, except that the pointer in the hand of the floating figure has been deleted.

1818 Engraving: In copy B Blake has rubbed out a good portion of the boy's torso in order to highlight parts of it and shade other parts. He has also reworked the boy's expression so that it is less crudely formed. The meaning of the expression, however, is still unclear. Is the boy angry, or excited, or aghast at his own deed?

2. Erdman, Notebook, p. 16.
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 7. Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 8
9. 5 x 6 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 34: My son My son

1793, 1818 Engravings: My Son! my Son!

'The Keys of the Gates': In Vain-glory hatcht & nurst
By double Spectres Self Accurst
My son! my Son! thou trestest me
But as I have instructed thee

Designs

Notebook, p. 34: In the pencil sketch
there are only the outlines of two figures. On the right a
youth stretches out his left arm for balance and readies his
lance in his right hand to cast it at the old man. The old man
sits languidly on a rock, on the left side of the scene, his
long beard reaching down to his knees. He supports his drooping
head with his right hand, and he is stretching up his left hand
in the face of the young man. Erdman sees in the obscure details
of this gesture the hilt of the sword which Blake used for the
1 engraved design, but it appears to me that with this gesture

the old man is trying to shield himself from the attack, or to dissuade the attacker, as in the watercolour sketch.

1

Watercolour sketch: Blake has considerably elaborated the composition. Both the youth and the old man are clothed. The youth is wearing an antique cloak which swirls around his quiver, and the old man is wearing a full suit of armour, except for the helm. He is also wearing a cloak, which is curled beneath him and which he raises to his face, as if to comfort himself. His head is bound by a band. The stone bench on which he sits is an antique monument or a temple, for behind him is a column, and to the right of his leg are the details of the temple's first frieze. On the whole the watercolour sketch follows the notebook sketch, but the interplay between the old man and the youth is much more dramatic and violent. The youth is depicted as rushing violently away from the old man, and the youth's hair is being blown in front of his face like Mortimer's King Lear, and the old man in Blake's own 'Death's Door'. The youth too, is no longer in so mannerly a pose. He is not so much poised for the thrust, as he is thrusting. And the detail of the hands nearly touching now more clearly appears to be an inversion of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam.

1. "My Son My Son", British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, number 1936. 6. 13. 2.
1793 Engraving: The design is reversed and greatly elaborated. The scene has changed from the antique context of the watercolour sketch to a native one. The nude old man, instead of holding his palm in the face of the youth, now holds the hilt of an enormous sword, and his face shows deep sorrow. An oak tree spreads its branches over him, and in the middle ground behind him is the steep face of a rocky cliff, instead of the antique column. In the background there are hills and a broken sky. The nude youth is in the same posture as in the sketch, only reversed, and there are traces that Blake had originally attempted to engrave the youth's leg in a different position, and was not entirely successful in rubbing it out.

1813 Engraving: In copy C Blake has reworked much of the rendering, especially the musculature of the youth, increased the range of tonal contrast; and he has turned the old man's head a few degrees closer to full front, so that more of his expression is visible.
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 8. Copy D.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 9
7 x 5 cm.

Text
Notebook, p. 40: \(\checkmark\) No inscription.

1793, 1818 Engraving:
I want! I want!

'The Keys of the Gates':
On the shadows of the Moon
Climbing thro Nights highest noon
\(\checkmark\) cf. 'Il Penseroso', 68-9\]

Designs
Notebook, p. 40: The pencil sketch depicts a scene in an astronomical perspective. Three figures stand on the planet, a couple on the left, who simply stand, doing nothing, and a single figure on the right who, with his right foot on the first rung, is just beginning to climb a ladder which stretches to the crescent moon in the sky.

1793, 1818 Engraving: The scene is reversed, so that the couple are on the right margin, the single figure is on the left, and he steps onto the first rung with his left foot. Keynes and Erdman identify the single figure as a

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2. Erdman, Notebook, p. 20.
young man. Keynes identifies the two figures as lovers, but they could as well be simply companions. Erdman identifies them as 'watchers'. He adds, furthermore, that 'the climber is given the traveller's hat', that the man and the woman 'embrace each other', and that 'the woman points or waves toward him'. None of these details are clearly discernible in the notebook, or in any of the engravings. If the climber is indeed wearing the traveller's hat, it is pitched in an odd manner, completely covering his face, instead of his head; and one cannot tell with any certainty whether both figures or only one figure is gesturing, or whether they are only looking on, as Keynes suggested at first. And if there is a gesture present somewhere, one cannot tell whether it is meant to be pointing, waving, or simply presenting the traveller to us with a flourish.

1. Ibid.
2. Keynes, loc. cit.
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 9. Copy D,
Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 10
7 x 5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 58: [No inscription]

1793, 1818 Engraving: Help! Help!

'The Keys of the Gates': In Times Ocean falling drowned In Aged Ignorance profound

Designs

Notebook, p. 58: The pencil sketch depicts a hand stretching into the air beneath the waves of a rough sea.

1793 Engraving: The design is reversed, the waves depicted in greater detail, and the head of a man, arched toward the sky, is also visible, in addition to the arm. Keynes identifies the figure as a drowning man. Erdman says that the drowning is 'desperately resisted', but this cannot be more than a conjecture. The drowning might also be meant

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2. Erdman, Notebook, p. 23.
as a suicide.

1818 Engraving: The sky has been worked more closely, making it almost completely black, and adding a corresponding tone of gloom to the whole.
For Children The Gates of Paradise. Plate 10, Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 11
7 x 6.5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 52: Aged Ignorance

1793 Engraving: Aged Ignorance

1818 Engraving: Aged Ignorance
Perceptive Organs closed their Objects close /

'The Keys of the Gates': Holy & cold I clipd the Wings Of all Sublunary Things

Designs

Notebook, p. 52: The pencil sketch depicts an old man with a long beard, wearing a long white gown, seated under a tree. He wears a large pair of spectacles. A young boy with a pair of wings hastens past the old man from left to right. The young boy is looking to the rising (or setting) sun which shines over the curve of the horizon. The old man has fastened his left hand on one of the boy's wings, and with his right hand he cuts the boy's other wing with a huge pair of scissors.

1793 Engraving: The design is not reversed. Many details are elaborated. Although the old man
wears spectacles, his eyes are closed.

1818 Engraving: Blake has worked the rendering more closely, and added genitalia to the boy.
Text

Notebook, p. 59:  
\[\text{No inscription}\]

1793, 1818 Engraving:  
Does thy God O Priest take such vengeance / as this?

'The Keys of the Gates':  
And in depths of my Dungeons Closed the Father & the Sons

Designs

Notebook, p. 59:  
The pencil sketch depicts five dejected figures, sitting on the floor of a small dark room. A bearded old man sits with his knees drawn up against his chest in the center of the plate. Two smaller figures sit in the same posture, one on each side of him. Behind them is what appears to be a door, with bars across its upper half. In the foreground of the plate, on both margins, two young men sit with their legs straightened in front, supporting themselves on the palms of their hands.

1793 Engraving:  
The design is not reversed, and the figures are in almost complete highlight. The room, which can now be identified as a vault of some kind, is nearly black. Whereas in the sketch the features of the
old man's face seemed to follow Reynolds's treatment of the same subject, in the engraving, the old man, with hair on end and shaggy beard, exhibits Blake's own kind of terror and dismay.

1818 Engraving: In copy B Blake has considerably lightened the scene as a whole by using the lower right corner as the center of illumination, the corner diagonally opposite as the center of darkness, and casting the range of shade evenly between the two. The violent contrasts in tone are generally muted, the old man's hair and beard are longer, and his facial expression is one more of anger than of terror.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 12.  Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 13
8 x 7 cm.

Text
Notebook, p. 61: What we hope we See

1793 Engraving
Copy A: Fear or Hope -- Vision
Copy B, et. seq. Fear and Hope -- Vision

'The Keys of the Gates': But when once I did descry
The Immortal Man that cannot Die

Designs
Notebook, p. 61: The pencil sketch depicts
a death-bed scene. On the right in the foreground a young man
who is kneeling by the side of the bed, shrinks back in alarm. On
the opposite side of the bed, a woman does the same, and beyond
her, in profile, are two ovals, outlines of the heads of two
children. The prone body of the one who has died is only lightly
sketched in, but the risen body is rendered more fully. The
man has long white hair and a long white beard, and he is wearing
a translucent robe. He points upward with his right hand and
his left hand is drawn across his waist and rests on his right hip.

1793 Engraving: The design is reversed,
and many details are more clearly depicted. The man's right hand, rather than being simply drawn across his waist, is pointing down. The old man's dead body has lost most of its features. The face of the mother and the faces of the children are given only a minimum of delineation. In copy A Blake has added a layer of crosshatching to the left side of the plate, but not to the right. The area around the risen man thus appears to be full of light. In copy B Blake has crosshatched over the entire background, eliminating this effect. He has still highlighted, as in Copy A, the faces of the mourners, and the portions of their bodies which face the risen man, so that the emphasis is still on the light radiating from the man, though the contrast is muted.

1818 Engraving: In copy B Blake has again worked to make light seem to radiate from the risen man's body, by almost completely rubbing out the background around it. In copy C he has depicted a nimbus round the man's head and rays of light darting from the length of his body. The dead body of the man is now devoid of all detail except for the suggestion of a vestigial right arm. In his risen body the important detail of his right hand pointing down has been clearly set apart from the ground on which it rests. Both these details were present in the 1793 version, but they had been treated in an ambiguous and uncertain fashion, so that the light cast on the family might have come from a source other
than the old man, and the man's hand might have been a part of his thigh so far as one could tell. All the characters are now given expressions of shock and fear, and in the case of the young man in the foreground, an expression almost of dread.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 13.  Copy A.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 13.  Copy D.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. Plate 13. Copy F.
Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 14
7 x 4.5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 15: Thus the Traveller hasteth in the Evening

1793, 1818 Engravings: The Traveller hasteth in the Evening

'The Keys of the Gates': Thro evening shades I haste away To close the Labours of my Day

Designs

Notebook, p. 15: The pencil sketch depicts a man wearing a large hat and a coat with tails, striding across from left to right, using his walking stick to speed him along. He is moving slightly uphill, and he is also moving into the light, for a distinct shadow is cast behind him. A forest is in the background.

1793 Engraving: The design is not reversed, and many details are elaborated. The traveller is wearing a belted, swallow-tailed coat, and a large black hat. The man appears to be walking down a lane, as Keynes suggests. In the background the forest is clearly visible, and far off in the distance is a broken, stormy sky. The details of the man's face are ambiguous. He

appears to be a glum sort, and fearful — as if someone or something is following close on his heels.

1818 Engraving: In copy C Blake has taken care to delineate the face in much greater detail, enlarging the eyes, and shaping the front of the face and chin much more distinctly. The man's face now has an attic physiognomy, largely from his aquiline nose and earnest expression. The eyes are practically bovine, and any suggestion of uneasiness has now been eliminated. The tone of the plate as a whole is a great deal lighter. These changes are carried even further in copy F.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise.  Plate 14.  Copy D.
Blake Trust Facsimile.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 15
7.5 x 5 cm.

Text
Notebook, p. 71: Deaths door

1793, 1818 Engravings: Deaths Door

'The Keys of the Gates': The Door of Death I open found
And the Worm Weaving in the Ground

Designs
Notebook, p. 71: The pencil sketch depicts an age-bent old man with white hair and a long white beard, wearing a white robe, leaning on a crutch held under his left arm. His right foot is on the threshold of a stone vault. A wind blows his robe and his hair into the vault.

1793 Engraving: The design is not reversed, and some details are elaborated. The door now appears to be made of wood.

1818 Engraving: In copy B Blake has added heavy black outlines to many of the masses, such as the stones in the vault, and the man's robe.
For Children  The Gates of Paradise. Plate 15. Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
PLATE 16
6.5 x 5 cm.

Text

Notebook, p. 45:
I have said to corruption thou art
my father. to the worm thou art
my mother & my Sister
Job
\[ \text{xvii. 14} \]

1793, 1818 Engraving:
I have said to the Worm: Thou
art my mother & my sister

'The Keys of the Gates':
Thou 'rt my Mother from the Womb
Wife Sister Daughter to the Tomb
Weaving to Dreams the Sexual strife
And weeping over the Web of Life

Designs

Notebook, p. 45:
The pencil sketch depicts a figure
robed in a shroud, sitting with knees drawn up to chest. A large
worm coils round the figure, who holds in the right hand, a white
wand or walking stick. The background is indistinct, but suggests
either a cave or a cavern of some kind. Two and perhaps three
semi-buried faces appear in the lower right corner of the plate.
E. L. Cary noted that the figure's head 'with its Egyptian quality is
sunk in mystery. The swathed form has the appearance of a mummy,
and the compression and rigidity of the figure are eloquent of
Blake's control over the spiritual atmosphere of his compositions.

There is still no general agreement on the sex or the identity of the figure. Swinburne identified the figure as a 'worm-like woman, with hooded head and knees drawn up, the adder-like husk or shell of death at her feet... This is she who is nearest of kin to man from his birth to his death'. Sampson identified the figure as 'a woman in white cerements seated on the ground in a burial crypt'. Tinker thought of the figure as having no particular sex. It was 'the shrouded figure of the soul, wand in hand, seated underground, below the twisting roots of a tree, with a vast worm coiling about its feet'. Beer called the figure 'a figure of earth, wrapped in grave-clothes, and still bearing its traveller's staff'. Kathleen Raine thought that the figure was the worm herself, wrapped in her winding sheet. In his Bibliography Sir Geoffrey Keynes identified the figure as a 'woman draped in

2. Swinburne, p. 28.
4. Tinker, p. 113.
white', but in the facsimile of the *Gates of Paradise*, he identified the figure as a male, the androgynous Traveller himself. Frye identified the figure as Tirzah. Erdman, on the other hand, identified the figure as a female, and more specifically, as a sibyl. Since there is little direct evidence to resolve the problem of identification, we shall have to do so with internal evidence only, in chapter twelve of part two.

1793 Engraving: 

The identification is less problematic in this state. The figure is clearly a male. The lower part of his face is heavily shaded, as if by the growth of beard, or perhaps by the blackness of death. The worm which could only be tentatively identified in the notebook sketch, can now be seen to be winding round the traveller and coiling up his left arm. One can now see too that the background consists of a cavernous hole with the roots of trees descending through the roof. The expression of the traveller is one of mute astonishment: his eyes are two black dots. Commenting on copy D, Cary noted how 'the soft mist of enchantment' of the notebook sketch was no longer present, and how the face was now 'commonplace' and 'uninteresting

in its blank marionette stare'.

1818 Engraving: In copy B Blake has rubbed out and then reworked the background in order to depict the roots of trees in more detail. So too, the traveller's shroud has darker outlines. In addition there are some minute changes in the face of the traveller. In copy C these changes are carried to the point where they become significant. Instead of the frightened and unseeing eyes of the traveller, Blake has drawn clear, mild, open eyes, much like the eyes of the traveller in plate 14. The face is still, however, blackened and puffy, and more male than female. In copy D these changes are carried even further. The traveller's face is no longer dark nor puffy, and the sex is now unclear, but closer to female than male. The eyes of the traveller are now glassed.

For Children *The Gates of Paradise*. Plate 16. Copy D.

Blake Trust Facsimile.
For the Sexes, The Gates of Paradise. Plate 16. Copy F,
Blake Trust Facsimile.
Text

1818 Engraving:  

To The Accuser who is
The God of This World

Truly My Satan thou art but a Dunce
And dost not know the Garment from the Man
Every Harlot was a Virgin once
Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan

Tho thou are Worshipd by the Names Divine
Of Jesus & Jehovah: thou art still
The Son of Morn in weary Nights decline
The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill

Designs

1818 Engraving:  

At the foot of the plate a
muscular man sleeps on his side with a long staff beside him. Satan
hovers above him with outstretched wings on which the moon and
the stars are emblazoned. In copy B Satan is depicted only in outline.
His body and wings are transparent. The sun, moon, and stars are
also depicted only in outline. In copy C Satan is entirely
blackened except for the stars, moon, and sun on his body. At the
top of the plate between the dedication and the verses there is a
coiling serpent whose coils are numbered from one to ten, beginning
with his head. In the distant background there is a mountain, and
behind it a blaze of light.

1. Cf. Young, Night Thoughts, VIII, final line.

J. B. Wharey, p. 42.
To The Accuser who is
The God of This World

Truly My Satan thou art but a Dunce
And dost not know the garment from the Man.
Every Harlot was a Virgin once
Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan.

Thou art Worshiped by the Names Divine
Of Jesus & Jehovah: thou art still
The Son of Morn in weary Nights decline
The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill.
'The Keys of the Gates'

Text

—as given above—

Designs

1818 Engraving: This plate and the one following consist of a calligraphed text decorated with marginal illuminations, which unfortunately were never engraved with quite the clarity of the rest of the series. Our understanding of these figures has, therefore, to remain partly conjectural until they can be recovered by infra-red or ultra-violet photography.

Plate 1: A man and a woman embrace, leaning on the ascender of the 'T' in 'The', and a figure in a long-flowing gown ascends between 'The' and 'Keys', bearing a pyramid on its head, which may be, as Erdman suggests, analogous to Job 18.

1. Results of these methods applied to copy B, now in the British Museum, have not been encouraging.

The Keys

The Caterpillar on the leaf
reminds thee of thy Mother's Grief
of the Gates

1. My Eternal Man set in Repose
   The Female from his darkens rose
   And She found me beneath a Tree
   A Mandrake & in her Veil had me
   Serpent Reasonings us entice
   Of Good & Evil; Virtue & Vice
2. Doubt Self, Jealous Watry folly
3. Struggling thru Earths Melancholy
4. Naked in Air in Shame & Fear
5. Blind in Fire with shield & spear
6. Horns Reasoning Cloven Fiction
In Doubt which is Self contradiction
A dark Hermaphrodite We stood
Rational Truth Root of Evil & Good
Round me flew the flaming Sword
Round her snowy Whirlwinds round
Freezing her Veil the Mandane Shell
6. I rent the Veil where the Dead dwell
   When weary Man enters his Cave

For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. 'The Keys of the Gates'
(from Copy D of For Children The Gates of Paradise)
Plate 2: On the right margin of 6d and f there are two butterflies, probably representing the male and female garments. On the right margin of 7b there are two figures, floating with heads inclined toward each other. On the right margin of 9a there is a figure with back arched around 'Moon'. In 'Times' (10a) a bird acts as an apostrophe. On the left margin of 10b there is an angel in profile, and on the right margin there is a group of three floating figures. On the left margin of 11b, a child, who sits in a posture similar to that of the figure in plate 16, points to the sky, and on the right margin a horizontally floating figure also points upward, as in plate 13. On the right margin of 12b and 13a, an embracing couple stand in front of a gothic door or tent, as in Jerusalem 96 and the Job series. On the left margin of 13b a figure throws up his hands in ecstasy. On both margins of the rest of the verses there are a variety of curling tendrils.
He meets his Saviour in the Grave  
Some find a Female Garment there  
And some a Male woven with care  
Lest the Sexual Garments sweet  
Should grow a Devonian Winning sheet  
One Dies Alas! the Living & Dead  
One is slum & One is fled  

8 In Van glory Hatcht & Nurse  
By Double Spectres Self Accurist  
My Son, my Son, thou Art the best of men  
But as I have instructed thee  
9 On the shadows of the Moon  
Climbing thro' Nights highest noon  
10 In Times Ocean falling round  
In Aged Ignorance profound  
11 How cold I clasp the Wings  
Of all Sublunary Things  
12 And in depths of my Dungeons  
Closed the Father & the Sons  
13 But when once I did desire  
The Immortal Man that cannot Die  
14 Thro' evening shades I haste away  
To close the labours of my Day  
15 The Door of Death I open round  
And the Worm Winning in the Ground  
16 I shurt my Mother from the Womb  
Wife Sister Daughter to the Tomb  
Weaving to Dreams the Sexual strife  
And weeping over the Web of Life  

For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise. 'The Keys of the Gates'.

Copy I.  Blake Trust Facsimile.
SUMMARY

Even from this brief description of the text and designs a number of interesting points emerge. Blake was continually altering the Gates of Paradise, continually reworking details long after the point at which many would have considered it to be finished, and indeed long after he had offered it for public sale. Even the major change involved in reissuing the series under a new title with an allegorized libretto, was not a swift and decisive movement, but rather a series of changes and adjustments of varying importance.

For the most part 'The Keys of the Gates' seems to have come all of a piece, but the designs did not. Certain designs were apparently clear from the beginning. The frontispiece, plates 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, and 15, once struck, found a satisfactory and lasting form. But other plates, such as 4, 5, and 13 were particularly troublesome, and Blake reworked them almost entirely -- and not always for the better.

Another kind of change in the series is more difficult to define, and yet of great importance. In the differing states of plates 3, 4, 5, 14, and 16 one can see a steady process in which Blake modified the expression of the character toward a gentler, more humane type, one with the look of a larger understanding. This could not be due solely to an increase in his ability as an engraver or a physiognomist. He was technically as proficient in 1793 as he ever would be, though perhaps not so adventurous. Overall, it appears that he moved the series away from the bitter, satiric, and indeed hopeless mode which is evident in nearly every plate of the original version, to a more exemplary mode such as one finds in the Job
engravings. This is nowhere more clear than in the Epilogue, the latest of all the plates. The traveller in the Epilogue is not one of the troublesome characters whom we shall have to discuss at length in the following pages simply in order to identify, but rather he is an ideal type, immediately recognizable as Albion himself, or the typical reader, waiting for the break of day. And in the marginal illuminations of the plates of 'The Keys', while there are many echoes of the gloomy motifs in For Children, the most striking designs all emphasize a new realm entirely, one now of pluralism and beauty, which is sustained by the sweets and delights of the marriage feast.
Chapter Two

Previous Criticism of the Gates of Paradise
Introduction

In this chapter I will present a brief survey of the critical interpretations of the Gates of Paradise. The survey is not intended to be exhaustive, but only to include the most significant criticism. There have been many perceptive comments by various commentators on single aspects of the Gates, but these will not be included until, in later chapters, I discuss each of the plates individually.

The first section of this chapter deals with the contemporary reputation of the Gates of Paradise. The second section provides an overview of criticism of the Gates of Paradise. The third section considers critical interpretations of the Gates in the nineteenth century. The fourth section deals with the contributions of John Sampson in his edition of Blake's Poetical Works in 1905. The fifth section stands somewhat outside of the chronological progress of the chapter, for in dealing with the question of a canon of Blake's engraved works, I concentrate mainly on the fruition of this concept in the work of Northrop Frye. The sixth section deals with the critical interpretation of the Gates between the time of Sampson's edition and the present. In this section I have had to be a great deal more selective than in previous sections, due to the enormous increase in volume and quality of scholarly studies. But I have included all studies which offer new and significant insights about the work as a whole.
Blake's own treatment of the series may leave one somewhat confused. On the one hand, the engravings show evidence of a good deal of concern in technical matters, and since the series was Blake's own work from conception to execution, it was clearly more important to him than any of the designs he made for the works of others. On the other hand, in his Prospectus of 1793 he did not describe the series in a way that was likely to encourage its sale. The Gates of Paradise was, in Blake's words, only 'a small book of Engravings', not an emblem book, a series of 'Visions', or a series of 'Historical Engravings'. And the price he set, three shillings, suggests he expected the Gates to be competing in a mass market of inexpensive woodcuts and engravings.

His contemporaries thought of the Gates, as far as we know, as an emblem book, and some of them regarded it highly. Allan Cunningham noted that it had become quite popular among

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1. See the obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine of Nov. 1, 1827 which describes the Gates as 'a very small book for children, containing fifteen plates of emblems'; reprinted in Bentley, Blake Records, p. 356. To call it an emblem book in 1793 suggested many different contexts. See my Introduction to Part Two.
collectors of prints, and J. T. Smith said that 'the pretty little series of plates' was, in 1828, 'now very uncommon'. In a gesture which may have said something about the contemporary understanding of the Gates, Fredrick Tatham presented his copy to Edward Bird after the funeral of Catherine, at which Bird was one of only six mourners. Cunningham thought that while Blake's reputation might not have advanced with the sale of his prophetic books, the Songs of Innocence, the Songs of Experience, the Gates of Paradise, and the Illustrations of the Book of Job would surely make Blake famous. Yet Cunningham's faint praise belied him. He said that while the Book Of Urizen possessed 'the merit or fault of surpassing all human comprehension', the Gates of Paradise was only 'a little mysterious'.


5. Ibid.
Overview of Criticism of the *Gates of Paradise*

Critical interpretation of the *Gates of Paradise* has been a fitful affair from the beginning. Upon the publication of Gillchrist's *Life*, when the prophetic books were less generally accepted and understood, the *Gates of Paradise* had a more significant position within the corpus of Blake's work than it does today, and it received critical attention at some length. However there were certain textual problems which were not resolved until John Sampson's *Oxford edition of Blake's poems* in 1905. And despite Sampson's efforts, the *Gates of Paradise*, even today, has not been generally recognized as a set of two, self-contained works, with two sets of problems quite different from each other and from those of the *Songs* and the prophetic books. Although Samuel Foster Damon supplied some background information, it was not until 1938, with the publication of C. B. Tinker's *Poet and Painter*, that the *Gates of Paradise* received a serious and sustained commentary which both considered the work on its own terms and placed it in its proper historical context. Following Tinker's study came a longer, but misleading study by George Winfield Digby, and following that, John Beer's excellent discussion in his *Blake's Humanism* (1968). In the *Blake Trust facsimile of the Gates of Paradise* (1968), Sir Geoffrey Keynes has offered a number of comments on the series, and most recently, in the notes to the facsimile of Blake's
Notebook (1973), and in The Illuminated Blake (1974), David Erdman has suggested a more optimistic and esoteric interpretation. In the following pages I shall look in some detail at these, and at other of the more important critical discussions of the Gates of Paradise, but it will not be possible to go into much detail on any of the interpretations until I discuss each plate individually.
Critical Interpretation in the Nineteenth Century

Even in the beginning the Gates of Paradise seems to have presented a certain amount of difficulty to its interpreters. Cunningham spoke of the 'mystery of meaning of the Gates of Paradise'. He thought that 'the meaning of the artist is not a little obscure', and he described the Gates in a way which corroborated this opinion: 'it seems to have been his Blake's object', according to Cunningham, 'to represent the innocence, the happiness, and the upward aspirations of man. They bespeak one intimately acquainted with the looks and feelings of children. Over them there is shed a kind of mysterious halo which raises feelings of devotion.'

Gillchrist, on the other hand, claimed he thought highly of the series. But it is evident from his comments that he was in some confusion. He quoted Cunningham's description of the Gates as 'a sort of devout dream, equally wild and lovely', but then he avoided any direct criticism by explaining how the designs were 'emblematic of so much which could never be imprisoned in words'.

2. Gillchrist, Life, p. 102
3. Ibid.
And while Gillchrist recognized that the Gates was a series of emblems, his preference for the work of an 'original genius' led him to separate Blake's emblems from their art-historical context: 'Blake's designs have, I repeat, the look of originals. A shock as of something wholly fresh and new, these typical compositions give us.'

Swinburne's comments are, for the most part, too detailed to consider in the present chapter. In general, he interpreted the Gates, and 'The Keys' ('somewhat of the rustiest as they are') as constituting a single, unified work in Blake's doctrinal canon. 'Interpreted according to Blake's intention, the book was a small leaf or chapter of the inspired gospel of deliverance which he was charged to preach through the organs of his art; a gospel not easily to be made acceptable or comprehensible.' Swinburne thought, moreover, that the work belonged to 'the prophetic or evangelic series which was afterwards to stretch to such strange lengths. In this engraved symbolic poem of life and death, most of Blake's chief articles of faith are advanced or implied; noticeably, for example, that tenet regarding the creative deity and his relations to time

1. Ibid., p. 103.
2. Swinburne, p. 20.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
and to the sons of men.' The reason that the Gates was addressed 'to children', was 'because in Blake's mind, the wide innocence of children was likeliest to appreciate and accept the message involved in them; "for sexes", that they might be at once enlightened to see beyond themselves, and enfranchised from the bondage of pietism or materialism'. As for the format, the book really belonged more to the graphic arts than to poetry, 'the verses being throughout subordinate to the engravings, and indeed scarcely to be accounted of as more than inscriptions or appendages'.

Rossetti seems to have been in some confusion about the series. Although he could be explicit about some matters, he did not venture any more of a description or an explanation than to say that 'The Keys of the Gates' 'summarize the general drift of the successive designs to which they are appended'.

1. Ibid., p. 28.
2. Ibid., p. 30.
3. Ibid., p. 28.
Following the appearance of Gillchrist's *Life* and Rossetti's edition of Blake's *Works*, criticism of Blake grew in volume year by year. While most of this criticism is important enough to consider in some detail in later chapters, there were certain textual problems which were never recognized until John Sampson's Oxford edition of 1905. Sampson was the first to discern that there were two separate texts, *For Children The Gates of Paradise*, and *For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise*. He demonstrated conclusively that the latter did not belong to the date indicated on the frontispiece, 1793, but to the period of the later prophetic books. Sampson went on to explain some of the misconceptions which had arisen because insufficient attention had been paid to textual details. Gillchrist had thought that 'The Keys' were only a series of explanations for the original series of 1793, and he did not distinguish between it and the later series. Rossetti dated 'The Keys' as belonging to 1795, and thought that the *Gates* as a whole belonged somewhere between the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*. Ellis and Yeats thought that the *Gates of Paradise* were 'of incalculable value as interpreting the Prophetic Books. Their "Keys" will open the meaning of all the myth, though they will not, of course, explain its story'.

And whatever their opinion of the Gates, all editors following Gillchrist omitted the numbers of the verses of 'The Keys', thus considerably complicating an already difficult problem.

Of the changes worked by 'The Keys' on the series as a whole, Sampson wrote,

These lines . . . belong to the same period as Milton and Jerusalem, reading into what were at first simple allegorical pictures for children the later-developed elaborate symbolism in which Blake clothed his full-fledged mystical gospel. Thus we find 'Water' represented in the earlier issue by the figure of a survivor of the Deluge, interpreted 'for the sexes' as 'Doubt Self-jealous, watry folly', while the 'dark hermaphrodite' (or humanity divided against itself) -- a favorite figure in Jerusalem -- is somewhat violently offered as the interpretation of the picture illustrating 'Fire'. The original plates have been worked over and elaborated in this second issue, the figure of 'Fire' being now represented as blind in order that it may agree with the descriptive text. 1

In addition to establishing the difference between the two separate issues of the Gates, Sampson provided extensive notes. Some are purely textual, but others are meant to show the coherence of Blake's thought and to suggest some general terms of reference for the Gates. The notes are not exhaustive, but selective, designed so that they do not enforce an interpretation so much as clarify ambiguities of language and symbol. In this task

2. Ibid., pp. 367 - 70.
Sampson's edition has never been surpassed, and most of the editions following his have fallen considerably below the standards he set.
The Systematic Conception of Blake's Work

The problem of the relation of the Gates of Paradise to the rest of Blake's work would, no doubt, trouble any editor or commentator. When should the important conceptions in the work be dated: 1793, or between 1806 and 1818? Should one interpret the series with or without the aid of 'The Keys of the Gates'? How closely should one collate 'The Keys' with the prophetic books? And, most important, how strongly should one argue for a canon of Blake's works, with a special place in it for the Gates of Paradise?

Although Sampson did not address these questions directly, the notes in his edition struck a delicate balance on the problem of relating the Gates to the rest of Blake's work. He provided examples of parallel phraseology without overwhelming the reader with a miniature concordance at every turn. Sampson's restraint in this matter stands out in relation to many of the editions and much of the criticism that have appeared since 1905. Indeed, one of the reasons the Gates of Paradise has not been adequately understood is that most of the commentators have not ventured further than to explain, for instance, that the woman who plucks the child out of the ground in plate 1 can only be Vala, or that the Mundane Shell of 'The Keys of the Gates' is handled more clearly in The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem.

No one will deny the coherence of the later prophetic books, and commentators will always choose to refer to one work of a poet to explain another, but in the study of Blake, the impression
has arisen that Blake's engraved works are the broken parts of a canon, and that the main task for criticism is to restore that canon to its formerly seamless state. In this critical milieu one is presented with the somewhat dubious suggestion that as early as 1788 Blake was clear about the scheme and the meaning of the prophetic books, and that he spent the rest of his life putting the plan into action. But this manner of treating Blake's work ignores the development of his ideas and the growth of his capacity as an epic and prophetic poet. Milton, for instance, was supposed to have been epic in style and length, but Blake never managed to sustain the grand sweep beyond the second book. Milton does not end, after all, in the New Jerusalem, but in the terrific holocaust which precedes entering into it. Jerusalem, on the other hand, while it does indeed satisfy all the requirements of the epic, was in many ways Blake's final, and only completely successful attempt to control his own cosmography and mythography. And it is also, in some ways, a final regrouping of all the earlier material. Thus, to show that Blake used some of the same phrases in 'The Keys of the Gates' as he did in Jerusalem, and not to explain the difference in context, is to confuse the relationship between the two poems. As E. D. Hirsch Jr. has explained, 'This systematic conception of Blake's poetry has obscured the fact that Blake not only changed his views radically, but also made changes, and what they symbolized to him, the subject matter of his later poetry.'

The systematic conception of Blake's poetry also introduces a certain ahistorical context, for it leads one to undervalue both the revolutionary changes between the 1790's and the first decade of the following century, and it also treats as unique in Blake what he shared with many of his contemporaries. If Blake's works can be said to form a canon, so also can those of many other poets of his time. The eighteenth century was, among other things, the age of the long philosophical epic, following Miltonic models. The poem 'with notes' also made its appearance at this time, the notes being not those of an editor or critic, but of the author himself, who was at pains to distinguish his use of Classical and Biblical imagery, and to locate himself in the proper tradition. One of the desiderata of such works was a certain amount of rational consistency, a certain amount of systematizing. Los' oft-quoted pledge, 'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's' is, in addition to being an assertion of Blake's own power, both a testament to the way that Blake's age tended to produce monuments and schemes, rather than lyrics, and an admission that Blake's own 'system' was not yet complete -- and this was at the beginning of Jerusalem.

Now at the time of Sampson's edition it was necessary to a certain extent, to collate symbols and phrases, for Blake's reputation was not yet completely established. There were still debates about his sanity, and his earlier editors, in attempting to present Blake's work systematically, had done a good deal to confuse their readers. But with the growth of Blake's popularity, and the more widespread understanding of his connections both with
eighteenth-century literature and with Western art as a whole, it is no longer necessary to assume that only a 'Blakean' is capable of understanding Blake. Unfortunately however, a good number of the more recent critics have overemphasized the systematic and the revivalist elements in his work. The trend which began with Swinburne, developed in Ellis and Yeats, and was already too complicated in Sloss and Wallis, was revived and shorn of some of its more obvious flaws in Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*. Frye put it that Blake's engraved works form a canon, and that 'anything admitted to that canon, whatever its date, not only belongs in a unified scheme but is in accord with a permanent structure of ideas. Omission may be deliberate or accidental -- we can seldom be sure which -- but admission is a seal of approval extending to more than poetic merit.' Frye explained Blake's development as that of a man who knew what he wanted early in his life, and stuck to it forever:

... even in matters of opinion Blake shows little variation, though there would certainly have been much more had he received his fair share of sympathetic criticism. His principles he held with bulldog tenacity all his life. The lyrics of his adolescence, the prophecies of his middle period, the comments which blister the margins of books he read on a sickbed at seventy are almost identical in outlook. He himself says that his notes on Reynolds, written at fifty,

are 'exactly Similar' to those on Locke and Bacon, written when he was 'very Young'. Even phrases and lines of verse will reappear as much as forty years later. Obstinacy in maintaining what he believed to be true was itself one of his leading principles, and he notes with sardonic amusement its success with those who opposed him: 'as if genius and assurance were the same thing!' Consistency, then, foolish or otherwise, is one of Blake's chief preoccupations, just as 'self-contradiction' is always one of his most contemptuous comments.1

In answer to Frye, one may say that while it is certainly true Blake used many of the same figures and the same schemes throughout his life, it does not necessarily follow that Blake's thought was completely consistent. As Hirsch pointed out, 'from beginning to end the circular pattern of his cosmic view, like so many patterns in his thought, remained constant. What changed radically was the significance of that pattern and the perspective in which it was viewed.'

When Frye stressed Blake's 'unified scheme' and 'permanent structure of ideas', he also made another, more telling comment, immediately following. He said that 'the unit of . . . mental existence


2. See the much-neglected work of E. L. Cary, The Art of William Blake, (New York, 1907), who is quite clear on the distinction. She explains that Blake 'clung with the same consistency to definite elements of design, repeating them in his work so often that they constitute a kind of signature, a special stamp of his individuality' (p. 13). She also spends a good portion of her book explaining the difference in meaning between various states of the same design. See also Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake, (New York, 1959).

Blake calls indifferently a "form" or an "image". If there is such a thing as a key to Blake's thought, it is the fact that these two words mean the same thing to him. He makes no consistent use of the term "idea". Frye intended to turn this observation into a defense of archetypal criticism, but it is also possible to use it more directly. According to the normal procedures of art history, graphic motifs are, to a certain extent, empty containers, waiting to be filled and to be connected in thematic patterns. The 'form' or 'image' of something is only given meaning according to its context. Because a long-bearded old man appears in many of Blake's works does not mean that he always has the same or nearly the same identity. The old man with the long flowing hair represents, if he appears in a cruciform position on a rock, Urizen; if on a throne in the clouds, Jehovah; if looking passionately or piously up to the clouds from beneath, Job; if with his hair blowing in a tempest, King Lear; if bathing, Har; if in prison with his sons, Ugolino; and if with keys in his hands, St. Peter.

Frye's approach to this question represents in many ways

1. Frye, op. cit., p. 15.
3. Hirsch offers an abbreviated version of the same kind of list, op. cit., p. 373.
the logical conclusion of the opinions of many earlier critics. Frye intends to include the Gates of Paradise in Blake's canon, and so far as the majority of the earlier critics were concerned, the Gates was simply a brief version of Blake's perennial message. In the opinion of the present writer this view is now untenable. The Gates of Paradise is not simply a first shuffle of the motifs in Jerusalem, Milton and the rest of the prophetic books. But a great number of commentators have not recognized this, and their criticism of the Gates has been little more than an elaboration of Sampson's notes -- without Sampson's selectivity and restraint.

1. Beginning with Swinburne, who 'has said that all of Blake's personages reenacted the same themes wearing different names and (grotesque) garbs'. D. Dorfman, Blake in the Nineteenth Century, (New Haven, 1969), p. 228.

2. Frye's recent essay, 'The Keys of the Gates', however, tempers the systematic approach with a close examination of the plates and some of the verses in the Gates of Paradise, and I rely on it for my discussion in chapter 13 of Part Two.

Edwin J. Ellis tried to move rapidly through the series without noticing enough detail to cause confusion: 'A man drowning, one walking quickly near trees, a boy knocking down a Cupid-like butterfly with his hat, a caterpillar with a baby's face, some one wishing to mount to the moon, and other scattered fancies. There is no coherence in them.' And although Ellis explained that 'The Keys of the Gates' were to serve as an explanation, he omitted the numbers which correspond to the plates, thus confusing the very issue Sampson attempted to resolve.

Following Ellis' edition, Basil de Selincourt described the Gates of Paradise in a manner which seemed positively to discourage any further interest. 'It consists of a short poem, one of the most enigmatic he ever wrote, and of about a score of engraved allegorical designs, themselves hardly less enigmatic than the verse, and very sketchy in execution. As works of art these are differently estimated -- to the present writer they seem of singularly little value. The interest is in almost every case, in the idea, and this idea is often

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conveyed almost as much by the motto under the design as by the design itself.'

Pierre Berger took an equally narrow, but more doctrinal view. 'The Gates of Paradise teaches the law of the forgiveness of sins, and "The Keys of the Gates", written by way of explanatory notes to a series of engravings, describes, in a series of very obscure metaphors, the history of the human soul, its fall into terrestrial existence, its life, death, and regeneration.'

Charles Gardner confidently asserted that the differences between the two issues were so slight as to prove that 'Blake's deepest thoughts were the same in 1795 \[sic\] and 1810.' Samuel Foster Damon, like Gillchrist, thought that the Gates offered a crucial part of Blake's doctrinal message, but to Damon this message was the mystical side of a dualist world-view. 'It \[the Gates of Paradise\] belongs to the state of "Experience", for while Blake teaches that we will reach happiness, yet this happiness is in the world beyond, not this world; and only by foreknowledge, to be gained by some vision can we find contentment here.' Thus, according to Damon, the

4. Damon, Philosophy and Symbols, p. 83.
book was not meant only for children, but for all men. 'For Children' meant 'those whose vision was still undimmed by materialism'.

Ernest H. Short, while he was one of the few who did not confuse the chronology of the two issues of the Gates, had an odd idea of their meaning. 'Evidently, what Blake had in mind was the issue of two books embodying the contrast between innocence and experience.' And Short, like Swinburne, had to appeal to a different order of perception: 'The eighteen plates of the Gates of Paradise require to be "read", until their power to arouse a dream-world of thought and emotion is realized.'

Joseph Wicksteed, who, with Short, stands out for not confusing the chronology of the Gates, compared the series as a whole to An Island in the Moon. This comparison may not hold throughout, but it certainly explains the tone of plate 9 of the Gates, and it is consistent in the sense that Wicksteed meant it: '... we see the whole of human life before and after birth, and even after death, represented as sordid and tragic, with one great break through into eternity (plate 13).'

On 'The Keys' Wicksteed

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 65. Short also took the appeal 'to children' in a metaphorical sense. 'Children' were 'mortals who were nearer to Heaven than their brethren. ...' (p. 65).
explained with great discrimination that although Blake intended the verses accompanying plate 13 to represent life after death, it did not also follow that Blake endorsed a life after death as the only way to meet the Immortal Man who Cannot Die. 'The question whether there is a better life after death does not affect the Vision of the Eternal Now, because for that there is no "after" or "before".'

Wicksteed also suggested, following Damon, that the death of Blake's brother was the inspiration for plate 13. 'It was then that the Time-process, with its passage from earthly generation to earthly decay, lost its bitterness for Blake. There seems to be no doubt that Robert Blake's death liberated something in Blake's mind that enabled him to see temporal existence as a thing outside, and almost unconnected with, his real life.'

Milton O. Percival thought that the Gates of Paradise was another variation on the circle of destiny. For Children, he explained, 'swings the cycle round with amazing rapidity, and yet the gist of the matter is contained in that sequence of sixteen plates'.

From the time of Wicksteed's book to the present, a period when scholarly studies on Blake increased enormously both in

1. Ibid., p. 182.
2. Ibid., p. 184.
volume and sophistication, many commentators mentioned the Gates of Paradise, but there were only six instances of extended commentary. The fullest treatment of the Gates was by George Winfield Digby. He found the emblematic mode of the Gates to be an indirect one. '... the purpose of this form of communication is not to make explicit statements. It is to evoke and direct attention to psychological events and states of consciousness by means other than that of the intellectual concept'.

Digby, as a proponent of the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung, relied heavily on the notion of a fixed series of archetypes tending to recur in all works of art. The meanings which Digby found in the Gates of Paradise, are, in consequence, familiar ones.

The tree in plate 1 'stands for the ancestral line from which the child springs'... his 'family lineage, social group, wide biological inheritance'. Plate 3 expresses the idea of the 'creative seed hidden in the earth, just as it is also hidden in man's feminine, instinctive physical nature'. In plate 14 the traveller expresses 'a new sense of direction, and a new sense of his rightful task as a man'. Plate 15 emphasizes again 'that

1. Digby, p. 6.
2. Ibid., p. 20.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Ibid., p. 48.
true vision implies accepting the dark side of life so completely that the door to it remains permanently open'. In plate 16 the figure sitting on the ground and clasping its knees is the 'female goddess of Nature', and the design as a whole points out that 'the dark, unconditioned, Yin side of life, is by itself a place of weeping, of strife, of illusion'. And to quote Digby at length, the ocean depicted in plate 10 is,

... the sea of time, man's karma; it is the conditioned past which overwhemns man with its weight of habit. It is the accumulation of worldly experience and mechanical reaction which gradually submerges life. This picture follows on that about desire [plate 97] because it is failure to discriminate that leads to this kind of psychological submersion and drowning. Lack of discrimination is due to underdevelopment of the feeling function, the emotional side of life in all its many aspects. For, as well as intellectual discrimination, there is also the discrimination of feeling, and it is just this which was, and is, habitually neglected in deference to the cultivation of the intellect, both in Blake's day and in our own. The awareness which comes from the development and discrimination of feeling is absolutely necessary for the mature human being. This picture is a comment on the fate of those who neglect it.  

While Digby's suggestions are of themselves interesting, his method is somewhat faulty. His notion that, by using the

1. Ibid., p. 49.
2. Ibid., p. 50.
3. Ibid., p. 42, 3.
emblematic mode, Blake avoids making explicit statements in order to direct one's attention to states of consciousness, cannot suffice for an explanation of the methods used in that tradition. He does not pay enough attention either to the contemporary context of each plate, or to the way in which Blake uses standard motifs, and thus both action and style are neglected. Plate 3, for instance, may, as Digby suggests, express the idea of a creative seed hidden in the earth, but it also depicts a man, and the man is struggling. According to Digby's criterion, any other representation of a man in a cavern would symbolize the same thing, no matter what the man was doing. And in plate 10, so far as one can tell, Blake could have rendered the sea in a multitude of differing ways, and the meaning of his design would have been the same: the underdevelopment of the feeling function.

The original misconceptions inherent in archetypal criticism have never been apparent to its practitioners, and these misconceptions are the same today as they were when Jung began. Digby concentrates

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1. See Henri Frankfort, 'The Archetype in Analytical Psychology and the History of Religion', J.W.C.I., XXI (1958), pp. 166 - 78, who explains that 'the imagery of mythology is concerned with the problems of the community in general and not with those of the individual as such'; that the images of mythology were often part of seasonal celebrations and arose 'in response to objective conditions and not in response to "intra-psychic" individual needs'; that the meaning of mythological images belongs rather to their manifest contents than to 'the repressed, inadmitted or compensatory contents of the unconscious'; and most importantly, that 'mythological images cannot claim to be either universal or necessary' (p. 178). For a discussion of the neo-Platonic assumptions of Jung's approach, see E. H. Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae', pp. 187 - 91.
on a set of images which he assumes to be universal. Then he predicates them of the collective unconscious. And, not surprisingly, he finds Blake to be intimately acquainted with the rest of the images in the collective unconscious when Blake uses a number of similar images. But in all this theorizing Digby loses track of the art-historical context and of the tone of Blake's emblems, and his criticism is thus of little value for any detailed study such as the present one.

Chauncey Tinker's treatment of the Gates, which appeared long before Digby's, remains with John Beer's, one of the two pillars for any future commentary. He explained that the pictures, 'about which there is nothing childlike, are inspired by thoughts as paradoxical as those in Songs of Experience', and he emphasized the importance both of the emblem literature and of the graveyard poetry in understanding the place of the Gates of Paradise in the art and literature of its times. Tinker suggested that if there were such a thing as a key to the Gates, it was surely in Blake's own estimation of the poetry of the graveyard, to be found in the dedication to his illustrations to Blair's The Grave:

The Door of Death is made of Gold,
That Mortal Eyes cannot behold;
But, when the Mortal Eyes are clos'd,

1. Tinker, p. 104.
And cold and pale the Limbs repos'd,
The Soul awakes; and, wond'ring, sees
In her mild Hand the golden Keys:
The Grave is Heaven's golden Gate,
And rich and poor around it wait;
O Shepherdess of England's Fold,
Behold this Gate of Pearl and Gold!
    To dedicate to England's Queen
The Visions that my Soul has seen,
And, by Her kind permission, bring
What I have borne on solemn Wing,
From the vast regions of the Grave,
Before her Throne my Wings I wave;
Bowing before my Sov'reign's Feet,
    'The Grave produc'd these Blossoms sweet
In mild repose from Earthly strife;
The Blossoms of Eternal Life!!'

Tinker also made an important point, which has been subsequently neglected. He explained that the irony of the title was only apparent. The plates, he said, 'represent scenes which must be passed before the Gates of Paradise are attained'.

John Beer has put forward a remarkably complete interpretation of the Gates of Paradise, and although he stresses a systematic conception of Blake's work, he does not lose sight of the singularity of the Gates of Paradise. Beer, like Swinburne, divides the series into two groups, plates 2 through 5, and plates 7 through 10. The two groups are corollaries, the first four being 'images of Despair' and 'images of alienation

2. Tinker, p. 103.
and Doubt when he \( \text{Man} \) contemplates the Universe'; and the second group being 'reproaches to Mankind', images of misdirected or misused Desire. The design which separates these two groups, plate 6, which shows a winged Cupid-like figure emerging out of an egg, is taken by Beer to hold the key to uniting the two groups; and his interpretation of this plate is another major contribution of his commentary.

He explained that the motif of bursting the shell should not be seen exclusively as representing either physical birth, or birth into immortality but rather as an ironic treatment of the birth of desire, following Orphic sources. The meaning of the plate is ambiguous, meant to suggest alternatives. 'The breaking egg may release either a winged Eros or a serpent of destruction and the child that Blake depicts has the potential lineaments of both.' Thus the winged child bursting the shell can be connected both to the beginning of the state of Experience, and to 'Satan's eruptions from the bounds of Hell'.

1. Ibid., p. 236.
2. Ibid., p. 234.
3. Ibid., p. 236.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 235.
6. A point also made by Tinker.
The connection with Experience is reinforced by the depiction of a similar cherub in the Introduction to *Songs of Experience*, and the connection with Satan is reinforced by Blake's serpent lore, where the coiled serpent breaks out of the shell of reason to become the fiery serpent of destruction. Beer's overall interpretation can be seen in the following extract:

If the general outline follows the natural pattern of eighteenth-century thought, counterpoising time and eternity, the internal structure of the series is dominated by Blake's own opposition between Reason and Energy, and his conception of the ambiguity of Energy as being the potential link between man and eternity as well as the means of greatest evil. Born into a state where Vision has faded, man finds himself in a world of cold reason, surrounded by 'Cloudy Doubts & Reasoning Cares'. He can either remain there or break out; if he does break out, he finds himself in the state of Satan: the Desire to which he gives himself turns into a rage for possession and destruction. The boy chasing butterflies prefigures the grown man who will 'martyr' the female; the hardening of the same desire will eventually lead to the murder of life. The aspirations of endless will become self-imprisoning; the soul which tries to climb a ladder into infinity will find itself sinking in the sea of time and space. Eventually, vision and desire both dead, he will begin to hinder the young, clipping their wings of vision and enclosing them within the dictates of his moral law. The happiest course for man is to live in the expectation that when he dies he will be liberated into eternity, his flesh being simultaneously restored to the earth which is the ground of his desire.

Apart from the final sentence Beer's interpretation is, in my view, perfectly sound. One might add, however, that

1. Ibid.
the overall lack of resolution in the series tends to emphasize despair, and thus to bring into greater relief the importance of the two chances to break out of the cycle, depicted in plates 6 and 13. While these two plates have an ironic effect, in that the events depicted in them do not permanently improve the character's life, yet they are still meant to be appeals to a different order of things, an order which, as I will show, suggests a way out of gloomy progress to the tomb.

Although he takes some account of Beer's contributions, Sir Geoffrey Keynes followed Damon for the most part, stressing a dualism in Blake's thought. He said of plate 10, for instance, 'The emblem is self-explanatory -- Man drowning helplessly in the materialistic Sea of Time and Space. He is lost through ignorance of spiritual things.' And of plate 11 Keynes said that the old man sitting under the tree was 'steeped in materialism', and that 'his perceptions have been closed to spiritual things throughout his life, and so he clips the wings of youthful aspirations. The old man, with his huge scissors, is seated under the usual tree of vegetative life, while the sun, or source of inspiration, to which the youth aspires, is setting below the rim of the earth.'

Keynes' emphasis on the spiritual, as opposed both to

2. Ibid.
its opposite, the material, and a category larger than both, the mental, leads him to misconstrue the point of the series. For him the series was meant 'to remind man of his melancholy progress from birth to death'. But surely Blake intended more than a traditional *memento mori*. Keynes interpreted the title in a traditionally Christian sense: 'Paradise is naturally to be taken as the symbol of a state of happiness, the aim and object of the spiritual life of man... Blake sought to summarize in his emblems man's spiritual progress from birth to death. Although he offered his book *For Children* he did not mean thereby immature human beings, but addressed himself rather to people not yet corrupted by experience of the material, or vegetable world: those, that is, whose imaginations were still active and unspoiled.' In the same sense, the title to the revised edition, *For the Sexes*, suggests an audience of 'people who had reached experience through life in the material world of sexual awareness and generation'. But one cannot accept these statements at face value, for Blake gave no indication in the series either that he intended to establish a dualist perspective, or that he was endorsing a traditional Christian pattern in which the joys of life are

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Ibid., p. 8.
only 'spiritual', and in which complete fulfillment can only take place in a 'spiritual' sense. One of the unfortunate effects of accepting a dualist perspective is that every person, idea, object, or event, has to be classified as belonging either to one category or the other. Thus, for instance, the sea becomes for Keynes, the Materialistic Sea of Time and Space; and this codifying of motifs to a preconceived system of meanings is precisely the approach we rejected in Frye and Digby.

David Erdman, in the facsimile of Blake's notebook, and in a slightly revised version in The Illuminated Blake, has suggested a more optimistic interpretation of the Gates than either Beer or Keynes. In his commentary on the notebook, he does not put forth a detailed criticism of the Gates since his main purpose is the editing of the MSS material, but it is clear from a number of his comments that he sees the Gates of Paradise as an esoteric or at least enigmatic work. Each emblem, according to Erdman, is an 'apperception exercise'. The title of the series, the Gates of Paradise, is descriptive not of what is literally depicted, but of what the enlightened viewer can read into the emblems. To the reader in the know 'fear and hope are vision', and the scenes depicted in the Gates will lead him to a visionary

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1. Ibid., p. 42.
understanding. But to one who is not talented in this art of creative reading, the Gates will remain an endlessly repetitive cycle of pessimistic emblems.

Erdman's interpretation will be open to question in the present work, especially since he does not distinguish any change of meaning between the two separate editions of the Gates. But his manner of introducing the series, as 'emblems of fear and hope', is unquestionably an important contribution to our understanding of the Gates. For the common factor in all of the emblems, and that which binds them together as a series, is more than anything else the play between these opposite states of mind. So also, Erdman's accurate and painstaking observation of details stands out from the rest of the commentators, even if in many instances there is cause to dispute his interpretation. Erdman almost, but does not quite, come to the point of defining the place of the Gates of Paradise in its immediate contemporary context. One of the principal aims of the present study will be to do just that, for only when we have an idea of the place of the Gates of Paradise in the history of art and literature can we know what kind of techniques and what sources Blake was likely to

1. Erdman is rebutted more frequently than most other critics mainly because his analysis of the Gates, besides being outspoken, is likely to go unchallenged in the future, ensconced as it is in the magnificent facsimile of Blake's notebook.
have drawn upon, and what his terms of reference were likely to have been.

1. Erdman has argued that many of the emblems may have been political in origin (Prophet Against Empire, pp. 204 - 6), but his arguments rest on the same approach rejected in Frye and Digby. In order to call the figure depicted in plate 2 a type of the head-clutching king, for instance, he must assume identical meanings for all figures who clutch their heads in alarm. Such assumptions may be valid in some cases, but to adopt it as one's general method of proof is surely to invite a number of dubious assumptions. In the present work I have not considered the political implications or origins of any of the emblems, because I did not find in any of them an indisputably political allusion.
Part Two

The Meaning of The Gates of Paradise

Introduction
In order to discuss the meaning of the Gates of Paradise something must first be said of the place of the Gates in the art and literature of its times. In the present introduction I will briefly survey the points at which the Gates is indebted to the emblem tradition and the literature of melancholy, and I will suggest that these two strains can be seen in each of the plates, using plate 7 as an example.

Even at a superficial level the melancholy tone of the Gates is evident. Death, in one form or another, is the subject of seven of the designs. The worm is depicted in two of them, and three include the grave. There are scenes of imprisonment, murder, suicide, and torture, and the faces of the characters tell of grief, despair, fear, and dread. While the morbid tone of these designs may seem strange and upsetting to an audience today, in Blake's time the series appealed to a widespread taste for melancholy themes.

In the visual arts melancholy had for quite some time a major part in the emblem tradition, culminating with the immensely popular Emblems (1635) of Francis Quarles. When the Emblems eventually went out of print, a number of developments assured that the

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melancholy emblem would not be lost. In mid-century an anonymous author rewrote the Emblems so that they could be sung to 'the Common Tunes of Psalmody', and when the original text was reprinted in 1777 a prominent group of Nonconformist ministers commended the Emblems as being 'in the main very consistent with the evangelic doctrines'.

And even if Quarles had not become ensconced in the evangelic literature, melancholy emblems would still have retained a certain currency, for the bleak outlook, the complaining tone, and the mist and gloom of the graveyard became the breeding ground for a school of morbid contemplation, dominated by Young, Blair, and Hervey. In this literature melancholy continued to be seen as the condition of mind inherited from the fall, aggravated into a kind of spiritual starvation or even demonic possession.

At the same time melancholy as a poetic theme was associated, in elegies, odes, laments, pastorals, and their derivatives, with reflection, solitude, and delight in nature. Melancholy was connected, in yet another way, with fancy, and to some degree at least, in Smart, Collins, and Warton, with the creative imagination. The appeal of these poets to their audience was more sympathetic than argumentative or aesthetic. All of them were concerned with the wretched state of affairs in the present -- that is, with the discontent of fallen man -- and after that, with his


2. Ibid.
redemption and salvation. Whatever one thinks of their success, it is clear that Young, Blair, and Hervey were trying to relieve the present anxiety with prophetic and apocalyptic works, just as Collins and Warton were trying to create a bardic and prophetic character who could lead the nation through its arts, especially poetry, to greater accomplishments. If Blake's series surpasses the achievements of these poets, one should not forget that the Gates begins by sharing many of their premises and aims. As I will show in some detail in the following chapters, the Gates of Paradise presents the life of fallen man as a melancholy cycle, and at the same time it goes far beyond its contemporary analogues, for it points to the way one may break out of that cycle into a visionary and creative state.

The melancholy expressed in English poetry of the eighteenth century was, of course, partly a literary convention, with roots in the previous age of melancholy, the Renaissance. But that convention was also solidly based in the behaviour of contemporary Britons. Melancholy as an artistic and literary theme developed in conjunction with the common experience that melancholy was a persistent affliction -- almost a cast of mind -- which was held to be peculiarly British. The situation was nearly as gloomy as during Hamlet's time when England was a place one was sent to recover one's wits. But even if one was unable to find a cure,

it would not make a great deal of difference, according to the grave-digger, for the men of England were all as mad as Hamlet himself. And even if they were not quite mad, but only pretended the serious deportment and the odd habits, these in themselves spoke of the peculiarly British capacity not to enjoy life without a great deal of commotion and worry, or at least to be dour, lugubrious, and painstaking about one's pastimes.

There were more serious consequences as well. Young addressed Britain as a place 'infamous for suicide', and Blair wrote of 'self-murther' as 'Our Island's Shame / That makes her the Reproach of neighbouring States'. Boswell said that he began his column, 'The Hypochondriack', in November, because it was the month 'when the people of England . . . hand and drown themselves'. Whether it was referred to as a mood, a type of character, a temporary state of mind, or most comprehensively, as a mental illness; and whether it was termed the spleen, the vapours, hypochondria, ennui, and later mal de siècle or weltschmerz, there was no confusion about the English Malady. It was melancholy. Prognosis however, was a matter of some difficulty. So long as melancholy, as a disease, was considered to be physiological in origin, there were an endless number of remedies to be tried. And whether the blame fell on the

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1. The morbidity of this period is common knowledge, but my discussion of it depends largely on two surveys: J. Boswell, The Hypochondriack, ed. M. Bailey, (Stanford, 1928), pp. 75 - 99, 'Boswell and his Audience: The Victims of the English Malady'; and C. Moore, Backgrounds of English Literature 1700 - 60, (Minneapolis, 1953), pp. 179 - 238, 'The English Malady'.

impenetrable London fog, the general moistness of the air, lack of exercise, lack of citrus fruits in the diet, or the dreaded east wind, there was still some escape from the symptoms. But when melancholy, as a mental state, was considered to be constitutional in origin, or to have an autogenic aetiology in the mind or in the soul, no permanent cure was possible.

In one way, however, the young man whom melancholy had marked for her own, might not wish to be cured entirely, for ever since the 'Aristotleian' Problem XXX i, the highly gifted person, the genius, was seen to derive his powers and ability from his melancholy constitution. No matter how wretchedly one might suffer from the English Malady, and no matter that all the horrors of damnation presented themselves to the afflicted, one could still justify the notion that the melancholic was a man set apart for distinction. As Burton described, such persons were,

Extremely passionate, quicquid volunt valde volunt; and what they desire, they do most furiously seek: anxious ever & very solicitous, distrustful and timorous, envious, malicious, profuse one while, sparing another, but most part covetous, muttering, repining, discontent, and still complaining, grudging, peevish, injuriarum tenaces, prone to revenge, soon troubled, and most violent in all their

imaginations, not affable in speech, or apt
to vulgar compliment, but surly, dull, sad, austere,
cogitabundi still, very intent, and, as Albertus
Dürer paints Melancholy, like a sad woman leaning
on her arm with fixed looks, neglect habit, &c
held therefore by some proud, soft, sottish, or
half-mad, as the Alderites esteemed of Democritus:
and yet of a deep reach, excellent apprehension, judicious,
wise, & witty: for I am of that Nobleman's mind,
Melancholy advanceth men's conceits more than any
humour whatsoever, improves their meditations more
than any strong drink or sack. They are of profound
judgement in some things. . .

Boswell, whom Johnson specifically warned against assuming that
melancholy was a sign of acuteness, discussed this point of the
'Aristotelian' problem in the fifth number of his column, and
there were occasional references to it elsewhere. In poetry the most
important witness was Milton -- or rather, Milton as he was revived
about 1750. With 'Il Penseroso' he had brought to English literature
the Italian transformation of the traditional treatment of melancholy,
the creation of a 'specifically "poetic" melancholy of the modern;
a double-edged feeling constantly providing its own nourishment,
in which the soul enjoys its own loneliness, but by this very pleasure
becomes again more conscious of its solitude'. And in the age of
sensibility, when the superior man was the one with exquisitely
tuned feelings, a general lassitude or depression was often taken to

2. See Life, 3. 99; cited by Bailey, p. 137.
be a sign of genius in moral matters, a sign that perhaps he too might 'attain / To something like Prophetic strain'.

Thus melancholy was, for Thomson, 'Philosophic Melancholy', which belonged with virtue, religion, love of mankind, and an animated and humanized natural world. For Matthew Green, melancholy brought the airy visions of Boehme's disciples. For Collins, it was melancholy, of all the passions, which came closest to 'untwisting all the chains that tie/ The hidden soul of harmony'. For Smart, although melancholy displaced grace, yet 'sweet Melancholy' reigned 'Angelically pensive, till the joy / Improves and purifies ...' And finally, for Warton, melancholy belonged in the mountain retreats of the gothic bards. Melancholy was the 'queen sublime', conversing with the spheres', who had the power to inspire the poet with the visions once held by Spenser and Milton. And in his edition of Milton's minor poems, Warton justified this treatment of the subject by explaining that melancholy in 'Il Penseroso', as the daughter of 'bright-haired Vesta', was as much the patron of genius as of pensive


and gloomy minds. He also explained Milton's debt to Durer for the motifs of the black visage, the 'looks commencing with the skies', the 'sable stole of Cypress lawn', and the 'Cherub Contemplation'. In addition to their brilliance as critical statements these points answered the expressed need of a group of poets who desired to rediscover a native, northern, and 'gothick' tradition to set against the foreign models of the Augustans.

At the same time as these radical redefinitions and realignments occurred, melancholy continued to be seen in a pejorative, though not wholly distasteful context. One still found descriptions, such as that by David Mallet, in which the poet was 'pleas'd with Winter's waste', and enjoyed to see 'all nature in agony with me!'.

Rough rugged rocks, wet marshes, ruin'd towers,
Bare trees, brown brakes, bleak heaths, and rocky moors,
Dead floods, huge cataracts, to my pleas'd eyes --
(Now I can smile!) -- in wild disorder rise:
And now, the various dreadfulness combin'd,
Black Melancholy comes, to doze my mind.

In this egocentric framework, Dame Melancholy still walked through storms to the midnight calm, but only when the poet was nigh; and melancholy was both the affliction of the poet, as in Mallet, and the inspiration which might lead him to overcome it, as in Warton.

The literature of self-centered melancholy, in the period which corresponds roughly to the span of Blake's life, has been


admirably surveyed by E. M. Sickels, following the well-known work of Professors Havens and Reed. She has explained the place of melancholy in the neoclassical complaint of life, the self-conscious contemplation, the meditation on mutability, the retirement theme, the imaginative realization of death, the sentimental love lyric, and many other kinds of poems. The Gates of Paradise owes something to each of these developments, and one can identify each of the emblems in the Gates as belonging to this literature.

In the frontispiece there is the worm of eighteenth-century moralizing and the quotation from Job. In plate one the scene is set under the weeping willow, the tree of the graveyard. In plates 2, 3, 4, and 5 the elements are pictured as fallen like man himself. In plates 6 and 7 Eros breaks out of his shell, but is immediately perverted to deadly mischief. In plate 8 usurpation becomes an emblem of mutability. In plate 9 the ladder is symbolic of vain mental searching. In plate 10 the ocean and the drowning man express an oceanic loneliness and despair. In plate 12 the vault is symbolic of both political and religious bigotry, and of the mind which imprisons the five senses. In plate 13 grief becomes, for a brief moment, prophetic. In plate 14 the cycle begins to wind down, and the melancholy traveller is still hastening, but his destination

is unclear, until plate 15, which shows it to be the grave. And plate 16 is an uncompromising and ghastly look into the grave itself. All these were standard motifs in the melancholy poetry of the eighteenth century, and the purpose of part two of this thesis will be to demonstrate in some detail the way Blake adapted them.

In addition to its debts to the literature of melancholy, the Gates of Paradise appears to have many things in common with the emblem books of the 1780's and 1790's. However, this kind of affinity needs a certain amount of qualification. By the middle of the eighteenth century emblems had long since ceased to offer a viable medium for the combination of text and design. Indeed, the emblem books of the later decades of the eighteenth century would have been, except for a few superficial characteristics, almost completely unrecognizable to the men of the Renaissance, for whom emblems had been either the products of wit, or an esoteric form of communication descended from the 'hieroglyphicks' of the Egyptians. Some of the emblem-makers of the eighteenth century did revive this very claim, and they did not hesitate to copy old designs, but the aims and aspirations of the early emblem-makers had long ago become confused. As artists ceased to use the emblem to create the symbolic language on which they thought it was based, the designs fell in behind one another in complete conventionality, and were fit only to be literal illustrations to a moralized text. And with metaphysical poetry securely
contained behind the reasonableness of Johnson's criticism, the emblems of this period could show no wit, but conventional wisdom forced into rhyming couplets. Even the games of love that had originated in the books of van Veen and de Passe, and had been turned to a rather more pointed psychology by the Jesuits, were now censured. The only aspect of its original character which remained to the emblem was its pedagogical aim, and even this was little more than a memory, for emblems were now being addressed only to children, an audience which could be treated in the most patronizing way, as we will see in some detail in the following chapter.

Blake's correspondent, Dr. Trusler, for instance, published a book in 1791 entitled The Progress of Man and Society, and while one can recognize similarities between this book and the Gates — such as the mime of the cycle of life, the subjects of the worm and the caterpillar, the four primary elements, the traveller, and the terrors of the imagination — yet Trusler's book does not come close to the achievement of the Gates. Trusler's main concern was how to get on in the world, and just as in another of his books, The Way to be Rich and Respectable (1775),

every iota of information had to be turned to that purpose.

Although the emblem had faded from serious consideration as an artistic mode, it still held certain attractions in theory. In earlier emblem books the author built his preface around the legend that emblems originated in the 'hieroglyphicks' of the Egyptians. The history of the language was seen as a devolution from the direct, pristine communion between Adam and God, to the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, from there to the parables of the Hebrews, and finally to the rational, discursive language of the present. The emblem was a frank attempt to revive what had not been lost forever of the symbolic language of God, the language of prophecy in the Bible, and indeed the language of Christ himself. This mode of expression, though it had lain fallow for so long, could not fail to attract a certain group of poets who were looking for a new idiom of utterance; and in choosing to work with emblems Blake was only choosing that mode which promised the best chance of accommodating a prophetic message.

In plate 7 of the Gates one may see the vestiges of both influences I have outlined: the emblem as it had degenerated in the late eighteenth century, and the literature of melancholy.

Blake's design would have been recognized by his contemporaries as a standard emblem of a youth chasing a butterfly. But while the usual emblem, with its cautionary tale, suggested conformity and propriety, Blake had in mind a good deal more. His original motto for the plate,

Ah luckless babe born under cruel star  
And in dead parents baleful ashes bred  
Full little weenest thou what sorrows are  
Left for portion of thy livlihed
derived from the *Faerie Queene* (II, ii, 12), where it described Ruddymane, the newborn child of Mordaunt and Amavia, who, having dipped his hands in the blood of his dying parents, cannot wash it away. Now the moral allegory of Book II of the *Faerie Queene*

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Like foolish boys on sunny summer days  
Pursuing butterflies with all their might,  
Who can't their troubles in the chase requite.  
The painted insect he who most admires  
Grieves most when it in his rude hand expires (37 - 44)

Works, ed. J. L. Robertson, (Oxford, 1908), p. 498. Blake himself used the scene in *Europe* iii. 9 (K. 237; E. 59) where the poet describes how he caught a fairy 'as boys knock down a butterfly'. He also depicted similar scenes in his engraved illustrations to *Night Thoughts* (number 12), and in his watercolour designs to *Night Thoughts*, N T 181 and 376.
TALE XXI.

THE WILFUL BOY AND THE HORNETS.

A BOY in active search of play or game,
Or mischief, which in truth he deem'd the fame,

Pursu'd
is of temperance and self-control, Mordaunt typifying the intemperance of self-indulgence, and Amavia typifying intemperate grief. And the connection with melancholy arises from the fact that melancholy was, according to Burton and Spenser, 'a disease resulting from psychological disturbances which could all be conveniently grouped under the technical term, inherited from Roman stoicism, of perturbations'. Thus Blake could, while still seeming to write 'for children', identify the youth as a red-handed, Orc-like figure, whose inheritance was the seething loss of control of melancholy. Instead of hunting butterflies, the boy is hunting females. Instead of catching them in a net, he kills them outright, so that the emblem as a whole, despite its childlike subject, is one of murderous cruelty resulting from a kind of madness. Yet the boy cannot be completely responsible, for he was only following the pattern set by his parents. He has inherited the perturbations of melancholy, and thus melancholy is not an individual affliction, but the general malaise.


In the following chapters I shall discuss the meaning of each of the plates of the Gates of Paradise in the same manner, though in somewhat greater detail, than that afforded plate 7. Taking each of the plates individually, I will survey previous criticism, introduce contemporary analogues, and I will offer an interpretation of the plate. The time spent on each of these tasks, and the order in which they are treated, will depend entirely on the demands set by the plate itself, and therefore no overall plan can be offered in advance. For instance, plate 9 merits a quite lengthy discussion and refutation of previous critical views, while plate 10 requires only a brief discussion, not because plate 9 is more important than plate 10, but because there has been a long-standing critical dispute about the meaning of plate 9, whereas plate 10 has always been understood in at least an adequate (if perhaps limited) way.

The purpose of the first thirteen chapters is to demonstrate that For Children The Gates of Paradise is a gothic vision of melancholy, and the purpose of the fourteenth chapter is to demonstrate Blake's important modification of that conception when he reissued the series. While there is some cross-reference between chapters one through thirteen, each chapter is designed to stand alone, and each can almost be read separate from the rest, with the exception of chapter thirteen, which should be left until the end, for it answers a number of questions posed by the other chapters. This style of presentation is intended to reflect the demands of the emblematic mode, in which each plate is an integral
and self-sustaining unit, and in which, while there may be a certain amount of narrative progression, the important points can be seen in each plate once the central pattern has been identified.
Chapter One

The Frontispiece
Most of the commentators, however they have differed on other matters, have seen the chrysalis depicted in the frontispiece as an emblem of innocence and potentiality. In developing this view, Swinburne added a number of questionable details which have been accepted without contest by many commentators. With his usual rhapsodic diction, he described the scene in the following way:

The frontispiece gives a symbol of man's birth into the fleshly and mutable house of life, powerless and painless as yet, but encircled by the likeness and oppressed by the mystery of material existence. The pre-existent spirit here wellnigh disappears under stifling folds of vegetable leaf and animal incrustation of overgrowing husk. It lies dumb and dull, almost as a thing itself begotten of the perishable body, conceived in bondage and brought forth with grief. The curled and clinging caterpillar, emblem of motherhood, adheres and impends over it, as the lapping leaves of flesh unclose and release the human fruit of corporeal generation.

1. One notable exception is Basil de Selincourt, who described the scene in a way which has never found any followers. The plate depicted, in his words, 'a pallid caterpillar', which 'bends over a hardly less pallid chrysalis cradled upon an oak-leaf below; and this chrysalis has a human head, so that one might imagine a baby in its swaddling clothes, only that the face is not a baby's face but the face of a mature man, with all the insipidity and self-satisfaction that only maturity can bring' (William Blake, (London, 1909), p. 176). In addition to his inaccurate observation, de Selincourt was probably in some confusion as to the difference between the frontispiece and plate 7, for he quoted the motto of the one as if it belonged to the other.

2. Swinburne, p. 21. Swinburne's strange idea that the caterpillar is an 'emblem of motherhood' probably derives from the Jobean paraphrase in 'The Keys of the Gates' 16: 'Thou 'rt my Mother from the Womb'.
The dualist distinction between the flesh and the spirit, which Swinburne introduced, was later given much greater emphasis by Damon. He said that Blake was 'using the old Greek symbol of the body as a cocoon from which the soul (psyche) will be reborn as a butterfly'. 1 And to underline his notion that the material world was no better than a doomed illusion, Damon said that the caterpillar feeding on the leaf was a 'symbol of man in this world. It is a worm which feeds upon error (this vegetable world) and produces others like it. This is a state of sorrow'. 2

The trouble with these interpretations, which rely so heavily on a neo-Platonic world-view, is that Blake never gave any indication in the Gates that the cocoon was supposed to be symbolic of the body and the butterfly of the soul. Indeed, he has drawn the sleeping worm with a child's face, so that it cannot be the soul which will awake into eternity, but rather man himself, as a complete being. Blake's point is that man is a worm until he wakes into a new kind of perception. The design as a whole is not directed at criticizing any notion about the material world, or the errors of a materialistic philosophy, or at the sorrow of one who follows such a system; but rather at the importance of creative perception.

1. Damon, Philosophy and Symbols, p. 83.
2. Ibid., p. 84.
As David Erdman has explained, the two worms, the one feeding, the other sleeping, 'hint at two possibilities for the eye that beholds these emblems . . . the baby's face on the sphinx-like chrysalis reminds us to dream of rainbow wings. Simply, the mortal worm using a leaf for food indicates one way of perceiving life; the immortal infant on his scrolled couch, another.'

In Blake's thirteenth watercolour design for Night Thoughts (plate F. 1), the two possibilities are clearly defined. Young described man as a creature of contradictions: 'An Heir of Glory! a frail Child of Dust! / Helpless Immortal! Insect infinite! / A worm! a God! . . . ' And when Blake illustrated these verses he expressed what Young had not yet begun to suggest, that life in this ambiguous middle state could not long continue without developing one way or another. One had to choose, according to Blake, between the state of inertia, embodied in the dead child at the top of the page, and the state of continual aspiration, embodied in the winged child at the foot of the page.

To see the story in this way does not neglect the importance of the neo-Platonic sources and analogues of which Raine and others have reminded us. But it does take them in a broader framework, one similar to that in which Coleridge, beginning with Plotinus'

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1. Erdman, Notebook, p. 25.
Plate F.1

Blake, Design for *Night Thoughts*, (unpublished, 1795 - 7), number 13.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
fifth book of the fifth Ennead, explained how,

They and only they can acquire the philosophic imagination, to the sacred power of self-intuition, who within themselves can interpret and understand the symbol, that the wings of the air-sylph are forming within the skin of the caterpillar; those only, who feel in their own spirits the same instinct, which impels the chrysalis of the horned fly to leave room in its involucrum for antennae yet to come. They know and feel, that the potential works in them, even as the actual works on them. In short, all the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a corresponding world of spirit...

This distinction, rather than Swinburne's or Damon's more doctrinal notion that Blake was criticizing materialistic philosophy, is the distinction Blake intended in the frontispiece. In addition, the adamant, incisive tone of Coleridge's commentary, and the way that he brings the description back to personal experience, making a choice seem necessary, echoes the severe tone of the Gates of Paradise. Coleridge makes one feel that the stakes are high; and just as he adds later that 'a man must either rise or sink', so Blake makes it clear that if one does not accept the burden of responsibility for one's view of the world, the consequences will be dreadful.

The fable of Cupid and Psyche, originally from Orphic sources, and then used by Apuleius, became for Blake the model for a certain

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kind of struggle, as Irene Chayes has shown. From the same sources, the story of the caterpillar and the butterfly became the allegory of life after death, and was in common use in medieval times. What Blake added to the standard form, as Tinker has explained, was the notion that the worm was asleep in its chrysalis like a child in the womb. For Blake, the child did not, like the worm of the medieval allegories, have to die before it awoke, but rather, it would not live at all until it wakes.

In using the story in this way, Blake was radically departing from contemporary models. The story of the caterpillar and the butterfly was a standard one in the emblem books for children of the eighteenth century, where it was used as a warning against 'vain pursuits'. In J. H. Wynne's Tales for Youth (1790), for instance, the 'Tale of the Earth-Worm' tells how,

A little Earth-worm, crawling nigh,
Obser'v'd, and heav'd a secret sigh,
For much he wish'd like him to fly,
The sweets of morning dews to taste,
Or rest at eve on flow'rets plac'd.

And so the worm climbs a flower to launch himself into flight, only to meet his enemy, the bee, who first lectures him, and then pitches him to his death.


2. Tinker, p. 105. Tinker also takes a broadly dualistic view, but his distinction regarding Blake's use of the motif points to the way he is not overburdened by it in the manner Swinburne, Damon, and Keynes seem to be.
This tale was intended to teach the child that obsequiousness would be rewarded and that ambition would only bring trouble. The 'Application of the Tale' spells out the message in a tone so cankerous that one cannot paraphrase it without dulling its bite. I shall quote it at length in order to give some idea of the norms of children's books in the late eighteenth century, and also of the vast distance separating such work from the Gates of Paradise.

AMBITION, in the higher ranks of life, has been the cause of many evils, which such of our young readers will find, as have the inclination to examine history.

If such be the case then, with persons in high stations, it cannot be expected that any good should follow from it among the lower classes of people, who will ever find themselves the happier, when they do not seek for any thing more than what they have reason to hope for from their situation. Vain wishes must always give pain to ourselves, besides being most commonly troublesome to those about us. -- The earth-worm can live and enjoy life in his proper sphere, he can dive into the ground for ease or shelter; but he never was designed to mount on high.

Children and young folks, in particular, should be careful not to presume too much; for that is the ready way to be hated and despised. It is, indeed, proper that they should try to excel, and exert all their powers to acquire knowledge; and if they do so, they will learn to be duly humble, and to behave so as to be beloved. They should never envy those who are their superiors or their elders because they appear above them. Every child knows that esteem and respect will increase with their years; and ill does it become the poor to be always pining for that which is above their reach, and wishing for what would only be likely to make them prouder, and in mature years add to cares which yet they know not, without giving them any increase of pleasure, or adding to their happiness.

One thing is plain to the youngest and least experienced, namely, that those who do not climb, can never fall; and such as wish for little
will meet with few disappointments.

In his _Select Fables_ (plate F. 2), J. Bewick included the same subject and treated it according to formula. Wynne and Bewick were able to adapt the story of the caterpillar and the butterfly with such ease because it had been a standard figure in contemporary homiletics and religious poetry. Young, for instance, wrote in 'Night the First', of how his heart had once been 'encrusted by the world', how 'like a worm, was I rapt round and round/ In silken thought, which reptile fancy spun'; and how he could not be free until 'darken'd reason', now 'quite clouded o'er', should be able to 'put forth her wings to reach the skies!'

James Hervey, on the other hand, used the story in a context which allowed him to emphasize a self-centered approach and to connect the story with the retirement theme. With his usual rhetorical extravagance, Hervey wrote of 'the animal, which spins her soft, her shining, her exquisitely fine silken thread... whose matchless manufactures lend an ornament to grandeur and make royalty itself more magnificent'; and of the 'cell in which, when the gayety and business of life are over, the little recluse immures herself, and


2. Young, _Night Thoughts_, I, 156 - 63. Blake's sixth engraving illustrated these lines. And in Blake's watercolour designs, butterflies, babies, hatching, flight, and similar motifs abound. See for instance, _NT_ 13, _NT_ 16, _NT_ 17, _NT_ 26, _NT_ 63, _NT_ 181, _NT_ 272, _NT_ 490.
"So come along, no more we'll part;\n" He said, and touch'd him with his dart;\n" And now old Dobson, turning pale,\n" Yields to his fate—so ends my tale."

**FABLE XII.**

_The Catterpillar and Butterfly._

The morning blush'd with vivid red,\nAnd night in sudden silence fled;\nSad Philomel no more complains,\nThe lark begins his sprightly strains;\nLight paints the flow'rs of various hue,\nAnd sparkles in the pendent dew;\nLife moves o'er all the quicken'd green,\nAnd beauty reigns, unrival'd queen.

Plate F.2

spends the remainder of her days in retirement'. Indeed, said Hervey, the chrysalis was like a 'sepulchre, which, when cloyed with pleasure, and weary of the world, she prepares for her own interment... when a stated period is elapsed, she wakes from a death-like inactivity, breaks the enclosure of her tomb, throws off the dusky shroud, assumes a new form, puts on a more sumptuous array, and from an insect creeping on the ground, becomes a winged inhabitant of the air...

In this conceit Hervey ranged the details of the retirement theme round the silkworm's cloister, the chrysalis. In Bewick's fable the device of the chrysalis held the same importance. His only variation on the standard form of the tale was to introduce a second butterfly, who explained how he had been born: 'The circling shield I broke, nor knew / How long my safety hence I drew'. This motif, of an imprisoning shell, stands over the Gates of Paradise from beginning to end, and once Blake establishes its significance as the home of the worm, he follows the associated images of the veil, the thread, imprisonment, and weaving, through the length of the work, continually playing against one's expectation that man will burst the 'ambient, azure shell', as Young (plate F. 3) put it, and emerge into a suprasensual perception.

And make us Embryos of Existence free.

From real life, but little more remote
Is He, not yet a candidate for Light,
The future Embryos, lumbering in his Sire.

Embyos we must be, till we burst the Shell,
Your ambient, azure Shell, and spring to Life,

Yet man, fool-man! here burys all his Thoughts;
Inters celestial Hopes without one Sigh:
Prisoner of Earth, and pent beneath the Moon,
Your pinions all his Wishes: wing'd by Heaven
To fly at infinite; and reach it there,
Where Seraphs gather Immortality,
On life's fair Tree, fait by the throne of God:

What golden Joys ambrosial clustering glow,
In His full beam, and ripen for the Jull,
Where momentary Ages are no more?

Where
Thus in the verses to plate 1 the mandrake-child tells of his own birth and imprisonment: 'And She found me beneath a Tree/
A Mandrake & in her Veil hid me'. In the verses accompanying plate 5 the veil has become the Mundane Shell. In plate 6 the child bursts out of it, and the verses predict that the 'Sexual Garments sweet' might 'grow a devouring Winding sheet'. And finally, at the end of the series, when man is back where he began, the worm is there too:

Thou 'rt my Mother from the Womb
Wife, Sister, Daughter to the Tomb
Weaving to Dreams the Sexual strife
And weeping over the Web of Life.

The motto of the frontispiece also has an interesting history. At one level, the verse from the Book of Job 'echoes Job's cry to Heaven', as Keynes says, 'lamenting the insignificance of man and his unworthiness of the special position assigned to him by God'. But the phrase was also accompanied, in eighteenth-century exegesis, with two opposing connotations. When Sterne used the phrase with gusto, exclaiming to the reader, 'What is the life of man! Is it not to shift from side to side? —— from sorrow to sorrow? —— to button up one cause of vexation! —— and unbutton another! ', he was capitalizing on the popularity of these connotations, in which the phrase was not, as he used it, a motto of mutability, but of men's place in the scheme of creation.

On the one hand the phrase was held to derive from Job vii. 17, and was used to illustrate a pessimistic estimation of the nature and destiny of the race, especially the achievements of the scientific community led by Newton. On the other hand the same phrase was held to derive from Psalm 8 and was used to enforce an enthusiastic celebration of man's dominant place in the scheme of creation. Although the derivation from the Book of Job was the more popular one, the derivation from the Psalm was, etymologically, the decisive one, for it was the one which Paul used in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 6). Nevertheless, a great deal of energy was expended in attempts to establish the truth and relevance of Job's complaint. The sort of thing one was likely to find, can be seen, in bald form, in Blackmore's paraphrase:

O, what is Man? What is the Hope and Trust
Of a poor piece of ill-connected Dust?
What is the Wight, that God should condescend
To try his Strength, and with him should contend?
Wilt thou such Honour on a Wretch bestow,
Is he worth thy Notice, or thy Blow?
Wilt thou thy Power against a Worm engage,
Is Man a proper Object of thy Rage?

or in Ralph Erskine's hymn on the subject

O what is man, that worthless wight,
That God should condescend
To magnify him, and in might
With such a rush contend!

Oh brittle man, from dust brought forth,
Wilt thou indeed bestow
Such honour great? or is he worth
Thy notice, or thy blow?

Is such a mortal fit to be
The object of thy rage?
Wilt thou thy strong artillery
Against a worm engage?

This kind of verbal embroidery would be of no interest at all, except that it represents a widespread taste for such things. Exegesis and commentary rarely rose above this standard, and it became the stock of poetasters as well as of poets as accomplished as Prior and Young.

And so while George Sandys, Joseph Caryl, George Hutcheson, Thomas Fenton, Samuel Clarke and others wrote commentaries on the Jobean context, recommending the truth of Job's statement; and George Abbot, Symon Patrick, William Langhorne, Laurence Holden, and others embellished the passage in paraphrase, James Hervey, who was far their superior in the art of manipulating the emotions of his readers, used it in the Psalmist's sense. He warmed to his task and tried to carry the reader with him when he wrote,

1. R. Erskine, Job's Hymns, (Glasgow, 1752), p. 34.

Too long, must I own, have my affections been
pinioned by vanity, and immured in this earthly clod.
But these thoughts break the shackles; these objects
open the door of liberty. My soul, fired by such noble
prospects, weighs anchor from this little nook, and
coasts no longer about its contracted shores; dotes
no longer on its painted shells. The immensity of
things is her range, and an infinity of bliss is
her aim. . .

Behold this immense expanse, and admire the
condescension of thy God . . .When I consider thy
heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and
the stars which thou hast ordained; I am smitten with
wonder at thy glory, and cry out in a transport
of gratitude, Lord what is man. . .

The tone of this passage, if nothing else about it, is
the tone Blake intended to suggest in the motto to the frontispiece.
He may have had only the Jobean context in mind when he drew
the first sketch in his notebook, but when he engraved the
design and shortened the phrase to its more ambiguous form,
he also changed the punctuation from the complaining query it
had been in the Book of Job, to the joyful exclamation of the
Psalm. Even so, this change probably would not have convinced
all readers to forgo the standard condemnation of man's pride,
or the Jobean complaint, in favour of something more inviting,
such as Pico's challenge in his oration. The phrase would still
have been ambiguous. Yet, to an eighteenth-century reader,
it could not remain ambiguous, because in the current exegetic
climate the meaning of the scriptures was thought to be clear
and reasonable to the average reader. Above all, scriptures

1. James Hervey, 'Contemplations on the Starry Heavens',
did not contain contradictions. Yet this very assumption precluded any satisfactory resolution. In maintaining the reasonableness of Christianity, exegesis had stifled itself by having also to adhere to the untenable view that the inspiration of the scriptures was by verbal dictation. Many students of religion became incapable of dealing with the Bible at any meaningful level because they were ceaselessly engaged in reasoning up to it, or, as Johnson put it, in trying the Apostles once a week for perjury. The layman was unlikely to have been better off, since debates on the subject had become the topics of coffee-houses. And even among those who were knowledgeable, the interpretation of the Bible had come to be seen as a branch of literary criticism, with its bugbears of taste, levels of style, diction, and the rest. Even the contributions of Lowth and Herder affected little more than the appreciation of the Bible.

But in previous exegesis, resolution of the truth of the phrase 'what is man', had not caused any particular problem. Calvin was the one who handled it with a firmer hand than any

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other, and it was Calvin's commentary which was, no doubt, the source of Hervey's use of the phrase in the Psalmist's sense. Calvin explained that there were not two meanings for the same phrase in the scriptures, but that Job's complaint was 'to the flatte contrary' of the proper sentiment in Psalm 8, for 'We have good cause to marvell and to say, Alasse Lorde, what are wee that thou visitest us, that thou usest us so familiarly, that wee bee as thy children, that thou holdest us as in thy lappe, and that thou shewest thy selfe so bountiful towards us. Loe what we ought to do.' But Job 'tourneth Gods providence quite upside downe, and that in steade of comforting and chearing himselfe therwith, he would faine that God were farre off'.

And Job's mistake points a lesson: 'When mennes mouthes are out of taste, nothing can like them: in case as if a mannes stomacke bee squemish by meanes of sickenesse, the best and the finest meates that coulde be brought unto him, should have no favour with him: but shouide loath him, and provoke him as it were to vomitinge. So standeth the case with us.'

Calvin's resolution of the differing senses of the phrase shows an affinity with Blake's frontispiece, in the sublimation

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
of the whole issue to a question of perception, and in making perception entirely a moral matter. Calvin put it that 'When mennes mouthes are out of taste, nothing can like them.' To the same purpose, Milton, in Aereopagitica, had begun one argument by quoting Titus 1. 15: 'To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge whether of good or evill; the knowledge cannot defile, nor consequently the books, if the will and conscience be not defil'd.' Blake's aphorism makes essentially the same point, but in a rather more appealing and open-ended way: 'The Suns Light when he unfolds it / Depends on the Organ that beholds it.'

One can see then, that not only has Blake urged the reader to a new life of creative, instead of passive, perception, but he has also forced the reader to begin that life immediately, for it is up to the reader which association of the phrase 'What is Man' he will choose. He can, like Job, turn God's providence upside down, or he can try to imitate the divine.

In the combination of motto and design, Blake has accomplished a number of things. Instead of suggesting either the Jobean context in isolation, or the context of the Psalm in isolation, he has encompassed both of them. First, he has portrayed man's mortality and his limitations by depicting the worm, which is

never without morbid associations. But rather than quoting the phrase from Job in full, and asking why God magnified man, Blake has, in effect, magnified his own picture of the hybrid man-reptile, treating it almost in the manner of an ornithologist. In so doing, he achieves a satiric, almost comic tone, and he is able to deflate the sanctimonious muddle of the commentaries and paraphrases on Job. And when one looks more closely at the magnified worm, one can see that it is not the filthy, gnawing creature of the grave, the worm of eighteenth-century moralizing, but rather a human being who is a worm only because he is asleep. For him to become a butterfly will not be a matter of pruning his 'vain desires', but simply of waking up. Blake has used the allegory of the caterpillar and the butterfly, then, more in its original sense than in the way it had been disfigured by the moralists of the eighteenth century. And a contemporary reader, seeing in the frontispiece not a warning against ambition and 'vain pursuits', but an invocation to mental travelling, might almost have seen Blake's plate as subversive of official norms of morality.

Next to the worm with a human face is a worm without human features, feeding intently on the leaf. The two worms together suggest that transcendence is not a necessary consequence of existence, but depends on a certain degree of aspiration -- which for the sleeping child could only take the form of dreaming. When the human worm awakes, bursts out of his shell, and rises
to his full stature as a man, he will stand in much the same position as Albion in Blake's Albion rose. The man will have attained a fulfilled, beatific state, and will long ago have left his cocoon behind. The difference between this moment of perfection, and the mere potentiality of the frontispiece, and discovering a way to get from the one to the other, is the subject matter of the Gates of Paradise. The design announces the beginning of a journey whose destination is the state of Albion rose; and the motto announces that the success of the journey depends on the traveller himself.
Chapter Two

Plate 1
Plate 1 depicts a woman kneeling to pluck a child out of the soil. The two separate motifs, the maternal figure bending over to pluck, and the child growing out of the ground, probably came to Blake through Philip Ayres' *Emblemata Amatoria*. The maternal figure derives from Emblem 18 (plate 1. 1), and the motif of the child growing out of the ground derives from Emblem 1 (plate 1. 2). While Blake may have been borrowing directly from Ayres, he has used the motifs quite freely, with little consideration for the original context. The notion from plate 18 that love will accept only the best for her lover, and the notion from plate 1, that love will transform the lover, can have only a slender connection with the meaning of Blake's plate. One of the problems in establishing Ayres as

1. Philip Ayres, *Emblemata Amatoria*, (London, 1683; rpt., Menston: Scolar Press Facsimile, 1973). For a discussion see Praz, pp. 127 ff., and Freeman, p. 230 ff. The similarity of the motif was also noticed, but not discussed, by Johnson, 'Emblem and Symbol in Blake', *L L Q*, XXXVII (1974), p. 153. This motif may have been one of those Fuseli so happily stole from Blake. See his Shepherd's Dream, in the lower left hand corner of which there is a woman plucking a mandrake.

2. The distaff-like winding of the woman's pouch in Blake may be an allusion to the figure of 'Decline' in the allegories of the ages of man, who corresponds to cold and the black bile. See the discussion in Saturn and Melancholy, p. 294, of the early twelfth century MS, *The Ages of Man* and the Temperaments. 
Plate 1.1

Plate 1.2

a source is that the designs in Emblemata Amatoria did not originate with Ayres, nor did the complicated history of the borrowing and theft of material end with him. Long after the last edition of Emblemata Amatoria had left the press in 1714 the designs which Ayres himself had borrowed from Vaenius, Heinsius, and Thronus Cupidinis were being collected and arranged in an emasculated format to satisfy new tastes.

In 1818, when Blake added 'The Keys of the Gates', he identified the child as mandrake, but it appears that he had this identification in mind all along. In the Bible the mandrake was associated with an aphrodisiac or an aid to conception, especially with reference to the story in Genesis xxx of Ruben finding mandrakes in his field. But Blake did not mean to allude to the story, for it centers more nearly on those who use the mandrake, than on the mandrake itself. In the Gates, Blake was more interested in establishing a certain identity for the child and for this purpose the superstitions surrounding the mandrake appear to be more useful. The most significant

1. See Praz, pp. 127 - 34, and 127 n. 1 and 2. See also H. Thomas, 'The Emblemata Amatoria of Philip Ayres', The Library, xiv (1910), pp. 73 - 95.

2. See also The Song of Solomon, vii. 13.
point, from which all the rest derive, is that 'the root thereof resembleth the shape of a man'. It was thought that the plant, when domesticated, could be found more often in England than in any other country; and when wild, it favoured the spot under a gallows, since it had more than likely been sown by the fat or urine of 'seyde of... hym that is hanged', the sex of the victim determining the sex of the plant. According to superstition, it was a formidable task to pick a mandrake. 'He who would take up a plant thereof must tie a dog thereunto to pull it up, which will give a great shreeke at the digging up; otherwise if a man should do it he should surely die in short space after.' When they intended to take up the root of this plant, they took the winde thereof, and with a sword describing three circles about it, they digged it up, looking toward the west... The superstitions became even more involved than


3. Ibid.


5. Ibid.

these, and if all had been true, as Sir Thomas Browne put it, 'This were to introduce a second forbidden fruit, and inhcne the first malediction; making it not only mortall for Adam to taste the one, but capitall unto his posterity to eradicate or dig up the other'.

When the mandrake was considered as an herb, on the other hand, it presented a much less menacing face. Galen classified it as cold and moist, and later physicians and herbalists recommended it, among other remedies, as a purge for phlegm and melancholy. It was, as well, an excellent soporific 'when put into the fundament' or ingested; and it was an aphrodisiac or sorts, since it had an action which was 'not so much to invigorate ... in coition, as to prolong the Act, and spin out the motions of carnality'.

Blake was certainly aware of this material, and no doubt he assumed his audience was too, but he did not specifically allude to any of the superstitions. Some of the early commentators, however,

1. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Browne, p. 301.
found in such lore an explanation of the drama in the plate.

Swinburne was so carried away by the superstitions that he was led to describe events which Blake never depicted.

... the woman finds the child under a tree, sprung of the earth like a mandrake, which he who plucks up and hears groan must go mad or die; grown under the tree of physical life, which is rooted in death, and the leaf of it is poisonous, and it bears as fruit the wisdom of the serpent, moral reason or rational truth, which invents the names of virtue and vice, and divides moral life into

1. Blake did, however, use this material in other works, as, for instance, in 'The Mental Traveller', where he applied the penalty for picking a mandrake -- a withered arm -- to anyone who dares touch the 'frowning form' of the babe. So too, the motif of the collapsing cosmos, which Blake uses in 'The Mental Traveller', also derives from similar sources. In John Armstrong's poem on the avoidance of melancholy, 'The Art of Preserving Health' (1744), for instance, the precipitous despair of the melancholic is described in the following way:

   ... the sun grows pale;
   A mournful visionary light o'erspreads
   The cheerful face of nature: earth becomes
   A dreary desart, and heaven frowns above.


2. See also Damon, Philosophy and Symbols, p. 89, who emphasized that the mandrake was engendered from the corpse (instead of the seed or urine) of the dead, and that picking the mandrake doomed one to an immediate death.
good and evil. Out of earth is rent violently forth the child of dust and clay, naked, wide-eyed, shrieking; the woman bends down to gather him as a flower, half blind with fierce surprise and eagerness, half smiling with foolish love and pitiful pleasure; with one hand she holds other children, small and new-blown also as flowers, huddled in the lap of her garment; with the other she plucks him up by the hair, regardless of his deadly shriek and convulsed arms, heedless that this uprooting of the mandrake is the seal of her own death also.

Even Sir Geoffrey Keynes was led to say that the child is 'ready to scream as it emerges from the material world'. But in all the copies I have seen not enough detail is visible to determine whether the child is screaming or doing anything else. And in one of the preliminary notebook sketches, Blake has depicted the child with upraised arms, and fierce weedy hair, details which could as well depict the child's celebration of birth as the shock

1. Swinburne, pp. 22 - 3.

2. Keynes, G P, I, p. 10. The shriek of the mandrake should be seen in the same context as Thel's shriek when she flees from whatever it is she sees in the 'dewy grave'; and both of these should be seen in the light of Blair's allegory of the way men refuse to face death. He described a 'Youngster', who is ready...

   To stem the Tide!

   This moment resolute, next unresolv'd:
   At last! he dips his Foot; but as he dips,
   His Fears redouble, and he runs away (The Grave, 700 - 3)

Cf. also NT 286, which depicts a man weeping on the door of eternity.
of his emerging into consciousness. Thus, the superstitions surrounding the mandrake, while pregnant of suggestion, cannot provide a definite interpretation of the child's birth. So too, the associations with melancholy and with the graveyard are important, but this broad compatibility of context does not seem to be so telling as the fact that the mandrake root resembles the lower torso of a man. In this sense the mandrake appeared in the poems of Harte as the emblem of cloying, and in Smart as an earthly preacher, but the motif did not find a lasting significance until Blake saw the mandrake as the man of the earth, halfway between vegetable and human.

In using the motif of the mandrake in this way Blake was amplifying a common description in religious poetry: that man was nothing but a creature of clay. Poets frequently appealed to the gloomy images of Job's complaints, and Young, the spokesman

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2. Smart, in 'The Country Squire and the Mandrake', The Gentleman's Magazine, (1755), has the mandrake deliver the final blow: 'Pretty, in Nature's various plan, / To see a weed that's like a man; / But 'tis a grievous thing indeed, / To see a man so like a weed.'
3. Blake also used the motif of the mandrake in Jerusalem 11. 22: '... Scofield is bound in iron armour, / He is like a mandrake in the earth before Reuben's gate, / He shoots beneath Jerusalem's walls to undermine her foundations.' (K. 631; E. 153). Considering that Scofield is the one who had Blake indicted for treason, it may be relevant to adduce Donne's description of the mandrake as one who 'with his death can do most good' ('Progress of the Soul', 170).
of his age, never tired of hoping that man might escape the cycle of nature: "Shall man alone, for whom all else revives, / No resurrection know? Shall man alone, / Imperial man! be sown in barren ground, / Less privileg'd than grain on which he feeds?" \(^1\)

The picture of a child growing out of the ground, then, would have been recognized, before Blake named him as a mandrake, as the ordinary representation of man's physical limitations. \(^2\) A similar design appears in Emblemes ou Devises Chrestiennes, (plate 1. 3), where man is compared to a briar whose nature it is to send shoots back into the ground. And in Blake's startling illustration to the verses of Young (plate 1. 4), the man growing out of the ground seems to be yearning through his change of being immediately in front of the reader, as if to say that although man originated in Nature, his telos is to aspire beyond it.

In the first plate of the Gates, however, the mandrake's aspiration is not strong enough to overcome the limitations of his nature, and he is able to escape the clutches of the soil only by being harvested, not by pulling himself free. He is torn out of the soil by a woman, and the scene as a whole is set under the boughs of a tree, details which remind one of

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1. Young, Night Thoughts, VI, 705 - 6.
Plate 1.3


Engraving.
Imperial Man! be sown in barren ground,
Left privileg'd than Grain, on which he feeds?
Is Man, in whom alone is power to prize
The bliss of Being, or with previous pain
Deplore its Period, by the spleen of Fate
Severely doom'd Death's single Unredeem'd?
If Nature's Revolution speaks aloud,
In her Gradation, hear her louder still
Look Nature thro', 'tis next Gradation all
By what minute degrees her Scale ascends?
Each middle Nature join'd at each Extreme,
To that above it join'd, to that beneath.
Parts into parts reciprocally flo't,
Ahnor divorce: What love of Union reigns?
Here, dormant Matter, waits a call to Life;
Half-life, half-death join There; Here, Life and Sense;
There, Sense from Reason steals a glimmering ray;
Reason shines out in man. But how preferv'd
The Chain unbroken upward, to the realms.
Donne's 'Progress of the Soul', in which the soul begins his metempsychosis as the forbidden fruit, becomes a mandrake, and is picked by Eve. Blake's earliest version of the motto, 'I found him beneath a tree in the Garden' (my emphasis) also suggests that the scene was intended to be set in Eden and that the tree is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. So also, the verses in 'The Keys of the Gates', which describe how, once the mandrake is picked by the woman, 'Serpent Reasonings us entice / Of Good & Evil: Virtue & Vice' suggest the same tree. And in his watercolour designs for Night Thoughts it appears, once again, that Blake has used a scheme similar to Donne's. In his 346th design (plate 1. 5) Blake has depicted a winged mother nursing her chrysalis-child on a pendant apple, while a winged father rises from the apple. The interesting thing about the design is that it does not correspond to Young's poem at all, except that Night the Eighth is subtitled 'The Man of the World Answer'd'. Yet Blake had this allegorical scheme ready to hand. Because for him 'the world' meant the knowledge of good and evil, he was able to supply a scenario in an encapsulated and self-sustaining form. Thus, one would argue for the overriding importance of Donne's scheme, and one would follow Bernard

1. We know that Blake was interested in Donne's poem, for he quoted from it on page 85 of his notebook. Cf also Donne's 'Progress', lines 141 - 3 with Blake's The First Book of Urizen, 13. 12 - 16 (K. 229; E. 75).
Plate 1.5

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795 - 7), number 346.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Blackstone, who described the tree in plate 1 as the Tree of Mystery. 1

One cannot forget, as Kathleen Raine has reminded us, that in some exegesis at least the Tree of Life was considered to be no different from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and that the great task of faith was to find the Tree of Life where most people only found the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. 2 At the same time, it is important to establish a definite identity for the tree in the Gates of Paradise, for in so doing, one can see that the first real movement in the series has been not a step in the direction of paradise, but a repetition of the old pattern of the fall.

This pessimistic movement coincides with Bede's explanation that the mandrake, as a plant without a head, represents humanity without Christ. 3 The mandrake, 'this living buried man', as Donne 4 called him, is a creature without higher faculties, which in the context of the Gates means that he lacks the ability to change himself, and is doomed to repeat forever the endless cycle of nature. As an organism which is rooted in the ground

and yet shows some trace of human affections, he recalls, as Frye suggests, 'Blake's frustrated sunflower'. The sunflower too was rooted in the ground and yet longed to go to 'that sweet golden clime / Where the traveller's journey is done'. But it remained rooted, an emblem of endless aspiration. Just so, the mandrake-child remains rooted and grounded not in love, but in the deterministic world of the natural order, and this distinction was, for Blake, the axis on which the identity and uniqueness of man turned. It is the distinction, as Milton put it, between an 'elemental life', and 'that ethereall and fift essence, the breath of reason it selfe... an immortality'.

Chapter Three

Plates 2, 3, 4, and 5
Plates 2, 3, 4, and 5, which depict the four elements, have always been interpreted as symbolic of the limitations and frustrations to which man is bound, but there has been no study which deals with the plates at a more basic level, investigating their connections with, and their departures from previous uses of the tetradic categories.

Because these plates correspond to the following group of four plates (7, 8, 9, and 10), and because the Gates as a whole is organized on the basis of groups of four plates each, one may want to emphasize the broad connection of the four elements with the tetradic categories in a schematic world-view. In such a world-view any member of the scheme can imply the rest of it, so that 'earth', for instance, will suggest the melancholy humour and temperament, the Galenic qualities of cold and dry, the planet Saturn, the north wind, the black bile, a mature age, and the season autumn. If one sees Blake's designs in this way, the elements will represent the primary qualities present in all men, and the relative abundance of each element will determine the characteristics of one's personality.

However, before attempting to type-cast the life-cycle represented in the Gates, one must recognize that Blake's treatment of the elements discourages this interpretation. In pictorial tradition the personification of the elements began in the context of the descriptive figures of the four temperaments, the four ages of man, and of the occupations corresponding to each. And while

it was common enough to see a picture of the sanguine man standing in the clouds, the choleric in flames, the melancholic on the earth, and the phlegmatic in the sea, it was equally important that these characters correspond to the four ages of man. The sanguine was depicted as a well-dressed youth, the choleric as a warrior in the prime of life, the melancholic as a middle-aged gentleman, and the phlegmatic as a long-bearded old man leaning on a crutch. In the Gates of Paradise, however, Blake has ignored this aspect of the scheme. Each of his elemental figures is the same age, and at the same time each seems to represent not the dominant type of the temperment, but an overabundance of the corresponding humour, even to the point of madness. They are, as Tinker described, 'horrible and dangerous, always hostile to man, and likely to destroy him.'²

Blake has, then, pictured the elemental figures not as representing the qualities of ancient natural science, but rather he has caricatured the figures as certain states of mind, founded, but also exceeding the usual balance one found in pictures of the temperments and humours. The elements had, of course, been pictured under the similitude of human figures before, but never so radically as this. One might find that an overabundance of the element earth was cited as a constitutional factor in the temperment of a melancholic, and an overabundance of water in the peculiar dropsy of the phlegmatic.

1. Tinker, p. 110.
but one did not see a character called 'earth' struggling to free
himself from a cave, nor did one see 'water' weeping. Blake's vision
of the four elements is for this reason a departure from tradition.

At the same time that they are caricatures of mental states,
the elemental figures also have a place in the life-cycle of the
Gates. Because they come after the birth of the child, and yet
before the development of his consciousness, the four elemental
figures represent both the constituent parts of the child's natural
inheritance, and four possible types of his future development.
As such, they belong more to moral psychology than to natural science.
Despite the advances in empirical psychology, humouralism still
exerted some influence in eighteenth-century psychology, so that
Blake could find the raw material for his physiognomic scheme in
works of his own day. In Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy, for
instance, the basis for many of Lavater's descriptions, despite his
strange theories and speculations, remained completely traditional
and based on humouralism.

... the choleric temperament ever aims at rising:
fearless of danger, it takes a daring flight. More
timid, on the contrary, the melancholic digs, explores to
the bottom: it loves the solid, and cleaves to it.
The sanguine launches into a distant region, and is
lost in endless wanderings. The phlegmatic thinks
neither of rising nor sinking, nor of distant
prospects; he attempts only what he can obtain
quietly and without effort, only what is within
his reach: he makes choice of the shortest road in
perambulating the contracted horizon which he
has traced out for himself, and will seldom make
one step beyond the absolutely necessary.

Now Blake's depictions of the four elements does not follow Lavater's descriptions, mainly because Lavater did not dig deep enough to find anything new. Everyone was familiar with what he was describing, and even Lavater's long-winded speculations were not new except in their use of physical evidence. In one of his descriptions of the melancholic, for instance, he goes into great detail, discussing 'that look, obstinately dejected', which 'will not raise itself to contemplate and to admire the wonders of the starry firmament'.

One dark point attaches him to the earth and absorbs all his thoughts. The lip, the chin, the folds of the cheek, announce a mind gloomy and morose, which never expands to joy. The whole of the form, and the furrows of the forehead, are absolutely repugnant to gaiety; every thing, even to that long lank hair, adds to the air of sadness which is spread over this figure. The nose might excite a suspicion of the kind of penetration respecting intricate subjects.2

But this sort of imaginary type-casting was limited in scope, and it certainly never rose to the visionary heights of some of the medieval descriptions. For a poet the real test which the

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1. Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy, (London, 1792 - 8), III, p. 96, 7. Blake depicted the four temperaments, I, p. 254, in a rather timid manner, which only heightens the contrast between the four elemental figures in the Gates and the standard figures of the four temperaments. Cf. also Fuseli's 'Bracciafero' in III, p. 294, which is the very portrait of the melancholic.

2. Ibid., p. 103, 4.

3. See Saturn and Melancholy, pp. 78 - 81 and 110, 111, on St. Hildegard of Bingen's Causae et Curae.
schematic world-view offered was whether he would see in it
the justification of a conservative and hieratic view of life and
politics, or whether he would use it imaginatively, as a means of
organizing conceptions of great scope.

Most of the Augustans either gave a half-hearted assent to
the former, or simply avoided the issue. In eighteenth-century
poetry schematism had become either outmoded or conventional,
and despite a few exceptions, the four elements were used in the
same way as observation's 'extensive view'. In the face of this
sort of gloss, Blake had to assert that the diagrammatic mode was
worth reviving, and he replaced the blindness of the astronomical
view with one which came close enough to see the elements in
human form. But having done so, he did not adopt another popular
view, such as Lavater's, of four equally bland types. On the contrary,
each of Blake's four elements seems to be monstrously deficient,
and tragically fallen. Although each element is still unique
and self-contained, and therefore still a kind of basic particle,
that very condition precludes their ever being united in any
combination at all. In this sense they do not appear to be
elemental qualities as such, or to correspond to the humours,
temperaments, ages or seasons. Instead, each appears to be an
anarchic hypostasis of what used to be one pillar of the tetrad.
While the whole structure might once have stood strong and of a
single piece, the parts alone can only produce chaos. And the old
solution to this condition, the intervention of love, is no
longer a viable one. Despite the suggestions of Tinker and Keynes,
one is given no reason to think that, as in Spenser's 'Hymn of Love', the warring elements will be brought together in fit harmony. In the Gates of Paradise the elements are shown to be permanently at odds with man.

From the frontispiece one learned that the progress of life could be toward a beatific state, and from the schematic structure of the Gates one expects that this beatific state will take the form of an ideal type. In an earlier era the ideal type had been formed on the model of the sanguine, but in the Gates the sanguine, 'air', has abandoned himself to groundless speculation. The message of plates 2, 3, 4, and 5 is that the ideal type cannot be formulated from any combination of natural qualities. Indeed, the natural qualities appear to be the principal obstacles to fulfillment. They are the images of frustration in the same context that the mandrake and the sunflower are forever tied to the ground. The

1. Tinker, loc. cit.; Keynes, G P, I, passim. Both Tinker and Keynes assume that since the elemental world is portrayed as fallen, fulfillment can only be spiritual. Keynes, says, for instance, 'as always for Blake, earthly life is a melancholy preparation for happiness hereafter (p. 12), a position with which I disagree entirely.

2. On this issue I disagree with the conjecture of Desiree Hirst, Hidden Riches, (London, 1964), p. 135, that the pictures of the four elements are based on the alchemical work of Robert Fludd. Leaving aside the question of whether Fludd's work has been adequately understood, Blake's four elements are not, like Fludd's sulphur and mercury, intended to be opposing substances, the union of which is the goal of the poet and the philosopher as well as the scientist.
four elements represent, as John Beer says, 'man's condition under the natural law'. In this condition there can be no special pleading. One can remain, as Pope put it, 'Like a plant on his peculiar spot', or one can try to burst out, like Blake's 'Fire'. But is there such a great difference between a man's resting in the ground like the mandrake, and his becoming 'meteor-like', flaming 'lawless thro' the void, / Destroying others, by himself destroy'd'? Is the latter not simply a consequence of the former? And do not both arrive at the same inconclusive end?

It is this knowledge, that a permanent shift has occurred between the Renaissance and the eighteenth century in man's relation to his ideal world, a knowledge informing one that man has become a stranger to his own desires, which places Blake's vision of the four elements beyond the ancient, medieval and Renaissance orders of the tetradic categories. Blake has, in a sense, returned to those orders insofar as he has humanized the elements in a scientific age; but he has done so only by showing how inhuman and how deranged they have become. One cannot find a desirable place in the world of the Gates, and not because the organization of that world is too intricate, but because that world is off its axis, and there is no longer a place for anyone.


This post-lapsarian life is submerged in a terrestrial cycle, which means that the dominant one of the four elements is, as Frye has suggested, the element earth. Each plate is then, simply a different view of the same melancholy affliction. In this case Blake is not departing from tradition, but developing Milton's distinction between the four terrestrial elements, and the fifth 'quintessential' element of rationality — so fully, indeed, that the best description of the elements can be seen, from Blake's point of view, in the lines from 'Il Penseroso', where the elements are

... Demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element

The demonic elements are different facets of the fallen order, an order which one can now see is manifested psychologically in the melancholy humour. Blake has used the schematic system to

1. Frye, 'The Keys of the Gates', p. 193. Even Swinburne seemed to have some inkling that 'earth' stood out from the rest of the elements. To him it was 'the heavy melancholy earth, grievous to life, oppressive of the spirit, type of all sorrows and tyrannies that are brought forth upon it, saddest of all the elements, tightest as a curb and painfullest as a load upon the soul' (p. 23). The picture of 'Earth' seems to be based on two sources, Durer's iron etching of 'The Man in Despair' (Bartsch 70), for the posture of the man; and the generic treatment of the same subject in the iconologies. See for instance, 'Ame' in Boudard, Iconologie, (Paris, 1759)


portray man in this order, divided against himself, but he has also made it clear that one cannot simply put the pieces back together. One has to formulate a new ideal type, which is not part of, but greater than the system.
Chapter Four

Plate 6
All the commentators agree that the figure of the winged child bursting forth from his shell is symbolic of the birth of something new and wonderful, and the only question has been the identity and significance of the child. Damon, finding his meaning in 'The Keys', suggested that the plate depicted the coming of sex. Tinker makes the valuable comparison between Blake's treatment of the child and the figure that sits on the shoulders of Youth in the frontispiece to \textit{Songs of Experience}, and he suggested that the meaning was the same in both: 'Innocence advancing to Experience. The child \textit{in plate 6} is as yet perfectly joyous, and, in full confidence, looks upward to the light'. Goerge Mills Harper suggested that the child was symbolic of the soul breaking out of the world of generation, the Mundane Shell, and that the soul was, therefore, breaking forth into Eternity. Kathleen Raine suggested that the plate represented the birth of Phanes or Time, who 'according to Orphic theology, hatches from a world egg, whose two halves are heaven and earth'.


2. Tinker, p. 111. There is an interesting analogue to the frontispiece to \textit{Songs of Experience} in B. de Montfaucon, \textit{L'Antiquité expliquée & représentée en figures}. \ldots (Paris, 1719 - 24), Vol. II, Plate CXLII, p. 230, in which Bacchus is depicted as the youth who advances into the foreground with a putto on his shoulders and a cluster of grapes in his left hand.


And in another instance she followed Harper by explaining that "hatching", for Blake, always refers to the birth of the soul, the second birth, of winged psyche from wingless pupa'. Raymond Lister too thought of the egg as the Mundane Shell. 'The figure has broken out of this into the outer and greater world of the imagination; it is a rebirth into a spiritual world, therefore he has wings. Although the plate is so tiny, Blake has shown very expressively the look of wonder on the child's face as "hatching ripe he breaks the shell".' Keynes borrowed something from all of these commentators. He thought that the plate depicted both the advancement of the child into adulthood, now 'with sexual powers demanding gratification'; and also that the child was meeting 'his Saviour, the faculty of imagination, with the help of which he can rend the Veil of materialism'. David Erdman interpreted the plate not so much for what it depicted, as all the previous commentators had done, but for what it predicted. 'The breaking of the shell prefigures the breaking of coffins and tombs, Ugolino's and others', a universal gaol delivery'.

1. Raine, II, p. 182. See also II, p. 312.
Each of these interpretations can be helpful in its way, and John Beer has put each interpretation against the others in order to arrive at a more comprehensive one. In his view, plate 6 stands between two self-contained groups of four plates, and any interpretation must, therefore, show how the design derives from the images of the four elements at war within themselves, and looks forward to the images of frustrated desire in plates 7, 8, 9, and 10. According to Beer, plate 6 cannot depict the physical birth of the child since that event has already occurred, nor can the plate depict the birth into immortality. 'Why should immortality be introduced at the beginning of a series depicting a human lifetime, instead of at the end?' The only real clue, he explains, is to follow the mythological allusion, and assume that the plate represents the birth of Eros out of the World Egg -- so long as it is clear that Eros is neither good nor bad in himself, but simply a sort of cosmic animation. 'Blake's use of the emblem is ambiguous and satirical...corresponding to the ambiguity of human desire. The breaking egg may release either a winged Eros or a serpent of destruction and the child that Blake depicts has the potential lineaments of both.' And, according to Beer, when one considers the paramount position of 'Fire' in the series of the

1. Except that of Keynes and Erdman, which were not published at the time of Blake's Humanism.
3. Ibid., p. 236.
of the elements, and Blake's original conception of 'Fire' as Milton's Satan, 'it is fair to suppose that the "breaking of the shell" reflects Satan's eruption from the bounds of Hell. The interpretation is reinforced by Blake's serpent lore, where the coiled serpent breaks out of the shell of reason to become the fiery serpent of destruction'.

Without introducing further evidence, one can hardly quarrel with Beer's skillful interpretation. It is important to keep in mind, as Beer shows, that Blake's design preserves the same wide berth for choice as the frontispiece, and puts the same premium on the freedom of the will as the frontispiece. Plate 6 cannot be so nearly an emblem of permanent rebirth or of birth into immortality as it is a bursting forth of desire, which is aimed at those states, and which, depending on its use, can become either redemptive or imprisoning.

But Beer's notion that the Cupid-like figure might become a 'fiery serpent of destruction' seems too severe a judgement. Although Beer says that the child has the 'potential lineaments' of both a winged Cupid and a serpent, he does not substantiate more than to observe that the child has a slightly mischievous grin on his face. And even in the copies where this is visible, it is difficult to tell what Blake intended to suggest by the grin -- especially when one notices that the features of the face are not well-aligned on the figure's

1. Ibid.
head, nor are they well incorporated with the rest of the design, so that the physiognomy in the later states may be the result of Blake's having overworked the copper. It should be possible to discover a more apt identity for the child than that of a young devil.

One comparison is particularly helpful. As we have already seen, 'Il Penseroso' was a crucial work in the development of Blake's conception of melancholy, and the background material on melancholy was most accessible in Warton's edition of Milton's minor poems. At one point in the poem Milton's persona asks that Melancholy bring 'Him that yon soars on golden wing, / Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne, / The Cherub Contemplation'. Might not the birth of desire in Blake's plate 6 be Blake's treatment of a creature who ought to become 'the Cherub Contemplation'?

Today one thinks of 'contemplation' as the exclusive activity of aged men in cloisters, and indeed, it had something of the same connotation in Blake's day, but it also had another meaning. Warton explained that 'By Contemplation is here meant that stretch of thought, by which the mind ascends "To the first good, first perfect and first fair". . . ' He went on to explain the obvious

2. 'Il Penseroso', 52 - 4.
antecedent from the Bible. 'The whole imagery alludes to the
cherubic forms that conveyed the fiery wheeled car in Ezekiel
x. 2'. And even outside the context of the poem itself, 'contemplation'
had the connotation of aspiration and imitation of the divine.

1. Ibid. On the problem of distinguishing the two kinds
of contemplation, the one of aspiration, and the other
of retirement, Warton explained that 'Contemplation, of
a more sedate turn, and intent only on human things, is
more fitly described, as by Spenser, under the figure
of an old man; time and experience qualifying men best
for this office. Spencer might be right in his imagery;
and yet Milton might be right in his, without being
supposed to ramble after some fanciful Italian' (p. 75).
Contemporary illustrations of 'Il Penseroso' are unfortunately
of little help in this matter. Stothard's engravings
for an edition of 1799, for instance, depict only the
literal scene of the poem: a woman dressed in black,
gazing up at the starry sky with a harvest moon low on
the horizon. And Blake's own designs for 'Il Penseroso',
while they are much more adventurous, and show a great
knowledge of iconographical tradition, are also of little help in the present matter, for they belong to a much
later period, after Blake had already written Milton,
and at the start of the period in which he was to quit
writing and illuminating the work of others. In the later period he is much more circumspect in his treatment
of Milton than he was in 1793, the year of The Marriage
of Heaven and Hell. For a discussion of Blake's designs,
see E. J. Rose, 'Blake's Illustrations for Paradise Lost,
L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso: A Thematic Reading',
40 - 67; J. E. Grant, 'Blake's Designs for L'Allegro
Blake Newsletter, 16 (Spring 1971), pp. 317 - 34; and
Judith Rhodes, 'Blake's Designs for L'Allegro and Il
Penseroso: Thematic Relationships In Diagram', Blake
Newsletter, 16 (Spring 1971) pp. 135, 6.
Peter Fisher has drawn attention to the way that Thomas Taylor frequently translated the Greek θερπί as 'contemplation' because the Greek word originally meant 'vision'. As Fisher explained, 'The highest form of intellectual activity is that of contemplative perception.' Thus, the whole notion of contemplation was one drawn from analogy with the divine process.

A clue to Milton's sense of the term can be seen in the fact that, when he adapted Durer's allegory, he had to invent the character of Contemplation, in order to give it the wings which had originally belonged to Melancholy herself. In Durer's engraving there was, of course, a winged, cupid-like putto already, who was busily engaged in writing in a book, but this figure was an emblem of mindless application, and Milton was not concerned with it. The wings of real importance belonged to Melancholy herself, for while she was rooted in Saturn's element, earth, and often sunk in an impenetrable gloom, she was also capable of the highest flights of imagination. One of Milton's great contributions to the conception of melancholy was to soften and to emphasize this side of melancholy, enabling one


to find transport in the gloom, even if the gloom might never be lifted. Warton went into some detail to point out how Milton had simplified the allegory by keeping Melancholy herself firmly earth-bound, however high she might wander in mind; and how Milton transferred the motif of the wings to the figure of Contemplation in order for that figure, rather than Melancholy herself, to carry the burden of aspiration. Warton said he thought it "highly probable, that Milton had this personification in his eye: and by making two figures out of one, and by giving Melancholy a kindred companion, to whom wings may be properly attributed, and who is distantly implied in Durer's idea, he had removed the violence, and cleared the obscurity of the allegory, preserving at the same time the whole of the original conception."

One might still lodge the objection, as Warton did to Newton, that the Cherub Contemplation was never imagined in the form of a putto or a cupid. Warton put it, "As Milton's Satan is not a monster with cloven hoof, horns, and tail, so neither are his cherubs cupids." But for Blake, Satan certainly

1. The meaning Milton attached to 'contemplation' was not necessarily his own contribution. Reed suggested that Milton was indebted to Nabbes' Microcosmos, which he had recently republished in Old Plays, Vol. IX, p. 120. Quoted by Warton, op. cit., p. 71.

2. Warton, ed., p. 64.

3. Ibid., p. 71.
was a monster, and while Blake was not overly fond of the Mannerist and Baroque putti, he did have a very definite need in his iconography for diminutive figures. And, one cannot forget, Blake was adapting Milton's figure as much as he was copying it. Blake needed to depict his figure of Contemplation within the life-cycle of the Gates, which meant he had to depict, as it were, the birth of Contemplation. 'Contemplation', in the sense of aspiration to a state of divine intellection, is surely the backdrop Blake was working against, and the end to which he thought man ought to reach.

If the identification of Blake's figure with the Cherub Contemplation turns out to be sound -- and, it must be admitted, I have not proved the case beyond doubt -- it will underline Beer's interpretation that the plate expresses the bursting forth of desire, and indeed extend the notion even further. The bursting forth of desire can be seen to have a definite object in that case: divine perception. In Blake's thought this was the first step in the prophetic vocation.

In his interpretation of plate 6, Beer quoted at length the passage from Dryden's modernization of 'The Knight's Tale' from which Blake extracted the motto, 'At length for hatching ripe he breaks the shell'. Beer explained that Blake was not in the least in agreement with Dryden, but was rather redefining Dryden's conceptions. For Dryden's 'insistence on the traditional belief that the four elements are harmonized by the intervention of Love', Blake substituted 'a vision of the four elements warring in Chaos', and Blake used this imagery 'to symbolize the fruits of
that analytical consciousness by which the creation is seen only
in its component parts. Reliance on his five senses allows man
to stand above nature in separate lordship: but it also leads to
an overwhelming feeling of futility and imprisonment. In desperation
he resorts instead to unlimited exploitation of his own energies.

According to Beer, Blake redefined Dryden's use of the Aristotleian
threefold classification of souls into vegetable, sentient, and
reasoning, so that the vegetable 'reflects the decline of Vision',
the sentient, the 'decline of Desire', and 'the reasoning, now a
solitary state, reflects the way in which man imposes his own will
on others'. And as a reply to Theseus' espousal of stoic
materialism, with his emblem of the long-standing oak, Blake
provided his own image of the oak. '... the Oak dies as well as
the Lettuce but Its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies, but
renews by its seed. just so the Imaginative Image returns by the
seed of Contemplative thought the Writings of the Prophets
illustrate these conceptions of the Visionary Fancy by their
various sublime & Divine Images as seen in the Worlds of Vision'.

In addition to the many relevant points Beer suggests, one
may also see in 'The Knight's Tale' one central image which

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2. Ibid.
3. 'A Vision of the Last Judgement', p. 69 (K. 605; E. 545).
organizes all the rest. The world in which Palamon and Arcite love, fight, and die, is a fallen world, which Blake, by using the description of the birth of man in that world, could identify as the world of the Gates of Paradise. The fallen world of Palamon and Arcite was fallen at a specific time and in a specific way, under the star of Saturn. Thus, at the moment immediately prior to battle, when Palamon has appealed to Venus, and Arcite to Mars, and neither god is able to guarantee triumph to its votary, 'Saturn from his leaden throne arose, / And found a way the difference to compose'. In so doing, he explains the expanse of his rule:

Wide is my Course, nor turn I to my Place,
Till Length of Time, and move with tardy Pace.
Man feels me, when I press th' Etherial Plains;
My Hand is heavy, and the Wound remains.
Mine is the Shipwreck in a Watry Sign;
And in an Earthy, the dark Dungeon mine.
Cold shivering Agues, melancholy Care,
And bitter blasting Winds, and poison'd Air,
Are mine and wilful Death, resulting from Despair.
The throtling Quinsey 'tis my Star appoints,
And Rheumatisms I send to rack the Joints:
When Churls rebel against their Native Prince;
I arm their Hands, and furnish the Pretence;
And housing in the Lion's hateful Sign,
Bought Senates, and deserting Troops are mine.
Mine is the privy Pois'ning; I command
Unkindly Seasons, and ungrateful Land.
By me Kings Palaces are push'd to Ground,
And Miners, crush'd beneath their Mines are found.
'Twas I slew Samson, when the Pillar'd Hall
Fell down, and crush'd the Many with the Fall.
My Looking is the Sire of Pestilence,
1
That sweeps at once the People and the Prince.

The way that Saturn's description of his dominion seems to be almost a catalogue of the plates in the Gates of Paradise shows that Blake has taken the theme of melancholy in its fullest, traditional sense. Even plate 6, which depicts the most hopeful event in the series, is rooted in the melancholy cycle under the star of Saturn.
Chapter Five

Plate 8
Plate 8 depicts a young man threatening to impale a despondent old king who languishes on a crude throne. The tension between the figures has two components, for as Swinburne and Sampson described, the youth is departing from the old man, just as the old man is shrinking back from the youth, but the youth is at the same time turning in on the old man to murder him. Jean Hagstrum and Anthony Blunt have suggested Salviati’s 'Saul' as the source of the extreme contraposto of the son, and his posture can also be seen generically, as the standard one for 'rebellio' in the iconologies (plate 8.1). The posture also attained a wide popularity in other kinds of compositions for the simple reason that it involved a good range of expressive movement without too much foreshortening.

The original identity of the old king, and the motifs used to depict him derive almost entirely from depictions of melancholics

1. Swinburne, pp. 25, 6; Sampson, p. 371.

2. Hagstrum, *William Blake Poet and Painter*, p. 35; Blunt, *The Art of William Blake*, p. 38. Blunt adds, however, that 'this particular fresco cycle was not engraved and seems to have been little studied in the late eighteenth century', and that if Blake did know of it, it could only have been through 'copies made by one of his friends'.

3. In the emblem books, which were entirely conventional in technique, one can find any number of analogues for details such as these. In Ayres' *Emblemata Amatoria*, for instance, see emblem 8 for the posture of the attacker; see emblem 19 for the diffident posture of the old man in the face of attack; and see emblem 32 for the theme of authority's impotence against an upsurge of passion.
Plate 8. 1

The monumental research of Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl has enabled us to see in Dürer's *Melencolia I* both the fulfillment of long standing pictorial and intellectual traditions, and a redefinition of melancholy in all its aspects. For instance, the motif of the drooping head, which in ancient art belonged to Saturn, and which had been the sign of the sin of 'acedia' in medieval art, and also of grief, of fatigue, of meditation, and of a host of other things, came in Dürer's engraving to symbolize the simultaneous and petrifying effect of the triad of grief, fatigue, and creative thought. The motif of the clenched fist, which originated in medieval illustrations as a sign of certain delusions, like that of 'a madman who thinks that he holds a great treasure, or the whole world, in his hand', came, in Dürer's engraving, to signify both the 'tight-fisted' avarice of the melancholic, and a 'fanatical concentration of mind which has truly grasped a problem, but which at the same moment feels itself incapable either of solving or of dismissing it'. And the eerie twilight of the scene as a whole 'is not so much based on the natural

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1. John E. Grant, arguing on the basis of graphic similarity, has suggested as a possible source for this design Vasari's fresco in the Palazzo Vecchio, which depicts the mutilation of Uranos by Cronus (Erdman, Notebook, p. 19). My argument, based on the theme and iconography, identifies the scene as as the mutilation of Cronus by Zeus. But this difference in the generation of the gods is not so significant as the fact that Grant and I arrived at the same source, *The Theogony*, by different routes.
conditions of a certain time of day', but rather, 'it denotes the uncanny twilight of a mind, which can neither cast its thoughts away into darkness nor "bring them to light"'. In the same fashion, many more details in Durer's engraving fit an unusually precise and wide-ranging reinterpretation of melancholy.

While Blake is not aiming at so penetrating a resolution or so wide an application as Durer's, his design still belongs to the tradition which Durer revitalized. Indeed, it would hardly have been possible to depict a pensive figure seen from the side without seeming to imitate Durer. Even in the frontispiece (plate 8. 2) to the great cumulative work, Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, where there was a wealth of material on which to draw, Le Bon, who engraved it, still chose to use the motif of the drooping head, and the seated posture of Saturn.

Between the fifteenth and the later eighteenth century


2. Another of Blake's important borrowings from Durer, which I have not seen pointed out before, is his use of Durer's 'The Four Witches' (1497; Bartsch 75) for plate 81 of *Jerusalem* (rpt., K. 724; E. 236).

3. This posture in which Saturn's expression is reflective, suggesting that he is gripped by some weighty problem, was one of two types in ancient art. See *Saturn and Melancholy*, pp. 196 - 7.
Plate 8. 2

THE ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY

What it is, With all the Kind's causes, symptoms, symptoms, &c. Several cases of it.
In three parts, with their several parts.
Sections, members & subsections,
Philosophically, Medically,
Historically, and curiously.

By
Democritus Junior

With, a Satirical Preface, Conducting to the Following Discourse.
The Second Edition, corrected and augmented by the Author.
Omnia sibi suum, nil minus vide dulci.

London
Printed for B. Cradock and are to be sold at his Shop in Poyntz-head Alley, and by R. Wallis at the Horse Shoe in the Old Bailey.

1660
there were many works which were built on the ideas and the combination of motifs which Durer brought to such a fine pitch; and these works can give us an idea of the uses to which Durer's engraving had been put, hence of the range of meanings available to Blake. In some works the intellectual content had only partly survived, as in Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata (Antwerp, 1607), where van Veen uses the posture of the melancholic to illustrate 'mentis inquietudo' (plate 8. 3). In others the connections with melancholy are more directly through Burton, as in Salvator Rosa's Democritus Deep in Thought (ca. 1650). In others it is the content of the dream or meditation which takes precedence, as in the standard frontispiece to The Pilgrim's Progress, which showed Bunyan resting his head on his hand, and behind him Christian setting off on his journey. And in others still, all the motifs have been diffused under a gothic fog, or have been sublimated to the retirement theme, as in the frontispiece to Roach's Beauties of the Poets (1794; plate 8. 4). And Blake himself used the motif in connection with the mutability theme in his watercolour designs for Night Thoughts (plate 8. 5).

Durer was also a source of inspiration for both poetry and the criticism of it. In Thomas Warton's edition of the minor poems of Milton, Warton suggested what Milton had borrowed from Durer and how Milton had used it, referred the reader to the literature of melancholy which preceded Milton, and heartily recommended Burton's Anatomy. In Joseph Warton's edition of Pope's poems he did much the same thing, recommending, for
Plate 8.3
O. van Veen, Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata, (Antwerp, 1607), Emblem 43.
Engraving.
Plate 8. 4

Plate 8.5

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795 - 7), number 354.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
instance, as 'truly sublime, and strong conceived' the following passage from 'Eloisa and Abelard', which, he said, derived from Durer's engraving.

But o'er the twilight groves, and dusky caves,  
Long-sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,  
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.  

But more important than these for the present discussion is the portrait of the 'Law' in the frontispiece to a Bible which was engraved by John Sturt in 1722 (plate 8. 6). At the head of the page is a depiction of the events described in

1. Quoted by Hagstrum, The Sister-Arts, p. 315. It must be recognized that the motif of the drooping head resting on the palm was not confined solely to depictions of melancholics, although that became its most famous usage. As Panofsky explains, the motif was used in medieval art (which is only one of many areas in which it had a certain currency) to depict 'St. John's grief at the Cross, and the sorrow of the "anima tristis" of the psalmist, but also the heavy sleep of the apostles on the mount of Olives, or the dreaming monk in the illustrations to the Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine; the concentrated thought of a statesman, the prophetic contemplation of poets, philosophers, evangelists, and Church Fathers; or even the meditative rest of God the Father on the seventh day' (Saturn and Melancholy, p. 287).

2. I present a description of the plate in some detail because it will probably be unfamiliar to the reader.
Plate 8. 6

Matthew xvii, 1 - 5. Below the title are the images with which we are mainly concerned. These are two allegorical figures, a man on the left of the page, who represents the 'Law', and a woman on the right who represents the 'Gospell'. In the background is the Sheldonian Theatre, which was the principal assembly room of the University of Oxford at that time, the meeting place of the Congregation, and the usual site of disputations and other important ceremonies.

For the figure of the 'Law' Sturt combined two distinct elements: the theme of the 'veiled Mosaic Law', which Sturt seems to have taken with a certain amount of antinomian relish, and the typical representation of Saturn. Instead of the staff or sword on which the saturnine monarch often leaned, and instead of the rod of Moses, Sturt has substituted the kind of elongated cross usually associated with John the Baptist in liturgical art, thus emphasizing the notion that the law, like John, was the harbinger of something greater soon to come. Instead of the dragon of time coiling around itself and biting its own tail, Sturt has substituted the serpent from Genesis, thus emphasizing the incompleteness, if not falsehood, of the Mosaic dispensation. Instead of, from the one source, depicting the cloak to be partially covering Saturn's forehead, or from the other source, depicting a transparent veil over the face of Moses (as Sturt had done once before), he has drawn the cloak completely

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1. In the frontispiece to Samuel Wesley, The History of the Old
over the face of the 'Law', thus conforming to the notion that the Mosaic Law was 'veiled', but also suggesting, somewhat enthusiastically, that the law was incapable of discerning anything at all. And instead of depicting the distant gaze of the Saturnine monarch, Sturt's treatment of the cloak undercuts the meaning of that expression. To be staring with a Galilean intensity into the invisible distance is no longer an index of deep concentration on heroic problems if the man is incapable of seeing his hand in front of his face. Finally, Sturt has added the detail of the tablets of the law, and instead of depicting Saturn supporting his head with his hand, or holding a sickle, Sturt has drawn the hands of the 'Law' with two fingers extended, indicating the importance of legal distinctions.

By depicting the 'veiled Mosaic law' in the person of the saturnine monarch, Sturt has altered the context of the saturnine figure from a mythographic character and type of a gloomy person, to the epitome of all that the old covenant lacked. Life under the law, life without the light of the gospel, is now seen as life under the influence of Saturn. He had been regarded in the past both as a cruel and vicious

and New Testaments attempted in Verse, (London, 1704). The veil over the face was also the attribute of the allegorical personage of 'Religio' in Ripa. See for instance, Robert Vaughan's illustrated frontispiece to Hobbe's Philosophical Rudiments, (London, 1651).
tyrant who usurped his position in the first place and could maintain it only by terror, and in another variation, as Father Time and King Death. At the same time, even he was subject to the changing patterns of time, so that he came to be associated with a certain inevitability and fatalism -- themes which have not been lost in Sturt's engraving.

In plate 8 Blake has retained the motifs of the drooping head, the clenched fist, the averted gaze, the seated posture, and the twilight, in their original context of melancholy. So also the king's resignation in the face of revolution is not only the reaction of David to Absolom that most critics, following Tinker, have noted. It is also a symptom which typifies the despair and the predilection toward suicide of the melancholic. In addition, Blake has incorporated the tone of Sturt's antinomianism. In his engraving the saturnine tyrant, blinded to the world and to the gospel by his own cloak, was symbolic of rule by blinkered principles of legality. Blake's king is just as effectively blinded by averting his head. And just as Sturt's tyrant represents the Old Covenant which had to be superceded, so Blake's monarch represents the Old Regime that has to be thrown out of office whenever it implants itself.

But Blake's design is not really bound by the compass of traditional and neoclassic iconography. As a matter of course

1. Tinker, p. 112.
he employed that symbolic language; it was every artist's heritage. But he had his own ideas about the meaning and coherence of the tradition. Janet Warner has shown how Blake used another of the typical representations of the melancholic, 'a seated, pensive figure, often viewed from the front', as the basis for his own, much more radical vision of a figure in despair. And over the course of his lifetime, it seems that Blake was striving to create, as Frye has suggested with respect to the Job engravings, an 'alphabet of human forms'.

If the stature of the fulfilled man is like that of Albion in Albion rose, the posture of the melancholic can be seen as the beginning of a collapse into a haphazard position in which all the parts of the body are in disarray and some have to support others. The hand clenches into a fist, stopping only at the 'limit of contraction'. The fist must support the languishing head. The chair must support the torso. And even then, the knee must be raised to prevent the body from falling to the ground. And so it goes. Blake's posture of despair -- the posture of 'crowding', to use the phrase of the singer of 'Mad Song' -- is the furthest compression, the final state before dissolution, the retreat into catatonia, of the figure in plate 16. In plate 8 the king is not yet this far gone, but he has lost his grip on things, and there is little which can prevent his complete collapse.

From the early watercolour sketch for this design we know that Blake had originally considered an heroic context, and although he changed a number of details prior to engraving the design, it still retains some of that flavour. By depicting both king and son naked, and by giving the son not a realistic lance, but a dart such as Death carries in Blake's own illustrations to Night Thoughts, Blake has suggested the legendary context of the Theogony and the epic context of Paradise Lost. From the Theogony Blake took the permanent state of regicide and revolution. So long as there are fathers like Saturn, there will be sons like Zeus. And the lengthening shadows, so far from suggesting that the cycle is about to end, remind us of Blake's portrait of 'Fire' and of Milton's Satan. When Satan appears he seems to exude a 'disastrous twilight', which 'sheds / On half the nations, and with fear of change / Perplexes monarchs'.

1. 'My Son My Son!', British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, number 1936-6-13-2.

2. Keynes has suggested Paradise Lost, II, 728 - 30 as the source for this scene, but the relevant words are spoken by Sin, who is female, and is, in any case, not depicted in Blake's design (G P, I, p. 13).

Chapter Six

Plate 9
Plate 9, which depicts a youth attempting to climb a ladder to the crescent moon, has always been considered of central importance to the series as a whole, but critical opinion has been divided between Swinburne, Tinker, Keynes, and others, who interpreted the plate as satiric, and Bruce, Burdett, and Erdman, who suggested Blake was endorsing the climber's attempt.

Swinburne's interpretation was a discriminating one, for while he saw the design as satiric overall, he thought that only the youth's vehicle, the ladder, was being satirized, not desire itself. He called the plate 'a general type of blind belief and presumptuous reason, indicative also of the helpless hunger after spiritual things ingrained in those made subject to things material; the effusion and elucitation of spirits sitting in prison toward the truth which should make them free'. Tinker followed Swinburne, describing the plate as an 'emblem of the passionate desire of man to understand the world in which he lives ...'. And he explained that Blake, just as he satirized Absolon's 'vaulting ambition' in plate 8, was in this plate satirizing 'the aspirations of youth to

1. Swinburne, p. 26. He apparently thought that all three figures were male, and that all were engaged in the assault on the moon. He also thought that the design 'was originally a satirical sketch of "amateurs and connoisseurs", emblematic merely of their way of studying art, analyzing all great things done with ready rule, line, and scaling with ladders of logic the heaven of invention' (p. 26).

2. Tinker, p. 112.
scale, as it were, the very heavens, even if it have no other means of ascent than the frail ladder of human reason. As the moonstruck youth begins his mad climb, he is watched by two lovers, who, we may infer, have discovered another pathway to Paradise.¹

Keynes followed Swinburne and Tinker, but he introduced an odd criterion. He explained that the climber was 'watched by a pair of lovers, perhaps because the moon is the symbol of "Beulah", or ideal marriage, in Blake's system (Damon). The lovers may know that the aspirant is doomed to failure, since he thinks he will reach his aim by material means, as is indicated by the use of his left foot.'² Although one may agree with Keynes' interpretation, the right-left system of signs is not the sort of evidence which can of itself, justify one interpretation at the expense of another. Joseph Wicksteed, who invented the system to deal with the complexity of the Job illustrations, relied too heavily upon it, and had to qualify it so often that the system lost most of its value. In the majority of Blake's designs it is possible to read the meaning and to pick the villains and the heroes without having to enquire which foot or hand is foremost. So too,

1. Ibid. There is some support for the notion that the ladder is an emblem of reasoning. Cf. N T 277, which illustrates the lines, 'Reason progressive, Instinct is complete, / Swift Instinct leaps; slow Reason feebly climbs.'

2. Keynes, G P, I, p. 16.

when engravers sketched their designs on a sheet of paper, as was common, and then traced the design onto the plate, the right and left hands of the figures would be reversed so that one could hardly employ the system at a conceptual stage. Indeed, the original sketch for plate 9 in the notebook (N 40) depicts the climber climbing not with his left foot foremost but with his right.

Among the critics who hold the opposite interpretation of plate 9, neither Bruce nor Burdett produced any evidence. Bruce's criticism was mute: he used the plate as the frontispiece to his book, and Burdett's comment was at least as laudatory. 'It is a commentary upon Blake's writings. His desires were his dogmas. He set his ladder at the moon.' Neither of these is convincing, but David Erdman has argued with some cogence that 'the message of this climbing can hardly be futility'. In his view Blake was portraying the climber as an admirable character, and indeed urging the reader to grand sallies of the same sort. The yawning gulf between the earth and the moon presented no danger, according to Erdman, because 'the curve of the earth, as drawn behind the ladder, shrinks the distance by an act of artistic vision'.

4. Ibid.
Erdman's interpretation is based not only on his reading of the Gates of Paradise as a whole, but also on his interpretation of a related design. He adduced Gillray's caricature, The Slough of Despond, of Jan. 2, 1793, which according to his description, forecast that the English Patriots, represented by the dismal figure of Charles Fox of the Whig Opposition, were sinking so deep in the Slough of Despond that they would 'never see the Promis'd Land' of 'Libertas'. Gillray's political pilgrim, almost neck-deep in the mire, is losing his Patriot's Staff and his diabolic Gospel of Liberty. His desire for freedom is a desire to reach the crescent moon: 'the Straight Gate or the way to the Patriot's Paradise' is specious because within the Gate we see no means for climbing toward the moon but a short wooden ladder... Blake's response to this piece of cynicism was to draw an extension to the ladder long enough to reach the moon and a youthful pilgrim energetic enough to climb to it.

Gillray's caricature is enormously important, especially considering the date and the subtitle, but in my interpretation, Blake was not inverting Gillray's imagery. Blake's intent was just as satiric as Gillray's, and indeed directed at a much broader target. Gillray saw Fox's desire to reach the crescent moon of liberty as ridiculous and futile mainly because Fox no longer possessed the means to achieve it, but also because his ideals were conceived, in 1792 at any rate, in terms too idyllic for the political realities. So far as Gillray was concerned, Fox's ideals, already contemptuous for

1. Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, pp. 186, 7.
2. 'The Straight Gate, or the Way to the Patriot's Paradise'.
what they had wrought in France during the Terror, had become almost bathetic in late 1792.

Despite his many differences with other members, Fox had managed, until Burke broke from him in 1791, to maintain a large circle of influential members. But on that occasion he had wept openly before beginning his response to Burke, and it was obvious to the other members that he had been completely unprepared for Burke's rejection, and that having lost Burke's affection, he could not be consoled. As the atrocities in France continued to mount throughout the following year, Fox made futile attempts to preserve his original position, to steer, on a number of issues, between Paine on the left and Burke on the right. But he seemed to have lost his political sense of balance. His tactics became harsh and blunt. At one point he claimed that the intention of Pitt and his party, in their support of the Proclamation Against Seditions Writings, was 'to strive to make a division between that great body of united patriots, known by the name of the Whig interest; a party, the firm union of which he considered as one of the utmost consequences, as indeed, essential to the maintenance of the constitution'.

And later he extended that attack to an accusation that Pitt was attempting to undermine the Constitution itself. '... from their outset to the present day, it has been their invariable object to


degrade the House of Commons in the eyes of the people, and to
diminish its power and influence in every possible way'. As
late as 1792 he still supported the Jacobins, and although he
qualified his support by extending it only to the events of August
10, he lost so much support by December of 1792, that only fifty
Members of Parliament followed him into the opposition.

The final straw, which Gillray immediately seized, was Fox's
speech on the Alien Bill of December 28, 1792, in which he
bitterly complained that if Sir Gilbert Elliot had differed
from him for so long, he ought to have said so earlier, if only
in deference to Fox's fond regard for the man. Fox said that
"He had long acted, and he wished to continue to act with
characters whom he esteemed and loved; but if he should be
driven, which God forbid! to the situation of acting without,
or even against those characters... he must then consider
whether he should act alone, or not act at all."

This then is the condition of Fox at the beginning of the
new year (1793): a man formerly powerful, who now, confused
and without support, continued to assert the ideals of 1789
at a time when the faction in France that had originally given

1. Ibid., p. 461
them birth, had for all practical purposes ceased to exist; and a man who continually undermined his own credibility with displays of effusive grief.

One has to admit that Gillray's attack was rather crude, and one may want to dissociate Blake from such things. In his description of the Slough, for instance, Gillray quoted from Bunyan, '. . . it is the descent whither the Scum & the Filth that attends being Convicted of Sin doth continually run; it is called the Slough of Despond, for when a Sinner is Trap'd in his sins, he sinks into Despondency under the Burden of his own Wickedness'. But despite his low blows, Gillray was not saying that Fox's failure was caused only by a lack of means. Nor would it be probable, under the circumstances, for a contemporary reader to think that if only Fox were given a hand, and if only the ladder were a bit longer, Liberty could be reached. Rather, Gillray's attack was a plain broadside: Fox was a fool who had shown signs of despair and melancholy in public and who was now paying for his Jacobin sins.

One may, then, disagree with Erdman that 'Blake's response... to Gillray's caricature' was to draw an extension to the ladder long enough to reach the moon and a youthful pilgrim energetic enough to climb it.' These two minor alterations do

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1. For an extended discussion, see Derry, chapter 7.
not make Blake's design a panegyric on the pursuit of desire, however dear that theme was to him, and however central to an understanding of his thought it may be for us. In Gillray's design, lengthening the ladder would not have made any difference, since the ladder was only one of Fox's many liabilities, and the most distant of them all. And in Blake's design, just because his climber will make it to the moon does not mean going there was a good idea.

Blake's emblem as a whole is still in the mold of 'children crying for the moon'. Indeed, the motto of the plate, 'I want I want', does not emphasize desire, but desire of an impossible object, perhaps even desire without an object. In the eighteenth century the word 'want' had a somewhat more pointed connotation than it does today. 'To want' was to be without, to need something, to be in a state of poverty, penury, or indigence. As Johnson put it, in a slightly different sense, 'We begin to form wants in consequence of our wishes'. Whether Blake intended to suggest this connotation we can never determine for certain. But we do know that the opposite interpretation, the sense in which 'want' means an enlargement of desire, is not normal usage, nor did Blake ever use the word in that sense.

Bruce, Burdett, and Erdman, however, mean to appeal to this connotation, and to the kind of statements Blake made in the first state of There is No No Natural Religion, in which desire is given an overriding importance. And if one reads only propositions

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V, VI, and VII, this case seems to be sound.

V If the many become the same as the few when possess'd, More! More! is the cry of a mistaken soul, less than All cannot satisfy Man.

VI If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot.

VII The Desire of Man being Infinite the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite.

But when one reads the section immediately following, entitled 'Application', it is clear that in so strenuously emphasizing the expansion of desire, Blake also qualified his statement in an important way: 'He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God'

[my emphasis] The important point is the emphasis on perception. If Blake had not added this qualification there would be no way of distinguishing the desire of the climber from the desire of, say, Napolean. 'I want I want' could just as easily be the cry of the will to power. The phrase could just as aptly describe the picture of 'Fire' in plate 5 as it could describe the man climbing to the moon. But Blake intended to distinguish between these two. He was not only interested in enlarging desire, but in directing it to the proper ends. Otherwise his plate would be little more than an hymn to inflation, aggravating a need into a voracious appetite devoid of discrimination. One's very desire would become an insupportable burden. Wanting something so ferociously that one can see nothing else would be the beginning of blindness, as it

1. (K. 97 - 8; E. 2). The kind of argument offered in proposition VI was a common appeal in Young and Blair. So too, in Thomson's juvenile poem 'Upon Happiness', the author reasoned that 'There is some object adequate to fill / This boundless wish of our extended will'. Works, ed. J. L. Robertson, (Oxford, 1908), p. 497.
is for the elemental figure of 'Fire' in the Gates.

The confusion of means with an end, and the frenetic needs of the man 'whose desires are his dogmas' are the targets of Blake's satire. Edward Young was a good example. Night Thoughts brims over with invocations to sublimity, but Young, once launched, sometimes seemed to forget his destination. At one point he urged Lorenzo to 'Loose then from earth the grasp of fond desire, / Weigh anchor, and some happier clime explore', but one learned in the next few lines that Young wanted to liberate desire only far enough to become fixated with the future. In another passage he wrote,

The soul of man was made to walk the skies;
Delightful outlet of her prison here!
There, disencumber'd from her chains, the ties
Of toys terrestrial, she can rove at large;
There freely can respire, dilate, extend,
In full proportion let loose all her pow'rs;
And, undeluded, grasp at something great.

But as the passage continues, the soul of man, now free, becomes a demi-god, happy, but without a kingdom, marooned in the middle of space. The soul,

1. Young, Night Thoughts, II, 387, 8. Blake's engraved plate 32 illustrated these lines.
2. Young, IX, 1019 - 25.
Sits high in judgment on their various laws,
And like a master, judges not amiss.
Hence greatly pleas'd and justly proud, the soul
Grows conscious of her birth celestial; breathes
More life, more vigour, in her native air;  
And, feeling, emulates her country's praise.

When Blake illustrated these lines (plate 9. 1), he wisely focused only on the first part, the release of desire. That man was imprisoned on earth, and kept from achieving his real potential, was not in dispute. But Blake avoided depicting the lines which, if one read them in light of Blake's own work, describe another kind of imprisonment, this time of moral evaluation and of abstract virtue.

In another passage from Night Thoughts, what begins with overtones of 'Il Penseroso' becomes the story of a Fellow of the Royal Society puttering about in his observatory.

I wake; and, waking, climb night's radiant scale,
From Sphere to sphere; the steps by nature set
For man's ascent; at once to tempt and aid:
To tempt his eye, and aid his tow'ring thought,
Till it arrives at the great goal of all,
In ardent contemplation's rapid car.
From earth, as from my barrier, I set out.
How swift I mount! Diminish'd earth recedes;
I pass the moon; and, from her farther side,
Pierce heavy'n blue curtain; strike into remote;
Where, with his lifted tube, the subtle sage
His artificial, airy journey takes,
And to celestial lengthens human sight.

Blake surely took exception to the final lines of this passage.

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1. Young, Night Thoughts, IX, 1030 - 36. See also VI, 248 - 50, which describes how 'Reason, with an energy divine, / O'erleaps, and claims the future and unseen; / The vast unseen! the future fathomless!'

2. Young, IX, 1713 - 25. See also VII, 717 - 20; To scale the skies, and build presumptions there,
Plate 9.1

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 508.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Indeed, when he illustrated it (plate 9, 2), he completely changed the context, in order to refine its mechanics and astro-theology into something more sublime. Instead of climbing 'from sphere to sphere', and passing the moon, Blake's visionary figure is greeted at the steps of heaven by two angels. Blake often had to adjust Young's imagery in this way in order to keep himself from departing completely from the poem. But he also would have agreed with Young's characterization of man's condition as that of a 'Pris'ner of earth, and pent up beneath the moon,/ Here pinions all his wishes; wing'd by heaven / To fly at infinite. . .'. And so, while one must recognize that Blake was satirizing misdirected or confused desire, and that one of his targets may well have been Young and his followers, one must not forget that Blake was only disagreeing with a compatriot, not condemning an intellectual enemy.

The clue to Blake's satiric intent derives from the incongruity

As I were heir of an eternity.
Vain, vain ambitions! trouble me no more.
Why travel far in quest of sure defeat?

1. Young, Night Thoughts, I, 137 - 9. Blake's engraved plate 6 illustrated these lines. See also Blake's engraved plate 59, which depicts the moon, 'Dark in herself, and indigent; but rich / In borrowed lustre. . .'; and plate 60, which illustrates the lines,
   Life makes the soul dependent on the dust;
   Death gives her wings to mount above the spheres:
   Through chinks styled organs, dim life peeps at light;
   Death bursts the involving cloud, and all is day.
On which Hand must I bend my Coursiie to find Him?—These Couriers keep the Secret of their King; I wake whole Nights, in vain, to find it from them.

I wake; and, waking, climb Night's radiant scale, From Sphere to Sphere; the Steps by Nature set For Man's Ascent; at once to tempt, and aid; To tempt his Eye, and add his towering Thought; Till it arrives at the great Goal of all.

I in ardent Contemplation's rapid Cary, From Earth, as from my Barrier, I set out:— How swift I mount? Diminuished Earth recedes; I pass the Moon; and, from her further Side, Pierce Heaven's blue Curtain; Strike into Remote, Where, with his lifted Tube, the Sage's Sage His artificial, airy Journey takes, And to Celestial lengthens Human Sight: I pause at every Planet on my Road, And ask for Him, who gives their Orbs to roll, Their Foreheads fair to shine: From Saturn's Ring, In which, of Earths an Army might be loft.

Plate 9.2
Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 536.
Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
of the two perspectives, the one human and the other astronomical. The minuteness of man with his feeble engines of assault is 
ludicrous when set against the cosmic scale of the heavens. And 
the scene is literal to the point of absurdity when it could have 
been an occasion for the sublime. The climber is not mounting on 
bright pinions, or winging his way in contemplation, but climbing 
an ordinary ladder. He is the kind of concrete-minded man who 
cannot tell the difference between Cynthia and the moon. Blake 
might as well have depicted this character, the builder of castles 
in the air, as Burton put it, filling his pockets with stone and 
mortar in order to repair his fantasies.

As for the moon itself, it is hardly pictured in the fashion 
one would expect if Blake intended to congratulate the climber. 
Instead of depicting it in a realistic manner, as a stellar body 
which only appeared to be a crescent due to a portion of light 
reflected about its circumference, Blake has treated the moon as if 
it actually were a shiny little metal crescent, with the ladder 
esting on the imaginary inside edge. But he has not gone completely

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1. Burton, 'The Author's Abstract of Melancholy', Anatomy:  
   When I go musing all alone, 
   Thinking of divers things fore-known, 
   When I build Castles in the air, 
   Void of sorrow and void of fear... 

2. As in the Epilogue of For the Sexes.

to the opposite pole and treated the moon in the fantastic and lyrical manner he used for many of the Night Thoughts designs, where the crescent became the ship for Cynthia's voyages through the stars (plate 9.3). Rather, Blake's treatment of the moon places it partly in both contexts, so that it can neither be the stellar body viewed by the Royal Society, nor the female body of Cynthia, Diana, Artemis, or Luna -- all of which only makes it appear absurd.

Many commentators have not recognized this clash of contexts, and have reminded us that the moon is the symbol of Beulah. And, in that connection, one could introduce passages from Young and his followers, in which the moon as an emblem of inspiration was already on the way to becoming Beulah. Young's poem becomes, following 'Il Penseroso', his 'quite lunar theme, / Soft, modest, melancholy, female, fair' (plates 9.4 and 9.5). But this material has an entirely different frame of reference, and is not apposite to Blake's use of the motif. If Blake did mean to draw on previous associations, it is much more likely that he had in mind, first, the moon which, after Saturn, was the planet of melancholy, and even more important, the moon which was like the Hades of Lucian's

1. Cf. Blake's 'William Bond'; 'For thou art Melancholy Pale/
And on thy head is the cold Moon's shine (K. 435; E. 488).
See also William Kent's engraving to the Faerie Queen, (London, 1751), Vol. I, between p. 240 and 241. The scene depicted is II, ii, 12, from which Blake took the motto for plate 7 of the Gates. Although the main event is Guyon giving the bloody child to Palmer, more emphasis is given to Diana, who reclines in her moon in the sky.
Plate 9.3

(Endymion's Rival) and her aid implore;
Now first implored in succour to the Muse.

Thou, who didst lately borrow *Cynthia's form,
And modestly foregoe thine Own! O Thou
Who didst thyself, at midnight Hours, inspire!
Say, why not *Cynthia Patroness of Song?
As Thou her Cresent, she thy Character,
Assumes; still more a Goddess by the Change.

Are there demuring Wits, who dare dispute
This Revolution in the World inspir'd?
Ye Train Pierian! to the Lunar Sphere,
In silent Hour, address your ardent Call
For aid Immortal; Let's her Brother's Right
She, with the Spheres Harmonious, nightly leads
The mazy Dance, and hears their matchless Strain,
A Strain for Gods! Deny'd to mortal Ear!
Transmit it heard, Thou Silver Queen of Heaven!

* At the Date of Night's Malady.

Plate 9.4
Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 83.
Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Plate 9.5

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 84.

Watercolour, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Dialogues of the Dead. This treatment of the moon was at its most extreme in the outrageous burlesques of Orlando Furioso, in which the moon was the repository of all things lost on earth, most notably the wits of men. At one point, Astolfo has gone to the moon to recover Orlando's wits.

He came, and saw (a wonder to relate)
What'er was wasted in our earthly state

There vows, and the unnumber'd prayers remain,
Which oft to God the sinner makes in vain.
The frequent tears the lovers' eyes suffuse,
The leisure given which fools so oft neglect;
The weak designs that never take effect.
What'er desires the mortal breast assail

Of gold and silver form'd, a heavy load
Of hooks he saw, and these were gifts bestow'd
By needy slaves, in hopes of rich rewards,
On greedy princes, kings, and patron lords.
He saw in garlands many a snare conceal'd;
And flatteries base his guide in these reveal'd.
There forms of creaking grasshoppers he spy'd;
Smooth verses these to yawning praise apply'd.
There sparkling chains he found and knots of gold,
The specious ties that ill-paired lovers hold.
There eagles' talons lay, which here below
Are power which lords on deputies bestow.
On every cliff were numerous bellows cast,
Great princes' favours these were never last;
Given to their minions first in early prime,
And soon again resum'd with stealing time.
Cities he saw o'erturned, and towers destroy'd,
And endless treasures scatter'd through the void:
Of these he ask'd; and these (reply'd the fire)
Were treasons foul, and machinations dire.
He serpents then with female faces view'd

1. Richard Hurd, Letters on Chivalry and Romance, (London, 1762), letter IX, had commended Ariosto as one with Spenser and others who could not be judged by classical rules of unity, but only by gothic ones. And Ariosto was also the inventor of the name 'Ore', so called, 'because I know no beast, / Nor fish, from whence comparison to take' (X, 87).
Of coiners and of thieves the hateful brood,
Of broken vials many heaps there lay;
These were the services the courts repay.

And then he finds the place where the wits of men are kept, and he sees how other men have lost theirs:

One, while he loves; one, seeking fame to gain;
One, wealth pursuing through the stormy main;
One, trusting to the hopes which great men raise,
One, whom some scheme of magic guile betrays.
Some, from their wits for fond pursuits depart,
For jewels, paintings, and the works of art,
Of poets' wits, in airy visions lost,
Great store he read; of those who to their cost
The wandering maze of sophistry pursu'd; 1
And those who vain presaging planets view'd.

Blake could not, of course, have intended to suggest everything Ariosto enumerated, but who, borrowing from this most inventive artist, could ever match his fertility? While Blake's An Island in the Moon owes at least a nod to Ariosto,

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1. L. Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, tr. John Hoole, (London, 1785), XXXIV, 564 - 667. Vol. IV, p. 212. It has recently been noticed by Michael Phillips that the frontispiece to Vol. III of this work was engraved by Blake after Stothard. See 'Blake and the "Unincreasable Club"', B N Y P L, 13, (1975). In the better-known translation of Harrington (London, 1591), Harrington adds that 'This fiction is agreeing with an English Proverb we use that mens wits are beyond the Moone, and they have laid up things in their circle of the Moone' (1634 edition, p. 286).
the moon in the Gates of Paradise might also derive partly from Milton's transformation of Ariosto's Limbo of Vanity into his own Paradise of Fools. It is the place where,

... pilgrims roam, that strayed so far to seek
In Golgotha him dead, who lives in heaven;

where to the deluded and superstitious,

... Saint Peter at heaven's wicket seems
To wait them with his keys, and now at foot
Of heaven's ascent they lift their feet, when lo
A violent cross wind from either coast
Blows them transverse ten thousand leagues awry
Into the devious air;

where the Papists and all their paraphenalia

Fly o'er the backside of the world far off
Into a limbo large and broad, since called
The Paradise of Fools... 1

Milton was probably drawing some of his material from Burton,

1. Milton, Paradise Lost, III. 445 - 97. The eighteenth-century editors were not all in agreement over this section. Bentley wanted to reject it completely as an editorial insertion. Richarson thought that it was finely imagined. Newton was sure of the authenticity of the passage, but not of its merit. He decided that it was formed 'more upon the taste of the Italian poets than of the ancients'. See Milton, Paradise Lost, with various critical remarks by Addison, Warburton, Newton, Bentley, and Richardson, (Edinburgh, 1765), Vol. I, p. 131.

2. See W. J. Grace, 'Notes on Robert Burton and John Milton', S.P, LII (1955), pp. 578 - 91. As Grace explains, Burton used 'Hope and Fear' in the sense of 'Hope of Gain' and 'Fear of Consequences' (p. 586), for Burton was stressing 'The difference between religion and superstition' (p. 590), the one being 'Wisdom', the other 'folly, madness, indiscretion'.


and Blake too may have been interested in Burton's idea of Religious Melancholy, because Burton united the ridiculous activity of the superstitious with the polarity of hope and fear. As he explained it, 'To these advantages of Hope and Fear', the devil infected men with 'stupidity, canonical obedience, blind zeal', or if they are learned he 'puffs them up with a vain conceit of their own worth... or else out of too much learning they become mad, or out of curiosity they will search into God's secrets, and eat of the forbidden fruit; or out of presumption of their holiness and good gifts, inspirations, become Prophets, Enthusiasts, and what not...'. Or if they feel themselves neglected, 'they begin presently to rage and rave, coelum terrae miscent'.

The mentality of the climber to the moon, then, the mentality which confuses heaven with earth, should be seen as one of the manifestations of melancholy. In a more perceptive form, that

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1. Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part iii. Sec. iv. Mem. i. Subs. ii. See also Part i. Sec. iii. Mem. iii.: 'One thinks he reads something written in the moone...'. The antithesis of fear and hope may also explain the context in which Blake originally intended to use the emblem of Daphne, on page 36 of the notebook. Blake quoted 'Comus', but behind 'Comus' was the description from Ovid (Met. I, 452 - 567), one line of which (507) had it that Apollo was 'quickened by his hope; She, by her feare'. Ovid's Metamorphosis sic, Englished by G. S., George Sandys, (London, 1640), p. 14.
same zeal which drives him up the ladder, might allow him to remain on earth and let the eye of his fancy glance from heaven to earth and earth to heaven. But the danger is that his (and anyone's) imagination can become indiscriminate, and one can hunger with an insatiable appetite for toys, trinkets, puffs of air, even the moon itself. In such a condition scaling a ladder to the moon would be like building a tower from Babel to heaven: not so much an enlargement of desire as a collapse of choice. As Johnson put it, 'the human imagination is potentially boundless in what it desires, and yet will fix itself hypnotically on a single aim or object'.

The success of Blake's design as a satire depends to a great degree on its relation to similar images. The use of the ladder to connect the mundane and the supernal was a standard device in emblematic art, and Blake, like Gillray, could have borrowed it from such sources as Emblemes ou Devises Chrestiennes (Lyon, 1571), in which man stays on the ladder because his hope in God is firm (plate 9. 6).

It was this sort of material which Gillray was drawing upon for his design, and one cannot ignore the sources of Gillray's design without running the danger of misconceiving the tone of Blake's. Any number of the sixteenth and seventeenth century emblems -- and indeed, even some of the medieval broadsheets -- could be made into effective satirical prints simply by supplying one's own set of verses and contemporary identities
Plate 9. 6

G. de Montenay, Emblemes ou Devises Christiennes, (Lyon, 1571).

Engraving.
for the persons depicted. One should not ignore the possibility then, that Blake was reworking the kind of material he found in the emblem books. We can refine this hypothesis further. If in his treatment of the motif of the ladder, Blake intended to suggest vain and fruitless desire in search of an impossible object, then perhaps he did not borrow the motif of the ladder only from the emblem books, and the inversion of it from Gillray, but instead was meditating on an image in a work where it had already assumed both roles. In Durer's Melencolia I the ladder had been seen as the symbol 'of an all-embracing, but often ineffectual, if not absurd, mental search'. And by the time of 'Il Penseroso' the mental search, if no longer absurd, was still all-embracing, and directed toward the

... wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way.

The associations with melancholy can explain yet another detail. One of the many quirks in the behaviour of the melancholic was his inability to achieve communion with his loved one, no matter

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how ardently and faithfully he pursued her. It was his lot to be forever engaged in fantastic schemes for winning her, and yet this bustle of activity only served to isolate him even further, and in the end, to plunge him into an endless solitude. In Blake's plate the young fool with his ladder is climbing not only to the moon, but also away from the contentment of the two lovers.

The ladder motif is perhaps as pedestrian a means of transport as one could find. Certainly Longinus would have preferred a more splendid carriage. Yet when we consider Plato's ladder of love in the Symposium, and the story of Jacob's dream (Genesis xxviii. 12), and the many illustrations of it (plate 9.7), the ladder to heaven seems the perfect emblem for transcendence, and compared to it, the ladder to the moon is a ridiculous imitation.

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1. John Adlard, The Sports of Cruelty, (London, 1972), has explained that the moon was associated with nubile English lasses, who prayed to it to discover the identity of their future husbands. 'One such poem suggests the lasses get as close to the moon as possible, by climbing a ladder or wall' (p. 66). For a discussion of the melancholic who shuns lovemaking, see Saturn and Melancholy, p. 298.

2. In addition to Fichler's design (plate 9.7), see David des Granges' title-page to Matthew Griffith's Bethel, (London, 1634); and T. Cecill's title-page to Thomas Heywood's The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels, (London, 1635). The motif used in these examples -- the plain step-ladder leading up to heaven, with angels ascending and descending -- was the traditional way of depicting the scene. Blake's spiral staircase in his watercolour, Jacob's Ladder was 'a complete novelty in the iconography of this subject' (Blunt, The Art of William Blake, p. 37). The same contrast I am drawing between Jacob's Ladder and the ladder
Plate 9, 7

When Jacob awoke after his dream, 'he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' And how is the gate of heaven wrought? Not as the lunar crescent, but

... as of a kingly palace gate
With frontispiece of diamond and gold
Embellished thick with sparkling orient gems
The portals shone, inimitable on earth.

But when Blake's lonely little fool strives toward the heavens he only sees a crescent, and he cries like an infant 'I want I want'.

to the moon can be seen in Blake's watercolour on the subject and the Epilogue of the Gates. At the foot of both designs there is a sleeping shepherd with his staff beside him. But whereas in the watercolour Jacob sees right through the realm of the stars and planets to the gate of heaven itself, in the Epilogue of the Gates the sleeping shepherd sees nothing beyond the stellar bodies, which as Blake's treatment of them makes clear, are identical with Satan, the god of the physical world.

Chapter Seven

Plate 10
Plate 10 depicts a young man yelling for help just as he sinks beneath the waves. Swinburne was impressed with the passionate eloquence of the design, and in his description he tried to equal its sublimity and pathos. He spoke of the 'weltering and savage space of sea, with the aimless clash of its breakers and blind turbulence of water veined and wrinkled with storm, enridged and cloven into drifting array of battle, with no lesser life visible upon it of man or vessel, fish or gull: no land beyond it conceivable, no heaven above it credible'.

But when he had to explain the meaning of the plate he relied entirely on 'The Keys of the Gates'. The man, he said, was sinking 'under the waves of time'.

The meaning of this plate has, indeed, been a difficult task from the beginning. While the event depicted in plate 10 -- a man drowning -- is clear and unambiguous, the significance of the design as a whole is not. With respect to the rest of the series, what is the meaning of such an event? If one accepts as do Damon, Digby, and Keynes, that in Blake's work there are a number of key motifs which have certain unchanging meanings attached to them, then the interpretation of plate 10 will only

be a matter of finding the correct theme for the motif of the sea. Damon said that the plate depicted 'the result of pursuing shadows and false light... the man falls into the Ocean of Materialism, and meets his spiritual death'. Keynes said that the man was drowning helplessly in the 'materialistic sea of Time and Space'. Digby followed much the same line, but saw a great deal more in the phrase 'Times Ocean'. He described the ocean as 'the conditioned past which overwhelms man with its weight of habit. It is the accumulation of worldly experience and mechanical reaction which gradually submerges life.'

The trouble with these interpretations is that prior to the addition of 'The Keys' there is no evidence that the drowning man is supposed to represent the spirit, and that the sea is supposed to represent the material world. This sort of scheme does occur in some poetic works of later date, chiefly in the descriptions of Albion lying prostrate on the Rock of Ages while the Sea of Time and Space thunders round; and it does

1. Damon, Philosophy and Symbols, p. 86.
3. Digby, p. 42.
4. Despite George Mills Harper's statement that plate 10 is 'ample proof of the association in Blake's mind of time and the ocean as material symbols' The Neoplatonism of William Blake, (Chapel Hill, 1961) n. 144.
5. See for instance, Vala or the Four Zoas, Night IV, 265 (K. 304; E. 331); Milton 15. 39 and 15. 46 (K. 497; E. 109); Milton, 34. 25 (K. 524; E. 133); Letter 22 (to Thomas Butts, 10 Jan. 1802) (K. 812; E. 688).
occur in some graphic works, such as The Circle of Life, but one cannot find it in the Gates, or in its contemporary analogues. For Young the ocean was not an image of the materialism which frustrates human aspiration, but of the exact opposite. It was 'eternity's vast ocean'. Elizabeth Carter addressed the ocean as 'Thou restless fluctuating deep, / Expressive of the human mind, /
In thy for ever varying form, / My own inconstant self I find',
And the mutability which depressed her spirits became a cause of even greater sadness for Young. The same ocean which was an emblem of eternity could also become his enemy, and yet it was no more than a reflection of man's melancholy state of mind.

Ocean! thou dreadful and tumultuous home
Of dangers, at eternal war with man!
Death's capital, where most he domineers,
With all his chosen terrors frowning round,
(Tho' lately feasted high at Albion's coast)
Wide-opening, and loud-roaring still for more!
Too faithful mirror! how dost thou reflect
The melancholy face of human life!

Now whether the man in Blake's plate is drowning as a result of an accident, or whether he has committed suicide, his emotion, like that expressed by Young and Carter, belongs to the category of doubt and grief, perhaps even despair. And this is the sense Tinker had in mind when he said that the man in Blake's plate was drowning in 'the Sea of Doubt and Fear'.

1. Young, Night Thoughts, VII, 1262.
3. Young, Night Thoughts, VIII, 168 - 75.
4. Tinker, p. 112.
However one chooses to label the ocean, the important point is not its symbolic significance *per se*, but the fact that one foundered in it. This more specific image was quite popular in the homiletic literature, where one could be saved from drowning by the hand of Christ. In Hugo, Arwaker, and Quarles, an identical design depicted the soul being rescued from drowning by the Christ child (plate 10.1), and in one of the most popular religious works of the eighteenth century, *Theron and Aspasio*, James Hervey used the motif to introduce Quarles' description of Christ as the 'Rock of Ages'. This motif had been the centerpiece of many sermons from the time of Jeremy Taylor to the present, and Hervey's long-winded and extravagant rhetoric was no more unusual nor any less effective than the sermon Ishmael heard before setting off in the Pequod. Hervey compared faith to a 'shipwrecked mariner, labouring to gain some place of safety',

--- He espies a large rock, which rears its head above the boisterous flood. To this he bears away, and to this he approaches; but whirling winds, and dashing waves, drive him back to an unhappy distance. --- Exerting all his strength, he advances nearer still; and attempts to climb the desirable eminence. When a sweeping surge interposes, and drenches him again in the rolling deep. --- By determined efforts, he recovers the space he had lost. Now he fastens on the cliff, and has almost escaped the danger.

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Plate 10.1

But there is such a numbness in his limbs, that he cannot maintain his hold; and such an impetuous swell in the ocean, that he once more dislodges, and is plunged afresh into the raging billows. -- What can he do? His life, his precious life, is at stake. He must renew, still renew, and never intermit his endeavours, -- Neither let him abandon himself to despair. The Master sees him, amidst all his fruitless toil. Let him cry earnestly, LORD, save me, I perish! and HE, who commandeth the winds, and the waves, will be sure to put forth his beneficent hand, and rescue him from the devouring sea.

This is the context in which plate 10 belongs; a point which cannot be missed if one is to recognize that Blake inverted the meaning of the 'Rock of Ages' and left his drowning man without a rescuer. Just as the mandrake has no higher faculties, the fallen elements are all trapped within themselves, and there is no one who can stop the regicide in plate 8, so in the world of the Gates there is never any possibility of a deus ex machina for the drowning man. The whole problem with that world is the cyclic, self-contained nature of the general affliction: melancholy. And as the frontispiece explained, perception, and hence the quality of life itself, is the individual's responsibility. In this sense plate 10 expresses the state of mind which was both the cause of drowning and the reason that one could not be saved by an external agent. This was the state of mind which Cowper, borrowing the episode

1. Hervey, Theron and Aspásio, (London, 1755), XII.
from Anson's *Voyages* (1748), had described. The castaway survived a while, but finally 'he drank / The stifling wave, and then he sank'.

Thus one may see in Blake's plate that the foundering young man is not only drowning; rather he is on the verge of despair, when he is letting the sea drag him down.

1. The episode was a striking one, and Blair's description of the death of 'Strength' is cast in the same mold:

   ... eager he catches hold
   Of what comes next to Hand, and grasps it hard,
   Just like a Creature drowning! Hideous Sight!
   Oh! how his Eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
   (The Grave, 271 - 4).

2. Erdman has suggested a connection with Bunyan's pilgrim who 'having tumbled into the Slough of Despond because he was pursued by Fear, is rescued by a man named Help . . .' (Notebook, p. 43). But this is not entirely convincing. What else would a drowning man yell? And the essential point about Blake's treatment of the scene is that, unlike the similar scene in Bunyan, Blake's drowning man will never be rescued.
Chapter Eight

Plate 11
Plate 11 depicts an aged man sitting on a rock under a tree. He wears a gigantic pair of spectacles, and he is about to clip the wings of a young boy, who, unaware of the impending violation, greets the sun with a wave of his hand. For some reason Swinburne thought that the boy was struggling violently to free himself. The boy, he said, 'wretches vainly in a passionate attempt at self-release, his arm hiding his face, his lithe slight limbs twisting with pain and fear, his curled head bent upon the curve of his elbow, his hand straining the air with empty violence of barren agony; a sun half-risen lights up the expansion of his half-shorn wings and the helpless labour of his slender body.' But the majority of commentators have understood that the boy was too engrossed in his affair with the sun to notice what the old man was about to do.

The theme behind this plate derives from a standard representation in the iconologies. In J. B. Boudard's Iconologie, (Paris, 1759; plate 11. 1), for instance, the plate entitled 'Reformation' depicts a female figure with a pruning sickle and the motto 'castigo mores'. Within this framework Blake has organized a number of elements.

1. Swinburne, p. 27.

The patterns of imagery fall behind two motifs, the old man with the spectacles, and the old man with the shears.

The first of these can be seen in Emblem 78 of Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata (Antwerp, 1607), which depicts a rather helpless, bespectacled old man seated on a stool surrounded by a number of allegorical female figures (plate 11. 2). Father Time rushes in behind him and drives off a group which include Sleep, Gluttony, and Lust, and ushers in a group which include Prudence and Temperance, who more properly belong to a dignified old age. The quotations from Seneca and Horace expostulate on many of the delights of retirement in old age, and they explain the significance of the old man's spectacles. A man will be happier when his activity declines, and although his sense may lose their ability to discern, yet a man's inner sight, the sight of his mind as it were, will grow stronger.

1. See also the woodcut by Malcotius, which depicts a female figure wielding a pruning knife in much the same fashion, with the motto 'Virescit vulnere virtus', in Bibliotheca Belgica, Marques Typographiques, (Antwerp and Ghent, 1883), number 1, Vol. I; and the depiction of 'Scruta-mini' by G. Silvius, op. cit., Vol. I, sec. XVI. The motif of the pruning knife is not an immediate sign that the figure wielding it is connected with Saturn or with the 'pruning' of vices. On the contrary, the context of the design qualifies the meaning, so that in John Payne's engraved titlepage to Gerard's Herball, (London, 1633), for instance, the figure 'Pomona' wields the pruning knife solely as the tool of the harvest. So too, in Blake, 'cutting' or 'pruning' is not always a pejorative activity. In his The River of Life, as Kathleen Raine has noted, the woman who cuts the thread is 'not fierce, but beneficent' (I, p. 98).
Plate 11.2
Engraving.
Blake's old man in plate 11 of the Gates resembles the old man in van Veen, but Blake's treatment of the spectacles is nothing like van Veen's. It would be pointless for Blake to argue that in advancing years a man's mental life would become more satisfying though his body had aged, for it was a self-evident proposition that age was a matter of perception. He says of Father Time, for instance, 'The Greeks represent Chronos or Time as a very Aged Man this is Fable but the Real Vision of Time is in Eternal Youth'.

This may sound peculiarly Blakean, but the conception of a man whose years hung heavy with learning, and who was yet ignorant of the meaning of his life, had been a standard object of satire in the neoclassical complaint of life. Johnson told the aspiring scholar to 'pause awhile from Letters to be wise'. And the need expressed in the retirement theme and in poems to Contemplation was to find a place or a time far from the distractions of days in the city, where one could commune with oneself. In his Visions in Verse Nathaniel Cotton took up both these themes, perhaps forgetting that his audience was composed mainly of children. 'Why do you roam to foreign climes?' he asked them, 'to study nations, modes, and times.'

Go, man, and act a wiser part,
Study the science of your heart.
... Why turn so many volumes o'er,
Till Dodsley can supply no more?
Not all the volumes on thy shelf,
Are worth that single volume, Self.
For who this sacred book declines,
Howe'er in other arts he shines;
Tho' smit with Pindar's noble rage,
Or vers'd in Tully's manly page;
Tho' deeply read in Plato's school;
With all his knowledge is a fool. 1

But retirement could also be an excuse for mental sloth. Young mocked, 'Grey-hair'd Authority'²:

... in volumes deep you sit;
In wisdom shallow: pompous ignorance!³
... . . .
Your learning, like the lunar beam, affords
Light, but not heat: it leaves you undevout,
Frozen at heart. . . .

And in the same tone Blake intended to contrast the old fool in plate 11 with the blind bards. Legend had it that Homer, Tiresias, and above all Milton, found in their blindness an ability to sustain an unearthly concentration. As the wall of flesh decayed, the eyes of faith grew more acute, and in comparison with the world revealed by the spirit, the physical world became no better than a fitful distraction. Thus Samson Agonistes was read in Blake's time largely as a commentary on, and an expression of events in Milton's own life, and if one looks to Blake's 'Samson' and 'Mad

2. Young, Night Thoughts, V, 658.
3. Ibid., V, 739 - 40.
4. Ibid., V, 754 - 6.
Song', it is evident that Blake saw the growth of his own powers much in that framework. One who had the ability to form grand conceptions, to use Longinus' phrase, would not regret the creeping blindness of old age, for his inner vision would ever be expanding, sharpening. But the old fool in plate 11, as a personification of Lockean epistemology, is a bitter denial of this. He wears spectacles in order to magnify the world, for within himself he has nothing. He is the perfect observer, and his mind is as empty as a camera obscura. Because he requires spectacles, one can see that his knowledge derives solely from the impressions registered by his senses. Yet he does not look at the world with any determination. Indeed, his eyes are closed, so that his spectacles can have only a pedantic, ceremonial significance. As Locke put it, 'in bare, naked perception, the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives it cannot avoid perceiving'.

In plate 11 Blake sardonically replies to this that the notion of passive perception is tantamount to willful blindness. Even worse, the consequences of a lack of vision do not remain in the perceiver alone. Because the old man has refused to see beyond his own nose, he also prohibits anyone else from mental travelling.


2. Locke, Essay, Book II, Ch. IV, sec. i. The fitness of Saturn as a figure of the dominance of the physical world over the mental, can also be established from Bacon's comment in The Wisdom of the Ancients that 'Saturn is matter itself which remains invariable in Nature' (The Philosophical Works... tr. Peter Shaw, (London, 1733), I, p. 551).
The second motif, of the shears, also derives from the emblem tradition. In the books of Otto van Veen, the shears belonged to God, who cut the silver cord. And by the time of Quarles (plate 11. 3), they belonged to Sense, who clipped the wings of Faith. Faith had been at one time 'That swift-wing'd advocate', but now

... she flutters with her idle wings;
Her wings are clipt, and eyes put out by sense;
Sense-conquering faith is, now grown blind and cold
And basely craven'd.

But more important than either of these for the present discussion is the old man who was often represented with the same pruning sickle that 'Reformation' wielded.

One of the typical portraits of Saturn in ancient art depicted him brandishing a sickle or pruning knife, with a cloak pulled partly over his head (plate 11. 4). In some instances the sickle was interpreted, from the *Theogony*, as the instrument by which Saturn castrated his father Uranos, and by which Saturn himself was castrated; and in others, as the harvest sickle or the aged god, who, having been banished by Zeus, had come to Latium and taught

1. Quarles, *Emblems*, Book I, Emblem XV. The connection between Blake's design and the one in Quarles was first noted by Nanavuty, p. 260. Johnson, op. cit., has questioned Nanavuty's interpretation of some points, for which, see Appendix One.
Plate 11.3
(Detail)
Plate 11. 4

agriculture to the Romans. Among the many variations his portrait was to undergo before he came to resemble the old man clipping the wings of youth, the most important, as Panofsky has traced in detail, was his identification with Chronos, rather than Kronos, and his transformation into Father Time. It was this character whose curtailment of Cupid in Otto van Veen's Amorum Emblemata (Antwerp, 1608; plate 11. 5) was the central analogue for Blake's design. Van Veen had depicted Father Time cutting the wings of Cupid, and Blake's plate follows his scheme, if not the design, quite closely.

It was also around this character that artists seized upon the descriptions in the Theogony of Saturn devouring his children,

1. Saturn and Melancholy, pp. 133 - 5, and 196 - 7; on the identity and significance of the sickle, see ibid., p. 196 n. 3, and Michael West's long note on line 175 of his edition of the Theogony, (Oxford, 1960), p. 217 - 8. Erdman has called the shears in Blake's design the shears of Atropos (Notebook, p. 22), but this seems unlikely considering the sex of the one who wields the shears, and Blake's design does not seem to have a great deal to do with the Fates. An interesting, though perhaps irrelevant use of the shears occurs in contemporary caricature, where they belonged to Tom Paine. Gillray depicted Paine with the tools of his trade -- actually he was a staymaker, not a tailor -- for the simple reason that Gillray had never seen Paine and could not codify his appearance without some identifying mark. See T. Wright and R. H. Evans, . . . Account of the Caricatures of James Gillray, (London, 1851), p. 34; and Gillray's caricatures, The Rights of Man, of May 23, 1791; and Tom Paine's Nightly Pest, of Dec. 10, 1792.

2. Panofsky, 'Father Time', Studies in Iconology, (London, 1939), pp. 69 - 93. This figure was one of Blake's favourites in his engravings and watercolours for Night Thoughts. Especially striking is his engraved plate 26, which depicts Father Time mowing a crowd of people who wait at heaven's gate (plate 11. 6).
Plate 11.5

Not on those terms was time, heaven's stranger, sent
On his important embassy to man.
Lorenzo! not: on the long-destined hour,
From everlasting ages growing ripe,
That memorable hour of wondrous birth,
When the DREAD SIRE, on emanation bent,
And big with nature, rising in his might,
Calf'd forth creation, for then time was born,
By godhead streaming through a thousand worlds;
Not on those terms, from the great days of heaven,
From old eternity's mysterious orb,
Was time cut off, and cast beneath the skies;
The skies, which watch him in his new abode,
* Measuring his motions by revolving spheres;
That horologe machinery divine:
Hours, days, and months, and years, his children play,
Like numerous wings, around him, as he flies;
Or rather, as unequal plumes they shape
His ample pinions, swift as darted flame,
To gain his goal, to reach his ancient rest,
And join anew eternity his sire;
In his immutability to nest,
When worlds, that count his circles now, unhinged,
Fate the loud signal sounding, headlong rush
To timeless night and chaos, whence they rose.
Why spur the speedy? why with levities
New-wing thy short, short day's too rapid flight?
Know'st thou, or what thou dost, or what is done?
Man flies from time, and time from man, too soon
In sad divorce this double flight must end;

Plate 21.6
Blake, Illustrations to Night Thoughts, (London, 1797), plate 26.
Engraving.
to depict Time the Devourer. In the frontispiece to *Saturni Ephemerides* (plate 11. 7) for instance, the reader is invited to "behold/ Times Emblem, Saturne; who when store of Gold/ Coyne'd the first age, Devour'd that Birth he fear'd". And Quarles worked the allegory in reverse, so that not only did Time devour its young, like Kronos had, but Time devoured itself, as in the picture of the dragon biting its tail:

Thus envious Time loves on it self to prey,  
And still thro its own Entrails eats its way.  
... thus its own course the circling Year pursues,  
Till like the Wheels on which 'tis mov'd it grows.  
This truth the Poets weightily exprest,  
When they made Saturn on his off-spring feast  
For Time on Months and Years, its children feeds,  
And Kills with motion, what its motion breeds.  
Hours waste their Days, the Days their Months consume,  
And the rapacious Months their Years entomb.  
Thus Years, Months, Days, and Hours, still keep their round,  
Till all in vast Eternity are drown'd.

The two characters, Father Time and Kronos, were often run together in the same manner used by Quarles. George Cumberland, for example, described the engraving by Guilio Bonasome which we

2. F. Quarles, *Emblems*, (1635),  
   See also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV, 234, 5.
Plate 11.7

SATURNI EPHEMERIDES
Sive
TABULA HISTORICO-CHRONOLOGICA
CONTAINING
A Chronological Series or Succession of the
Four Monarchies, with an Appendix of
the Annual Memorable Discoveries in
AS ALSO
The Succession of the Kings and Rulers over the
Kingdoms and Estates of the World, with a
Brief Geographical Description of Them,
And the Neutral States and Empires,
WITH
A Compend of the History of the C. V. N.:
Of God from the Creation, the Times of the Patriarchs,
The Prophets, the Twelve Tribes, the Captivity,
The Return, and Baptist Preachers in the
United Nation, the Hierarchy of Orders,
Religious and Civil, and the Keeping of
His Majesty's Temporal Occurrences,
LASTLY
An Appendix of the Plantation and Earl of
Religion and Monarchy in Britain, the Times
of the Foundation of the British Empire, and the
Chronological Succession of the Empire, and
A Brief Relation of Some Accidents
BY
Henry Isaacson Lambar
Printed by BATASTI for Henry Yelde and
Champernowne & Robison, are sold at their shops
at St. Paul's Church Yard, London, 1632.
now know as 'The Allegory of Time' as 'Saturn Devouring the Rock' (plate 11. 8). This type of picture became enormously popular, for obvious reasons, and twenty years after Blake engraved the Gates, Goya reverted to the earlier pattern, depicting not Time, but Saturn devouring his children. It was this kind of material which Blake was turning to shape time and again in the sketches on pages 15, 16, and 17 (plate 11. 9) of his notebook, which depict a giant crunching a human figure between its jaws.

1. Cumberland, Anecdotes of Julio Bonasoni (London, 1793), number 192, p. 72. Cumberland owned this engraving, so we may assume that Blake was familiar with it. See also B. de Montfaucon, L'Antiquité expliquée & représentée en figures... (Paris, 1719 - 24), Vol. I, Plate II, p. 34, for a depiction of Saturn which is described as 'Saturne ou le Tems'. See also Cumberland's own treatment of the subject in his drawing (BM Department of Prints and Drawings, number 1866 - 2 - 10 - 571), which depicts Rhea presenting Saturn with the rock disguised as the infant Zeus.

Plate 11.3
Plate 11. 9

Blake, Notebook, p. 17. Pencil Sketch. British Museum, Department of MSS; rpt., Erdman, Notebook.
Chapter Nine

Plate 12
The scene depicted in plate 12 derives from the thirty-third canto of Dante's *Inferno*, in which Count Ugolino, imprisoned in the ice of the lowest circle of Hell, puts down the skull he is gnawing and explains to Dante how he and his two sons and grandsons were starved to death in the tower of Pisa by Archbishop Ruggiero, upon whom, he indicates, he is now satisfying his hunger for revenge. Blake's treatment of the Ugolino episode came at the height of its popularity in English literature and art, and one cannot understand the significance of plate 12 without taking some account of that background.

We know a great deal about Dante's influence on English literature and art, and about the Ugolino episode in particular, thanks to the work of Paget Toynbee and Frances Yates, of which the present chapter presents only a partial summary. According to Villani's *Chronicles*, the historical Ugolino, upon whom Dante modelled his character, was one of two leaders of the Pisan Guelphs, a political faction opposed by the Ghibbelines, who were led by Archbishop Ruggiero. In order

to gain complete control of his own party, Ugolino betrayed his nephew, Nino de' Visconti, the co-head of the Guelph faction, but in the midst of the scheme was himself betrayed by his fellow conspirator, Ruggiero, who locked him and his sons in the tower of Pisa, threw the key into the Arno, and left them to starve to death.

This historical Ugolino was the basis for Dante's character, but Dante also allowed his character to develop a distinct identity. Although Dante confined both Ugolino and Ruggiero to the seventh and lowest circle of Hell, reserved for traitors, Ugolino was given the right eternally to repay the Archbishop for his cruelty. Dante did nothing to mitigate Ugolino's unsavoury character as a political schemer, yet he did treat Ugolino somewhat sympathetically, for although Ugolino was a very Machiavell himself, his children and grandchildren had done nothing wrong, and it was barbaric for Ruggiero to include them in his murderous intrigue. One learns, when Ugolino tells his story, that he suffered most as a father, bearing guilt and remorse for having been the occasion of innocent deaths.

In eighteenth-century England the Ugolino episode was even further removed from Dante's version of it, and was not even very close to the historical version. The story was seen, not in the broad allegorical context of the Divine Comedy,

but rather as a heart-rending episode of undeserved suffering inflicted by the Church. Ugolino's own political intrigues were forgotten, and he was no longer confined in hell, but in prison. For the eighteenth century the story of Ugolino became the sentimental, even pathetic account of a Whig unjustly deprived of his freedom; and Dante — virtually indentified with the Ugolino episode, to the exclusion of the rest of the Divine Comedy -- became one with Shakespeare and Milton, whose magnificent style and whose capacity for depicting passion in its fullest, freed them from the tyranny of classical rules.

This treatment of the Ugolino episode and of Dante began with Jonathon Richardson's Discourses on the Science of a Connoisseur; was carried on in art by Reynold's painting, Count Hugolino and his Children in the Dungeon, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1773; continued with a number of translations, notably that of the Earl of Carlisle in 1772; and reached even greater heights and more pointed expression with Fuseli's painting in 1806.

1. There was no complete translation of the Inferno until 1782, by which time the Ugolino episode had been translated in seven separate versions, in addition to which there was Reynold's famous painting of the subject.


3. But since Fuseli's work came long after the publication of the Gates of Paradise, I will not offer a detailed discussion of it.
Richardson's treatises were enormously influential. As Yates has described, they 'may almost be said to have inaugurated the revival of arts in eighteenth-century England'. In his Discourse Richardson summarized Villani's account, and explained that Dante carried 'this story farther than any Historian could, by relating what passed in the Prison'. But, Richardson thought, the scene still awaited a great painter to take it up. To Richardson the sister-arts of poetry and painting should never have been separated, and if only a new Michelangelo would arise to paint the Ugolino episode, they might be re-united. To Richardson, painting was 'this Hieroglyphic Language' which 'completes what Words, or Writing began, and Scripture carried on, and Thus perfects all that Human Nature is capable of in the Communication of Ideas...'. And thus Dante's Ugolino was for Richardson only the bare skeleton of a potentially more magnificent creation. He described a bas-relief of the scene, which he (and almost everyone else) thought had been done by Michelangelo, and when he called for a great painter, a worthy successor to to Michelangelo, to paint the scene, he even offered his opinion as to the treatment of certain details.

1. Yates, p. 93.
3. Ibid.
4. It was actually by Pierino da Vinci, the nephew of Leonardo, as Yates explains, p. 104. Only Fuseli was not convinced that the work was by Michelangelo.
And could we see the same Story Painted by the same great Master, it will be easily conceiv'd that this must carry the Matter still farther: There we might have had all the Advantages of Colours would have given -- These would have shewn us the Pale and Livid Flesh of the Dead and Dying Figures, the Redness of Eyes, and Bleuish Lips of the Count, the Darkness and Horror of the Prison, and other Circumstances, beside the Habits. -- These might be contrived so as to express the Quality of the Persons the more to excite our Pity, as well as to enrich the Picture by their Variety.

Reynold's painting probably came in direct answer to Richardson's call, and in the same manner, the Earl of Carlisle's translation was probably prompted by seeing Reynold's painting. The two were seen almost as companion pieces, of, as Boswell put it, 'very affecting horror', and as such they were completely divorced from the episode as Dante had written it. Count Ugolino became an anti-tyrannical figurehead both in an artistic and aesthetic context, and a political one. Critics frequently remarked on the sublimity and pathos of the Ugolino episode. Joseph Warton thought that the Pathetic 'was never carried to a greater height'. 'If this inimitable description had been

1. Richardson; rpt., Toynbee, p. 386; Yates, p. 105 - 6.
2. See Toynbee, p. 343; and Yates, p. 106.
3. Toynbee, p. 333; Yates, p. 94, and n. 4.
found in Homer, the Greek tragedies, or Virgil', he mused, 'how many commentaries and panegyrics would it have given rise to?'. William Hayley described Reynold's portrait as 'The tragic story of sublimest woes', in which

The wretched Sons, whom Grief and Famine tear,
The Parent petrified with blank Despair,
Thy Ugoïno gives the heart to thrill
With Pity's tender throbs, and Horror's icy chill.

Martin Sherlock imagined that 'On perusing the Canto of Count Ugolino, the sentimental Soul of Longinus would have exclaimed 'Homer has nothing so sublime!'' And John Wesley, when he saw Reynold's picture at Knole Park, found an analogy to Christ's expiation suggested in the story that Ugolino's son offered himself to be eaten rather than watch his father devour himself with anxiety. One may gauge the sentimental value of the Ugolino episode in Boswell's account to it in his column, 'The Hypochondriac'. At this point in his career, Boswell wanted to set himself as a just arbiter of taste and sensibility, and in order to do so he had to go one better than the rest of the critics. To him the story of Ugolino, while it was a 'subject of very affecting horror', was nevertheless only one of 'mere

1. Ibid.
corporeal privation', which did not rate so high as the distress of unrequited love. As he put it, 'The separation of Oroonook and Imoinda, of St. Peter and Eloise, or any other scene of such tender affliction, will touch the finer springs of feeling in the heart in a more exquisite manner.'

In a political frame of reference the story of Ugolino was seen mainly as an instance of injustice engineered by the Church. Following the sixteenth-century's view of Dante, which twisted Dante's desire for a secular power to reform the church into a justification of the Protestant reformation, the eighteenth century saw Ugolino as 'a man of rank, deprived of his liberty and his rights by an oppressive churchman'. Thus 'Dante, the Protestant... developed into Dante the Whig'. Dante was also given some credit for inspiring the revolution, for during this period the Whigs looked back on the revolution with nostalgia; and above all, they glorified Milton, who, it never ceased to be pointed out, had drawn a great deal of his imagery from Dante. Ugolino was then 'not only the father over whose sorrows one must weep'... he was also 'the Count, the man of rank oppressed by a priest. He has stepped right out of

1. Boswell, loc. cit. This is the only reference to the Ugolino episode which was not noticed either by Toynbee or Yates.

2. For a fuller discussion, see Yates, p. 98, 9.

3. Ibid.
the Divine Comedy and become an emotional and liberty-loving English lord. Indeed, when J. R. Smith engraved a copy after Reynold's painting in 1777 he entitled it, not 'Ugolino', but 'The Banish'd Lord'.

And from a Tory point of view, the imprisoned 'liberty' which so many saw in Reynold's painting, was ridiculed as the opiate of the traitorous American colonists and their supporters in England. In Giuseppe Baretti's Easy Phraseology for Young Ladies, published in 1775, a troubled and auspicious year for the American colonists, there is a dialogue between a cat and a dog about their reactions to Reynold's painting. The cat says that he would not like to be imprisoned like Ugolino was.

Dog. I know that. You love liberty, and so do the Americans.
Cat. Who are the Americans?
Dog. Mighty loyal people on the other side of the Atlantick.
Cat. But do you love liberty?
Dog. Oh, as to that, I love it as well as any lord mayor of London.
Cat. Then you shall have a statue erected in your honour.
Dog. Shall I have an inscription under my paw?
Cat. To be sure! An inscription setting forth that you are a dog possessed of as many canine virtues as any dog ever had.
Dog. Dear puss, dogs ought not to pant after so much glory.
Cat. Pray don't be singular. Every dog that can bark out the word Liberty, though quite ignorant of its true meaning, is to have statues and inscriptions... were he the worst basset that ever barked at the moon.

1. Ibid.

2. This reference was missed by Toynbee. My knowledge of it derives entirely from Yates, p. 108, 9, who also reprints the part I quote.
So too, the Dante who was held up as the patron of political liberty was also appealed to as one who, along with Milton and Shakespeare could not be fettered by the tyranny of classical rules. Milton's borrowings from Dante were often pointed out, and even Reynolds's painting, which if anything reinstated a neo-classical decorum, was compared favourably with his most famous Shakespearean subject, The Death of Cardinal Beaufort.

Yet when one looks at it today, Reynolds's painting hardly lives up to its former reputation. As Yates has explained in detail, Reynolds followed the pseudo-Michelangelo bas-relief of which Richardson spoke, and indeed, took Richardson's advice on a number of details.

As in the bas-relief, the father is seated, with one of the sons closely touching him, whilst the other three are arranged in a descending line, the middle one supporting the dying, or fainting one. Reynolds is thus quite literally following Richardson's advice and transforming the sculptured group into a painting which should 'carry the matter further' than the sculpture could do by showing the 'darkness and horror of the prison'. The figures are clothed, and not in the naked state 'more proper for sculpture,' and the rich, fur-edged mantle which the Count wears is perhaps intended 'to express the quality of the persons the more to excite our pity.' Reynolds has tried to paint the picture which Richardson suggests that Michelangelo might have painted.

1. This conception developed most fully in Germany under the influence of the Swiss critics Bodmer and Breitinger. See Yates, p. 101 - 3.

2. As, for instance in a poem by the Earl of Carlisle. Quoted by Toynbee, p. 337, and Yates, p. 110.

But Reynolds made all these details his own, and the result is a picture based on a 'Shakespearean theme' such as one might expect in the hands of a Fuseli, Blake, or Flaxman -- painted however in a 'conservative, academic, pseudo-Michelangelesque manner'. 'Reynolds has avoided going to the full lengths which the unlimited horror of his subject demanded in order to keep within the bounds of his borrowed formal patterns. The result is that the picture, though powerfully painted and arresting, fails either to plumb the depths of genuine tragedy or to satisfy as a classical composition.' And thus it comes as no surprise that Blake's treatment of the same subject, despite the fame of Reynolds's painting, owes nothing to Reynolds in composition or motif except by way of a radical departure. As Yates put it, 'The only point in common is that the father is seated.'

Blake's treatment of Ugolino is, of course, partly a product of the contemporary developments in art, aesthetics, and criticism which we have outlined. The anti-clericism is stated explicitly in the motto, 'Does thy God O Priest take such vengeance as this?'; and the form of the motto, a kind of mock-supplication, only rubs salt into the wound. Blake's dislike

2. Yates, p. 110
3. Ibid.
of the pathos of the neo-classical can be seen in the way he has removed any trace of the bridled and equiposed emotion which Reynolds had made so didactic in his version of the scene; and in the way he has turned from emotional indulgence in the sorrow of the scene into an accusation against those who were the cause of it. There is even a chance that Blake was intentionally parodying Richardson's posture as a connoisseur and Reynolds' whole-hearted support of him, for in Richardson's *Discourse* he made the curious judgement that Dante as a writer was superior to Giotto as a painter, and Blake used a similar device in *An Island in the Moon* to debunk Suction the Epicurean, who wondered if 'Pindar was not a better Poet than Ghiotto was a Painter'.

But Blake's treatment of the Ugolino episode is most significant in its departure from contemporary versions. Blake

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1. Richardson, op. cit., p. 220; rpt., Toynbee, p. 200. Richardson describes the state of the arts upon the fall of the Roman empire:

   In these Miserable times, and for Ages afterwards, God knows there were no Connoisseurs! to Write, and Read was Then an Accomplishment for a Prince to value himself upon. As the Species began to Recover themselves, and to gain more Strength, Literature, and Painting also lifted up their heads; but however not equally; That Degree of Vigour that serv'd to produce a Dante in Writing could rise no higher than a Giotto in Painting.

2. *An Island in the Moon*, Chapter 6, p. 6 (K. 49; E. 444). And in his criticism of Fuseli's Ugolino Blake warned that in the London of 1806 a man was in danger of being 'connoisseeured out of his senses' (Letter 61. K. 864; E. 705).
enlarged the standard theme of the denial of liberty, from its original, purely political significance, to a much broader kind of liberty, a liberty of the imagination. Thus Ugolino became for Blake the type of a fettered mind as well as of an unjustly imprisoned citizen. In this context Blake was able to restore to the Ugolino episode something of the breadth of application in which Dante had conceived it, and of which the eighteenth century had lost sight. Dante had used the cannibalism theme as a way to describe the terrible fact that men will feed off one another, almost with relish, in an unjust society. In the eighteenth century, however, the horror of cannibalism became merely the literary device which pointed a great pathetic moment. But now Blake was able to see the imprisoned father and sons in a way which may well have been a type of mental imprisonment, of the five senses trapped within the body unable to see the light of imagination. One has to admit that there is no conclusive evidence for this interpretation, but Blake did use Young's figure of life peering at the light 'through chinks styled organs' in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, a work composed at approximately the same time as the Gates of

1. Even more pathetic was Chaucer's version of the story in The Monk's Tale, which Tinker, p. 113, suggests Blake may have had in mind, in addition to Dante's version.

2. Blake's engraved plate 60 illustrated this line.
Paradise, and a work in which Blake explicitly mentions the poetry of Dante as a great watershed of wisdom and imagery. And the interpretation of plate 12 in an allegorical, instead of simply a political frame of reference, has been the rule since the time of Swinburne. Blake may also have intended to suggest one aspect of the historical Ugolino which had been long forgotten: the betrayer who is himself betrayed. In plate 8 of the Gates Blake depicted this very theme of just retribution, as well as the idea that the sins of the father will be visited on the children. The scene depicted in plate 12 then, is only one in a series of such events, all of which bear the same fatalistic stamp.

For the purposes of my discussion, this is the most important aspect of Blake's Ugolino: the connection between the old man Saturn, in plates 8 and 11, and Ugolino's imprisonment. Because Blake placed the Ugolino scene immediately following the picture of Aged Ignorance clipping the wings of youth, and because the narrative in 'The Keys of the Gates' links the two scenes together as the work of the same agent, one can recognize a familiar voice in Ugolino's imprisonment. As that character puts it in

1. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 22. (K, 158; E, 42).

2. Swinburne, p. 27, saw in plate 12 'the vital energy and its desires or passions, thrust down into prison-houses of ice and snow.'
'The Keys',

Holy & cold I clipd the Wings
Of all Sublunary Things
. And in depths of my Dungeons
Closed the Father & the Sons

Even without this explicit connection it is painfully clear that the titular god of imprisonment is identical with the man who clips the wings, and whose influence is felt in shipwrecks, suicides, and revolutions. Just as his father before him, Saturn's response to the unforseen birth of his children was to devour them at the moment of their birth, or to imprison them deep within the earth. And when he was finally deposed and his son Zeus took the throne, he too buried all who might become usurpers. In Hesiod the imprisonment of the children was always portrayed as an automatic action on the part of the father, just as the children's hatred of their father was almost a birthright. Blake has taken over this conception all of a piece, as the central thematic link between the Ugolino episode and the rest of the Gates. He incorporated, of course, the anticlericism, and the Whig stance with which the eighteenth century viewed the story. Most of all he incorporated the pathos, for Ugolino was, as he later described, suffering 'passionate and innocent grief' and 'innocent and venerable madness'.

1. Cf. Theogony, 135, 6; 156, 7; and 461 - 72.
2. Letter 61 (K. 864; E. 705).
he also organized all of these within the theme of Saturn's baleful influence. It is principally because of this, because, like Dante, Blake could see in the story of Ugolino the larger pattern of bondage and parasitism that his design surpasses all contemporary treatments of it.
Chapter Ten

Plate 14
The motif of the weary traveller was a standard device in the poetry of natural description. If this character was not, like Blake's traveller, heading toward the door of death, he was still the kind of man whose unfailing lassitude left him to wander through the churchyard wrapped in an indolence like death itself. In the poetry of the graveyard, on the other hand, the motif of a weary traveller had a less emotive and more heraldic function. For Blair it served as the central image in the exordium to The Grave. Other poets, he said, may describe the various journeys men take through life, but his task was to 'paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb;/ the appointed place of rendezvous, where all/
These travellers meet'. And for Young, the motif of a weary traveller served as the coda of his poem. He began the Ninth Night as if he too were weary of the work.

As when a traveller, a long day past
In painful search of what he cannot find,
At night's approach, content with the next cot,
There ruminates, a while, his labour lost;
Then cheers his heart with what his fate affords;
And chants his sonnet to deceive the time,
Till the due season calls him to repose:
Thus I, long-travell'd in the ways of men,
And dancing, with the rest, the giddy maze,
Where disappointment smiles at hope's career;
Warn'd by the languour of life's ev'ning ray,
At length have hous'd me in an humble shed;
Where, future wand'ring banish'd from my thought,
And waiting, patient, the sweet hour of rest,
I chase the moments with a serious song.

While this traveller is familiar, he is also rather ambiguously defined. What kind of a man is he? Is he a wanderer, lost and

forlorn, or is he a pilgrim, fending off his foes and hurrying to reach his deserved goal? All of the commentators have seen this plate in the light of 'The Keys', a reading which plays down the importance of specific details in favour of a sense of the cycle as a whole. They described the traveller not as a figure who stands in the foreground, but as a distant herald who announces that the series is coming to a close. The traveller loses any individual identity in order to become Everyman reaching the goal of his life and the end of his journey. In short, the traveller becomes a pilgrim. C. B. Tinker said that plate 14 was symbolic of 'the later life of man', and that the plate represented 'the Pilgrim approaching with accelerating speed the goal of his earthly existence'. John Beer said that the traveller was symbolic of Blake's 'approved way of life'.

Kathleen Raine said that 'The Traveller hasteth in the evening because he knows where he is going'. He 'has seen eternity, and hastens to end his journey through the states'. Keynes followed in the same vein. 'The enlightened man now hurries to meet the immortality he has learnt to expect'. Only Northrop Frye chose a middle road. To him the traveller was a 'wandering Pilgrim', who was 'making his way towards his own death'.

1. Tinker, p. 113.
2. Beer, p. 47.
3. Raine, I, p. 59. But in another place, she says, somewhat differently, that 'Job is the traveler who enters Experience, the state in which the divine in man sleeps, or dies; when the lost traveller returns, the God awakes' (I, p. 96).
David Erdman has suggested a way in which the traveller-pilgrim may be seen as the central figure in the Gates, and he has shown how, in one way or another, each of the plates depicts some aspect of the theme of travelling. According to Erdman, while Blake treats some of the travellers in a pejorative way, as for instance in plates 8 and 10, the traveller at the end of the series, which he assumes is cast in the mold of Bunyan's pilgrim, is the traveller in his real identity. Erdman says that getting on with the business of life is the main task for the traveller, and thus the traveller in plate 14 'is doing almost all the right things. He is striding with almost the same vigour as the youth of plate 11 . . . his hat is on tight; lacking wings he is using his staff hastening exactly toward the sunlight'.\(^1\) According to this reading, movement of any kind, so long as it is energetic and honest, is an iconographic clue of approved action. The traveller is clearly a good man, not just a morally neutral one, and his goal, one can only assume, is that 'sweet golden clime / Where the traveller's journey is done'.

But the idea that any kind of forthright travelling is a mark of approval should be open to question, and there ought to be a way to distinguish between a good traveller, such as Erdman sees in plate 14, and one that is perhaps less admirable, one like Milton seems to himself in plate 15 of Milton: 'a wanderer lost in dreary night'.

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1. Erdman, Notebook, p. 43.
The only evidence to substantiate the notion that Blake's traveller is a good man is the similarity with Bunyan's pilgrim. But this supposed similarity will not stand up to criticism. Erdman has suggested that Blake's traveller's 'hat and staff are rather similar to those of the travelling Christian in Thomas Stothard's designs for Bunyan made at this time'. But surely this is not decisive. The similarity of hat and staff cannot serve to substantiate a similarity in theme. Nor, for that matter, do the similarities appear to be significant. Stothard's designs, like much of the rest of his work, are his own blend of romanticized classicism. We see the aquiline-nosed, rosy-cheeked Christian, proudly donning his shining helm, setting off on his journey, his mantle flying in the breeze. Or heroic Christian, with bedraggled hair, parson's hat, and shepherd's staff, walks forthrightly on, a tear in his eye and the words of the saviour in his heart. Such mawkish and slick engravings as these have little to do with Blake's design except by way of contrast.

And in the more standardized illustrations to The Pilgrim's Progress the similarities are again only superficial. In most of these Christian was depicted with a knapsack and a staff, and


2. Bunyan, Pilgrim's Progress, (London, 1792). Stothard's ten designs, engraved by Joseph Strutt, were the main illustrations of the volume, but not the only ones. Stothard's engravings were each on a full half-folio leaf, while the woodcuts of the other artist were quite small, about the size of the Gates of Paradise.
when he was only travelling, rather than overcoming a specific obstacle, he was also reading a book. These two details are telling, for without them there would be no way to distinguish Bunyan's pilgrim from any other traveller. And since Blake's traveller lacks precisely these details, one can assume that Blake was not trying to allude to Bunyan at this point. The important difference between Bunyan's pilgrim and Blake's traveller is that the former was a warrior, always engaged in some struggle to reach the city of light, whereas the latter was either travelling or running away.

Blake's own illustrations to Bunyan also show a much different character than the traveller in the Gates of Paradise. The illustrations to Bunyan are wild and strange, even grotesque in colour and design. Plate 2 depicts Christian walking and reading, as always, but instead of a knapsack, he is struggling under the weight of a huge tumour, which has grown like a hunch onto his shoulders, and seems not only to weigh him down, but

1. For instance, editions published in Glasgow: Robert Sanders, 1720; Glasgow: John Robertson, 1763 and 1767; Glasgow: J. and M. Robertson, 1787; London: J. Osborn and T. Griffin, 1795. For a brief discussion of early editions see Keynes, 'Pilgrim's Progress', Blake Studies, pp. 163-75.

2. But he was alluding to Bunyan in the Epilogue to For the Sexes. See discussion below.
actively to torment him, almost to feed off him. This man clearly has little in common with the traveller in the Gates of Paradise.

If Blake's traveller is not akin to Bunyan's Christian, then, is he something of a wanderer? Everyone is familiar with the figure of the wandering traveller in later Romantic poetry. He was also the subject and the character-type of a number of earlier works in the age of sensibility, and as a matter of course the frontispieces, tailpieces, and illustrations to such works (plate 14.1) contained depictions of the man who wandered, 'remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow', to use Goldsmith's phrase. He was an unhappy fellow, who would probably never be content.

1. Keynes, ed., *The Pilgrim's Progress*, (New York, 1941). Some of Blake's designs show remarkable similarities with sketches in the notebook. For instance, X, 'Knocking at the Wicket Gate', which depicts a hunchbacked Christian knocking on a Gothic portal; XI, 'The Gate is opened by Goodwill', which depicts a long-bearded old man greeting Christian, and the archway surrounded by swirling, ascending figures; XII, 'The Man In the Iron Cage', which resembles the sketch of 'Fate' on p. 85 of the notebook; XXIV, 'Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle', which depicts a figure similar to one of Ugolino's sons in plate 12 of the Gates. For a discussion of the designs, see Keynes, 'The Pilgrim's Progress', *Blake Studies*, pp. 163-75. Blake probably had some interest in illustrating Bunyan at the time he engraved the Gates, for the 'woodcut on pewter' entitled 'Sweeping the Interpreter's House' was done about 1794, according to Keynes' dating (Ibid., p. 165).

2. See, for instance, Bernard Blackstone's study, *The Lost Travellers* (London, 1962), which takes its theme from the Epilogue of *For the Sexes The Gates of Paradise*. 
THE

TRAVELLER,

A

POEM.

BY

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, M.B.

LONDON:

Printed for T. CARNAN and F. NEWBERY jun.

in S. Pauls Church Yard.

MDCCLXX.

Plate 14. 1

But me, not destin'd such delights to share,
My prime of life in wand'ring spent and care,
Impell'd, with steps unceasing, to pursue
Some fleeting good, that mocks me with the view;
That, like the circle bounding earth and skies,
Allures from far, yet as I follow, flies;
My fortune leads to traverse realms alone,
And find no spot of all the world my own.

And in James Beattie's 'Triumph of Melancholy', the wandering traveller who 'through many a lonesome path is doomed to roam'. finally abandoned himself to solitude. 'Ah Melancholy! how I feel thy power! / Long have I laboured to elude thy sway / But 'tis enough, for I resist no more'.

Depictions of such characters were quite popular. Even in the emblem books for children there were pictures of wandering

3. One of the reasons children's books contained so many different pictures of the traveller, was that children's books developed partly from the fables of Aesop, in which one might find the following fables: 'The Satyr and the Traveller', 'The Travellers and the Bear', 'The Boasting Traveller', 'The Travellers', 'Travellers dreaming', 'A Traveller Alights to kill grasshoppers'. For a discussion of the relation between the two genres, see Harvey Darton, Children's Books in England, (Cambridge, 1932), pp. 10-32.
men, lost at night. Tale XXVIII of John Wynne's Tales for Youth\(^1\) (plate 14.2) tells the story of a 'Benighted Traveller',

\[
\ldots \text{who trac'd a wild}
\]
\[
\text{Where miry paths his footsteps oft beguil'd,}
\]
\[
\text{At a long heath arriv'd, when silent night,}
\]
\[
\text{Thro' Heav'n prevailing, shut the gates of light;}
\]
\[
\text{Not less bewilder'd, hopeless here he strays,}
\]
\[
\text{Where void of trees appears a fearful maze}
\]
\[
\ldots \ldots \text{a glimm'ring flame he spy'd,}
\]
\[
\text{And fondly took it for a faithful guide;}
\]
\[
\text{O'er the rough heath, o'er moorlands swift it flies,}
\]
\[
\text{Sometimes eludes and sometimes glads his eyes}
\]

1. Wynne, Tales for Youth, (London, 1790). David Erdman has suggested that the traveller depicted in Emblem XXIV of Wynne's Choice Emblems, (London, 1772), 'moves in the manner and direction of Blake's (Notebook, p. 9; rpt., p. 92), but the similarity is not apposite.' Wynne's traveller faces the viewer head on, while Blake's traveller is in profile. Wynne's traveller waves his right hand in greeting, and carries his walking stick happily over his shoulder, while Blake's traveller slinks away as unobtrusively as possible. Wynne's traveller goes cheerfully on his way, while Blake's traveller keeps to himself. The detail of the serpent coiled around the traveller's leg in Wynne is missing in Blake, and the notion from the Epilogue that the traveller in the Gates is lost because he has been following an unclear ideal, is entirely different from the error of Wynne's traveller, who, the text informs us, is lost through a lack of discretion and prudence.

The main reason that Wynne's design does not resemble Blake's is that Thomas Bewick, who engraved it, was drawing on an entirely different type. He based his design on Ripa's treatment of the theme of 'Pericolo', in which the young man (who is by no means cheerful) finds himself not only in danger of being bitten by a snake, but also of walking off a concealed precipice, and being struck by lightning. In the 1620 edition of Ripa there is almost no resemblance to Bewick's design, but by the time of Boudard's revision of Ripa (plate 14.3), the motif of the snake has been emphasized above the other two dangers. With this material in hand, Bewick simply painted a smile over the glum face of the traveller, and Wynne used the notion of peril as a starting point for his cautionary tale.
TALE XXVII.

THE BENIGHTED TRAVELLER.

A WEARY Trav'ler, who trac'd a wild
Where miry paths his footsteps oft beguil'd,
At a lone heath arriv'd, when silent night,
Thro' Heav'n prevailing, shut the gates of light;

Not
Plate 14.3

In this emblem Bewick has depicted the traveller leaning on his walking stick, and wearing a large black hat. It is night, and the traveller is lost, but he spies a light far off in the distance, and to this he directs his steps. These details correspond with Blake's treatment quite closely. It is especially interesting to find the suggestion that the traveller is lost because he has been pursuing something which he had never clearly discerned and which was perhaps nothing but a figment of his imagination.

These details remind one of Blake's traveller despite the fact that Wynne's emblem is concerned with physical, not mental travelling, for just as Wynne's traveller is led astray by Will-of-the-Wisps and Jack-O-Lanterns, so Blake may have intended that his traveller had been led astray by a figment of his imagination -- a manner of deception which had been given a special value ever since Milton had used it in *Paradise Lost* to describe Satan tempting Eve:

Lead then, said Eve. He leading swiftly, rolled In tangles, and made intricate seem straight, To mischief swift Hope elevates, and joy Brightens his crest, as when a wandering fire, Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night Condenses, and the cold environs round, Kindled through agitation to a flame, Which oft, they say, some evil spirit attends Hovering and blazing with delusive light, Misleads the amazed night-wanderer from his way To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool, There swallowed up and lost, from succour far. So glistered the dire snake, and into fraud, Led Eve our credulous mother, to the tree Of prohibition, root of all our woe.

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1. Or he may have been thinking of the 'friar's lantern' of *L'Allegro*, 104.

Between the time of Milton and Blake the motif of the lost traveller was put to many uses which find echoes in the Gates of Paradise. For Quarles it described the soul, lost and forlorn: 'Like a strange Trav'ler by the Sun forsook, And in a road unknown by night o'ertook' For Dryden it was a weapon to be turned against the Deists. Reason was to the soul, 'Dim, as the borrow'd beams of Moon and Stars / To lonely, weary, wandring Travellers'. For Johnson, in 'The Vanity of Human Wishes', it characterized the melancholy condition of man in which,

   . . . Hope and Fear, Desire and Hate,
   O'er spread with Snares the clouded Maze of Fate,
   Where wav'ring Man, betray'd by vent'rous Pride,
   To tread the dreary Paths without a Guide;
   As treach'rous Phantoms in the Mist delude,
   Shuns fancied Ills, or chases airy Good.'

And for Nathaniel Cotton, it served as an allegory to explain to the child the ways in which a man's passions deceive him 'with wond'rous art'.

   Thus when a mist collects around,
   And hovers o'er a barren ground.
   The poor deluded trav'ler spies
   Imagin'd trees and structures rise;
   But when the shrouded sun is clear,
   The desert and the rocks appear.'

Blake's traveller shares many qualities with these melancholy travellers, but at the same time Blake's traveller seems to be as closely modelled on a more famous melancholy traveller in As You Like It, who himself was probably drawn on the malcontent foreign traveller of Marston. The case of 'Monsieur Melancholy', as Orlando calls him, is a strange one, for although there is no difficulty in discovering Jacques' problem, one can never be sure how to react to him. His own description of his melancholy, and

1. With one exception: Blake's idea of the place where 'the traveller's journey is done' was based on a model of continuing creation, free from psychological divisiveness, whereas most of his predecessors had in mind a model of pacification, such as Thomson expressed in 'The Castle of Indolence':
   - What, what is virtue but repose of mind?
   - A pure ethereal calm that knows not storm,
   - Above the reach of wild ambition's wind,
   - Above those passions that this world deform,

2. Z. S. Fink, 'Jacques and the Malcontent Traveller', P Q XIV (1935), pp. 237-52. The niggardly character, the malcontent foreign traveller, was an atheist, whose real political allegiance, insofar as he had one at all, was more likely than not Popish. He was a sexual libertine and in some cases a political insurgent, and he was as contemptuous of his native land, and indeed of nature herself, as he was of his fellows. He skulked about, pretending a grave deportment, arguing with himself in corners, and he habitually dressed in black and wore a large black hat, in order to give himself a mysterious air, perhaps of a deadly Italian duellist. He was convinced that his own talents had not been recognized by the world, and he bore an habitual grudge against practically everyone, which generally prompted him to backbiting at the slightest provocation, and to the betrayal of any trust. In portraits he was often pictured with his head cast down, and with his arms folded tightly across his chest, much as the character in the upper left panel of the frontispiece to Burton's Anatomy (plate 8.2). The central passage for Fink's case is Rosalind's remark to Jacques: 'Farewell, Monsieur Traveller. Look you lisp and wear strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country, be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swum in a gundello' (IV, i, 31-6).

3. III, iii, 290.
Rosalind's reaction, provide diagnosis enough:

Jacques: I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation, nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these; but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

Rosalind: A traveler! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's. Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

Jacques: Yes, I have gained my experience.¹

But what is one to make of Jacques now? If one sees him in a kindly way, one will say that he never really harms anyone else in the play, and however self-contained and incapable of human affection he may be, he has learned to make the best of it. He could be more venal than he is, and his white melancholy is the source of enjoyment and instruction to others. But if one takes him seriously, the way that Jacques seems to have avoided attachment to anyone else will be disturbing. He has already had his 'experience' by the time he appears in the play, which can only mean that he now considers himself incapable of anything but solipsism. He has always held himself in reserve, waiting, on the margin. Although he manages to sound cheerful at times, and he tries to convince us that his melancholy is only an artifice, the truth is that he cannot help himself. He has nothing to look

¹. IV, i, 10-24.
forward to from one day to the next, and it is this fatalism in his life which so galls him, not, as he says, the saccharine sweetness of it all. He is the kind of person who would be 'glad to find the grave', for his life has been an empty affair. He has never risen to full stature as a man, nor will he ever do so.

In his speech about the seven ages of man, for instance, the scheme he describes does not include the prime of life, as if the very idea is unknown to him.

1. II. vii. 139-67.

2. According to the standard Ptolemaic scheme, 'The infant / Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms' corresponds to the age of infantia; 'the whining schoolboy, with his satchel / And shining morning face, creeping like snail / Unwillingly to school' corresponds to puertitia; and 'The lover / Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad / made to his mistress' eyebrow' is adolescentia. The next age is the problematic one. If we assign 'a Soldier / Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard, / Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel, / Seeking the bubble reputation / Even in the cannon's mouth' to juventus, there is no age to correspond with virilis aetas, the description can be made to fit well enough, and the problem is postponed until the next age. But the next age, described as 'the justice / In fair round belly with good capon lined, / With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, / Full of wise saws and modern instances. . . , could not well be equated with juventus. On the contrary, it fits the next succeeding age, senilis aetas, under the sign of Jupiter. And so it goes. The sixth age, which 'shifts / Into the lean and slippered pantaloon, / With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; / His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide / For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, / Turning again towards childish treble, pipes / And whistles in his sound', is senecta et decrepita. And the last age, 'mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything', is simply an extension of this age. Thus Jacques has left out the prime of life, juventus, in order to add a longer period under the sign of Saturn, which is governed by his habitual humour, melancholy. My understanding of this speech derives from Professor A. D. S. Fowler.
The emblematic mode demanded that Blake's traveller be a schematic creation. He cannot have much depth, and his appeal has to be immediate. Yet he seems to be based on the model of Jacques the malcontent traveller. In addition to the details of the large black hat and the black coat, there are many other points of similarity. Both the life of Jacques and the life-cycle of the Gates of Paradise are missing that central segment of an active and satisfying maturity. Jacques and Blake's traveller are like Goldsmith's traveller, whose prime of life was spent wandering in pursuit of some fleeting good. Both Jacques and Blake's traveller appear mysteriously, without a past, and without the prospect of any future worth the reckoning. There is also a sense of isolation in Blake's traveller just as Jacques cannot become close to any other human being. But most of all, it is the sense of futility in both characters, of a life to no purpose, of only passing time. Blake's traveller hastens in the evening, but as we learn in the next plate, his activity leads nowhere but the grave.

The motif of the traveller was an important device in many of Blake's works besides the Gates of Paradise, and it is important to distinguish which of these are relevant to his use of the motif in the Gates. In some cases the traveller is only the type of one who is lost, or one cast into a world not of

1. 'An Imitation of Spenser' (K. 15; E. 412); 'The Little Boy Lost' (K. 60; E. 11); 'A Little Boy Lost' (K. 120; E. 28); 'The Little Boy Found' (K. 121; E. 11); 'The Little Girl Lost' (K. 112; E. 20); and 'The Little Girl Found' (K. 113, 4; E. 21).
his choosing. In other cases the motif has only the most pedestrian associations: the weariness of travelling, the speed of locomotion, and the dangers of the journey. In others, the travelling is not physical but mental, an emblem of discovery, and even when Blake introduces a metaphysical dimension to this, he keeps it separate from the character of the traveller. In more than one case the traveller is a pilgrim, and in yet another the traveller is a rural man of sentiment. But distinct from these travellers is the traveller of the Gates of Paradise, the mysterious figure who rushes past our view like the wounded stag of Jacques and of Cowper.

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1. 'The Wild Flower's Song' (K. 170 and 175; E. 463); 'London' (K. 216; E. 26); 'The Little Vagabond' (K. 216; E. 26); 'A Little Boy Lost'; 'A Little Girl Lost' (K. 219; E. 29). An extreme example can be found in 'The Couch of Death' (K. 35; E. 432), in which 'the damps of death fall thick upon me! Horrors stare me in the face! I look behind, there is no returning; Death follows after me; I walk in regions of Death, where no tree is; without a lantern to direct my steps, without a staff to support me.'

2. Jerusalem, 58. 34 (K. 690; E. 206).


5. All Religions are One, 'Principle 4th' (K. 98; E. 2).


7. 'Prospectus of the Engraving of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims' (K. 590; E. 558); and 'Epilogue' of For the Sexes. The Gates of Paradise (K. 771; E. 266).

8. 'Lines for the illustration to Gray's Poems' (K. 414; E. 473); cf. in connection with 'The Descent of Odin'. For discussion, see Blackstone, The Lost Travellers, (London, 1962), pp. 51-90.

9. Jacques' wounded stag was also the subject of Emblem XX in Wynne, Choice Emblems, 'Of False Friendship'.
The mysterious traveller first appears in a poem in the notebook, in which, just at the moment when another man's lover has left him, to gain her freedom, 'A traveller came by / Silently, invisibly', and spirits her away. This wraith-like figure reminds one of the traveller in 'The Mental Traveller'. In that enigmatic ballad the mental traveller himself plays no part in the action. He is the invisible narrator who introduces himself only as having been a traveller in lands stranger than anything yet seen. 'I travel'd thro' a Land of Men, / A Land of Men & Women too, / And heard & saw such dreadful things / As cold Earth Wanderers never knew'. And when he has finished his story, his parting is, even then, brief and mysterious: 'And all is done as I have told'. One never really knows where the mental traveller, as narrator, stands in relation to the events described. In one sense the events must have occurred at some distance from him, or else he would not be able to tell us about them, but on the other hand, there is no possibility of an observer at such scenes as these:

And if the Babe is born a Boy
He's given to a Woman Old,
Who nails him down upon a Rock,
Catches his shrieks in cups of Gold.

She binds iron thorns around his head,
She pierces both his hands & feet,
She cuts his heart out at his side
To make it feel both cold & heat.

2. 'The Mental Traveller', 1-4 (K. 424; E. 475).
Her fingers number every Nerve,
Just as a Miser counts his gold;
She lives upon his shrieks & cries,
And she grows young as he grows old.

Till he becomes a bleeding youth,
And she becomes a Virgin bright;
Then he rends up his Manacles
And binds her down for his delight.¹

The mental traveller did not just happen upon these scenes; his relation to them must be one of participation. All these events occur in a sphere over which he must have had some control. Many commentators have begun to psychologize at this point, and to say that the various characters are the traveller's own psychic elements locked in a deadly struggle, but to do so would be to put back into the poem precisely those elements in the sentimental poetry of his predecessors which Blake eschewed. So also one could say that all the events happen in Eternity, as James Sutherland does, but such an interpretation is unnecessary, nor does it adequately explain the opening lines which specifically indicate 'a Land of Men & Women too'. The strange thing about the mental traveller's position is that his voice is abstracted from the situation, accurate perhaps, but apparently powerless, and more important, uncaring. Yet in his very isolation one can put part of the blame that the Female Babe and the frowning Babe never develop to any productive purpose, and that the energy which they possess always transforms them into parasites. In his abstraction, in the cyclic nature of his story, and in the way he reminds one above

¹. Ibid. 8-24.
all, of figures like the Angel of Death, the mental traveller appears to have a good deal in common with the figure who rushes off the page in plate 14 of the Gates. But if he is akin to the traveller in the Gates, he is only one of the family. The other is the traveller through the grave, who is depicted in plate 15.

1. My interpretation of 'The Mental Traveller' is a deliberate departure from current criticism. For example, James Sutherland says that Blake the poet is himself the mental traveller, 'who sees and reports all that happens', and that the events take place in Eternity. ('Blake's Mental Traveller', E L H, XXII (1955); rpt. in Critics on Blake, ed. Judith O'Neill, (London, 1970), p. 71). Harold Bloom says that the Mental Traveller is 'one of Blake's unfallen Eternals', who 'moves through our world' (Blake's Apocalypse, (New York, 1963), p. 313). Northrop Frye says that the boy himself is the mental traveller ('The Keys of the Gates', p. 192). And E. J. Rose says that the point of view of the mental traveller is that of Los ('Los, Pilgrim of Eternity', Blake's Sublime Allegory, eds. Curran and Weittrich, (Madison, Wisconsin, 1973), p. 95).
Chapter Eleven

Plate 15
Plate 15 depicts an old man wearing a long-flowing gown, leaning on a crutch, and stepping into a stone tomb. A strong wind sweeps his hair and his gown in front of him. Previous commentators have associated this design with three similar designs: the penultimate illustration of *The Grave*, in which the travelling figure is the soul who explores the recesses of the grave; the final illustration of *The Grave*, which depicts the same scene as plate 15 of the *Gates*, with the addition of a radiant young man above the lintel of the tomb; and the frontispiece of *Jerusalem*, in which the traveller is Los, entering Albion's bosom. In treating all four designs as similar, the commentators have inferred a similar meaning for all. According to this reading, the traveller in plate 15 is finally beginning his rite of passage, and at long last is entering the gates of paradise. But this reading is open to a number of objections. Blake may at an earlier stage have intended to portray the rite of passage, since the design of the traveller and the rejected design of the man meeting death at Death's Door (N 17) were, in the original numbering, the first two emblems of the series. With the doorway motif acting as the doorway to the series, one could hardly avoid reading all the following emblems as episodes in a journey through man's inner life. But this is not the order Blake eventually used. He put the doorway at the end of the series, and in that position, one's impression is rather that all the previous designs depict events along the road leading to the gates of paradise, and that the gates themselves still await opening.

David Erdman has suggested that plate 15, like the rejected
sketch of the traveller meeting death in the doorway, expresses the traveller's bursting through death into eternity. He said that 'it is more to the immediate purpose to keep in mind the major irony of the ultimate emblem series, the Gates of Paradise, that our access to what Blake called the sports or fires or 'realities of intellect', that is, to life, is through acceptance of death as corporeally inescapable, hence not worth fearing. In the full notebook series of emblems reminders of every conceivable manner of dying meet us at every turn as if to eliminate the illusion that we should worry about any kind of death but mental.

But this interpretation too is open to question. If Blake, in dwelling to such an extent on scenes of death and dying, only meant to teach one how to escape the fear of death, he has not borrowed many of the tactics of the graveyard school. Hervey explained that 'We have taken a turn among the tombs, and viewed

1. This sketch (plate 11.9), which was originally numbered 2 in the notebook, depicts a traveller stepping into a doorway which is opened by a shrouded skeletal Death. The inscription beneath the door is 'Are glad when they can find the grave'. According to Erdman's interpretation, the traveller is 'gesturing bravely in the face of . . . Death' (Notebook, p. 16), and 'laughing at Death' (p. 24). But the only evidence for such an interpretation is that the fingers of the traveller's left hand are spread widely apart, a gesture which could as well indicate alarm or shock, as it does in the analogous design in van Veen (plate 15.3). And since the traveller is entering the door with his right foot first, and his right hand and cane are also foremost, his left hand is not in an effective position to strongarm Death.

2. Erdman, Notebook, p. 15.
the solemn memorials of the dead, in order to learn the vanity of mortal things, and to break their soft enchantment. But death itself was not a mortal thing in the way that the pleasures of the senses were mortal. Death was the last mortal thing, and the graveyard poets did not want to give death its due until the penultimate stanza of the poem. Young, Blair, Hervey, and their followers, did not so much want to escape the fear of death, as they wanted to borrow its sublimity, to turn the shudders and fright of mortality into the terrific visions of salvation. In addition to the availability of the imagery from the Bible, and the previous homiletics of Donne, Drummond, Tate, and others, there was a certain attraction in the case with which the psychological determinants of fear and hope could be used. The two could work as a perpetual see-saw of emotions, and a poet could never dispense with Death, without also giving up the source of his sublimity. To the taste of today, this may seem almost necrophilic, but to Young, Blair, Hervey, and the Blake who wrote the prose fragments of Poetical Sketches, it would have been a crippling blow to their armour of imagery and rhetoric not to use Death's paraphernalia.

In the rejected design of the traveller meeting death (N 17), for instance, the traveller is not, as Erdman suggests, perfectly willing to die because he has learned that death is not worth fearing. The traveller is not an old man, like the aged

figure of plate 15. He is in the prime of life, and he cannot be willing to die unless his present condition is one of unmitigated misery. The quotation from the Book of Job, 'Are glad when they can find / the grave', if read in context, establishes that the man is in just this frame of mind. The quotation comes from the third chapter, in which Job has cursed the day of his birth, and asks God what is the point of consciousness, when one's life is nothing but pain and torment.

'Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?' (iii. 20-3).

In using this sentiment, Blake was not, as Erdman suggested, trying to portray someone so well adjusted that he does not become upset even at the prospect of his own extinction. Rather, Blake is portraying a misery so acute that even death would seem a relief.

This interpretation epitomizes the theme of the rest of the series, and it may well have been for this very reason that Blake deleted the emblem from the series. Since the rest of the plates were already devoted to analyzing life as a death-wish, Blake did not have to re-emphasize the same point in the penultimate plate of the series, but could use it to some other purpose. 'Death's Door' treats ostensibly the same theme as the other plate, and still sounds the coda of the series, but it makes a rather different point about death. 'Death's Door' is in some ways,
intended to lessen one’s fear of death, as Erdman suggested, but it also does something more. Let us look at a rather lengthy passage from *Tristram Shandy* in which Walter tries to argue the point Erdman suggested: that death has no sting. The passage will suggest one of Blake's aims.

'The Thracians wept when a child was born' (and we were very near it, quoth my uncle Toby) 'and feasted and made merry when a man went out of the world; and with reason. Death opens the gate of fame, and shuts the gate of envy after it; it unlooses the chain of the captive, and puts the bondsman's task into another man's hands.

'Show me the man, who knows what life is, who dreads it, and I'll show thee a prisoner who dreads his liberty.'

Is it not better, my dear brother Toby (for mark our appetites are but diseases), is it not better not to hunger at all than to eat? not to thirst than to take physic to cure it?

Is it not better to be freed from cares and a�es, from love and melancholy, and the other hot and cold fits of life, than like a galled traveller, who comes weary to his inn, to be bound to begin his journey afresh?

There is no terror, brother Toby, in its looks, but what it borrows from groans and convulsions and the blowing of noses, and the wiping away of tears with the bottoms of curtains in a dying man's room. Strip it of these, what is it? 'Tis better in battle than in bed, said my uncle Toby. Take away its hearse, its mutes, and its mourning. Its plumes, scutcheons, and other mechanic aids What is it? Better in battle! continued my father, smiling, for he has absolutely forgot my brother Bobby 'tis terrible no way for consider, brother Toby, when we are death is not; and when death is we are not. My uncle Toby laid down his pipe to consider the proposition; my father's eloquence was too rapid to stay for any man away it went, and hurried my uncle Toby's ideas along with it. 

In this passage Sterne has parodied a famous sentiment from Lucretius and Drummond by having Walter adopt their arguments and state them in a bombastic fashion. Walter tries to extract all human emotion from death by calling it a state of non-existence, and then he peppers his case by suggesting that such a pacific state may well be more desirable than the tawdry, disordered lives most of us lead now. But the black humour arises from our understanding that Walter, as usual, is making no sense whatever. The categories of language and rhetoric are to him no different from the categories of experience. As far as he is concerned, life is a state of being, and death is a state of non-being. Where is the grief in that? In allowing Walter to pretend to a 'scientific' analysis of death, Sterne reminds his readers of the dignity of suffering and the importance of treating death in the same honourable manner that Toby treats Le Febvre on his deathbed. And at the same time Sterne does not tumble into the pathetic wailing which Young never seemed to avoid. He also makes his point in a more direct way. The clause, 'the blowing of noses, and the wiping away of tears with the bottoms of curtains in a dying man's room', quietly creates the image of human concern and grief which Sterne, despite the humour of the passage, does not intend to let go.

1. See Drummond, 'A Cypress Grove', Poems, ed. Ward, (London, 1894), Vol. II, p. 245. 'If thou dost complain that there shall be a time in the which thou shalt not be, why dost thou not too grieve that there was a time in the which thou wast not?'. Quoted by Reed, The Background of Gray's Elegy, (New York, 1924), p. 43.
Blake's treatment of death lies somewhere between what Sterne is parodying, and the parody itself. One might almost say that Blake's is an 'objective' rendering of death, in the sense that he is not using death so suggest any other theme but extinction, a point to which we shall return.

In contemporary art there were many designs which were similar in motif and composition to plate 15 of the Gates, and in them we can see that Blake's design owes a great deal to the revival of medieval themes in a 'gothick' setting. There was, for instance, a relatively standardized portrait of a long bearded old man standing on the edge of the grave, such as Holbein used in the Dance of Death. If Blake had not at some point been a student of Holbein's designs, or of the xylographic technique of Hanz Lutzelburger, who cut the plates, his attention would still have been called to the series by Bewick's copy after it, published in 1789 (plate 15.1). In the same style, and perhaps even closer to hand for Blake, was the depiction of Death meeting a young gallant, who leaned rakishly on his walking stick at the side of the grave. This picture was for many years preserved on the walls of the Hungerford Chapel in Salisbury Cathedral, and in Richard Gough's Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain, for which Blake engraved a number of plates, there are two depictions of it.1 This type of character, whose identity derives from his position as a representative of a class, and from his meeting death

[33]

The OLD MAN.

My Breath is corrupt, my Days are extinct, the Graves are ready for me.

Job xvii. 1.

Exhausted Strength my feeble Nerves
No longer now does brace,
And, like a River's rapid Stream,
My Life flows out apace.

The Time, which no One can recall,
How swift a Flight has ta'en!
And nothing but the silent Tomb
For me does now remain.

Tir'd of the Ills of a long Life,
And sick of all its Cares,
For speedy Death I now address
To Heav'n my anxious Pray'rs.

Plate 15.1

face to face, always had an intrinsic connection with the traveller, for as Tyndale said in The Daunce of Machabree, the point of the Dance of Death was 'to shew this world is but a pilgrimage'.

Similar designs also appeared in the emblem books. In some of them (plates 15.2 and 15.3) Father Time is the one who, like Blake's figure of Death in the notebook sketch, stands at the door to greet or to warn each man as he enters. In these designs the old man is the same 'prudent Age' whom Young described and Blake depicted without modification (plate 15.4). In others, for instance Emblem 100 of O. Horati Flacci Emblemata (plate 15.5), the long-bearded old man is depicted in his original costume as the allegorical figure of Winter. This design is important because it shows the essential connection between the old man and the tetradic categories of which he represents a part. In van Veer's plate the theme of mutability and the emphasis on cyclic recurrence are made more palpable by being connected to the four allegorical figures of the seasons. They belong to a pictorial tradition which was unbroken from classical times, and which in medieval art retained many layers of significance, including the four elements, the four humours, the four temperaments, the four ages of man, and the rest. But one member of the scheme came to be more fully developed and to dominate the series, as van Veer's plate demonstrates. The long-bearded old man looms in the foreground because he is the main subject of the design. While the three are present mainly to provide the proper context, Winter

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2. Saturn and Melancholy, p. 293 n. 46.
Plate 15.2
Plate 15.3

Man makes a Death, which Nature never made.
Then on the Point of his own Fancy falls:
And feels a thousand Deaths, in fearing one.

But was Death frightful, what has Age to fear?
If prudent, Age should meet the friendly foe,
And shelter in his hospitable gloom.

I once can meet a Monument, but holds
My Younger; every Date, cries—"Come away,"
And what recalls me? look the World around,
And tell me what: the Wiseft cannot tell.
Should any born of Woman give his Thought
Full range, on just Dyfide’s unbounded field,
Of Things, the Variety; of Men, the Flaws;
Flaws in the Body; the Many, Flaw all o’er,
As Leopards spotted, or as Ethiopia, dark,
Vivacious Mo; Good dying immature;
(How immature, Narciffo’s Marble tells)
And at its Death bequeathing endless Pain;
His Heart, tho’ bold, would sink at the sight,
And spend itself in Sighs, for future Scenes.

Plate 15.4
Blake, Design for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 113.
Watercolour.
Plate 15.5

O. van Veen, Q. Horati Flacci Emblemata, (Antwerp, 1607), Emblem 100. Engraving.
embodies the tone of the whole. Just so, Thomson's 'Winter' stands out from the rest of the Seasons not only as the one composed first, but also as the most fully realized. And in Blake's poems on the seasons, old man Winter is the one Blake knows in the flesh.

Now Blake's old man in plate 15 of the Gates is no longer fulfilling the function of an allegorical personification of one of the seasons, but he has not lost the trappings that mark him as a member of that scheme, and he is also unmistakeably akin to the old man in the Dance of Death, so that the series as a whole remains in a schematic typical frame. Looking back on the series from plate 15, the fourteen previous plates are thrown into relief as fourteen states a man is likely to pass on his way to the grave. In this sense the old man entering Death's Door is still a traveller, but he is no longer the traveller who wanders at midnight through the swamps, so nearly as he is a more neutral vehicle, the traveller-pilgrim who is now further along the road to dissolution, and who has by this time become almost identical with his destination.

Seen in this light the event depicted in plate 15 is a familiar one. When Young spoke of 'Poor human ruins tott'ring o'er the grave', he wanted his readers not to 'Strike deeper their vile root, and closer cling / Still more enamour'd of this wretched soil', but to accept death. Blake's illustration achieves much the same point, but by a more direct means. By

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depicting this strong wind blowing the man into the tomb, and the man himself bent almost to collapse, the man and the forces of nature appear to be moving in unison. The man and the wind have joined hands, and now they flow with the rhythm of nature's cycle. Winter is the time for sleep.

When Blake redesigned this plate to illustrate Blair's The Grave (plate 15.6) he elaborated many of the details, and added the figure of a radiant young man above the lintel of the tomb. In this form the design may be seen as the perfect emblem of the graveyard school, for it embodies the apocalyptic image so eagerly sought: the grief of mortality falling away as one awakes into eternity.

Blake's design for The Grave is based not so much on the poem itself, as on Hervey's gloss of Young. Hervey wanted to convince 'Men of hoary locks, bending beneath a weight of years, and tottering on the brink of the grave' to believe in his dearest doctrine, the imputed righteousness of Christ; and he turned all his apocalyptic imagery to that purpose. He exhorted them to glorify Christ, 'who, in the perfection of health, and the very prime of manhood, was content to become a ghastly corpse, that you might be girt with the vigour, and clothed with the bloom, of eternal youth'. When Christ takes up your burden, Hervey told his readers, then
Plate 15.6

you find, not without pleasing astonishment, your hopes improved into actual enjoyment, and your faith superseded by the beatific vision. You feel all your former shyness of behaviour happily lost in the overflowings of unbounded love, and all your little differences of opinion entirely bore down by tides of invariable truth. Bless, therefore, with all your enlarged powers, bless his infinitely larger goodness; who, when He had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the gates of paradise, opened the kingdom of heaven to all generations, and to every denomination of the faithful.

While Blake has followed this programme in his illustration to The Grave, he has not followed it at all in the Gates of Paradise. He has not depicted either Christ bursting the bars of death, or the eternal youth rising from the grave. Nor is it likely that he intended his audience to read such details into the design, for to do so would be to endorse the standard Christian formula that eternity is a state which comes only after death.

Blake wanted primarily to depict an eternity which is both within life and beyond death. And so, when he set up the association with Hervey's apocalyptic image of 'the gates of paradise', he also inverted the meaning of it by leaving out the resurrection. There may well be an eternity after death, in Blake's view, but he can see no reason to glorify it. If one cannot find eternity now, within life, what is the good of finding it later?


2. For this reason I disagree with Hagstrum's suggestion that Mantegna's 'representation of Christ about to enter the dungeon of hell through the door of death now broken down' was a source of Blake's design (Hagstrum, William Blake Poet and Painter, (Chicago, 1964), p. 54).
Chapter Twelve

Plate 16
POLY-OLBION

GREAT BRITAIN

Sir Michael Drayton

London printed for IOH Else and I Bache.

1655.
that 'the parents and children of Emblem 23 (N 43) have said this, and stiffened in their fear...', but such reasoning is unconvincing. One cannot transfer the motto from one sketch in the notebook to another without textual evidence, especially considering Blake's frequent regrouping of the emblems.

Rather than adopting any of these identifications, it seems more likely that the figure in plate 16 is either the 'androgynous figure of the traveller himself', as Keynes suggests, or as Frye suggests, Tirzah. However one resolves the problem, the meaning one finds in plate 16 must ultimately come back to the fact that the traveller has finally reached the end of his journey, the grave. But the grave is not the end of the processes of nature, only the end of a phase in which, while organisms die, the grave into which they fall presently becomes the womb of new life. Thus, Blake has depicted the figure in plate 16 as if waiting expectantly to begin the cycle again. It does not make a great deal of difference at such a point whether one emphasizes that it is the traveller who now becomes part of the grave, or that the grave (or Tirzah) has now invoked her claim on the traveller and begun to inhabit his body. For all we know Blake may have intended to depict both movements: the traveller collapsing into the grave, and the grave reaching up to grasp him. At any rate, life is now come to a standstill, waiting mutely to begin the cycle again, and nothing about such a condition has much to do with resurrection, transcendence, or even with the

tradition of a well-made death.

Erdman disagrees with this interpretation. He suggests that the plate is an enigmatic treatment of transcendence and of resurrection.

The final plate is oracular, a sibylline enigma that will echo back our sighs or hopes. We have followed the traveller through the door, but he is not here, only the linen clothes -- not folded up but draped on the untravelling sibyl or prophetess, who sits enigmatically still at the mouth of the cave, with a staff or a wand in her hand. Is it the traveller's? The traveller himself is not here: if he is risen, has gone up, he has now shed staff and clothing as earlier he had shed wings, and still earlier his shell-cocoon. The legend, spoken in his voice, is in a past tense: 'I have said to the Worm, Thou are my mother and my sister' -- a kinship which he must understand, and the reader must understand, to be 'the expendable portion of the soul, the staff no longer needed.'

While this analysis sounds a number of familiar notes in Blake's thought, Erdman does not show why one should read plate 16 of the Gates in this way. How can one argue for an 'enigmatic resurrection'? The resurrection has always been regarded as the most significant miracle of all. It was the figure of the Second Coming and of the reunion of each body with each soul, and thus it was not only a cornerstone in theology and apologetics, but also one of the most compelling episodes in the gospels. If one believed in Christ's resurrection, then one too would never die. In this context it is difficult to grasp the idea of an 'enigmatic resurrection'. So too, the details of the resurrection in the

gospel do not fit Erdman's conception of the resurrection in the Gates of Paradise. Why should a sibyl be impersonating the traveller? In the gospel the angel did not sit silently in front of the tomb, disguised as someone else, but directly identified himself, and told the enquiring women that Christ had risen. Just so, the linen clothes were not draped over another person, but folded up, a clear sign to everyone. And finally, one cannot read the quotation from the Book of Job out of context. Job meant to show how long his hope had been buried. The tense of the phrase has the sense, 'Ever since my misery began, I have been saying . . .', not, as Erdman suggests, 'I used to say . . .'.

John Beer has explained that although the effect of plate 16 was startling in a book which was intended to be for children, Blake nevertheless intended the design to be taken literally. 'A proper vision of the relationship between this world and eternity would, he Blake felt, induce an attitude to the earth which would take the horror even from the grave and the devouring worm . . .'.

However, Beer does not explain precisely what this attitude is supposed to be, until he comes to discuss 'The Keys of the Gates', and without that allegory, we too may remain about as satisfied

1. Blake used the same figure in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 3.2 'Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up.' (K. 149; E. 34).

with the series as Blake's four elemental figures. C. B. Tinker was disturbed by the fact that Blake did not, in this plate, 'throw open the gates and reveal the next stage in man's existence', and he tried to compensate for Blake's pessimism by suggesting that the roots which 'thrust themselves down into the grave', belong to the Tree of Life. This is an interesting conjecture, but even if it could be substantiated, it does not adequately explain why Blake did not depict the resurrection, especially since he could do so when he thought it appropriate, as in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, America, and the final illustration to Blair's The Grave. Keynes has suggested that although one may be upset at this conclusion, the traveller himself is not, because 'the vision of plate 13 has given the hope of immortality to the Traveller on his journey'. But this emphasizes too heavily the idea that the Gates of Paradise is the life-story of the traveller, and it only raises the further question of why the traveller's hope has never developed into anything more substantial. As Hervey put it, one's hopes would be 'improved into actual enjoyment', and one's faith would be 'superseded by the beatific vision', when the gates of paradise were opened. But Blake does not depict anything even close to such scenes. If he had been following poetic convention, he would have

1. Tinker, p. 114.
2. Ibid.
exaggerated the importance of death, and depicted it as the penultimate event in one's life. He would have described something like Nathaniel Cotton did in his 'Vision' of Death. Man, with his vademecum, the Seraph Religion, is on the verge of death, and cannot keep from trembling. But finally he plunges in to meet his fate, and Death, now seen face to face, is not so frightening. The Seraph,

Then hasten'd with expanded wing
To meet the pale terrific King.
But now what milder scenes arise!
The Tyrant drops his hostile guise.
He seems a youth divinely fair,
In graceful ringlets waves his hair.
His wings their whitening plumes display,
His burnish'd plumes reflect the day.
Light flows his shining azure vest,
And all the angel stands confest.

But in the Gates of Paradise this radiant youth never appears, and the morbid elements reign uncontested.

Young, to take another example, worked some of his best effects in variations on this kind of scene. In Night the Fourth, for instance, he described how Christ 'Burst the Bars of Death', and Young exhorted the 'Everlasting gates' to 'Lift up your heads', to 'give the King of Glory to come in'. And then, identifying himself as the object of the act of redemption, he wrote,

'Then, then, I rose; the first Humanity
Triumphant past the Crystal Ports of Light,
(Stupendous Guest!) and seized eternal Youth,
Seized in our Name'.

When Blake illustrated these verses he depicted two definite

stages: a man raising the gates of death (plate 16.1), and Christ with the stigmata rising triumphantly after having conquered Death (plate 16.2). In Young the movement from supplication to resurrection is unmistakable, just as it is unmistakably absent from the Gates of Paradise.

Nor, on the other hand, is the resurrection implied in the Gates. In some works, such as Blake's Milton, the author may be able to build up such a flood of expectation in the reader that even if he drops the theme midway through the holocaust which precedes the Second Coming, his readers may well carry themselves the rest of the distance. This is not a wholly successful tactic, nor, in Blake's case, was it his original intention, but it did work to some extent. If Armageddon begins with sufficient violence and firepower, one may expect the reader to see the 'crystal ports of light' through the smoke and confusion. Night Thoughts ends with

... Time, like Him of Gaza in his Wrath,
Plucking the Pillars that support the World,
In NATURE'S ample Ruins lies entomb'd;
And MIDNIGHT, universal Midnight! reigns (plate 16.3).

And the point is, that night has been given a definite span, and therefore will end. The sun will soon rise; one need not worry about it. Salvation is secured. But in the Gates of Paradise the destruction of the body is not the result of mental or spiritual conflict, but rather of weariness, and of melancholy. Death in the Gates is more nearly dissolution into the terrestrial elements, and reversion to chaos.
And is Devotion Virtue? 'Tis compa'd in the Soul.
What Heart of Stone, but glows at Thoughts, like
Such Contemplations mount us; and should mount us:
The Mind fill higher; nor ever glance on Man... Unraptur'd, uninflam'd.—Where row my Thoughts:
To rest from Wonders? Other Wonders rise, as fast.
And strike where'er they row: My Soul is caught;
Heaven's sovereign Blessings chaff'ring from the Cross,
Rush on her, in a Throng, and close her round.
The Prisoner of Amaze! — In His blest Life, and Day
I see the Path, and in his Death, the Price, both Red.
And in his great Affer, the Proof Supreme of Immortality.— And did he rise?
Hear, O ye Nations! hear it, O ye Dead! hear it, and tell
He rose! he rose! he burst the Bars of Death, and yet
Lift up your Heads, ye everlasting Gates!
And give the King of Glory to come in:

Plate 16.1
Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 126.
Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Plate 16.2

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 127.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Of Fancy, when our Hearts remain below?

Virtue abounds in Flatterers, and Foes:
'Tis Pride, to praise her; Penance to perform:
To more than Words, to more than Worth of Tongue,
Lorenzo! rise, at this auspicious Hour;
An Hour, when Heaven's most intimate with Man;
When, like a falling Star, the Ray Divine
Glisters swift into the Bottom of the Well;
And Jut are All, detergent to reclaim;
Which see that Tide high, within thy Reach.

Awake, then! Thy Philosopher calls: Awake!
Thou, who shalt wake, when the Creation sleeps;
When, like a Taper, all these Suns expire;
When Time, like Him of Gaza in his Wrath,
Plucking the Pillars that support the World!

In Nature's ample Ruins lies entombed;
And Midnight, Universal Midnight, reigns.

Plate 16.3

Blake, Designs for Night Thoughts, (unpublished, 1795-7), number 536.

Watercolour. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
Chapter Thirteen

Plate 13
It is appropriate that discussion of plate 13 should follow discussion of the rest of the series, because this plate answers many of the questions posed by the rest of the plates, and because it stands somewhat at a distance from them, both in background and in meaning. While deathbed scenes and scenes of the resurrection were the very staple of the emblem literature, none of these emblems seem to be especially illuminating in comparison with Blake's. The emblem books were completely conventional on this subject, which meant that the designs were for the most part concerned with piety, rewards and punishments, grief, and the resurrection of God, rather than of man.

In the literature of melancholy however, the deathbed motif, the resurrection motif, and variations on them, such as the themes of lamentation and atonement, were used in ways which approach Blake's treatment of them. In Night Thoughts, for instance, Young revived the medieval comparison of the deathbed to a shrine, almost without change, adding only his usual quota of ejaculatory epithets. And when Blake illustrated Young's verses, he separated the scene into two components, the scene at the deathbed, with angels ministering to the dying man (plate 13.1), and the man 'rising to a god' after death (plate 13.2). So too, in his illustrations to The Grave, three of Blake's eleven designs are deathbed scenes\(^1\), and five of the eleven depict the

\(^1\) 'Death of the Strong Wicked Man', 'The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life', and 'The Death of the Good old Man'.

By mortal hand—it merits a divine:
*Angels should paint it, angels ever there;
There on a post of honour, and of joy.

Dare I presume then? but Philander bids,
And glory tempts, and inclination calls:
Yet am I struck; as struck the soul beneath
Aerial groves' impenetrable gloom;
Or in some mighty ruin's solemn shade;
Or gazing by pale lamps on high-born dust
In vaults; thin courts of poor unflatter'd kings!
Or at the midnight altar's hallow'd flame:
It is religion to proceed: I pause—
And enter, awed, the temple of my theme:
Is it his death-bed? no—it is his shrine:
Behold him, there, just rising to a god.

The chamber, where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite in the verge of heaven.
Fly, ye profane! if not, draw near with awe,
Receive the blessing, and adore the chance
That threw in this Bethesda your disease;
If unrestored by this, despair your cure;
For here restless demonstration dwells;
A death-bed's a detector of the heart;
Here tired dissimulation drops her mask,
Through life's grimace that mistress of the scene!
Here real and apparent are the same—
You see the man; you see his hold on heaven;
If sound his virtue, as Philander's sound.
Heaven waits not the last moment; owns her friends

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Plate 13.1

Blake, Illustrations to *Night Thoughts*, (London, 1797). Engraving.
On this side death; and points them out to men:
A lecture silent, but of sovereign power!
To vice, confusion; and to virtue, peace.
Whatever farce the boastful hero plays,
Virtue alone has majesty in death;
And greater still, the more the tyrant frowns:
Philander! he severely frown'd on thee:
"No warning given—unceremonious fate!
A sudden rush from life's meridian joys!
A wrench from all we love—from all we are!
A restless bed of pain! a plunge opaque
Beyond conjecture! feeble nature's dread!
Strong reason's shudder at the dark unknown!
A sun extinguish'd! a just opening grave!
And oh! the last—last—what? can words express?
Thought reach? the last, last—silence of a friend!
Where are those horrors, that amazement where,
This hideous group of ills, which singly shock?
Demand from man—I thought him man till now.
Through nature's wreck, through vanquish'd agonies,
Like the stars struggling through this midnight gloom,
What gleams of joy! what more than human peace!
Where, the frail mortal? the poor abject worm?
No, not in death, the mortal to be found.
His conduct is a legacy for all,
Richer than Mammon's for his single heir:
His comforters he comforts; great in ruin,
With unreluctant grandeur gives, not yields
His soul sublime; and closes with his fate.

Plate 13.2

Blake, Illustrations to Night Thoughts, (London, 1797). Engraving.
separation of the soul from the body.1

But these designs are not really apposite to plate 13 of the Gates. In illustrating Young and Blair, Blake had to emphasize the resurrection in order to offset the gloom of their ego-centric reflections, and in consequence he had to rely heavily on the device of depicting the soul as separate from the body. But in the Gates of Paradise the radiant form of the old man rising above his body is meant to portray a prophetic character, not to suggest the soul's separation from the body or the resurrection after death.

In this didactic context the more apt analogues are in painting, where the deathbed motif was a principle device in what Robert Rosenblum has called the 'Neoclassic Stoic', a 'viewpoint which looked toward antiquity for examples of high-minded human behaviour that could serve as moral paragons for contemporary audiences'.2 Plate 13 of the Gates is not neoclassic in setting or in style, and it may appear, therefore, that it has little to do with neoclassic precedents. But when one considers Rosenblum's estimate that the motif was 'so prevalent from the

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1. 'Death of the Strong, Wicked Man', 'The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life', 'The Soul exploring the recesses of the Grave', 'The Death of the Good Old Man', and 'The Reunion of the Soul & the Body'.

2. Rosenblum, Transformations, p. 28. My discussion is greatly indebted to Rosenblum, both for information about the deathbed motif (pp. 28-43), for his discussion of Blake (pp. 153-91), and for his discussion of the problems in the study of eighteenth-century art (pp. 1-49). All the plates I discuss are reproduced in Transformations.
midcentury on that examples may well run into the thousands',
the apparent difference in style is of less consequence.

The *Ars Moriendi* had long ago established the importance of
a standardized setting around the deathbed, with prescribed
duties for those attending. And the deathbed motif was naturally
associated with the saints, especially St. Joseph, the patron of
a peaceful and well-made death. The heroes Hector, Germanicus,
Virithus, Bertrand Du Guescelin, Chevalier Bayard, James Wolfe,
and Jean-Paul Marat were also depicted at the moment of death
surrounded by officers and compatriots; and similar scenes depicted
the deaths of Masaccio, Leonardo, Raphael, and Socrates and
Seneca.

One could never hope to do justice to even a few of these
subjects in a work of the present scope. But as Rosenblum has
explained, a number of elements tended to recur in most of the
paintings of this kind, following four early examples, and one
can therefore, generalize to a certain extent. In Poussin's
*The Death of Germanicus* (ca. 1627), and in Gavin Hamilton's
*Andromache Bewailing the Death of Hector* (ca. 1761), the event
depicted is the moment prior to death. The focus is on the
deathbed and the dying hero, and each of the mourners expresses

1. Ibid.
2. A subject which Blake illustrated in his *Death of St. Joseph*.
4. Ibid.
a particular nuance of grief. In Poussin's composition, in the marble relief after it by Thomas Banks (1774), and in the copy after it by Heinrich Füger (1789), it is the gesture of pointing upward which stands out in relation to Blake.¹ In Poussin the gesture coincides with the upward-pointing lances of the soldiers, and has mainly an heroic significance. In Füger the gesture is rather one of supplication. And in Banks' relief, the gesture is again heroic, but because there are now two men pointing upward, and because the scene is now treated in attic nudity, there is more a sense of the timeless, even collective, martyrdom to ideals, than of the virtues of a particular hero.

Banks' elimination of detail goes a long way to approach Blake's even greater simplification of the scene. In his design all the details which had reference to the usual setting have been pared away. Instead of the complex group of mourners, each performing a specific function and each embodying a specific modulation of grief, Blake has depicted four figures who have almost nothing individual about them. They are differentiated only according to sex and age. As a group they compose a family, but one can tell little else about them. Indeed, in the early copies Blake has not even bothered to fill in the facial features of the two children; and in the later copies, in which he spends

¹ The same gesture was also used in didactic settings other than that of the deathbed scene. See for instance Taillasson's Timoleon and the Syracusans, Salon of 1796, rpt. in Rosenblum, plate 94.
a great deal of effort to depict the risen father in the proper luminosity, the family again receives little attention. The boy's expression remains one of fear and of shock, and the mother and children never express anything but mute astonishment and grief. So too, the body of the dead man is no longer the center of attention. Instead of lying in a posture which is eloquent of his suffering, his courage, and his concern to leave this world in a proper state of mind, the man on the deathbed is depicted as already dead, his features already dissolving from his body. The center of attention has shifted from the dying man to the risen form of the man, and thus to the significance of death itself.

For the figure of the risen man Blake has adopted the motif of the hand and finger gesturing upward. In Poussin and Füger the mourners were the ones who pointed to heaven, but in Blake it is the dead man, now risen, who points. While the gesture still stands in opposition to the corruption of death, it is no longer a gesture of heroic faith, or of the dignity of martyrdom, but rather a testament of new values by one who is in a position to know.

Blake probably did not borrow this motif directly from Poussin or from Füger, for David had used it in a way which shows even greater affinities. In the Death of Socrates (1787) David

1. A motif which had an enormous number of precedents, chief among them, that of John the Baptist in liturgical art.
has depicted Socrates reaching out to accept the cup of hemlock, and gesturing with his upraised hand and forefinger just before the final moment. In contrast to the stern moral fortitude of Socrates, Plato (at the foot of the bed) and the youth holding the cup, turn away in grief or shame, and the mourners at the head of the bed range in emotion from impotent resignation at what they cannot prevent, to complete despair. The way in which Socrates, in the stark white of his nakedness commands the attention of all, and the way that in rising from the bed he seems to be rising above the morality of those who would condemn him, are the points at which Blake begins to use David's design. In Blake's design the old man is not triumphing over conventional morality, but rather pointing to something beyond it. The radiance of his body is not emblematic of moral purity, but of a state in which righteousness has lost its meaning. The motif of pointing to heaven is no longer meant to put death in greater relief, or to turn the dying man's thoughts to what awaits him, but rather it is a sign that a new state awaits all of us -- and death is only one, and not the best way to get there. The old man's hands are, indeed, the most articulate elements in Blake's design. Although the details are obscure in early copies, in the later copies it is clear that he points upward with his left hand and down with his right, to indicate the different directions that the fears and hopes of the living can take. Blake's design

1. My discussion extends a number of points originally made by Rosenblum, pp. 74 - 6.
has, then, the same didactic tone as the *exemplum virtutis* mode of David, but Blake's message is not so much moral as prophetic. Where Socrates was already a secular saint, and his name alone, not to mention the very moment of his death, could be used as an immediate focus for moral emulation, Blake's old man is an unidentifiable figure, of no particular time or place. His function is to give advice in Blake's sense of prophecy. He offers us alternatives. Fear and hope can be not only the manifestations of melancholy, but also the beginnings of vision. In this way plate 13 points beyond the problematic view of life depicted in the rest of the plates. Ordinary life had been seen as a melancholy cycle turning on a downward spiral of dissociated emotions which inevitably resolved into a death wish. But in plate 13 Blake shows that even within such a life one can find moments of epiphany.

Except for plate 13, all of the scenes in the *Gates of Paradise* constitute a closed cycle. At one end man waits, then in rapid succession he is born of the earth, desires, possesses, exploits, dies, and ends back in it, waiting for the cycle to begin again. No matter how much energy he expends, he accomplishes nothing. The lack of resolution in this 'natural' life, this life

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1. See Annotations to Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*:

'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' (K. 392; E. 696, 7).
without spirit or vision, is what makes it such a cramped, useless existence. According to the behaviour one sees in the Gates, the cycle of physical life is, from beginning to end, a perpetual state of melancholy. Melancholy in this sense is no longer an individual ailment, but a general one, and it is no longer a disease associated only with the black bile, earth, and the qualities of cold and dry, but rather melancholy has been broadly allegorized as the condition of fallen man in which each person lives totally within himself and without others. Fear and hope have no objects, and one cannot maintain contact with one's intuitive or creative powers. Hope and fear, desire and restraint, are only momentary exchanges within a polarized field.

Yet even within such a life there may be moments of great insight and achievement. In 'Il Penseroso' Melancholy had been the daughter of both Saturn and Genius, as she had been in Melencolia I, so that 'melancholy' described not only saturnine dispositions, but also the melancholy genius. He could be found 'pursuing his lonely and perilous path on a high ridge above the multitude and set apart from ordinary mortals by his ability to be "creative" under divine inspiration'. But he was cursed in not being able to escape the burden of his gift. In the beginning he might be possessed of a nearly Satanic energy which would provide for unsurpassed accomplishment, but as soon as he attempted to turn this energy to the demands of art, he would be

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betrayed. The price of genius was self-imprisonment, solitude, and despair.

One may see in the conception of the melancholy genius, with its permanent internecine struggle between vitality and anxiety, the germ of much of Blake's early work. And one may see the Gates as Blake's expression of his own condition in precisely these terms. Each of the scenes bears down on one central problem: the struggle within a man between desire and restraint. He knows that he ought to be able to forge the image of himself and his world as he would have them, but the danger constantly facing him is that he will not be able either to take the task firmly in hand or to escape the burden of it. In the Gates of Paradise Blake is trying to turn the inevitable war between desire and restraint into a form which will prove creative. In any particular design it may be desire or it may be restraint which has the upper hand, but overall it is the

1. For a delineation of this view, see Phillips, 'Blake's Early Poetry', Paley and Phillips, Essays for Keynes, pp. 1-28. In works of the same date as the Gates of Paradise Blake was engaged in the same issues. In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, for instance, Blake approaches the problem from the opposite direction, putting the emphasis on desire rather than on restraint. One may see the devil's manifesto for the emancipation of desire as a necessary reaction to Rintrah's banishment. He used to be able to wander alone with his thoughts, but even the deserts, his former haunts, have become the province of fools. And so Rintrah, now an angry prophet, comes to announce that things must change. And who is Rintrah? The angry prophet, the one who 'once meek and in a perilous path', now 'rages in the wilds', is the melancholy genius, who may once have been the solipsist wrapped in his own world, but who has been forced to reform society by society's inability to tolerate him.
relation between the two, the way that desire seems inseparable from restraint and that each begets the other, which perpetuates the struggle, and which must be overcome. Desire can never exist for long without fixing itself on some object; and once it possesses that object, it hardens into restraint. The interplay between plate 6, when desire burst forth, and plate 7, when the boy has become a killer of desire, is treated even more explicitly in plates 8 and 11. In plate 8 the son rebels against his father and usurps the throne, and the father's only comment is that the son is doing as he had been taught. And in plate 11 the son, having gained the throne (but nothing else) appears as an old man, who, like his father, can maintain his position only by restraining the desires of youth. If this pattern repeats itself in two generations, it can repeat itself forever, across all of history, and will therefore constitute a kind of identity for history.

From a point of view outside the historical cycle it will appear that this struggle will never yield the least advantage either way. But to look at the cycle from a distance is precisely the point of view of 'Air', and it is clear that this astronomical perspective is little help to him, nor can it be to anyone else. From a viewpoint within the cycle, however, each leap of desire has a momentous importance. From an imaginative point of view the timely renewals of nature will seem resurrections into eternity, in the same way that the emergence of life from the seed will ever be mysterious and wonderful. From a center which one cannot locate, life begins, both in the earth, and in the mind; and the difference
between an acorn and an oak, like the difference between an ovum and a thinking human being, is no less than the difference between time and eternity. Thus the events depicted in plates 6 and 13 are potential resurrections into a new existence beyond the cycle. The birth of desire in plate 6 is, alas, immediately compromised by the cruel event depicted in plate 7; but the glimmering vision of plate 13 may be a true resurrection, and in his earlier years Blake could have left it at that. However, plate 13 indicates a good deal more than the seasonal renewal of life, and because it does, one begins to see the weakness of the cycle.

The old man in the vision is trying to teach those who see him the way out of the self-perpetuating antithesis of hope and fear, into a more permanent state of creative perception. Such a state cannot be within the bounds of an earthly cycle. It has only to be found for the beholder, while he holds the vision clearly, to be free of death. Now the more emphasis one puts on this visionary state, the less adequate the cycle is going to appear, no matter how capable it is of renewing itself. Because plate 13 is the single prophetic plate in the series, it also becomes the most articulate event in the series, and is indeed necessary to the dumb despair of the rest. Once one knows that moments of melancholy can be the very occasions of epiphany, then Eternity is no longer something that exists only after death. While Blake does not develop this conception as fully as he

might, and while one never sees the eternal artist, one who can stand self-fulfilled and independent, yet the motto of the plate, and the fact that the mourners have indeed seen what we would, gives us a glimpse of a divine, purely creative, and purely imaginative identity which does not depend on nature for anything but an occasion.

For Children The Gates of Paradise contains, then, two visions of life. One, which is put forward in the majority of the plates, is of human life, which though it is self-renewing, is characterized mainly by melancholy. The other, presented in plate 13, extends the notion of renewal to a completely different state, a state which is beyond the bounds of desire and restraint, hope and fear. Although it begins in melancholy, it is never again subject to the rhythm of the cycle. And although the struggle between desire and restraint is never permanently resolved, plate 13 suggests how it can be surpassed.

One learns in plate 13 that desire is not the principle thing; vision is. Desire only provides a quota of energy, which then has to be consumed, but vision is the pristine state of self-identity, the life of pure creation. In putting forward this ideal, Blake does not abandon the conception that ordinary life

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1. My view is a deliberate departure from the majority of the commentators who, like Tinker, see plate 13 as the moment when the traveller's life changes. Tinker compares the plate to plate 12 of the Illustrations of the Book of Job, and sees in both 'a vision of the poetic or prophetic spirit later personified as Los', which, in the case of the traveller, 'permits him to "close the labours of his day" in peace'. (p. 113).
is more like a treadmill than a pilgrimage, nor does he do anything to make the prospect less menacing. But he does suggest that within the inevitable polarization of hope and fear, desire and restraint, there are moments of renewal, which may, if we use them creatively, open gates leading out of such a wretched life. In this sense the title of the series is not so ironic after all. For Children The Gates of Paradise is the great prologue to the pilgrimage. It does not present paradise itself, it only shows us the gates that open inward. But having seen them, man is ready to begin the journey.
Chapter Fourteen

For the Sexes  The Gates of Paradise
When Blake reissued the *Gates of Paradise* about twenty-five years after its original publication, he added a Prologue, an Epilogue, and a set of verses entitled 'The Keys of the Gates'. In the present chapter I will discuss the Epilogue in the same manner and at a comparable length as that afforded the plates in the earlier series, but with respect to 'The Keys of the Gates' and the Prologue, I will discuss only those points which have been glossed or misrepresented in the critical literature. This is not to underestimate the importance of 'The Keys' and the Prologue, but rather to redress the current critical balance. As I explained in Chapter Two of Part One, most of the commentators have discussed the *Gates* only in light of 'The Keys', explaining for instance, that the woman in plate 1 is really Vala, and that the Mundane Shell is treated more clearly in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*. But this material is now well-known, and there is little to be gained in a work of the present sort in rehearsing it.

In the Epilogue one of the two figures is a muscular man asleep on the ground with his staff beside him. If this design belonged to the earlier series, it would be almost impossible not to see this figure, following Keynes, as the traveller himself. But in the period of the prophetic books, the traveller, whom we saw earlier as the melancholic wanderer, becomes an idealized figure of heroic dimensions, who can more easily accommodate the grander scheme of 'The Keys'. The kind of changes required are not so very great as one might imagine. Even in the *Night Thoughts* designs, which Blake executed in the years immediately following the
publication of *For Children*, he was already moving the motif of the melancholy traveller into a prophetic context (plate Ep. 1) with a few simple means. In this design Blake has transformed Young's description of the poet as traveller, associated as always with the forlorn traveller of Quarles, into a more idealized, even bardic figure, who reclines on his couch, finds inspiration in thoughts of mutability, death, and immortality, and whose melancholy already leads him to something beyond it.

The other figure in the Epilogue is Satan, who hovers over the sleeping with outstretched wings and arms, presenting his backside to the viewer. The moon and the stars are emblazoned on Satan's black wings, suggesting that the sleeping man's perception of the physical world is only a spell cast by Satan. Thus the Epilogue appears to be cast in a dualist mold, despite our objections to that interpretation of the earlier series. One would, therefore, follow Damon and Keynes in their interpretation, as well as Kathleen Raine, who connect Satan with Vala, and the illusion of material existence.

Both the graphic motifs and the verses reinforce the dualist

1. This may have been intended as a base gesture. See for instance the depiction of the devil in the character of the demon of vanity, presenting his backside to a coquette who admires herself in her mirror, in G. de Latour Landry's *Ritter vom Turn*, (Basle, 1493; rpt., J. and E. Lechner, ed., *Devils, Demons, Death, and Damnation*, (New York, 1971)).

Thus I, long-travell'd in the Ways of Men,
And dancing, with the rest, the giddy Maze,
Where Disappointment smiles at Hope's Career,
Warn'd by the Langour of Life’s Evening Ray,
At length, have hous'd me in an humble Shed;
Where, future Wand'ring banish'd from my Thought,
And waiting, patient, the sweet Hour of Rest;
I chase the Moments with a serious Song:
Song soothes our Pains; and Age has Pains to sooth.

When Age, Care, Crime, and Friends embrace'd at Heart;
Torn from my blesting Breast, and Death's dark Shade,
Which hovers o'er me, quench'd the ethereal Fire;
Canst thou, O Night, indulge One Labour more?
One Labour more indulge: Then sleep, my Strain! I
Till, inspir'd, wak'd by Raphael's golden Lyre,
Where Night, Death, Age, Care, Crime, and Sorrow cease,
To bear a Part in everlast'ing Lays;
Tho' far, far higher far, in Aim, I trust,
Symphonious to this humble Prelude here.
position, and they do so in ways that have not yet been demonstrated. The device of imprinted signs of the heavens on a character's body or clothes belongs to a larger class of such devices in medieval art, in which almost any kind of sign can be superimposed over a character as a means of identifying him. Blake himself used the device to depict 'Fame' in his Night Thoughts illustrations (NT 371) as a figure wearing a cloak which is emblazoned with winged eyes. The astrological signs have long been used in the same way, and even today the coat of stars and planetary symbols has retained a certain connection with the sorcerer and the magus. Beyond these specific uses the motif was used in the Renaissance as a ready formula to illustrate the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm.

Everyone is familiar with the frontispiece to Hobbe's Leviathan, where the commonwealth is shown to be a man composed of many men. So also the frontispiece to Drayton's Poly-Olbion depicts Britanniawearing a gown which is itself a map of Britain (Plate Ep. 2). This device of equating a human figure with the nation is of course one of the most important elements of structure in Jerusalem, but in the Gates of Paradise the device is used with a completely opposite intent. Satan's ubiquity, which is figured in the moon and the stars, is not productive of the sublime, as is Albion's universality in Jerusalem, but rather of disgust.

The imprecation against Satan -- 'thou art but a Dunce' -- 1 derives from Young's Night Thoughts, and the idea to depict Satan

Plate Ep. 2

the Dunce with a star-studded cloak may well have derived from traditional treatments of Pan. In his *Wisdom of the Ancients*, for instance, Bacon speculated that 'This Pan, or the universal nature of things, which we view and contemplate, had its origin from the divine Word and confused matter, first created by God Himself, with the subsequent introduction of sin, and consequently corruption'. And, Bacon went on to explain, Pan's mantle is described as spotted, 'for in like manner the heaven are sprinkled with stars, the sea with islands, the earth with flowers, and almost each particular thing is variegated, or wears a mottled coat'.

In the frontispiece to an 'Englied' version of an ancient treatise on astronomy, Manilius' *The Sphere* (plate Ep. 3), Pan is depicted according to this formula. At the top of the page is Urania, muse of Astronomy, gazing at the stars through her telescope. At the foot of the page on the right is Mercury, and on the left, across from Mercury, is Pan. On Pan's legs there are emblematic representations of cities, indicated by the church-spires, and between these run rivers, so that the whole is reminiscent of a map by John Speed, and also of a schematic treatment of the circulatory system. The treatment of Pan's cloak is in much the same vein. The cloak is studded with stars to indicate that it represents the skies just as the lower half of Pan's body represents the earth.

Wenceslaus Hollar, who engraved the frontispiece to *The Sphere*

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THE SPHERE of M. MANILIVS
made An English POEM by Edward Sherburne Esq.
Plate Ep. 3

was emphasizing Pan's combination of differing natures. Just as Pan is composed of man and goat, so Hollar, in making Pan an emblem of the physical world, has superimposed the higher parts of nature, the heavens, onto the elevated human part of Pan, while he superimposed the lower parts of nature, the fields and rivers, onto Pan's base nature, represented by his caprine shanks and cloven hooves. The motto and the sententiae to this plate emphasize the dualistic distinction that Estienne and others never tired of repeating. Pan is styled 'Natura Universitas', and Mercury 'Universitatis Interpres'.

Although the distinction between the body and the spirit was enormously important, one must recognize that there is no intrinsic connection between it and the motif of the star-studded cloak. In Hugo, Arwaker, and Quarles (plate Ep. 4), the motif is used without any reference to the meaning it had in Hollar. And yet the design of these plates preserves at least a kind of dualism. The division of the plate in the middle, with the sun on one side and the moon on the other, the children of light on one side and the children of darkness on the other, remind one of the old distinction, even though it is not developed.

Blake's use of this motif in his Epilogue returns in some

1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem XV; Quarles, Book III, Emblem XV.
Plate Ep. 4.

degree to Hollar's treatment. In Blake's design there is, first of all, the straightforward transformation of Pan into Satan. Blake has depicted the stars, the sun, and the moon not on a cloak or mantle, but on Satan's saurian wings, so that Satan himself is the physical universe in one of its most awe-inspiring aspects. Blake has also added a dramatic touch by making Satan seem to be revelling over the man, as if it were his great joy to be the manipulator of nature, the ghost in the machine. Satan is then, both the material of the world and the mechanic who operates it. But this is not all. The sentiment from the verses, that Satan cannot tell the garment from the man, shows that for all Blake's ingenuity in using the material of Hollar, and of Hugo, Arwaker, and Quarles, he has not abandoned the one basic notion on which all the rest depended: that the physical universe exists because it means something, that nature ought to be perceived as an emblem—that is, as a representation of something else.

This conception underlies 'The Keys of the Gates', and points to yet another allusion in the phrase 'gates of paradise'. For in addition to the 'gate of heaven' which Jacob saw in his dream, Hervey's gothic 'gates of paradise', and Ghiberti's gates wrought in gold, the word 'gate' had a peculiar significance for Blake through the works of Jacob Boehme, which William Law had translated

1. Warton, considering the sable stole which Melancholy wore in 'Il Penseroso', offered the suggestion that Milton was 'struck with an old Gothic print of the constellations, which I have seen in early editions of the Astronomers, where this queen is represented with a black body marked with white stars' (Milton, Poems on Several Occasions, ed. Warton, (London, the 2nd edition, 1791), p. 65).
in 1764. Boehme had been practically obsessed with the notion of a duality of qualities. Love and hate, good and evil, the wrath of nature and the mercy of God were the standards behind which all fallen things contended. The main purpose of Boehme's philosophy was to show how a unity of existence could again be achieved. His system was almost completely speculative and schematic, and he continually urged man to rise above his 'Adamical fallen state', into progressively higher planes of existence. In *Aurora* and *The Three Principles of Divine Essence* Boehme used the word 'gate' in the sense of 'explanation'. One reads of the 'Gate of Mystery', the 'Holy Gate', the 'Gate of Power', the 'Gate of Love', the 'Deep Gate of the Soul', the 'Golden Gate', ad infinitum. In this sense the Gates of Paradise would be a great leap in perception.

The verses of the Epilogue are for the most part self-explanatory. But the final line, 'The Lost traveller's Dream under the Hill', has been a continuing source of puzzlement. Kathleen Raine has suggested that 'Satan is the "lost Traveller" and his "dream under the Hill" is Maya, "States that are not, but ah! Seem to be." The hill is, one must suppose, the mountain of purgatory, a symbol taken from Dante, whose hells are "under the hill". Dante and

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   The illustrations in the final volume actually demonstrate what Boehme tries to explain. In one plate a man's body opens into its various parts to reveal multiple sets of superimposed coloured plates beneath. One can, as it were, pass through the gates of the fleshly prison to the starry heavens and eventually arrive at the deity itself, figured in the sun.

Vergil emerge from Satan's realms into the sweet light to find themselves at the foot of the mountain of purgatory, and all the hells reversed, beneath them.' Raine's comparison with the Divine Comedy bears some fruit when one considers that the majority of Dante's poem is devoted to wandering through regions of the suffering, the dead, and the damned, and only near the end of the poem does the goal become visible to the two travellers. In the same manner the majority of the designs in the Gates of Paradise are involved in describing events in a fallen condition, and only one (and perhaps two) point the way to paradise. Furthermore, Blake's use of themes traditionally associated with Saturn and Melancholy necessarily included bringing in to some degree an inverted moral order, the kind of order for which Saturn was often held responsible. As Arcite puts it in 'The Knight's Tale',

So stood our horoscope in chains to lie,
And Saturn in the dungeon of the sky
Or other baleful aspect ruled our birth, 2
When all the friendly stars were under earth.

But whether the Epilogue should be seen as having direct relevance to the scheme of the Divine Comedy remains to be shown, however close some themes may appear. And since there is no other allusion to the spiral mountains of the Divine Comedy or to any overall pattern in the traveller's journey, one should not rely too heavily on the connection.

1. Raine, I, p. 245.
Frye's suggestion, on the other hand, that the phrase alludes to an episode in The Pilgrim's Progress, is more likely the case. At one point Christian falls asleep in a cave halfway up the hill, and while he sleeps, he unwittingly lets his roll fall from his grasp. He awakens with a start, runs up the hill, but then discovers the loss of his roll and has to retrace his steps in order to find it. According to Frye's reading, this episode is relevant in purely typological terms. In retracing his steps, Christian is 'like the Israelites in the desert, to whom Bunyan explicitly refers'.

But there may be more in Bunyan's allegory than this, and indeed, Frye does not go into enough detail to make it clear what retracing one's steps has to do with Bunyan's plot or with the Gates of Paradise.

If one takes a closer look at the allegory these difficulties can be overcome. According to the details of the allegory presented early in the book, Christian's coat is the coat of righteousness much like that of Joshua, who, once clothed in filthy garments and accused by Satan, had been given a coat of righteousness by the Lord (Zech. iii. 4). Christian's roll is the gospel, but more specifically, his trust in the Lord, and the sealing of that trust in the Holy Spirit, as in Eph. i. 13. It follows that Bunyan is blaming Christian for losing his trust in the Lord and becoming a sluggard by taking comfort in righteousness which he had not earned, but had been given him by the Lord. And if one applies this reading

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to the Epilogue of the Gates, Blake is saying that Satan's judgement is mistaken because Satan judges the righteousness of a man from the cut of his coat. But in Blake's view it is even more important to notice that the whole issue of righteousness is a red herring in its relation to finding paradise. Righteousness is of no more eternal consequence than a clean coat. To the lost traveller fondling his lovely, borrowed garment it may seem as radiant as Lucifer himself, but then the traveller is, after all, lost, in the decline of the day, and his values are precisely those of Satan, who is the accuser of sins, and thus the inventor of the distinction between righteousness and filthiness. The traveller who is, like Hervey and Wesley in their notorious dispute, bothered about the mechanisms of the law, and who thinks that one is sure of reaching one's goal if one is free of blame, is like a man asleep, like the child on the leaf, waiting for someone to shock him into consciousness. The only solution at such a point is to retrace one's steps, back to the birth of contemplation, and back to the deathbed scene, in order to break out of the vicious cycle. And as soon as one sees this, then the lost traveller may seem to be on his way to the light, which is under the hill only because it is over the horizon. If he keeps travelling onward, he will eventually come upon his original starting point.

1. The dispute was on the Calvinist doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ. It began with Hervey's Theron and Aspasio (1755), to which Wesley replied with Remarks (n. d.), to which Hervey replied, on his deathbed, with Eleven Letters (1766).
The main change effected by 'The Keys of the Gates' is to transfer the events depicted in the Gates of Paradise from a temporal frame of reference to the bosom of a transcendent God. This radical change appears to be a textbook case for Hirsch's thesis of an overall shift in Blake's thought from his central period to the period of the later prophetic books. In the central period he did not 'deliberately point to his transcendent vision' of life and being as if it were 'a reproach to this life', but rather he 'embraced both contrary worlds'. And in his later period, 'the perspective has entirely shifted. Both the beginning and the end of the cycle lie in Eternity'.

But having distinguished this change of reference, a number of other problems immediately arise. Although the events depicted in the Gates are now in the bosom of the Eternal Man, the first-person narrative of 'The Keys' is not the autobiography of a character like Albion, but of one who is generated from Albion, and who probably returns to him, although this point is unclear. One's interpretation can now proceed in either of two directions, the one of a close comparison with the prophecies, and the other in more general terms. If one compares For the Sexes with Blake's other prophecies, one may say, with Bloom, that 'the story told in pictures and text alike is a version of the Orc cycle'. But there is a further distinction to be made. Whereas in America,

Europe, The French Revolution, and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, the Orc-figures are clearly held up with approval, in the Gates the same kind of figures are satirized, as in plates 5, 8, and 9. The release of desire and the beginnings of revolution are no longer seen as harbingers of the millenium, but rather as temporary outbursts, as safety-valves for normality, which having blown their heads, will soon subside into the familiar melancholy pattern.

In other words, the Gates of Paradise presents essentially the same estimation of the Orc cycle as one finds in the later prophecies and in the last plate of Europe. That is, Blake rejects Orc and his self-renewing cycle and fastens instead on a Los-figure who is more prophetic and visionary than energetic and revolutionary.

He appears in Europe 3. 7 as 'possessor of the Moon' and tries to urge his sons to the feast, but then he disappears as quickly as he arrived, and arises again only for an instant in the final plate of Europe (15. 10: K. 245; E. 65), calling his sons 'to the strife of blood'. So too, the form of the old man in plate 13 of the Gates arises without warning and points the way to a new order, even if he does not completely delineate it. The paradigm for For the Sexes, in this view, is of a journey by an entire family toward a new existence, the picture of Aeneas escaping from burning Troy with Ancises on his back and Ascanius beside him, on the way to Lavinia's shores.

There are certain advantages to this view, primarily that in looking at the Gates as a whole, the traveller can become a more idealized figure in much the same fashion that in plates 15 and 17
of *Milton*, the traveller becomes the traveller through eternity, and eternity, both after and within life, now becomes as palpable as physical life. 'For travellers from Eternity pass outward to Satan's seat, / But travellers to Eternity pass inward to Golgonooza' (*Milton* 17. 29 - 30: K. 498; E. 110). A traveller in eternity is capable of perceiving both the apex and the circumference of things at once, because in eternity perception is perfect and there is no distinction between subject and object. In this view, one must accept many of the interpretations rejected earlier, such as that of E. J. Rose, who explains that

Man is re-created according to the imagination through the one long night of the soul. Like everything else which only appears to be real, the cyclical nature of existence proves also to be delusion, an allegorical generation. When the long night ends, only the imaginative forms, the mental acts of man, remain; and these (his emanations) are now themselves one with man. Awakening to identity, man is fourfold and the seasons of his sleep are no longer sequential but simultaneously present. Viewed from eternity, the pilgrimage is the creative moment -- an apocalypse. Viewed from time, the pilgrimage is recurrent -- that is, cyclical.  

In *Milton* the traveller is invested with a great deal more generality than ever before. He becomes completely neutral, a pure vehicle of perception, the form in which all men have to live until they settle certain accounts. The traveller through eternity is as pure as the soul through metempsychosis, and any identity he may seem to have is only temporary. Thus Blake can transform many of the characteristics of the earlier traveller -- his aloofness, his

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non-involvement, the abstracting quality about him that arose from
his melancholy -- into parts of his doctrine of the differences
between individuals, such as Milton, and states, such as Satan.

But the trouble with this view is that to accept it one must
completely erase the significance of all the plates (except plate 14)
in the series as they stood before. All of them have to be seen
as false starts if the central point of the revised series is seen
to be nothing more than the traveller's journey through eternity.

If, on the other hand, one interprets *For the Sexes* in more
general terms, other equally difficult problems arise. If one
sees the 'Eternal Man' and 'The Immortal Man that cannot Die' not
specifically as Albion, but as the common poetic device of the larger
man, the phyogene, then it will appear that the seeds of renewal
are carried across the duration of many cycles. The effect of this
autonomy is to extend the meaning of a 'lifetime' to an unusually
large scale, one which begins before birth and ends after death.
Man waits, as in the frontispiece, to be born, and after his body
has died, he waits, as in plate 16, to be born again. And if a
lifetime is in reality longer than the period of conscious activity
one usually thinks of, then the latter period is thrown into
greater relief as a period of intense movement and development,
a period in which certain things are meant to be accomplished.
But in this larger scheme the *Gates* can only be said to present a
picture of failure. Nothing of great importance is accomplished.
And thus, while 'The Keys of the Gates' may have added a certain
amount of unity to the more obscure early version, it has also
made the ending appear unsatisfactory.
In *For Children* one could discount the importance of narrative progression and cause and effect and put plate 13 above the series, as the single prophetic plate, pointing the way out of the vicious cycle. But in *For the Sexes* plate 13 is the one moment of understanding, which though it occurs in every lifetime is, nevertheless, always passed by. The larger man, the race as a whole, is no different than any single member of it. Perhaps because of this inequity, because in other words, 'The Keys of the Gates' did not succeed in completely changing the character of the work, Blake added the Epilogue and the Prologue. If his allegorical commentary could not bring the Gates into complete agreement with the new insights of *Jerusalem*, at least in the Epilogue he could identify the enemy, and in the Prologue offer advice how to escape his clutches. 'The Lost Traveller's Dream under the Hill' refers to the episode in Bunyan, as I have explained, but also to the melancholy traveller in plate 14, and the relevance of the Epilogue lies in its message that the melancholy traveller who owes so much to Jacques, to Satan's temptation of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, and to the rural man of sentiment, must no longer follow his lost dream, but must change his perception to a different mode, and become a traveller through eternity.

All this is fairly clear. But the advice offered in the Prologue, on the other hand, must be considered with care. The most important part is the opening couplet: 'Mutual Forgiveness of each Vice/ Such are the Gates of Paradise'. Most of the commentators gloss this couplet as simply another instance of Blake's doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, and in so doing completely misrepresent
Blake. Rossetti, for instance, spoke of an 'endless capacity for forgiving', as if Blake were urging a charitable, altruistic outlook. Pierre Berger said that the forgiveness of sins was 'Blake's one commandment', and that his advice was to 'abstain from accusing anyone of sin, and forgive all offences'. Even Sir Geoffrey Keynes argued that Blake was saying explicitly that 'Paradise may be obtained through forgiveness of the sins of others, a virtue always opposed by Satan, the Accuser'. One would not object to these statements as incorrect in fact, but rather because they only tell half the story.

The first couplet of the Prologue is as important in changing the meaning of the Gates as the addition of the Epilogue or 'The Keys', for this is the only instance in the Gates in which Blake completely discards an egocentric framework in favour of the notion of communal creation. Melancholy was the very disease of egocentrism, and the problem pointed by plate 10 was the fact that in this condition one could never escape self-imprisonment, nor could one be aided by another. This diagnosis itself was a melancholy thought to consider, but even more depressing was the idea that the best way to relieve melancholy was not by amusement or diversions but by solitary contemplation. And what more central problem could one contemplate than one's own melancholy? As Burton said, he would

not have written the Anatomy, but that the scope of the project offered him an almost endless activity to offset his own melancholy. Even the softer, more creative vision of melancholy offered by Milton was essentially an inviolable, solitary state, and if one could not summon up the means to turn one's melancholy to prophecy, then melancholy became again a frightful disease leading to madness. But if one could turn one's melancholy to prophecy, what then? So long as one existed above the multitude, so long as one could achieve more and finer than anyone else, then melancholy could be put off. But Blake must have realized at some point that this solution, however dazzling to a young poet could not sustain him when he considered society as a whole, and when his conception of society admitted plurality. When in 'The Keys' he introduced the larger man, the phylogene, as the central character in the cycle, then the picture before him was of the whole of society able to escape despair only in the manner of the melancholy genius — an absurd and grotesque picture indeed. But this single couplet of the prologue changes that context entirely, and in effect says that while one man can do nothing, two people can find paradise itself.

This couplet does not say only that the forgiveness of vices is the way to paradise; it says rather that mutual forgiveness of vices is the way. The difference is important. According to the former, a man can find paradise by being lenient in his outlook, but according to the latter, it takes two people working on the bonds that unite them to find the gates of paradise. When one sees the couplet
in this way, it adds a significant dimension to one's evaluation of Blake. It shows he did not believe that isolated individuals, however courageous in fashioning their desires, could change society, but rather that in conjunction with mutual changes of perception, a new community of vision might develop. A mind working on itself by itself could effect little, but two people, each dying for the other, could find paradise.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this point. Even in Blake's greatest work, *Jerusalem*, one can never tell in plate 96, when Los finally throws himself into the 'Furnaces of affliction' and they finally become 'Fountains of Living Waters', why this sacrifice of self is a genuine one, when previous sacrifices had not been. It is a suspicious mind which would harp on the issue too long, but it must occur to all readers of Blake at one time or another: Why is Los' sacrifice of self genuine? How can he be fully conscious that he is sacrificing himself and yet not be committing a willful action which can only redound to his own advantage, and which is, therefore, not so much a sacrifice as an investment? Within the egocentric framework of *For Children* and of the prophecies, one has eventually to appeal to faith on this point. The paradox cannot be satisfactorily resolved. Or perhaps when Los surrendered himself he had no idea he would be gaining eternity. In any case, the problem does not arise in *For the Sexes*, because Blake states his conception of the forgiveness of sins in a way which overcomes all the difficulties. If the forgiveness of sins can only take place between two people,
as a mutual and simultaneous surrender of self, and if it cannot, by definition, take place on the basis of one person's need for it, then the final and indeed the principle problem of the melancholic can be solved. He is no longer solitary.
Part Three
Appendices and Bibliography

Appendix One
On M. L. Johnson's 'Emblem and Symbol in Blake'
When research for the present work had already been completed, M. L. Johnson discussed the subject of Blake and the emblem literature, and adduced the two emblems from van Veen (Plates 11, 2 and 11, 5) and the one from Quarles (plate 11, 3) which I discussed in relation to Blake's plate 11. Her interpretation differs from mine on many points, and in this appendix I will explain the points where, in my view, she is mistaken.

On the significance of Quarles' Emblem XV, Johnson took exception to Nanavutty's suggestion that Blake was following Quarles' scheme and offered instead that Blake reversed 'the roles of Sense and Faith, with their stereotyped associations', so that 'aged, blind, and ignorant Faith -- the law-bound religion of the fallen Urizen -- would clip the wings of youthful Sensory Delight; self-righteous, convention-frozen Experience mutilates joyous, free Innocence.' But this interpretation contradicts the contemporary meaning of the terms 'sense' and 'faith', especially when they were used in conjunction with one another as opposing categories. 'Sense' referred to the five organs of sense, and the information registered by them. 'Faith' referred to the trust in God which led to an awareness beyond the normal standards of verification -- that is, beyond any knowledge the senses could provide. There was no traditional

2. Ibid., p. 156.
use in which the knowledge provided by the senses could be seen to dominate one of the three cardinal virtues. The senses, especially considered under the heading of 'sensory delight', were precisely that function which in Protestant homiletics had to be harnessed under the tutelage of the virtues for a more direct route to the divine. While Blake differed from Protestant theology at many points, this was not one of them. He may have had a more viable notion of faith, a faith which did not so much harness as release, but he certainly did not intend to invoke the values of natural science over those of religion, and to put faith under the direction of the senses. As I explained in chapter eight of part two, his intent was precisely the opposite of this quasi-Lockean notion.

One may see a typical (and almost interminable) elaboration of the same scheme used by Quarles in Nathaniel Cotton's 'Vision' of Death. This passage may not rank very highly as poetry, but it does show that in contemporary poetry, when 'sense' conquered 'faith', it was a sign that man had lost control of his faculties, and had degenerated into a barbaric state.

Proclaim the truth -- say, what is man?
His body from the dust began;
And when a few short years are o'er,
The crumbling fabric is no more.

1. In the Night Thoughts engravings Blake did, however, use 'sense' as a figure of 'sensory delight' (plate App. 1. 1). But this figure's antagonist was not 'faith', but 'reason'. 
Or if we wish a fourth, it is a friend——
But friends how mortal! dangerous the desire.
Take Phoebe to yourselves, ye basking bards!
Inebriate at fair fortune's fountain-head;
And reeling through the wilderness of joy;
* Where sense runs savage broke from reason's chain,
And sings false peace, till another'd by the pall.
My fortune is unlike; unlike my song;
Unlike the DEITY my song invokes.
I to day's soft-eyed sister pay my court,
Endymion's rival! and her aid implore;
Now first implored in succour to the muse.
Thou who didst lately borrow Cynthia's form,
And modestly forego thine own! O thou!
Who didst thyself, at midnight hours, inspire!
Say, why not Cynthia patroness of song?
As thou her crescent, show thy character
Assumes; still more a goddess by the change.
Are there demurring wits, who dare dispute
This revolution in the world inspired?
Ye train pierian! to the lunar sphere,
In silent hour address your ardent call
For aid immortal—lose her brother's right.
She, with the spheres harmonious, nightly leads
The mazy dance, and hears their matchless strain;
A strain for gods, denied to mortal ear.
Transmit it heard, thou silver queen of heaven!
What title or what name endears thee most?
Cynthia! Cyllene! Phoebe!—or dost hear
With higher gust fair P——d of the skies?

Plate App. 1. 1

Blake, Illustrations to Night Thoughts, (London, 1797). Engraving.
But whence the soul? From heav'n it came!
Oh! prize this intellectual flame.
This nobler Self with rapture scan,
'Tis mind alone which makes the man.
Trust me, there's not a joy on earth,
But from the soul derives its birth.
Ask the young rake (he'll answer right)
Who treats by day, and drinks by night,
What makes his entertainments shine,
What gives the relish to his wine;
He'll tell thee, (if he scorns the beast)
That social pleasures form the feast.
The charms of beauty too shall cloy,
Unless the soul exalts the joy.
The mind must animate the face,
Or cold and tasteless ev'ry grace.

On the subject of van Veen's emblem of 'Varia Senectae Bona' (plate 11. 2) Johnson described the scene as depicting 'Time', who 'drives away the tambourine-playing Senses'.

Here again, I disagree. The female figures, (who number seven not five), are not the allegorical depictions of the senses, but rather the vices of an extravagant youth, and the virtues of a dignified old age. As the verses explain, the figures on the left, whom Time is driving away from the old man are Indolence, Appetite, Lust, Amusement, and the other delights of Youth, while the figures on the right, whom Time is bringing to the man so that they can make reparation for his loss, are Prudence, Temperance, and the other virtues which are more befitting an advanced age.

1. Johnson, p. 159.
2. 'Sommum, gustum, cupidinem, ludum, aliaque juvenilia oblectamenta, tempus a viro senescente depellit: at contra, ut communus Medicus abunde damna resarciscit, varias animi dotes, Prudentiam, Temperantiam, aliasque virtutes grandiori aetati convenientes, adducit.'
Perhaps because Johnson sees this emblem and the one from Quarles to be telling substantially the same story, she is led to treat the allegory of Sense and Faith as if it were a more important feature in the emblem literature that it really was, and to treat Blake's emblem as if it were closely modelled on the allegory.

Perhaps because in van Veen's design Cupid struggles to free himself from Time, Johnson sees the young boy in Blake's emblem to be struggling in the same way. She writes, almost as if following Swinburne, that 'The nude youth, older than Vaenius' infant love, near adolescence has his feet on the ground, his arms flung up in pain or futile protest.' But as we saw in chapter one of part one, these details are ambiguously presented, and Johnson's interpretation of them can be no more than conjecture. The same is true of another group of details. Perhaps because Time in van Veen's design appears to be inflicting pain on Cupid, Johnson is led to discover points of congruence between his design and Blake's where none exist. Johnson writes,

Since Ignorance, or spiritual dullness, is psychologically and spiritually 'Aged,' Blake gives him Father Time's flowing white hair and beard but not his wings and muscular body. Robed, knees drawn up in the manner of Urizen in, for example, the title page of The Book of Urizen, Aged Ignorance sits stooped, with a dark, curved shadow area behind him. In Blake's preliminary notebook sketch, Aged Ignorance has his feet on what appears to be an open book of the sort associated with Urizen. The dark nimbus behind him suggests the doorway of a stony cave, Blake's usual symbol for man's
imprisonment in the skull-cave of the five restricted physical senses.¹

But again, the motif of the flowing white hair did not have to derive from Father Time, and the details which Johnson sees in the notebook sketch -- the cave and the book -- are simply not present.

The issue raised in this controversy is one which will continue to trouble Blake scholars: when should one argue that a corollary design or text is a source, and when is it merely one of many analogous designs or texts? The emblem literature was itself so derivative, that one would normally avoid arguing that any particular emblem was a source. But Quarles and van Veen may seem to be exceptions. The immense popularity of Quarles' Emblems might have given it the kind of authority which neither the verse nor the engravings could claim by merit, while van Veen's designs dominated the emblem tradition largely because of their technical excellence. Nevertheless, the associations which Johnson has pointed out between van Veen's designs and Blake's, and Quarles' allegory and Blake's do not seem to be intrinsic, and one would do best not to argue for a thematic connection at all. It is misleading to suggest that Blake intended his design of 'Aged Ignorance'


2. Johnson was using the older facsimile of Blake's notebook (London, 1935), now superceded by an edition which has made use of infra-red photography, and in which the details in question are nearly as clear as in the original.
to be seen explicitly in the light of the allegories of sense and faith or of Time curtailing Cupid. The motifs of the shears and of the pruning sickle, and of the bespectacled old man were for Blake simply a point of immediate contact with his readers, in the same manner as the emblems of the traveller, the butterflying youth, and the caterpillar and butterfly. If he had intended his readers to consider a new and unusual reading of the allegories of sense and faith or of Time clipping the wings of Cupid, he surely would have given some indication of it.
Appendix Two

Saturn-Melancholy-Geometry
Blake's extensive use of the theme of melancholy, and of the character of Saturn is evident at many points outside of the Gates of Paradise; and although a full discussion of these is beyond the scope of the present essay, one is too important not to be mentioned. In Melencolia I Durer had depicted Dame Melancholy as the embodiment not only of melancholy, but also of the nexus Saturn-Melancholy-Geometry. Saturn and Geometry had been connected long before Durer because the activities proper to one under the influence of Saturn, such as farming, building, and accounting, were also associated with the domain of Geometry, which included the arts of measurement and construction. Geometry and Melancholy, on the other hand, were connected by Durer in the context of creative art. He saw Melancholy, following Ficino and Petrarch, as the spring of genius and of artistic inspiration; and he saw the arts of measurement, which belonged to Geometry, as expressive of the mastery of technique. In pictorial terms the figure that embodied this threefold intellectual content seemed to be constructed mainly on the figures of Melancholy and Geometry, with Saturn serving in a minor capacity. But following Durer, the important nexus of Saturn-Melancholy-Geometry was revived by Jacob de Gheyn in his portrait of Melancholy (plate App. 2.1). In this picture Saturn is once again a classical god. He sits astride his sphere in the midst of the starry heavens, a background which not only underlines his power and the depth of his concentration, but also the coldness and isolation of his position. His cloak covers the
Plate App. 2. 1

top of his head, and his head rests wearily on his hand. His eyes are closed in deep contemplation and sorrow.

With respect to *Melencolia* I this engraving is enormously important because, as Panofsky has explained, it makes explicit what Dürer had only inferred: 'the essential unity of Melancholy, Saturn, and Mathematics'. With respect to Blake, the engraving is no less significant, for it establishes the similarity, if not identity, between the aged god Saturn, his melancholy condition of mind, and Blake's embodiment of these in Urizen.

When one looks at these three side by side -- *Melencolia* I, de Gheyn's portrait of Melancholy, and the frontispiece to *Europe* -- one can see that Blake's interest in Saturn and


2. There have been a number of attempts to account for the iconography of the compasses in the frontispiece to *Europe*. The most important of these is Anthony Blunt's 'Blake's *Ancient of Days*: the Symbolism of the Compasses', *J W C I*, II (1958), pp. 53 - 63. A less significant contribution was M. K. Nunni's 'Blake's *Ancient of Days* and Motte's Frontispiece to *Newton's Principia*', *The Divine Vision*, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, (London, 1957), pp. 205 - 16. Michael Phillips, The Poetical Sketches of William Blake, Diss., Exeter Univ., 1968, Appendix E, pp. 540 - 2, has shown that the drawing entitled by Keynes 'God Creating the Universe' (1788), which was probably the original study for the frontispiece to *Europe* and for plate 2 b of *There is No Natural Religion*, derived from the engraved frontispiece to the third edition of Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*, (London, 1748). Another important analogue, and a more pervasive one than any other, derives from the device of the Plantin Press, which consisted of a pair of compasses, with the motto 'Labore et Constantia'.
in melancholy did not end with the Gates of Paradise, but rather became for him the basis for his finest mythographic and satiric creation.

The Plantin Press was one of the most prestigious presses on the Continent, and the quality of its work was hardly surpassed over its 400 year history. Its device went through an enormous number of variations. Bibliotheca Belgica, . . Marques Typographiques, reproduces 114 separate versions of the design (numbers 6 - 120 in Vol. I) in one list, and 109 versions in another (numbers 6 - 115 in Vol. II). In Britain, as McKerrow has explained, the device was used in two forms, both copies, one from 1601 to 1608 by John Harrison and Nicholas Okes, the other, in which the device was rotated 90 degrees, was used about 1630, and recut and used later, from 1649 to 1658, or perhaps even later. See R. B. McKerrow, Printers' and Publishers' Devices, 1485 - 1640, (London, 1913), p. xxvi. The device of the Plantin Press also gained considerable fame when George Wither used it in his Collection of emblems (London, 1635).
Appendix Three

Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise
The main inspiration for the title to the series probably derives, as I have explained, from Hervey's 'Descant Upon Creation'. But the phrase, 'the gates of paradise' was also the legendary title of one of the masterworks of the Quattrocento, and it is likely that Blake intended to allude to it. The Florentine sculptor, Lotenzo Ghiberti, cast, chased, and gilded a set of massive doors for the east portal of the Baptistery of San Giovanni, next to the Cathedral in Florence. The doors were universally admired as Ghiberti's finest work and one of the city's most valuable possessions, and they were given the name, 'the gates of paradise' not by Ghiberti but by legend. In one story, Michelangelo, amazed at their beauty, cried out in praise that the gates were so exquisitely finished as to be the gates of paradise itself.¹ But as Krautheimer has explained, the term 'could easily have been applied to the main door of the Baptistery, not by Michelangelo, but by common parlance, and not because beauty deemed them worthy to serve as the "Gates of Paradise", but simply because they opened onto the paradisus, the atrium in front of the Cathedral.'²

Ghiberti's reputation remained high throughout the Renaissance. Vasari said the gates were 'perfect in every particular, the finest masterpiece in the world, whether among the ancients or the moderns'.³

³. Vasari, p. 22.
and estimates of this tone continued into the eighteenth century.

There was another example of a large work by Ghiberti close by, in a set of doors on the north portal of the Baptistery, and perhaps because of the proximity of the two works, and because of Ghiberti's slow and painstaking habits (the doors took 40 years to complete), the differences in Ghiberti's early and late styles were often pointed out. Indeed, following Vasari's lead in calling Ghiberti a 'modern', and yet suggesting that the details of the drapery on some of his figures were reminiscent of Giotto, Ghiberti was seen as occupying a unique transitional position in the history of art. His early work was characterized as Gothic and his later work as triumphantly modern; and this manner of seeing Ghiberti's work 'as a bridge between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and at the same time alloting praise to the late style, set the pattern for the opinions of the entire seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.

The importance of all this for Blake, in addition to the attraction which all Gothic art held for him, originates during one of Reynolds's trips to Italy. His travelling companion, Thomas Patch, published a series of copperplate engravings after the Gates of Paradise in Florence in 1772. The book came out in two editions, one with an English, and one with an Italian titlepage, and with a bilingual text. Patch's engravings are fairly accurate

2. Krautheimer, p. 22.
in such matters as postures and the grouping of the figures. But the style and context have been totally mistaken. If the doors themselves did not exist for comparison, one would assume, from Patch's engravings, that the Gates of Paradise was the work of a 'romantic neo-primitive'. As Krautheimer explains, the idea of Patch's book was a 'frank catering to the cast of English tourists who were at that time on the verge of discovering the beauties of Italian primitives -- albeit primitives in classicist disguise'.

Many English artists at this time took the tour to Italy for the express purpose of sketching the art and architecture of the ancient world; and because Blake did not, and had to rely on the drawings and engravings of his fellows, he is often thought to have been ignorant of the real state of many of those masterpieces. But in the case of the Gates of Paradise, Blake would not have had to go any further than Somerset House to see a fairly accurate representation of Ghiberti's work. George III had given up his apartments in Somerset House in 1771 and presented the entire building to the Royal Academy. When the interior modifications were completed in 1780, and the Royal Academy officially took up

1. Ibid. Ferinando Gregori e Tommaso Patch, no title La Porta Principale del Battistero di Giovanni, Florence, (Florence, 1772). Patch at least did not prune Ghiberti's reputation along with his style. Patch called the Gates 'one of the most renowned monuments of modern sculpture' (p. 1).
residence, the Library was decorated with plaster casts made from reliefs of the Gates of Paradise and thus, as Goldschieder has explained, they were 'the first works of the Quattrocento to find general acceptance in England.'

It was about this time that Blake, having completed his apprenticeship, began copying from the antiques of the Royal Academy. Malkin said in his preface that beginning sometime during or after 1778, when Blake was 21, 'He continued making designs for his own amusement, whenever he could steal a moment from the routine of business; and began a course of study at the Royal Academy, under the eye of Mr. Moser. Here he drew with great care, perhaps all, or certainly nearly all the noble antique figures in various views.' And one must remember, since Moser himself was a medallist and chaser by profession, it is likely that had Blake for some reason not noticed the Gates of Paradise, Moser would have pointed out to him that they were the finest example of casting and chasing that had ever been done.

But what of the work itself? In addition to Ghiberti's reputation as a great master of the 'Gothic' style, would anything about the Gates of Paradise have attracted Blake's eye? Certainly the plan for the work would have stood out in eighteenth-century

1. Goldscheider, p. 10. The quotation is unidentified in Goldscheider. See also, Sidney Hutchinson, The Homes of The Royal Academy (London, 1956).

England. The Merchants Guild, patrons of the project, had, in the original plan they sponsored, (a plan not devised by Ghiberti) called for the depiction of twenty important events and eight prophets from the Old Testament, arranged in quatrefoils, in a manner similar to Ghiberti's earlier work on the north portal of the Baptistery. But the plan which Ghiberti eventually executed was both simpler to grasp, and yet more comprehensive in its treatment of the Old Testament.

It consisted of ten scenes from the Old Testament within which thirty-seven events were grouped. As Krautheimer has explained, this method of so radically simplifying the Old Testament cycle was more than likely indebted to Ambrose, who, in his allegorical commentaries, had been 'first and foremost in working out a comprehensive and intelligible outline of the whole Bible.'

Ghiberti's programme included one plate each for episodes involving Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac (and Jacob and Rebecca), Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon and Sheba.

When one considers the scope of such a programme, the title of Ghiberti's work stands out, most of all, for its inappropriateness. Ghiberti did not set out to depict either Paradise or the way to get there, but simply a number of scenes from the Old Testament. One can, of course, find a certain degree of relevance between

1. Krautheimer, p. 175.
2. Ibid., see pp. 165-195 for a full discussion.
the title and the scenes depicted by viewing the whole in a typological frame of reference, but that was not what Ghiberti or the Merchant's Guild intended. If the title of the portals was meant to explain their content, it would have made more sense to call the earlier set of doors on the north door of the Baptistry the 'Gates of Paradise', for they were composed of twenty eight scenes which began with the Annunciation and ended with the descent of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. In such a case the claim could be made that all of Biblical history was being presented as a series of events which had to be accomplished before the gate could be opened to the Apocalypse. On the other hand, to a Protestant in eighteenth century England, who would not be inclined to doubt the fitness of Michelangelo's title, but rather to see how it could best be applied, and to someone who, furthermore, was living in the midst of the Gothic revival, Ghiberti's scenes from the earlier books of the Old Testament may well have seemed like the original pattern, the type of Blake's Gates of Paradise.

Leaving aside the complexities of the schema of Ghiberti's Gates, it is important to establish the relevance for future research, of earlier schematic treatments of Biblical material. Even more closely than Jerusalem, the Illustrations of the Book of Job are clearly based on work of this kind, but thus far, no particular study has been made with the purpose of discovering the texts and graphic material available to Blake. While Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise were, obviously, not a direct source either for Jerusalem or for the Job illustrations, it is interesting to note that Ghiberti's series, unlike earlier Old Testament cycles, which
ended with David's entry into Jerusalem, ends with Solomon and Sheba approaching one another. And while the significance of this for Ghiberti may well have been as an analogy of the eventual union of the Eastern and Western churches the importance of the same scene for Blake may well have been in a different allegory, as for instance in his adaption of a similar scene for the penultimate plate of Jerusalem.

Suggestions of this kind may never be substantiated or disproved because this period in the history of art has been greatly neglected. But we do know that George Cumberland thought highly of the Gates of Paradise and was ready to adapt Ghiberti to his own ends. Cumberland was an odd man, and as an artist he was not especially distinguished except for his Thoughts on Outline, for which Blake engraved a number of plates. Were it not for his long friendship with Blake he would probably be remembered even less than he is. We are not sure when Blake and Cumberland first met. It may have been as early as 1784. Despite the fact that Cumberland did not appear to understand Blake's artistic and aesthetic aims, Blake and Cumberland shared an interest in many things: Guilio Bonasoni, Raimondi, Egyptian antiquities, and

2. George Cumberland, Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture. . . (London, 1796).
'hieroglyphicks', among other things. And while Blake's knowledge of earlier art was limited to whatever engravings he could buy in London, Cumberland was more privileged. He had lived abroad for many years, and he had made extensive, although somewhat odd studies of the art of the ancient world, among which are three drawings from Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise.

In the late eighteenth century Greek and Italian art were in the process of being rediscovered, and provided many artists 'with the stimulus of a primitive, uncorrupted style that evoked a tabula rasa upon which to create a new and vital pictorial tradition.'¹ It was often the linear quality of outline which attracted students, and some, like Cumberland, were even able to combine the styles of the two different periods into one. For this reason, the volume of Cumberland's 'outline drawings', now in the British Museum, is somewhat baffling at first glance. A great many of the drawings, with their 'fine, firm, flowing, and faint' outlines² are of white figures on a brown ground, so that one has the impression Cumberland was copying Greek vase painting. But neither the dress, nor the postures of the figures fit that context. And only one of the three scenes which Cumberland has labelled 'Gates' of 'Ghiberti' corresponds directly with the

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panels of Ghiberti's Gates. Of the other two, one depicts two men who stand over and direct their attention to a large child, and the other depicts three mourners over a tiny coffin.

Cumberland did not copy these scenes, as scenes, from Ghiberti's Gates, but rather copied individual figures from widely separated scenes in the Gates, and then rearranged them for his own compositions. In the first drawing the huge child derives from Ghiberti's depiction of Adam and Eve with the young Cain and Abel; the figure on the right from Ghiberti's depiction of one of Noah's sons; and the figure in the middle from Ghiberti's depiction of the three men whom Abraham entertains. In the second drawing the figure on the right derives from Ghiberti's depiction of one of Benjamin's brothers, the figure on the left from Ghiberti's depiction of an anonymous figure in the frightened crowd who wait for Moses at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The child's coffin derives from Ghiberti's depiction of the ark of the Covenant, which is being carried behind Joshua's legions at the siege of Jericho.

1. British Museum, Dept. of Prints and Drawings number 1866-2-10-561 which depicts three of Rebecca's companions. Rosenblum describes the changes Cumberland made: Whereas Ghiberti had used a checkerboard ground to heighten the illusion of perspective and foreshortening, Cumberland drops it altogether and chooses a deliberately two dimensional frame of reference, so that his figures float in space rather than rest their weight on their feet. Transformations, p. 167.

2. Number 1866-2-10-562.

3. Number 1866-2-10-564. See also numbers 1866-2-10-572 and 1866-2-10-575, which also depict scenes from the graveyard school.
It is interesting to note how in Cumberland's 'primitivist paraphrase', the gothic Ghiberti becomes even more 'gothick'. Out of pieces of Ghiberti's Gates, Cumberland has composed two of the standard gothic scenes: the one of the birth of an awesome child, and the other of the death of a fair infant. For all we know of the matter, Cumberland's recomposing of these scenes may have had some connection with Blake's choice of title for his series. At any rate, while we cannot conclude that Blake was definitely alluding to Ghiberti's Gates, nor have I shown any particular examples of Blake's having borrowed graphic material directly from Ghiberti, we can conclude that Ghiberti's 'gothick' work had the kind of currency likely to reach Blake, if not from the established artists of the time, then from the relatively unsuccessful, like Cumberland.
Appendix Four

Illustrations of the Book of Job

Although the present work is devoted primarily to discussing the Gates of Paradise, there are two other works, Blake's illustrations to Blair's The Grave, and his Illustrations of the Book of Job, which deserve some attention, because they are heavily indebted to the literature of melancholy and the emblem tradition, and because in each of them Blake attempted to convey his message primarily by pictorial means. Some mention has already been made of the illustrations to The Grave, but thus far I have not discussed the Job series.
In illustrating the Book of Job Blake was in fact rewriting it, as Wicksteed, Damon, Frye, and others have noted. And although the meaning of Blake's interpretation resists being contained in a short summary, the scholars agree that Blake's new reading was based not just on his special admiration of the poetry, nor on his reading the story as an allegory of his own misfortunes, but also on the conviction that he had found a definite meaning to the problems raised in the book, especially the question of theodicy. Most of the critical literature is devoted to elucidating this meaning. With one exception, there has been little interest at more basic levels of iconography and iconology. This appendix will suggest some avenues for future research of that kind.

As Gombrich has reminded us, the first step in any iconological study is to decide to which genre the work in question belongs.

If, for example, the Job series were intended to accompany the


full text of the Book of Job, or if the series were meant to illustrate Edward Young's Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job, or to follow Robert Lowth's, Hugh Blair's, or Edmund Burke's critiques on the Book of Job, one should first look to those texts and the demands set by them. But the Job series does not belong to any of these categories and it appears, indeed, independent of conventional categories. Frye has described it most aptly, if also somewhat elusively, as an 'emblematic epic'. From the rest of Frye's criticism one can tell that he means 'epic' in the sense that the Bible is an 'encyclopedic epic', and that the Book of Job and Paradise Regained were 'brief epics': That is, Paradise Regained, the Book of Job, and Blake's illustrations of it, were each supposed to be a compressed version of a universal allegory of Sin and Redemption. But to describe the series in this way is not to define the genre to which the work belongs, but to expand to infinitude the terms of comparison. The only helpful index one really has is that the illustrations are 'emblematic'. At the very least this means that although the series may seem to be 'realistic', because it consists of


2. See B. K. Lewalski, Milton's Brief Epic (Providence, 1966).
representations of identifiable characters in concrete scenes from the book of Job, the designs may also be seen as symbolic in the manner of the emblem literature, where there is either a full allegory or some secondary layer of meaning. ¹

In comparison with the emblem material Blake's engravings employ traditional motifs and themes, in traditional, if much more elaborate compositions. Indeed, the striking thing about the Job series is not that Blake employs any hitherto unknown techniques, or a new iconography, but that he uses the worn-out materials of the emblem tradition in much more elaborate ways, and according to more radical themes than the writers of the emblem books, and that he sustains a passion and a symmetry throughout the twenty-two plates such as the writers of the emblem books could not have dreamed.

In plate 1 the background of the plate is divided into two sections, with evening depicted on one side and night on the other. This device, the opposition of concepts, is one of the oldest and the most widely used methods of communicating with a graphic language. ² The connotations attached to the right and the

1. The motto at the base of the altar in the first plate, 'The Letter Killeth The Spirit giveth Life It is Spiritually Discerned', enhances one's anticipation of a second level of interpretation.

2. See Gombrich, 'Icones Symbolicae', p. 130-1, who explains the opposition of concepts with reference to 'the earliest example of a syntactic form even more widespread than that of kinship and amity', the chest of Kypselos.
left sides of things may have roots 'fixed in our language and deep in our subconscious', as Damon explains¹, but a student of the emblem literature would not have to hold this hypothesis, for it was simply a well-worn convention to put the sunrise and all preferred things on one side of the plate, and to put the sunset and all objectionable things on the other, as one may see, for instance, in the frontispiece of Eikon Basilike (plate App. 4.1),

On the right side of Blake's plate, which signifies the east and the side of the good and the spiritual, the sun ought to be rising, but it is night instead; and on the left side of the plate, which signifies the west and the side of material and the legal, the sun sets.² The theme that in Job's life the material has become spiritualized and the spiritual materialized relies on conventions like this for schematizing the moral life in terms of the compass directions and the right and the left sides of things.

The last plate of the Job series is an antithetical treatment of the themes in the opening plate, and the same conventions are employed, conventions which one may see used in a more simple way

1. Damon, Blake's Job, p. 4.

2. As Wicksteed put it, 'The two worlds are the inner and outer worlds, or, more simply, body and spirit, and the reason why Blake needed a symbolism to distinguish them was that he was committed by his philosophical theories to represent them on paper as identical in appearance' (p. 52). 'The right hand, which held the brush or graver, is connected with the Brain, Poetry, Paradise, Vision'. . . (p. 53). 'The right and the left sides arecontraries; that is, one proceeds to the other. They participate in a cyclic motion, just as the sun sets in order to rise and we descend in order to rise again.' (p. 54).
The Explanation of the EMBLEME.

Thou gazed with weights of miserys
Palm-like Depressed, I higher rise.

And at Immov'd Rock, outbraves
The burnish'd Windes and raging weaves;
So triumph Lo'd and shine more bright
In sad opposition's darkness night.

That splendid, but yet toil some Crown
Regardlessly I tempile down.

With jast I take the Crown of thorns
Though sharp, yet calle to be born.

That heaven's Crown, already mine.
I view with eyes of Faith divine.

I slight vain things, and to embrace
Glorie, the just reward of Grace.

Plate App. 4. 1


Engraving.
in Pia Desideria (plate Ep. 4) In the last plate Job's house 
has been put in order, the sun, the moon, and the stars are restored 
to their proper stations, and whereas in the opening plate the 
instruments belonging to Job and his family hung mutely in the 
trees, in the last plate Job, his wife, and their sons and daughters 
are gathered together, praising the Lord with song. There is a 
connection with emblem material even in this straightforward 
illustration, as one may see in an emblem from George Wither's 
Collection, which illustrates the Psalmist's sentiment that 'Music is the Handmaid of the Lord'.

In plates 2, 5, 9, 14, 15, and 16 of the Job series Blake 
uses a popular, not to say common, way of dividing the space within 
the decorative borders of the plate to depict the spiritual state 
of his characters. This motif had many variations, but it always 
involved placing the spiritual scene nearer the top of the 
composition than the earthly one, and sometimes, as in Blake's

1. H. Hugo, Pia Desideria, (Antwerp, 1624). Hugo's book was 
'Englished' by Edmund Arwaker in 1686. The designs in Pia 
Desideria were also used in Quarles' Emblems (London, 1635). 
In all future references I shall list both the number of the 
emblem in Hugo and Arwaker, and the number of the emblem in 
Quarles thus: Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem XV; Quarles, 
Book III, Emblem XV. A lack of resources has prevented me 
from reproducing all of the plates discussed in this appendix. 
However, for the benefit of the reader, I have reproduced 
those which would be the most difficult to locate, and the 
others are available in Scolar Press facsimilie, as indicated 
in the respective footnotes.

2. G. Wither, A Collection of Emblems, (London, 1635; rpt., 
Menston: Scolar Press Facsimile, 1973), Book II, Emblem LXV.
case, by surrounding the spiritual scene with billows of clouds.¹ This device had long been used in pictures of Judgement Day, and the Visitation of the Spirit, designs which were also applied in fifteenth-century Northern European art to depict the 'fatal influence' of a planet on earthly life. And as Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl have explained, 'despite modification of individual traits, and shifting of emphasis, this composition remained unaltered until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'.² One may discover analogues to Blake's design, then, in any work of this type from the beginning of the fifteenth century until the end of the eighteenth. How is one to decide which works were influential and which were not?

Unfortunately there is no ready answer to this question. The issue is further confused by a trend which seems endemic in the history of art. At a certain point in the study of an artist's work, when his reputation may seem to stand in need of defending, scholars will compare his work to that of the masters, though the

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1. See for example the woodcuts of Jean vender Loe, reprinted in Bibliotheca Belica... Marques Typographiques, Vol. XVIII, (The Hague and Ghent, 1891-1923), numbers 1-7; and sec. 36, numbers 1-5. One of the reasons for discussing such a commonly understood device is to provide an alternative to Wicksteed's weak explanation that 'Blake represents the inner by the higher', and his reading of plate 71 of Jerusalem as a general justification of the notion that 'what is above... is within' (Wicksteed, op. cit., p. 93).

masters are remote in time and place. Thus Gillchrist did not hesitate to compare Blake to Durer, Michaelangelo, Giotto and other masters, and as late as 1959 Anthony Blunt suggested that the design of the Introduction to the Songs of Innocence was 'clearly taken from certain types of medieval manuscripts in which a series of scenes are enclosed in a panel knit together by an interlacing design.'¹ In this case the similarity is unmistakeable, but the same type of design was not at all rare in seventeenth and eighteenth-century printed books. In the title-page to Estienne's The Art of Making Devises (plate App. 4.2),² for example, the design of a border composed of oval panels connected by vegetation organizes the smaller pictures on the title-page. And there were many more examples of the same general cast, so that one need not look only to so remote a source as a thirteenth-century manuscript.

To return to the conventional formulae for relating an earthly event to a spiritual one — the motif of the heavenly court


2. Henry Estienne, The Art of Making Devises, tr. Th. Blunt, (London, 1646, the second edition). I have not found any other plate which is so exact a match with Blake's plate as this, but it was not uncommon for titlepages to be based on this type of architecture.

Engraving.
court, which was only one form among many, can be found in Hugo, Quarles, and Arwaker.\(^1\) And the convention had by Blake's time become popular enough to be inverted by Gillray (plate App. 4.3)\(^2\); and other caricaturists and political cartoonists. E.H. Gombrich has explained why this device proved so useful. In the eighteenth century it was no longer possible to rely wholly on the symbolic image alone or on allegory to carry the meaning in graphic art, because such a method often resulted in a composition which would be rejected as grotesque or at least somewhat odd by an audience hoping to see a 'natural' or a 'reasonable' representation. The problem before the artist was then, how might he employ a style rich in metaphor and allusion without at the same time seeming to have abandoned himself to fancy. One solution was Hogarth's practise of allowing the 'accidents' of composition to tell the truth about character. Another method belonged to the emblem tradition, in which a long and involved commentary was offered to interpret a rather arbitrary symbolism -- which probably would have been indecipherable without it. But the most fruitful method of all was the adaption of the medieval

1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book III, Emblem XIV; Quarles, Book V, Emblem XIV.

2. Gillray, the Apotheosis of Hoche, 1798, (plate App. 4.3), depicts General Hoche of the revolutionary army in France, who conveniently died at a time when his absence would hasten Napoleonic's rise to Emperor. Surrounding Hoche are all the crimes of the French Revolution. Gillray perhaps chose Hoche as a symbol of the revolutionary excesses because Hoche had been designated the commander of the army for the invasion of Ireland.
Plate App 4. 3

practice of enclosing all the symbolic material in a dream. '... to justify the incongruities of symbolic narratives these poets were fond of representing their allegorical stories as real dreams or visions. A realistic introduction describes how the poet fell asleep and leads us to a different level of reality. This simple device allowed the narrator to introduce fantastic beings into a realistic setting without being accused of "lying".1 And in the same way Coleridge had only to say that when he awoke, there was the poem, composed without his conscious effort, in order to put his choice of form beyond criticism.

What Blake contributed to the use of this motif was the suggestion, sustained in plate after plate in the Job series, that a heavenly vision constitutes the inviolable perception of a single character, and thus serves to expose that character's innermost being. With Gillray, the dream was no more substantial than corrupt reality, and to accept the version of events explained in the dream was like exchanging one mask for another -- and was furthermore, entirely dependent on political events, so that any sustained development was out of the question. Gillray did not try to sustain his vision of Fox the savage, or of Pitt the mushroom who fed on dung, or of Burke the swineherd of the multitude, beyond a few isolated events, and

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indeed Gillray could not raise the spectres of the three weird sisters each week unless he made parliamentary intrigues look convincingly like the political maneuverings of Macbeth.

Blake's use of the dream motif is far closer to the medieval epics than to Gillray in this respect, but he would have found a source closer to home, and only slightly less severe, in Whitney's Choice Emblems, one emblem of which depicts a Man with a Clear Conscience basking in the approval of his god, while the god's weapons lay conspicuously idle on his lap.

In plate 9 of the Job series, which depicts the dream of Eliphaz, Blake has used the motif of the vision enfolded by clouds with an important innovation. Job, covered with sackcloth, is reclining on his ash heap, his wife is beside him on his right, and Bildad and Zophar are attending him on his left. Eliphaz, the figure in the foreground, raises his left hand through the clouds of vision, crossing the boundary between the mundane and the visionary. Within the clouds there is a depiction of Eliphaz in his bed, and he is so frightened at the divine countenance that, as he puts it, 'the hair of my flesh stood up'. The posture of Eliphaz, and the spatial relation between him and the representation of his dream are quite similar to a design used by Hugo, Quarles, and Arwaker.


2. Hugo and Arwaker, Book III, Emblem VI; Quarles, Book V, Emblem VI. See also Quarles, Book I, Emblem I.
which depicts Anima telling the Christ child, who floats out of reach in the sky, that she values the earth as nothing in comparison with his love. This composition is relatively straightforward, and was indeed common enough for Blake to have borrowed it from a number of sources. In any case, he chose to use it in an unconventional way. In Blake's design one can see that all of the characters whom Eliphaz addresses are looking into Eliphaz's dream, and from the uneasiness and even fear in their faces one can tell that they see, though dimly perhaps, something of the horror and rapture of his nightmare.

An even bolder touch by Blake, directed toward the same point, involves his use of chiaroscuro. The characters are sitting roughly in a circle, and within the circle all is lit up to a brilliant whiteness, while outside the circle all is dark. The source of illumination is the divine vision enjoyed by Eliphaz. But the divine vision, although it is depicted as occurring a few feet above the center of the characters, has not actually occurred in their midst, but to Eliphaz alone, some time ago. Now he is only remembering the dream he once had and has never been able to forget -- yet the force of that experience is recreated in the mere telling of it. The characters see into his former vision and all are taken aback by the great light radiating from the face of God. One may say then, that the motif of the vision enfolded by clouds was a necessary part of this design for two distinct reasons: first to establish
the separation of the mundane from the visionary, and then to provide a way for the visionary to cross the boundary.

One of the reasons Blake depicted in such certain terms the power and the fear of Eliphaz's dream was that the lines describing this episode had been praised by Burke as a principle example of the sublime in literature. As Burke went on to say, the sublime was really the province of literature and not of the graphic arts, for if painters tried to render such things, 'I fear they would become ridiculous'. Blake's opinion of Burke's treatise was, as he put it, of 'contempt' and 'abhorrence'. 'They [i.e. Newton, Locke, Reynolds, and Burke] mock Inspiration & Vision Inspiration & Vision was then & is now I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling place how can I then hear it Contemnd without returning Scorn for Scorn'. Is it possible then, that Blake's plate is partly an answer to Burke, the man who thought such things could not be depicted?

In plates 14, 15, and 16 of the Job series Blake has made a more elaborate use of the motif for depicting vision. In his magnificent plate 14, instead of the mundane level and the

2. 'Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses' (circa, 1808), Discourse VIII, p. 244 (K. 477; E. 650).
visionary level, there are three levels which depict, respectively, Job's suffering, Job's vision of Yahweh, and Yahweh's vision of creation. The stratification of levels in the visionary realm is a motif with a great number of precedents in the emblem books, as for instance, in Hugo, Quarles, and Arwaker. However, one did not find in the emblem books a representation of a vision within a vision. In Hugo's design the spiritual realm includes only heaven and hell, while in plates 14 and 15 of the Job series, the vision of heaven and of the divinity is comprehensive enough to include a sublime vision of the creation in the one instance, and a monstrous vision of the creaturality of the world in the other.

The role of Satan in the Book of Job is an odd one. He is a minor figure, but a very powerful one, and he drops out of the story as soon as he completes his few tasks. His role as 'the accuser' is something like that of a misguided government prosecutor, who tests the judicial system by providing a continual supply of defendants. Although Satan is not an especially important figure -- at least in comparison with Yahweh, Job himself, and the three accusers -- nevertheless, Blake considered him important enough to depict as a frightening menace in two plates of the series, and in the tempera, Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils, and to assign a definite set of motifs to depict Satan.

In plate 3 of the Job series Satan is depicted with saurian wings, and he is directing with his hands a raging storm of destruction against the sons and daughters of Job. In plate 5 of the series

1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem XIV; Quarles, Book III, Emblem XIV.
the hand of Satan again funnels pain and destruction; and in this case the fires torment Job because they contain his image of an obsequious, pitiable god. The motif of the hand which funnels destruction and pain was a common one in the emblem books, as one can see in Pia Desideria, Quarles' Emblems, and Quarles' Hieroglyphicks.

So too, the motif Blake used in plate 6 of the Job series, in which the fiery arrows have been dispatched from the invisible heavens at the request of Satan, also derive from a well-known emblem. In Hugo, Quarles, and Arwaker this emblem depicts the Christ child about to cast a handful of fiery arrows against Anima, while Heaven in the background is preparing an assault on her with the same weapon.

In plate 2 of the Job series Satan occupies precisely the center of the design. He flees across the scene, his body in contraposto and his arms upstretched to Yahweh. The action is frozen at the moment when Satan, in deference or supplication to Yahweh, is positioned exactly between Job and Yahweh, poised on the boundary between the visionary realm and the physical world. The figure of Father Time in Hugo, Quarles, and Arwaker is in a similar position, between day and night, and in plying his usual trade of harvesting the lives of men, Father Time is performing a role not so very different from Blake's Satan.

1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book II, Emblem IV; Quarles, Book IV, Emblem IV. Quarles, Hieroglyphicks, (London, 1638), II.

2. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem XII; Quarles, Book II, Emblem XII. In plate 6 of the Job series Satan is smiting Job with boils with his vial of pestilence, and while this may appear to be another variation of the motif of the funneling hand, it probably derives more directly from the apocalyptic depictions of pestilence such as Gillray adapted.

3. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem XV; Quarles, Book III, Emblem XV.
Plate 11 of the Job series is a composition which closely resembles Blake's colour print of 1795, *Elohim Creating Adam*, although there are some important differences between the two.  

A cloven-hoofed God frightens Job with visions from above while demons try to drag him with chains down to the fiery pit. Blake's motif, of the demon who has crawled out of hell in order to drag his victim back with him, is analogous to a motif in *Emblemes ou Devises Chrestiennes* of Georgette de Montenay.  

In her design, the demon's chain has snapped, and the motto from the book, 'Et usque ad nubes veritas tua', along with the laurel crown above it, signify that the word of God will be the perpetual victor, while in Blake's design, the tablets of the law, the cloven-hoofed God, the lightening, the fire, and the serpent produce a much more frightening and dynamic 'trial by vision' in which the outcome is still uncertain.

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1. In *Elohim Creating Adam*, *Elohim* is a winged god whose face expresses desperate rapture. Behind him is a schematic treatment of the sunset. Adam is represented with a gigantic worm circling round his leg. Most of these details are changed in the Job plate. Yahweh, shorn of his wings, is now a cloven-hoofed menace who brings with him not the sun but a dragon, the tablets of the law, and bolts of lightning. And Job, instead of indicating Adam's complete absorption in the Deity and a winsome reluctance to be separated from him, is, on the contrary, doing all he can to defend himself against the Deity. C. H. Collins Baker has suggested that the figure of the Elohim derives from an engraving by R. Dalton of the 'Skiron on the Temple of the Winds'. See C. H. Collins Baker, *William Blake, Painter*, Huntington Library Bulletin, X, (1936), p. 363.

In plate 20 of the Job series Job is sitting with his arms in a cruciform position, and his three daughters are sitting at his feet, listening to him recount his life. In the triptych in the background there are five small scenes from Job's life. This part of the design is an elaborate use by Blake of a well-known motif. In J. Droeshout's engraved title-page to Truth brought to Light, for instance, there is a depiction of James I, sitting in the posture of the melancholic, with his left hand on a skull. On the wall behind him there are faint depictions of scenes relating to his reign, which unfortunately mean little now. One can tell, however, that Blake's design, as the stretto of the series, provides a brief summary, with a slight readjustment in emphasis, of the previous nineteen plates. In the scenes depicted on the walls behind Job, the two lower panels depict Job and his wife in despair. The two upper panels on the right and on the left depict the disasters which first befell Job's family, and the panel directly above Job depicts Yahweh descending out of the whirlwind. These are the principal events in the history of Job, and they are arranged in order of importance, the theophany dominating the group. One may see then, that Blake has used the


2. Frye, Fearful Symmetry, p. 434; see also Damon's commentary in Blake's Job, p. 50.
device of equating the walls of the room with the events in a man's life, not in the wooden manner of Droeshout, merely as a backcloth which identified the scene and set the mood, but rather as a way to depict Job at the highest point of consciousness, when he is finally able to understand and to organize all that has gone before, and when he has finally come to comprehend the Book of Job, by himself embodying the knowledge which is the conclusion the book lacks.¹

Plate 15 of the Job series represents the theophany, in which God taunts Job with the wonders and the horrors of creation. By far the most horrible of God's creations are the behemoth and the leviathan. Blake's depiction of the two shows how slightly he was constrained by the usually timid practices of the emblem makers, and also how he was capable of turning the whole tradition upside down to serve his own purpose. One of the methods of constructing a suitable border for an emblem was to surround the picture with a cartouche, or to make it appear to be a cameo, a medallion, a seal, or a signet, as for example in the plates of Parthenia Sacra.² Blake used this device as a way of indicating the nature of the monsters. He placed the behemoth and leviathan

¹ Frye makes a similar point, Fearful Symmetry, p. 434.
within a circle and rendered the area within the circle as if it were a bright and smooth surface. The meaning of so doing was to show that, as the brute forces of Nature, the monsters are nothing but the trinkets of a god who now displays his toys to man. The posture of Yahweh alludes to the frontispiece of Europe, and in addition to the mingled respect and denunciation which this portrait of Urizen seems strangely to elicit, the allusion carries a reminder of the statement in Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth. In Blake's design for the Job series, the Urizenic Yahweh is indicating that he created the biggest brutes of nature, but also that they are like coins of the realm, that is, like emblems, representing one thing but symbolic of something else.

In plate 18 of the Job series, Job is offering a sacrifice to his god with the intention of intervening on behalf of his friends who 'have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job'. With his arms spread wide apart, Job lifts his eyes to heaven where the enormous pyramid of flames from his sacrificial fire ascends. At the top of the plate there is a gigantic sun, only partially able to fit into the design, and at the bottom of the plate Job's friends and his wife kneel in obedience. There may be no direct parallels to this plate in the emblem books, but in Pia Desideria,¹ and in a design used

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1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem I.
also by Quarles, one may see a similarity of theme which runs rather deeper than anything discussed thus far. These plates depict the same situation, which is the thematic core (and one of the few points of lasting interest) in this kind of emblem book: the pursuit of desire, the soul longing for its god. In the first design three 'arrows of desire' ascend upward to the ears and eyes of god, and one pierces the heart of Anima, who yearns mournfully for her lover; and in the second, the soul is striving for communion with Divine Love, but because she is bound by the flesh, she is not allowed to enjoy the spiritual bliss of union, and she remains shackled to the earth.

1. Hugo and Arwaker, Book III, Emblem IX; Quarles, Book V, Emblem IX.

2. Hugo and Arwaker, Book I, Emblem I; Quarles, Book III, Emblem I. Blake too used the motif, but in a number of different ways. It appears on page 92 of the notebook, in plate 4 of Visions of the Daughters of Albion; in plate 4 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; in the colour print The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a Child; and in plate 16 of his engraved illustrations Night Thoughts (plate App. 4.4) and NT 278. Although the motif always had some connection with the theme of bondage, individual meanings differ from each other. Cf. for instance his use of it in Night Thoughts, where it ironically illustrates the line, 'Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life', with his use of it to depict the Orc-figure in the colour print.
The sprightly lark's shrill matin wakes the morn,
Grief's sharpest thorn hard pressing on my breast;
I strive, with wakeful melody, to cheer
The sullen gloom, sweet philomel! like thee,
And call the stars to listen; every star
Is deaf to mine, enamour'd of thy lay:
Yet be not vain; there are, who thine excel,
And charm through distant ages: wrapp'd in shade,
Pris'ner of darkness! to the silent hours,
How often I repeat their rage divine,
To hush my griefs, and steal my heart from woe!
I roll their raptures, but not catch their fire:
Dark, though not blind, like thee Maenides!
Or, Milton! thee; ah, could I reach your strain!
Or his, who made Maenides our own:
Man too he sung—immortal man I sing:*
* Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life:
What now, but immortality, can please?
O had he press'd his theme, pursued the track,
Which opens out of darkness into day!
O had he mounted on his wing of fire,
Soar'd, where I sink, and sung immortal man!
How had it bless'd mankind, and rescued me!

Plate App. 4. 3

These examples are only two of hundreds which could be marshalled from the emblem books of love. In all of these the common feature was the theme of desire and its frustration, and the lovers were always depicted as identical in appearance. The lover was always longing for his loved one in the profane love books, and the soul was always longing for the Christ child in the sacred love books. Christ or Cupid may punish the soul or the lover, he may rescue her from the raging tempest, he may reach down from heaven in longing, he may pout like an infant, or he may drape himself on a cross in front of her. But the emphasis was never so much on the situation as it was on the interplay of emotion between the two when she longs for and is prevented from reaching him. So long as desire exists in any form at all, there is no limit to the number of variations. Hope begets doubt, doubt fear, and fear hope again. And the point of such rapid reversals in this literature, which never relinquished its propagandistic aims, was to soften the reader's supposedly petrified sensibilities, and to create the same fruitless polarization of emotion in him, that he might be more easily led.

In connection with the Job series, this complex of themes is important because it may well have suggested to Blake that he depict Job and Yahweh with identical features. In so doing he

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1. Jean Hagstrum has suggested Raphael's Loggie design as the source for 'the intimacy of God and man that in Job brings the sufferer and creator so close together in appearance and position' (Poet and Painter, p. 133).
could allude to the overriding importance of desire, and he could depict scenes which otherwise might have proved troublesome theologically. He could show Yahweh allowing Job to be tortured by Satan, Yahweh withholding his love from Job, Yahweh playing the psychophant, Yahweh frightening Job in the night, and all the rest of the innumerable variations, without having to face the insurmountable theological problem that Yahweh so often seemed to behave in an ungodlike way. If it were possible for the face of Yahweh to be seen as the mirror image of Job's desire, then Yahweh could be an unconcerned burgher, a selfish old man, an obsequious knave, and a tyrant, as Job's desire collapsed; and when Job's desire enlarged to accommodate a god of love and magnificence, Yahweh could then merge with and illuminate Job.

In addition to the similarities of motif we have noted in the central parts of the Job designs, there are a number of perhaps less significant motifs in the borders of the same designs which also deserve some discussion. One may see the derivation of these figures in almost any of the collections of emblems, such as Wither's or Whitney's, or in the illustrated editions of Ripa's Iconologia. The main task of the iconologies, which were distinctly different for this reason from emblem books proper, was to establish a 'science of visual definition' for the moral life, in imitation of what the Renaissance thought the
Egyptians had done with hieroglyphics. The mythological beasts, the flora and the fauna, the angels and demons, and the significant articles which abound in the decorative margins of the Job plates can be recognized, then, as the common stock of this branch of emblems.

In plate 19, which depicts Job being honoured by the community, the margins are decorated with adoring angels, some bearing fruit and flowers, and two date palms, with roses at the bottom of one, and lilies at the bottom of the other. The flowers can be seen to signify love and purity, material and spiritual beauty, or chivalry and chastity, or the like. The significance of the palms, however, is more complicated. In the Bible the palms are often connected with celebrations, the city of Jericho, and the virtues of probity and righteousness. Perhaps the more influential connotations in the Bible derive from the episode in Matthew (xxi. 6 - 9) and in John (xii. 12 - 13) which tell of Christ riding an ass into Jerusalem and the citizens hailing him with cut palm branches. As described in the gospels, Christ makes ritualistic preparations for this event, and perhaps for this

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2. Damon suggests 'the roses and lilies of material and spiritual beauty' (p. 48). Wicksteed suggests 'male and female bounty' (p. 199).
reason the commentators have long seen the event as a prophecy of the triumphant entry of Christ into the new Jerusalem. It would be tempting to conclude something of the same with respect to Blake's use of the palm in the Job series. One would say that the palm trees signify the discovery of true nobility, or that the palms are 'the palms of victory', as Damon suggests.¹

But this raises two problems. The idea of victory does not fit Blake's conception of the Jobean situation, since there is no one in a position to reward Job unless it is God himself, and according to Blake, one of Job's errors was his idea that God sits up in the 'vault of paved heaven', giving gifts and saving lives. And then there is the perhaps minor point that the palms of victory were always represented as cut palm branches, which would be presented to the victor in the same way as the other emblem of victory, the laurel wreath. But Blake's palms are whole trees, and therefore must be modelled on different analogues.

If one looks to this kind of palm in the emblem literature, Blake's meaning can be easily discovered. In Whitney, Wither, and in the Hertel edition of Ripa,² the palm tree signified the righteousness earned by a man after the difficult struggle to maintain his virtue. The palm was depicted as a great flourishing

1. Ibid
tree, or as a tree growing upward despite a great weight placed on top of it; and the commentary explained that even with a weight oppressing it the palm would grow straight and tall. So also, in the frontispiece to Eikon Basilike (plate App. 4.1) where the palm is depicted with two leaden weights hanging from it on either side, the motto in the cartouche reads, 'crescit sub pondere virtus', and the verses on the frontispiece read, 'Though clogg'd with weights of miseries / Palm-like Depres'd I higher rise'. This use of the emblem must have consecrated it to a certain audience in the eighteenth century, for as Hume said of Eikon Basilike,

It is not easy to conceive the general compassion excited towards the King, by the publishing, in so critical a juncture, a work so full of piety, meekness, and humanity. Many have not scrupled to ascribe to that book the subsequent restoration of the royal family. Milton compares its effects to those which were operated on the tumultuous Romans by Anthony's reading to them the will of Caesar. The Icon passed thro' fifty editions in a twelvemonth; and independent of the great interest taken in it by the nation, as the supposed production of their murdered sovereign, it must be acknowledged the best prose composition, which, at the time of its publication, was to be found in the English language.

It is also of interest that Hume chose to portray Charles as the 'good man' in his sympathetic history. And while Hume was not normally one to appeal to prejudice or to faith -- in the same section of the history he ridiculed Bishop Laud's superstitious ceremonies -- nevertheless he used all his considerable talent for subtlety to identify this good man Charles, who without crown or

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kingdom awaited trial by his inferiors, with Christ before Pilate, as one can see in the following passage:

Mild and equable, he rose into no passion at that unusual authority, which was assumed over him. His soul, without effort or affectation, seemed only to remain in the situation familiar to it, and to look down with contempt on all the efforts of human malice and iniquity. The soldiers, instigated by their superiors, were brought, tho' with difficulty, to cry aloud for justice: Poor Souls! said the King to one of his attendants; for a little money they would do as much against their commanders. Some of them were permitted to go the utmost length of brutal insolence, and to spit in his face, as he was conveyed along the passage to the court. To excite a sentiment of piety, was the only effect which this inhuman insult was able to operate upon him.

The people, tho' under the rod of lawless, unlimited power, could not forbear, with the most ardent prayers, to pour forth their wishes for his preservation; and, in his present distress, they avowed him, by their generous tears, for their monarch, whom, in their misguided fury, they had before so violently rejected. The King was softened at this moving scene, and expressed his gratitude for their dutiful affection. One soldier too, seized by contagious sympathy, demanded from heaven a blessing on oppressed and fallen majesty: His officer, over-hearing his prayer, beat him to the ground in the King's presence. The punishment methinks, exceeds the offence: this was the reflection, which Charles formed on that occasion.

It was this kind of popular hero who might be figured by the palm.

One may say, then, that while the palms in the Job design may well be called the 'palms of victory', they are also a tribute to the struggle before victory was attained, and an

1. Ibid., p. 140. See also similar passages on pp. 144 - 5.
acknowledgement that though a man had been immeasurably disgraced, yet he maintained his dignity. As Wicksteed put it, the palm trees are symbolic 'of the flourishing of the righteous'.

This interpretation of the palm may not radically change one's understanding of plate 19, but it does provide a more specific understanding of one of the motifs. And this particular motif is important because it shows that while Blake discarded the naive theme of 'patient Job', he still wanted to indicate that the severity of pain, the depth of humiliation, and the utter degradation which Job was forced to suffer, proved a measure of his character, even if it was his own lack of understanding which brought on his suffering in the first place.

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(I call them by their English names: English, the rough basement.
Los built the stubborn structure of the Language, acting against
Albions melancholy, who must else have been a Dumb despair.)