BEAL, ANN DICKINSON

"CAN SUCH AN EYE JUDGE OF THE STARS": A STUDY OF STAR IMAGERY IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro PH.D. 1981

"CAN SUCH AN EYE JUDGE OF THE STARS"

A STUDY OF STAR IMAGERY IN

WILLIAM BLAKE'S POETRY

by

Ann Dickinson Beal

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1981

Approved by

Robert L. Kelly
Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Adviser Robert L. Kelly

Committee Members William W. Dixon

Mary K. Wakeman

Robert D. Stephens

F. I. Clyde

14 May 1981

Date of Acceptance by Committee

BEAL, ANN DICKINSON. "Can Such an Eye Judge of the Stars": A Study of Star Imagery in William Blake's Poetry. (1981) Directed by: Dr. Robert Kelly. Pp. 208.

Critical studies of Blake's poetry have, by and large, read the stars as images that belong to Urizen and that represent his world of destiny, mechanism, and tyranny. Although most critics would recognize that the stars are also the light of the Eternal Sun, now fragmented, few have actually applied this recognition to a reading of the poetry. In this study I propose to demonstrate that the stars of vision appear throughout Blake's poetry, together with the stars of the fallen world, as consistent, central images in his prophetic language.

The first chapter provides a critical perspective by considering the ways that the star imagery has been interpreted by representative critics. The second chapter examines the star imagery in Blake's early lyrical poetry to discover a basic pattern of meaning that is carried forward in his later works. The third chapter looks at the political prophecies where as early as The French Revolution the stars are presented in an imaginatively complete prophetic language and where they are also seen to delineate and clarify the prophetic message of America, Europe, and The Song of Los. The fourth chapter explores the full complexity of star imagery in Blake's epic poetry, focusing on Milton, but offering complementary analyses of The Four Zoas and

Jerusalem as well.

In final analysis, I discover that the images of the stars are shaped to fit the different genres and purposes of song, political prophecy, and epic, but that their visionary meaning remains essentially the same throughout Blake's works. What is more, this visionary meaning is a key to the prophetic language of the poetry.

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A NOTE ON REFERENCES

Plate and line references for quoted passages from Blake's illuminated works, with the exception of Songs of Innocence and of Experience, are given in parentheses immediately following the text. Poems from Songs of Innocence and of Experience are cited only by title. The wording of the quotes and the numbering of plate and line are taken from The Complete Writings of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). I have also consulted The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1974), and various facsimile reproductions of the illuminated works (indicated in the notes and in the bibliography) in preparing this thesis. If Erdman, in The Poetry and Prose, gives a different number to the plate cited, I will include his plate number in a note.

Night and line references for The Four Zoas are given in parentheses again according to Keynes. Erdman's different numbering of these lines appears in the notes.

Line references are given in parentheses for other long poems, and page references to Keynes, indicated as K, are given in parentheses for prose poems of more than one page.

References to Blake's pictures are to The Illuminated Blake, ed. Erdman, unless otherwise indicated in the notes.

Abbreviations

Am	America
BU	The Book of Urizen
E	Europe
J	Jerusalem
M	Milton
MHH	The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
NNR	There is No Natural Religion

CHAPTER I

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

It is my purpose to examine the star imagery in William Blake's poetry. By star imagery I mean primarily the heavenly bodies that are referred to traditionally as the fixed stars. In my discussion, however, I will at times include the planets, which shine in the heavens with the stars and are often referred to as stars, e.g., Venus is called the Morning or Evening Star; our sun, which though a star is not viewed as one in the night sky; and our moon, which often works symbolically with the stars in Blake's poetry. I will be looking at both the worded text and the pictures that illuminate these words. Indeed, at times not to look at the illuminations would falsify or leave incomplete the meaning of the imagery in the poem. In this relatively short study I have not attempted an exhaustive analysis of the star imagery in Blake's poetry, but instead I have selected works to indicate Blake's presentation of the stars in three of his major genres: lyrical poem, political prophecy, and epic.

The stars appear throughout Blake's works, in text, illuminations, and illustrations. As we shall see, these stars are much more than indications of a night sky. More than perhaps any other image construct, that of the stars

can teach us how to read the prophetic imaginative language of Blake's poetry. That this prophetic language is both informed by tradition and characteristically Blake's own has been appropriately noted by critics.[1] From the very early works the star imagery makes this dual impression of setting off resonances with conventional and traditional meanings and of arresting our attention to Blake's particular vision. For example, in "To the Evening Star" from Poetical Sketches, the star is addressed as an angel whose sacred influence is invoked to lull the world to sleep and to protect the sheep from the wolves and lions that roam at night. Frye has noted that in making the star a human figure Blake "has taken a step beyond personification" so that we can see his "humanizing vision bursting out of eighteenth century abstract nouns."[2] This poem may have been influenced by the convention of the descriptive landscape poem, but the thematic character of the imagery is Blake's own.

In Blake's vision, the heavenly bodies reveal our fallen state; by setting the limits to how far we can see, they quite literally circumscribe our earthly existence, they draw a circle of destiny around us. In Milton Blake images the Plowman, the Artificer, and the Shepherd as sending their Thoughts abroad "To labour in the ocean or in the starry heaven" (M 39.55-56);[3] many traditional readings of the stars come from just such a casting of the

imagination out to the oceans of the night sky.[4] The movement of the constellations that were imaged in this way long ago marks the seasonal changes, the times of planting and harvest, of birth and death. As mortality is measured by the stars in recurring cycles of birth and death, so fate or fortune was often imaged there in hieroglyph or cipher. Later, compass and clock, geometry and mathematics, were used to measure the stars to determine the natural laws of the universe. In all these readings, the stars reveal the fallen world, but if seen rightly these same stars are gates to an inner vision that puts us in touch with or allows us to see the Human Form Divine. In other words, the stars can either be seen with the fallen senses or with an apocalyptic vision that transforms this fallen perception. This basic principle of seeing is expressed in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is infinite.
> For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.
> (MHH 14)

Although no critical studies of Blake have been addressed exclusively to the star imagery, most writers of book-length studies present at one time or another an interpretation of the meaning of this imagery. In addition, a number of articles address themselves in part to a reading

of star imagery. I have included all the studies that I have consulted in a bibliography, and I will refer to many of them during the course of this dissertation. For the purposes of introduction, however, I have selected critics that are representative of the different approaches to this imagery. Most of these interpretations discuss what the fallen senses see to the exclusion or the eclipse of the apocalyptic vision. In A Blake Dictionary, S. Foster Damon states that the stars "symbolize Reason," that they are "assigned to Urizen," and that they are "the visible machinery of the astronomical universe, . . . Fate."[5] George Harper in The Neoplatonism of William Blake says:

> Blake's disapproval of the stars is well known. He associated them with the new science, in the figures of Bacon, Newton, and Locke. The stars symbolized the partial truth which man might apprehend by means of the five senses.[6]

Morton Paley echoes both these interpretations while also adding a political emphasis in noting that the stars are "associated with tyranny and war" as early as Poetical Sketches and as late as Jerusalem, and that the stars are "symbols of oppression because they are associated both with the mechanism of the Newtonian Universe and with the instrumentality of fate."[7] Other critics when they have occasion to allude to star imagery will almost fill in the blank with stars equal "fate," "mechanism," or "tyranny."

There is, of course, partial truth in these interpretations. In Blake's mythology, Urizen is the Demiurge who seizes power and builds the Satanic world bounded by the circle of destiny; the beautiful painting of the Ancient of Days drawing this world with a pair of golden compasses is an illustration of this creation. The stars as images in Blake's poetry tell us much about the Demiurge and his Empire. They also, however, tell us of the world beyond the circle, a world of inner vision and of transformation. Some few critics have recognized this.

Notable among these is Milton O. Percival, whose monumental study, William Blake's Circle of Destiny, contributed much of significance to an understanding of the star imagery. He interprets the stars as a symbol of the fallen world, noting that they are an ancient symbol of necessity, but he also shows how Blake images this as a change in perception. The starry heavens, Percival says, are "a symbol of unity in multiplicity."[8] That the starry heavens have fled from the limbs of Albion who once like Adam Kadmon "contain'd in his mighty limbs all things in Heaven & Earth" (J 27) is a figure that says to Percival, "When man ceases to think of nature as spiritual, the universe loses its unity and becomes a multiplicity of incoherent and divided fragments."[9] Likewise, in discussing the stars as the world created by Urizen or the Demiurge, Percival traces the tradition for this to the Gnostics and to St. Paul: "the stars are third

and last in the order of heavenly illumination,"[10] and emphasizes that this world is one of mercy as well as one of tyranny. In The Four Zoas, Blake says that the stars were "created like a golden chain / To bind the Body of Man to heaven from falling into the Abyss" (FZ II.266-67).[11] Percival notes, "In its descent the chain loses its golden and benignant character, and becomes iron and oppressive. . . . Blake gives to it a regenerative function."[12] In discussing the images in the starry heavens of the great serpent with twenty-seven folds and the great Polypus, Percival is careful to emphasize that while the Spectre reads the voids between the stars, Los reads the stars themselves (J 91.36-37), and that while their light may be "cold and feeble"[13] they are there "to provide a little light in the moral darkness" for those (the prophets) who have eyes to see.[14] In this way, the stars represent the break-up of the eternal sun,[15] and "the ordered round of constellations is Blake's beautiful and appropriate symbol for the order imposed by law upon a world from which unity had fled."[16]

Other critics of Blake's poetry have to a certain degree recognized what Percival explains. Northrop Frye notes that in Blake's poetry the "zodiacal pattern always has the sinister significance of the unending cyclic repetition of time."[17] He also, however, notes that Albion's twelve sons are "associated with the 'starry wheels,' " and that "their

relation to the twelve sons of Jacob, who represent humanity, symbolizes the interdependence of the universe we see and the bodies which compel us to see it in that form."[18] We see the stars as tyrannical "starry wheels" because our perception is limited. Frye relates this way of seeing to the Orc cycle, "visions of tragedy and failure" which seem to say that "all our imaginative efforts are bound to a wheel of time, which in its turn is imprisoned in a wheel of space" and that this cyclic movement is independent "from the will and desire of man."[19] Ezekiel's vision of "wheels within wheels" as presented by Blake could free us from these visions of tragedy and failure for, as Frye notes, it "suggests the possibility of reversing our present view of the universe as a huge 'mill' of geared machinery."[20]

Harold Bloom most usually refers to the stars as symbols of the tyranny of the fallen world. In his footnote commentary on Milton, however, he refers to the passage on Plates 25 and 26, where the stars are called the Sons of Los, as a confirmation by Blake of "the new parentage of the phenomenal world," for in this passage the star world is "no longer seen as Urizenic in its movements."[21] And later on in Milton, Plate 37, when Blake describes the stars as gates to the Caves of Urthona where the Fires of Los rage, Bloom comments that Blake "allows himself to interpolate" these lines of apocalyptic vision.[22]

In Blake's Visionary Universe, John Beer explains his thesis that the key to Blake's visionary world is the understanding of its polar opposites--sublimity and pathos--by setting this vision against the conventional eighteenth century astronomer's map of the heavens. This conventional picture of the sky

> was structured by the north and south poles, matching lights which reduced the universe to a geometrically organized whole, . . . an order [which] was inevitably dominated by Law and Death.[23]

Beer goes on to contrast Blake's universe to this picture.

> The opposites of [Blake's] universe were human extremes: the 'contracting' of man in the moment of pathos, on the one hand, his 'expansion' in the moment of sublimity on the other.[24]

Throughout his analysis, Beer very rightly distinguishes between the stars of the fallen world, "the world of Reason," and "the stars of the world of Vision." In commenting on Jerusalem 91, "Los reads the Stars of Albion / The Spectre reads the Voids Between the Stars . . .," Beer notes that Los responds to "the sublimity of the starry heavens, while the Spectre reduces them to matter for analysis."[25] Later, Beer expands this commentary:

> Eternity can be traced either at the heart of the flower or in the realm of light beyond the regions of the stars. Calculators and reasoners may go on measuring to the utmost limits of human perception in either direction, but Eternity will lie always just beyond them. They are worshipping the

> mechanism of the flower instead of its heart, the abstract voids between the stars instead of the light of the stars themselves. Their diagrams to analyze the course of the planets become Satanic wheels which bind humanity.[26]

Beer recognizes here the prophetic nature of Blake's imagery, that the stars are never just one thing. He further sees that Blake's star imagery illustrates both how our senses fell to be limited by the circle of destiny and how our vision can be transformed to free us from this chain that binds.

Interestingly enough, two of the most insightful commentators on Blake's star imagery write about his illustrations and not his poetry. Joseph H. Wicksteed in Blake's Vision of the Book of Job and Albert S. Roe in Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy both open up helpful avenues for exploring the star imagery. These illustrations, late works by Blake, dramatically show the stars of vision.

Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy show the stars freed from their associations with tyrannical reason and the wheels of fate. In his commentary, Roe quotes Percival and Wicksteed and identifies the stars with divine love. For example, in Plate 91, A Design of Circular Stairs from Paradiso, a very sketchy pencil drawing that according to Roe probably illustrates "Divine Intelligence manifesting itself in the world,"[27] four stars appear alongside the stairs. To Roe they represent God's mercy reaching from the

Eternal Sun down to the Fallen World.[28] In other commentary he notes that the stars "testify to God's love even through the darkness of night"[29] and that they indicate the night of Beulah which in its eternal aspect is "a place of repose in which the soul is ministered to by the Emanations and restored to new vigor for its return to Eden."[30]

In commenting on Blake's twelfth illustration to the Book of Job in which Elihu appears, his left hand pointing upward to the brilliant stars in the dark night sky, Wicksteed makes several useful observations. First, he notes that the brilliant light of the stars emphasizes "the depth of night which Job's soul has now reached."[31] He goes on to say that the stars represent:

> the point of contact between the spiritual and corporeal visions of life, or the irreducible minimum of spiritual reality which even the corporeal vision cannot quench; the fragments of universal light which Night itself cannot drown.[32]

He supports this interpretation with the golden chain passage from The Four Zoas, already quoted above, and his interpretation here is similar to Percival's explanation of the stars as the break-up of the eternal sun. In commenting on the drawing in the margin of Job sleeping peacefully "in a Dream" while Spirits emanate from his head and feet and soar upward through and above the stars at the top of the picture, he adds a more particular interpretation that bears attention. He quotes Jerusalem 44: "Man is adjoin'd to

Man by his Emanative Portion," and suggests that "just as the sun is the symbol of Job's inner spirit . . . so the stars may be the souls of other men, as distantly perceived by him across the abyss of nature."[33] He supports this rather unorthodox interpretation by quoting from Jerusalem and The Four Zoas:

> . . . . . Shuddering
> With their wings they sat in the Furnace, in a night
> Of stars, for all the Sons of Albion appear'd distant stars
> Ascending and descending into Albion's sea of death.
> (J 50.18-21)

> Howling & Wailing fly the souls from Urizen's strong hand,
> For from the hand of Urizen the myriads fall like stars.
> (FZ IX.321-22)[34]

Wicksteed's interpretation here is important for it recognizes a key to the apocalyptic vision of the stars and other images in Blake's works.

In the closing of Jerusalem the apocalypse has been realized in the lines:

> All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth & Stone: all
> Human Forms identified, living, going forth & returning wearied.
> Into the Planetary lives of Years, Months, Days & Hours; reposing
> And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.
> (Jerusalem 99.1-4)

This identification of human forms in all that we see with our fallen perception as separate from us is the major

challenge of Blake's images and symbols that present, as Frye says, "so uncompromising an address to the intellectual powers."[35] How the stars reveal the Human Form Divine is a more important question to Blake than how they reveal our fate and the mechanism of natural law, but the latter must be seen before the former is discovered. It is my contention that throughout Blake's work these multiple meanings for the stars are presented.[36] From the earliest poems the stars of vision are there as well as the stars of the fallen world. An understanding of how these images or symbols work together in a reading of the poetry is the aim of my study.

I have divided my study into three chapters. In the first chapter I will discuss Blake's early lyrical poetry, most notably, Songs of Innocence and of Experience. In the second chapter I will examine his political poetry, with particular emphasis on the political prophecies of the early 1790's. Lastly, I will look closely at the star imagery in Milton, noting, as I do so, corresponding configurations of the stars in Jerusalem and The Four Zoas. In these readings we will discover that from Blake's earliest poems the stars are part of a prophetic language. In the later epics, The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem, the star imagery is presented with great complexity and beauty to show how our vision was altered with the Fall and how we can again learn to see ourselves and the world as we were

before our senses were shut down. Milton, which is the shortest and in many ways the most accessible of these epics, clearly illustrates the many different appearances of the stars in these later epics, appearances that are consistent with the images of vision and of destiny set forth in his earlier lyrical and political poems.

CHAPTER ONE: NOTES

[1]Northrop Frye, Hazard Adams, Harold Bloom, Peter Fisher, among others.

[2]Northrop Frye, Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947). pp. 177-78.

[3]Erdman, M 44.

[4]The heavens are often referred to as oceans in Blake. In Milton 27.52, for example, the Starry Mills are "oceans, clouds & waters ungovernable in their fury." In star lore, parts of the night sky are also seen as an ocean. Argo, the ship, sails in this ocean, and the constellations Pisces (the fishes), Cetus (the Sea Monster), and the Southern Fish all swim in the area of the Heavens called "the Sea." This association no doubt originated from ancient sailors who charted their course by the stars and who could actually view these constellations of sea creatures that always appear just above the horizon as if they were swimming in the same ocean on which they sailed.

[5]S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965), p. 386.

[6]George Mills Harper, The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 178.

[7]Morton D. Paley, Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 52, 55.

[8]Milton O. Percival, William Blake's Circle of Destiny (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), p. 61.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., p. 60.

[11]Erdman, FZ II.33.16-17.

[12]Percival, p. 61.

[13]Percival, p. 66.

[14]Ibid., p. 65.

[15]Ibid., p. 148.

[16]Ibid., p. 147.

[17]Frye, p. 141.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., p. 145.

[20]Ibid., p. 246.

[21]Harold Bloom, Commentary to William Blake, The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1968), p. 834.

[22]Ibid., p. 841.

[23]John Beer, Blake's Visionary Universe (Manchester, England: The University Press, 1969), p. 6.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., p. 219.

[26]Ibid., pp. 243-44.

[27]Albert S. Roe, Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 179.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 147.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Joseph H. Wicksteed, Blake's Vision of the Book of Job (1910; rpt. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1971), p. 92.

[32]Ibid., p. 94.

[33]Ibid., p. 92.

[34]Erdman, FZ IX.125.6-7.

[35]Frye, p. 143.

[36]A substantial number of critics have argued that Blake's symbols did not develop and change but that they are essentially the same throughout his work. For example, Northrop Frye in Fearful Symmetry comments on Blake's impressive "consistency of mind" (p. 178) throughout his works noting again and again "the outlines" of Blake's later myth in early works; and Hazard Adams in William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p. 53, states a premise on which the structure of his book, which uses later poems to illuminate Songs of Innocence and of Experience, is based: "in effect Blake's early poems strive to express the same 'system' that the later prophetic books approach."

CHAPTER II

EARLY POETRY, LYRICS

In this chapter I will discuss Blake's star imagery in selected Poetical Sketches and Songs of Innocence and of Experience. The star imagery in Poetical Sketches is, for the most part, traditional. For example, in "Song: When early morn walks forth," the speaker of the poem curses his "black stars," an image which connects the black eyes of his beloved with the stars seen as fate. In "To the Evening Star," however, we will see that the basically conventional star imagery begins to read like the prophetic language that it will become in Songs of Innocence and of Experience.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section considers the image of night as a necessary background for a discussion of the stars. Blake's earliest poems present night as a symbol for the fallen world, our earthly existence, a meaning that is carried throughout his works. In "The Ecchoing Green" from Songs of Innocence the symbol of night is figured within a circle image that defines it as part of both a natural and a visionary cycle. This dual identification, with the patterns of our world creating for us a visionary understanding of this world, is a basic technique of Blake's prophetic language.

Sections two and three are concerned with star imagery in Songs of Innocence and one lyric from Poetical Sketches. In these poems the stars that appear in the night, the fallen world, offer protection for the innocent, and, in some cases, transformation to an Eden-like existence. The stars, then, reveal the visionary meaning of night as Beulah. Section three focuses on the relationship between star imagery and the world of dreams. There are two dream worlds in these poems: one imprisons the soul in the fallen world; the other frees the spirit in a vision of Eden. The stars are identified with the latter.

The last two sections consider three poems from Songs of Experience: "Introduction," "Earth's Answer," and "The Tyger." The first two poems present contrasting definitions of the stars as they are seen in the world of experience. The Bard in "Introduction" sees the stars as the way back to Eternity; the Earth, in a contrary vision, sees them as an imprisoning circle of destiny. These definitions of the stars are also definitions of the universe that we inhabit. "The Tyger" unites the contrary visions in one enigmatic image that describes the stars at the creation of this world, when hell was separated from heaven, "When the stars threw down their spears, / And water'd heaven with their tears." The stars here prove to be at one and the same time the stars of vision and the stars of destiny wedded together in the furnaces of creation.

Night

Night as an image, concept, and experience provides a necessary background for Blake's stars, literally and symbolically. In many of Blake's poems night represents the fallen world, our earthly existence. In this sense, it is contrasted with the "heavenly" world of light and life. Night is also seen as part of the natural cycle of light and dark that defines this fallen world. It is a time of darkness that ends play and labor and brings beneficial rest. In Blake's mythology this cycle of work and rest that we all experience in the physical world is a shadow of Eternity where the creative activity of Eden is followed by the peaceful rest of Beulah in an unending cycle. That the rest of Beulah can lead to a deeper sleep for the soul and a fall into Generation means that night, from the perspective of Eternity, is both Beulah, a space of dreams and visions, and our world of Experience or Generation, where our humanity falls asleep and we become unconscious of our Eternal existence. In the first poems that we will look at from Poetical Sketches, night is a symbol for the fallen world. From these earliest poems it is clear that night and the stars are words in an imaginative prophetic language. In "The Ecchoing Green" we see how the mythical structures that begin to make sense out of this language are visionary patterns found within the natural cyclical patterns of this world.

In three little-discussed poetical sketches, "Samson," "Then She Bore Pale Desire," and "The Couch of Death," night is symbolic of the fallen world. In all three the world in which we live is seen as a world of darkness and death and is contrasted with the "heavenly" world of light and life. The poet's invocation at the beginning of "Samson" asks Truth to turn "our earthly night to heavenly day" and to visit "our darkling world." Likewise, Night is addressed as "noon-tide of damned spirits [that] over the silent earth spreads her pavilion" (K 37). In "Then She Bore Pale Desire," the fall of Reason is described using the familiar light and dark imagery, "Reason once fairer than the light, till foul'd in Knowledge's dark Prison house" (K 42). The dark Prison house is our world of experience or our life on this earth.[1]

The presentation of the image of night as our earthly life is a more complicated one in "The Couch of Death." This prose poem is a dramatic description of the death of a young man who is so convinced of his own sinfulness that he sees no possibility of salvation.[2] As his death approaches, night falls; his mother and a sister sit beside his sick bed:

> Sorrow linked them together, leaning on one another's necks alternately--like lilies, dropping tears in each other's bosom, they stood by the bed like reeds bending over a lake, when the evening drops trickle down.
> (K 36)

This initial simile is representative of the metaphorical

structures throughout the sketch. The experience of these individuals confronting death is continually compared to natural occurrences so that this one man's couch of death becomes our life on this earth. In despair of his sins he speaks out:

> "If I lay my face in the dust, the grave opens its mouth for me; if I lift up my head, sin covers me as a cloak! O my dear friends, pray ye for me! . . . Through the void space I walk between the sinful world and eternity!" (K 36)

This sin, a cloak, is the dark night of this fallen world.[3] When mother and child are both consumed by their despair, their sighs are compared to "rolling waves, upon a desert shore." The young man's salvation from this despair is described as a natural occurrence: "he was like a cloud tossed by the winds, till the sun shine, and the drops of rain glisten." The simile is then wedded to an archetypal human experience, the harvest, "the yellow harvest breathes, and the thankful eyes of the villagers are turned up in smiles"; and further emphasized by another archetypal human experience, the journey, "The traveller that hath taken shelter under an oak, eyes the distant country with joy!" (K 36)

When the young man's death does come, it is in the deep stillness of night; the moon "hung not out her lamp, and the stars faintly glimmered in the summer sky" (K 36). In later poems the stars will shine brightly as a sign that the visionary light is not completely extinguished or the

dawning sun will dispel the darkness and give promise of a new Eternal Day, but in this poem a "visionary hand" wipes away the tears of despair and leaves behind "a ray of light [which] beamed around his head" (K 36).

What is interesting here are the many similes that continually transform the experience before our eyes. We discover that the metaphors and images even in these very early works set up a mythical context that gives an archetypal dimension to the poem. This young man on his couch of death, the lilies growing by the stream, the dark night that surrounds this earth, the ocean waves breaking on the shore, the clouds, the wind, the sun, the harvest, the traveller, the moon, the stars are all words in an imaginative prophetic language. As Peter Fisher has expressed it:

> The Symbolism of Blake is not representational, and the images are related to one another in the act of interpreting the prophetic vision which is already a unity in the moment of its perception.[4]

This symbolism is a particular presentation of the universal language of the imagination. Fisher explains that with this language Blake intended "to arouse the faculties of the reader to relate one image to another in somewhat the same manner that we relate one word to another in ordinary discourse."[5]

The circle is one emerging pattern that relates these images one to another. In "The Ecchoing Green," the image

of night takes on a visionary meaning within the pattern of the circle. By looking closely at this poem we can discover how the symbolic or visionary meaning of night is found in an understanding of the natural world.

"The Ecchoing Green" presents night in the natural cyclical pattern of Day/Night that can be seen as a symbol for the visionary cycle of Eden/Beulah/Generation. The third poem in Songs of Innocence, "The Ecchoing Green" comes immediately after the idyllic world of the Shepherd, who follows his sheep "From the morn to the evening" hearing the echoing sound of the lambs' calling and the ewes' reply. Here in this innocent vision of the Shepherd, we see the harmony of Eden. On the illuminated plate, a bird of paradise soars above the rising sun in the background.

"The Ecchoing Green" also begins with the sunrise:

> The Sun does arise
> And make happy the skies.
> The merry bells ring,
> To welcome the Spring.
> The sky-lark and thrush,
> The birds of the bush,
> Sing louder around,
> To the bells chearful sound,
> While our sports shall be seen
> On the Ecchoing Green.

This is the world of childhood, when each spring day brings joyous play and the whole world seems to respond, the world of bells, the birds, and even "the old folk" who are able to relive the joys of childhood by watching the girls and boys

play. But the harmonious sounds must end as "the ecchoing green" changes to "the darkening green." The children are then imaged "Round the laps of their mothers / . . . . Like birds in their nest, / . . . ready for rest."

This image is answered by circle images in the illumination. On the first page of the poem, the central figure under the oak tree is a mother encircling two younger children in her arms while the older children play a game of ball to her right. The game of ball in its turn suggests a circle. She is seated with others, Old John, a nurse, and other children, who as a group encircle the oak tree. Below them in the margin to the right of the poem, a young boy is playing with a stick and hoop. There is a halo around the head of one of the figures on the second page of the poem. This female figure reaches her left hand up towards a cluster of grapes held by a boy who reclines on a vine that has spiralled up to the left of her and over her head.

The circles of the poem emphasize the cycles of light/dark, day/night, and seem to show us that the images and actions in our daily life are echoes of the underlying patterns that shape our lives. In the vision of this poem night is part of the cycle of play and rest that is a visionary echo of Eden and Beulah. But there is in the poem as well a hint of the sinister in the tone of "sport no more seen, / On the darkening Green," and the suggestion that the lap of the mother may confine as well as protect. We are

already entering the restricting natural cycle of generation, the mortal round that ends in death.

If one considers that Blake's images are part of a prophetic language that one must learn by reading his poetry and looking at his pictures, then night can be seen, in these early poems, to have certain root meanings that are altered and even transformed by the syntactical patterns of each poem's myth. The circle images of "The Ecchoing Green" show night, a time of sleep and rest, as part of a continuing cycle that follows an underlying pattern. In the world of innocence this is a seemingly never-ending cycle of joyful play and rest, but the spiral descent into a deeper night of Generation and Experience, suggested by both words and pictures in "The Ecchoing Green," is shown clearly as the Couch of Death in Poetical Sketches and throughout Songs of Experience as the world of cruelty, hypocrisy, and deceit where all children must live.

Innocence

With this understanding of night in Blake's early lyrical poetry, we can more clearly read the star imagery that is there. In "To the Evening Star" from Poetical Sketches and "Night" and "The Little Boy Lost" from Songs of Innocence, night is revealed to be a time of danger and treachery, but the stars appear, within this night, as protective divine presences for the innocent. In "Night" these presences also have transformative powers.

The speaker of "To the Evening Star" addresses Venus as "fair-hair'd angel" and asks her to light her "bright torch of love" and to "Smile on our loves." He also asks her to "scatter" her "silver dew / On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes / In timely sleep." Her "influence" is requested to protect the innocent sheep with her "sacred dew" from the wolf and lion, animals of prey, that "rage" and "glare" in the dark night that quickly follows the silver evening. In this early poem, then, the star is an angel who brings the quiet and peace of evening and "timely sleep" to the world, but the night itself is a time of hidden dangers.

In "Night" the visionary mythology is much more developed. The first of the six stanzas describes the close of day, with the evening star shining, and ends with the moon "like a flower" sitting in "heaven's high bower" and smiling on the night below. Whereas in the earlier poem the evening star brings sleep and protection to the innocent, in "Night" a number of Angels descend as guardians of sleep and safe repose.

The activities of these angels are described in stanzas two, three, and four. As these "angels bright" silently move over the fields,

> Unseen they pour blessing,
> And joy without ceasing,
> On each bud and blossom,
> And each sleeping bosom.

The image of dew that was directly presented in "To the

Evening Star" is only implied here. The Angels themselves have a much more human-like form and function. They are described looking in "every thoughtless nest," visiting the caves of "every beast," and sitting down by the bed of those who cannot sleep. Again in this poem sleep is seen as a blessing. The "thoughtless" nest suggests that sleep provides a rest from the rigors of mental activity. Blake's later image of Beulah/Night providing needed rest from the Mental Fight of Eden is instructive here. In the earlier poem the speaker requests the protective "influence" of the star; in "Night" the Angels stand and weep "Seeking to drive /the/ thirst /of the wolves and the tygers/ away." If they fail in this the Angels then "Receive each mild spirit, / New worlds to inherit."

The illumination of the second page of the poem depicts five angels as human figures with haloes around their heads, in groups of three and two, standing under the dark blue night sky with three bright stars.[6] One of the stars, with four instead of five points, is just above the halo of one of the angels. The sky around this four-pointed star is a lighter blue to suggest this as the evening star descending on the horizon. The closeness of this star to the angels reminds us that they are equivalent symbols. The five angels are standing beside and under a large oak tree. In the branches of this tree are three human figures that seem to be not guardian angels but the mild spirits that the angels are said to receive in the fourth stanza of the poem.

The last two stanzas of the poem describe the new worlds that these mild spirits inherit. This is "our immortal day," the Eden or Eternity where the predator of night, the lion, is transformed by the pitying vision of the angels and replaces them as guardian of the flock. Night as contrasted with "our immortal day" is our world of Generation where the passive innocent are preyed upon by the energetic evil. It is also, however, Beulah, the time of sleep, dreams, and visions. The angels do not have power to keep the wolves and tygers away from the sheep in this world, but their vision of compassion does have the power to show the way to "New worlds" where the lion will lie down with the lamb and where the lion will sing of his transformation in a Song of Innocence:

> For wash'd in lifes river,
> My bright mane for ever,
> Shall shine like the gold,
> As I guard o'er the fold.

The illumination of "The Little Boy Lost" in Songs of Innocence makes it an interesting companion piece to "Night." The illustration above the poem is of the little boy following after a will-o'-the-wisp that leads him into the forests of night where the trees reach out menacingly over his head. In the margins around the poem, however, six angels are grouped, and seven stars shine in a dark blue sky beneath these angels. Neither the angels nor the stars are mentioned in the poem, but the angels look very much like the

guardian angels of "Night." The reader dramatically sees two nights juxtaposed: one, the ensnaring night of the natural world, whose only light is the deceptive and evasive will-o'-the-wisp; the other, the angelic and starlit night that appears as an assurance that innocence will be protected. As a fulfillment of this assurance the weeping child is heard by God who appears "like his father in white" in "The Little Boy Found" and takes him back home to his mother. Curiously, in the illumination, God seems to be a female and appears much more like an angel than a father.

Thus, in these three poems, the stars bring "timely rest" ("To the Evening Star"), show a vision of compassion that has transformative powers by indicating the way to Eternal worlds ("Night"), and promise that the innocent of this world will be protected ("The Little Boy Lost"). In the first two poems the stars are shown to have human characteristics; indeed, in "Night" they descend as Angels to walk upon the earth. With this in mind we can perhaps better understand why the Father who comes down to Earth to lead the Little Boy Lost back to his mother looks so much like an Angel.

Dreams

A number of the Songs of Innocence show us that while we may be born into this world of Experience which soon imprisons our soul as night brings to an end the joyous

play of day, an innocent or childlike perception can also find in night a land of dreams, a land that has for the innocent the protective and transformative powers that we have come to identify with the stars. In "The Land of Dreams" (K 427), from the Pickering Manuscript, this other world is said by the child of the poem to be located "Above the light of the Morning Star." In the poems, "The Land of Dreams," "The Chimney Sweeper," "A Dream," and "A Cradle Song," a clear difference between the child's perception of dream and an adult's is shown, and the child's understanding is revealed to be much like the vision of the stars in "The Little Boy Lost."

In "The Land of Dreams" a father awakens his little boy, whose mother has recently died, because he is weeping in his sleep. The little boy's questions about the Land of Dreams and his father's attempt to answer these questions make up most of the text of the poem:

> "O, what Land is the Land of Dreams?
> "What are its Mountains & what are its Streams?
> "O Father, I saw my Mother there,
> "Among the Lillies by waters fair.
>
> "Among the Lambs, clothed in white,
> "She walk'd with her Thomas in sweet delight.
> "I wept for joy, like a dove I mourn;
> "O! when shall I again return?"
>
> Dear Child, I also by pleasant Streams
> Have wander'd all Night in the Land of Dreams;
> But tho' calm & warm the waters wide,
> I could not get to the other side.

"Father, O Father! what do we here
"In this Land of unbelief & fear?
"The Land of Dreams is better far,
"Above the light of the Morning Star."

To this child there is an actual land or place in his dreams to which he can go. It is a space out of time, for he sees his mother there and walks with her "in sweet delight." The child not only tells his father about his dream but also asks him where this land is, for he wants to return. The father responds by telling of his own experience in the Land of Dreams which is far more limited than the child's because he was not able to cross the stream "to the other side." The father's statement implies that one cannot actually go to the Land of Dreams, but the little boy knows better. It is unbelief and fear that keep us from this land which to his imagination and from his experience is "Above the light of the Morning Star."

As adult readers, we may find the boy's desire and the father's inability to explain pathetic, for we know that the child cannot actually be reunited with his mother. But this pathos might keep us from the wonder, joy, and determination of the boy's experience, and it might also blur the important distinction that is made between the child's and the parent's vision.

"The Chimney Sweeper" from Songs of Innocence also tells of a dream in which a child experiences another world. This poem contains no stars, but it presents the integrity

of this dream world with such clarity and power that it is deserving of our attention here. The night of the poem is both this fallen world where the children must work as slaves, the coffins of black that are the chimneys they must sweep each day; and the time of sleep and dreams. The chimney sweeper sleeps in soot, in the darkness of this world of experience; yet the dream of little Tom, one of the chimney sweeps, has the power to make him "happy & warm" when he must rise in the cold morning to work again. He is able to be "happy & warm" in the cold, dark world of experience because he carries with him a vision and a promise of a future life where he will "wash in a river and shine in the Sun." (This is presumably the pleasant stream that the father in "The Land of Dreams" could not cross.)

Tom's white hair, "That curl'd like a lamb's back," is an image of his innocence and of his identity with the Christ child. (The poem "The Lamb" comes just four plates before.) The brutality of the shaving of his hair is underscored rather than mitigated by the practical and pathetic advice of the chimney sweeper, "Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare, / You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair." The dream that follows is related both thematically and symbolically to this acquiescence.

Tom's white hair is saved from the soot by being shorn; in much the same way his innocence, his soul, is saved from the corruption of the fallen world by his martyrdom as a

chimney sweep. The dream is vision in that it shows Tom how to live in the radiance of his own imagination, so that "if all do their duty, they need not fear harm." The dream is inverted, however, by the adults of this world who see the child's innocence and dedication as reason for his martyrdom. So if all do their duty, they, indeed, need to fear harm. "The Chimney Sweeper" from Songs of Experience clearly shows the resulting hypocrisy:

> "Because I was happy upon the heath,
> "And smil'd among the winters snow:
> "They clothed me in the clothes of death,
> "And taught me to sing the notes of woe.
>
> "And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
> "They think they have done me no injury:
> "And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King
> "Who make up a heaven of our misery."

The adult heaven is made quite literally from the misery of the children, for each time that they lock a child in a coffin of black, they are crucifying Christ anew. One will remember that in Blake's later poetry, Jesus is the imagination; he is also the imagination here.

"A Dream" and "A Cradle Song" dramatically illustrate the difference between a child's perception of dream and an adult's.

"A Dream" is woven over the "angel-guarded bed" of a child, the speaker of the poem. The dream, a simple fable, carries much the same message as "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found": the innocent of this world while they might lose their way and fall into dangerous circumstances are protected by divine presences. There is a

difference; in "A Dream" it is the mother, not the child, who is lost. A lost ant, heart-broken, expresses concern for her children but is rescued by a glow-worm, the watchman of the night, who lights the ground so that she can find her way home. There are stars in the illumination of the poem; two faint ones in the title, and two larger, five-pointed ones at the beginning and end of the third stanza in which the ant cries out in distress. Interestingly enough, the stars in "The Little Boy Lost" also appear as the child weeps. The glow-worm, who calls himself the watchman of the night, is pictured in the illumination of the poem as a human figure standing watch with staff in hand.

There are no stars in "A Cradle Song." The first plate is illuminated by a mass of tendrils; the second plate presents a rather sinister picture of a very somber mother watching over a sleeping child. Heavy blue curtains hang behind the cradle, and heavy garments drape the bodies of both mother and child. As the poem weaves itself in repetition of words and sounds, we realize that the mother is weaving the child into the sleep of generation:

> Sleep sleep happy child
> All creation slept and smil'd.
> Sleep sleep, happy sleep
> While o'er thee they mother weep.

Throughout the lullaby, the mother sings of her smiles and the infant's smiles beguiling away moans and tears in a circular rhythm that lulls one to sleep in the turning cycles

of generation. "Beguiles" carries a double meaning of "charm" and "deceive," and the lullaby itself charms one into sleep. Near the end of the lullaby the Christ child is woven into the song, imagination woven into the fabric of generation, "Heaven & earth to peace beguiles." The beguiling power of dreams, sleep, and Christ's smiles to change sorrow to peace, seen as a shade woven over the infant's head, appears in "The Human Abstract" of Songs of Experience as "the dismal shade / Of Mystery" and in the later prophetic books becomes the Churches of Beulah.

Just as there are two nights in Blake's early poetry, the night of Generation or the fallen world and the night of Beulah (of dreams and vision), so there are two dream worlds, one that imprisons and traps us in the sleep of generation and one that frees us from this death-in-life to an imaginative life of joy, love, and harmony. The stars, when they are associated with dreams, are indications of this latter dream world. Thus, in Songs of Innocence the stars are consistently seen as protective presences with visionary power.

Experience

In the introductory poems of Songs of Experience, "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer," the Bard or the inspired Prophet and Earth present two different views of this fallen world and the stars that surround it. The Bard reads the stars as a way back to the life of Eternity;

Earth sees them as an imprisoning circle of destiny. We have already met these two contrary definitions in the two views of night and dreams as visionary Beulah and the imprisoning world of Generation. For the first time, the latter definition is now associated with the stars.

In the illumination of the first poem the whole of the text is written on an extended cloud which is surrounded on either side by a deep indigo sky with stars. In the right margin one recognizes, from top to bottom, Orion's belt, the Pleiades, and Aries. The naked figure who appears below the text of the poem, reclining on a cloud that is also a couch and possibly his garment, turns away from the pole star and the northern sky and looks towards the southern sky marked by these constellations. This figure may be either the Bard, who sees Present, Past, and Future and who introduces the whole of the Songs of Experience to us from this visionary perspective, or Earth, who turns away from the call of the Bard and looks through the golden circle of destiny drawn by the Ancient of Days. In either case, the figure is turning away from vision (the way to renew the fallen light of the Eternal Sun, as explained in the text of the poem, is to control the starry pole) and towards the constellations that symbolize, according to The Book of Job, man's inability to bind cosmic influences to him (the Pleiades) and to unbind himself from his restricted determined destiny (Orion) and Aries, the first constellation of the Zodiac. The line

from The Book of Job that presents this symbolic interpretation, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion" (38.31) is placed by Blake on the fourteenth plate of his Illustrations of the Book of Job.[8] On either side of the quote appear the constellations, Orion on the right and the Pleiades on the left. The Zodiac is a band of constellations that measure the circuit of the sun around the earth, and as the first sign, Aries marks the beginning of the sun's journey. The stars in the southern sky then show the binding, determined world of nature.

Interestingly enough, the Pleiades, also called the seven sisters and traditionally represented by seven stars, are pictured as eight stars here, one decidedly larger than the rest. Is this an appearance of the seven starry ones that are made eight by Milton's descent in Milton? If so, it suggests the dawning apocalypse of the poem, "Night is worn, / And the morn / Rises from the slumberous mass." One would be able to see these constellations not far above the horizon in the early morning hours, just before dawn in late summer through early autumn. Aries, a sign that is celebrated as the renewal of solar energy when it appears at the Vernal Equinox, is perhaps, here, in the autumn skies and in the presence of the eight starry ones, a symbol for the renewal of the Eternal Sun which is a release from the continual natural cycle.

The first line of the poem commands, "Hear the voice of the Bard!" The Bard is worthy of this command because he sees "Present, Past, & Future" and he has heard "The Holy Word, / That walk'd among the ancient trees." The Bard to Blake is Prophet. As prophet he has a timeless perspective and direct knowledge of the Word of God. Peter Fisher explains that Blake's Bard partakes of the Celtic tradition as a culture-hero, but that he differs from the Celtic bard in that he does not idealize the past. Instead, Blake's Bard like the Hebrew prophets, "remain[s] consistently aware of the inner source of prophecy which [Blake] calls the 'Poetic Genius.' " Blake himself makes this identification in All Religions Are One, "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy" (K 98). The Hebrew prophets often rebuked the people of Israel for falling away from true inner vision into the worship of false deities that were based on perceptions of the natural world; thus, it is not surprising that the Bard in this song calls to the Earth to return to vision.

This address to the Earth is complicated by multiple references to the Bard, the Holy Word, and the lapsed Soul. The lines, "Calling the lapsed Soul / And weeping in the evening dew," refer with equal meaning to both the Bard and the Holy Word. If the lines refer to the Holy Word, we see Jehovah or Christ calling to Adam and Eve, fallen man, and

weeping because of their fall; if to the Bard, we see the lapsed Soul as a more direct reference to Earth. The next three lines, then take on three possible references. We now have a Trinity of sorts, the Bard, whom Earth in her answer that follows will call "the Father of ancient men," the Holy Word, and the lapsed Soul. We are told that each or all of these "might controll / The starry pole: / And fallen fallen light renew!"

The definition here of return to vision is arresting. One sees the pole star as the only still point in the heavens with all the stars, the fallen light of the Eternal Sun, revolving around it. To control the starry pole is to control the center of our perceptions, the cyclical pattern of the seasons, the directions of north, south, east, and west, the images of birth and death, seedtime and harvest, love and war that are pictured in the constellations, the magnetic and electrical powers that underlie our very existence. The result of this control is the renewal of fallen light, the recreation of the Eternal Sun.

There is a resonance here with Hindu, Hermetic, Cabbalistic and Tantric traditions. In Hindu mythology the cosmic serpent, Sesha, is wrapped around the world axis, Mount Mandara. The gods who hold the tail of the serpent and the demons who hold his many heads alternately pull on this serpent so that they turn the central pole and churn the Milky Ocean. The result is Amrita,

the liquid of immortality.[10] In Hermetic, Cabbalistic and Tantric traditions this serpent, sometimes pictured as two opposing serpents, symbolizes the circulation of energies within the human body. In all traditions it is seen as desirable to awaken and balance this energy. Perfection is reached when all these energies within are balanced and the central axis is controlled.[11]

To think of the Bard having this control reminds one of Orpheus, "the figure of poetry as power."[12] With Orpheus poetry has the power to awaken the human consciousness in all forms of life on this earth, including, stones, trees, and animals, and to bring the dead back to life. It is just such power that the Bard, the Holy Word, and the lapsed Soul might have if the Earth will listen.

Also of relevance in reading the star imagery here may be the symbolic interpretations of Ursa Major, the Big Bear; and Ursa Minor, the Little Bear, in star lore. Although interpretations vary, many cultures from American Indian to Greek, see the Little Bear, who circles around the pole star which is in his tail, as the intuitive mind; while the Big Bear, who circles around the Little Bear, is the objective mind, the intellect that bases knowledge on what the five senses discover in the world. The constellations never set so that they are always to be found in the northern sky as a symbol that says only intuition can touch the most basic, central truth.

To my knowledge Ursa Major appears in Blake's pictorial work only once, in one of his illustrations of Milton's Il Penseroso entitled Milton and the Spirit of Plato.[13] In this illustration Plato stands before Milton who is sitting at his desk, deep in thought. Numerous figures circle around Plato and Milton including Hermes, God the Father with compasses, the Three Fates, and, just behind Milton's head and below the feet of Hermes, the constellation Ursa Major, drawn with the eight stars that form the "dipper" and an outline of the Bear around these stars (as it would be pictured on old star maps). This is, of course, a representation of the lines in Il Penseroso:

> Or let my Lamp at midnight hour,
> Be seen in some high lonely Tow'r,
> Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
> With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
> The spirit of Plato to unfold
> What worlds, or what vast Regions hold
> The immortal mind that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook.
> (84-92)[14]

One might also, however, note the appropriateness of Ursa Major, the constellation of the Reasoning Objective mind, as a symbol for Blake's Milton in contemplation.

But what is meant by the figure Earth in this poem? Immediately after Earth is addressed, we are presented with a literal image that jars our senses, "Arise from out the dewy grass." One remembers the starry pole and the controls placed on our world and ourselves by the forces indicated

by this pole. The image seems to ask Earth to defy one such power, gravity. This image has a figurative dimension as well, and one is reminded of the little boy lost whose garments are soaked with dew as he wanders about in the night of this world chasing after the delusive will-o'-the-wisp. The Earth then is the Soul that has fallen into the body of this world so that when the Bard calls to the "lapsed Soul" he addresses her as "Earth." A pattern emerges: three-fold Spirit, the Bard, the Holy Word, and the Soul; and body, Earth. It might be good to remember here a passage from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (MHH 4).

In the first part of the poem controlling the starry pole is presented to us as the way back to vision. Earth wishes to turn away from this vision and from the voice that calls her to a fourfold unity. The Bard questions why she should do this, and closes his song with, "The starry floor / The wat'ry shore / Is giv'n thee till the break of day." In this night of Experience, the floor of stars and the watery shore are gifts. Later, Blake will tell us that they are gifts because they limit our fall. As we read the poem we might see them as gifts because all life on this planet evolved from the seas and before that the seeds for this life fell from the stars (Blake will also develop this

aspect of the image in his later poetry). The image of "starry floor" shows that the stars are below us even though we may see them as above us. This doesn't just mean that the stars are below us in space, as indeed, our telescopes reveal that they are, but that the stars are the floor of our perception of inner vision. In The Metamorphoses Ovid refers to the stars as the floor of heaven (I.69-72). Similarly, Blake's image is saying to us that we are, as Human Forms Divine, in this "heaven," and that we would recognize the stars as a floor and not a ceiling if we realized our true humanity. In order to see the stars as a floor, one must turn his eyes inward to the image of the stars that is reflected within us. Blake's Bard wishes to awaken us to this vision that is within and the transformative power that is there. "He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God. He who sees the Ratio only, sees himself only. Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is" (NNR).

"Earth's Answer" shows that she cannot see "the Infinite in all things"; instead she sees herself as bounded by the watery shore, the stars, and the darkness. "The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round, even of a universe would soon become a mill with complicated wheels" (NNR). The stars that in The Four Zoas will be described as "created like a golden chain / To bind the Body of Man to heaven from falling into the Abyss," are seen by Earth as "Starry Jealousy" that guards her "den" as she is

imprisoned on the watery shore. She turns away from vision to a bestial existence that can only perceive the darkness, the cold, and the containment of the fallen world, and the chain that was meant to limit the fall and to provide a path to redemption, becomes the heavy chain of selfishness, cruelty, fear, and jealousy, the chain of moral law, but also the chain of natural law.

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

With the restrictive cycle of day and night comes a whole world of duality and contradictions.

The imprisonment of Earth's vision is also seen in the illumination of the poem. The serpent that is pictured at the bottom of the page seems to be an extension of the tree that grows up in the left-hand margin beside the poem. In the Hermetic and Cabbalistic traditions he would be twined around the tree as a symbol of the energies in man that need to be controlled and balanced. Here he is almost completely separated from the tree. Tendrils of mostly dead or dying vegetation twine around the poem, reaching into the stanzas as if imprisoning the words.

In this world of experience, the stars may be seen with the restricted vision of the fallen senses or they may be viewed through the imaginative vision of the prophet.

Obviously, the latter is the vision that will free us, while the former will only assure our continued imprisonment.

The Furnaces of Creation

"The Tyger" unites the contrary visions of experience seen in the two introductory poems in a dramatic image of the stars that are ultimately seen as the furnaces of creation. The star imagery clearly shows that there is no one-to-one definition system in Blake's prophetic language. Any attempts by critics to assign such categorical meanings to the stars here result in a partial and limited reading of the poem. The stars bring to mind many associative meanings, all of which contribute to an imaginative understanding of the poem.

As "Introduction" and "Earth's Answer," the other two poems in Songs of Experience that contain references to the stars, present two opposing views of the creation of this world, "The Tyger" presents yet another view. The speaker of the poem with full awareness of the beauty and the cruelty of creation as imaged in the Tyger, questions "What immortal hand or eye, / Dare frame they fearful symmetry?" The energy, daring, and power of the creative act is regarded with awe. That this creation is at once human and divine, conceptual and actual, is emphasized throughout the poem, e.g., "immortal hand or eye," "On what wings dare he aspire? / What the hand dare seize the fire?"

The stars appear initially in this poem as the source of fire for the tyger's eyes. In searching for a way that his imagination can grasp the reality of the tyger, "burning bright, / In the forests of the night," the questioning speaker pictures the fire of the tyger's eyes burning as distant suns or stars. He asks: "In what distant deeps or skies / Burnt the fire of thine eyes?" This cosmic imagery that tells of the creation of the world is similar to a passage in The Book of Urizen where Eternity is described as standing wide apart "As the stars are apart from the earth" (5.41-6.2) while Urizen falls into "a deep world within: / A void immense, wild, dark & deep, / Where nothing was: Nature's wide womb" (4.15-17). Likewise, in The Book of Los the fall is into the void that becomes the Deeps, the oceans and seedbed of the earth (4.66-67,5.3-5,42-45,48-50). One may also recall that Milton uses similar imagery in Paradise Lost when describing Satan's treacherous journey from chaos to the newly created world. In the following lines Satan is not unlike the Promethean figure who seizes the fire for the tyger's eyes in Blake's poem, and both the Deep and the "fiery concave" (what Blake calls the "starry floor") are part of the cosmic landscape.

> Meanwhile the Adversary of God and Man,
> Satan with thought inflam'd of highest design
> Puts on swift wings, and towards the Gates of Hell
> Explores his solitary flight; sometimes
> He scours the right hand coast, sometimes the left,

> Now shaves with level wing the Deep, then soars
> Up to the fiery concave tow'ring high.
> (II.629-35)

Creative energy, power, vision--the vision of the Tyger--come from this distant fire. The stars here seem to be the very fire of life, and, more particularly, the tyger's life.

As this image of distant celestial fire follows immediately after the question that frames the poem and begins the more particular questions about the tyger's creation, the second appearance of the stars brings these questions to their climax.

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

This image of the stars throwing down their spears has inspired a great many interpretations. The interpretations are interesting both because they offer helpful ways to look at the image and because many of them fall into a syllogistic trap that assigns the stars categorically to Urizen and his closed mechanistic universe.

Hazard Adams provides a very good example of this syllogistic reasoning. In William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems he states:

> "Spears" brings a suggestion of war into the poem. "Stars" in Blake's symbolism are always associated with Urizen and materialism. As warriors they seem to represent his own legions, who have lost the battle against the creator of the tiger. . . .[15]

Anne Mellor in a more recent work, Blake's Human Form Divine, follows similar reasoning in her interpretation of this image. She reads the image as the "starry hosts" of the tyrant Urizen who are "eclipsed by the sun-tyger."[16] She supports this reading by noting the associations of the stars with Urizen in America 8.4 and Night V of The Four Zoas and with "the oppressions of monarchy and with a Newtonian, mechanistic conception of the universe" in The French Revolution (1791) and "A Song of Liberty" (1793).[17] She also selects quotes from Blake's later works that make these associations.

The obvious problem with this reasoning is the "always" that I have italicized in Adam's commentary. From the poems we have examined it is quite clear that the stars have other symbolic meanings very different from "Urizen and materialism." While it is true that the identification of the stars as Urizen's "starry hosts" in works contemporary with "The Tyger" and even those written later may shed light on the meaning of the stars throwing down their spears, one should not make this the only or even the primary reading.

We should first note that this image is an accurate description of how an observer from earth sees the stars in the night sky. Our eyes see the stars as balls of light with spear-like points shooting out from the center. The standard representation of stars as five- or six-pointed is witness to this perception. Similarly, falling stars look

like tears that "water" the heavens. "When the stars threw down their spears, / And water'd heaven with their tears," thus, marks the time when our fallen perception began.

To further understand this image we can examine it within the context of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Although Songs of Experience was composed and printed some five years after Songs of Innocence, it was, as far as we know, never printed separately from the first volume. Instead, Blake joined the two volumes, moved some poems from the first volume to the second, kept the title pages for each, but bound them together with a cover title page Songs of Innocence and of Experience, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." In Songs of Innocence, the stars are divine presences that protect the innocent. This protection is not physical but visionary. The stars and the land of dreams that they show the way to have a transformative power that keeps the Chimney Sweep warm in this fallen world and that changes the Lion to a Shepherd in Eternity. This is what the stars mean to the innocent: one contrary state of the human soul.

Just as the state of experience is foreshadowed in many of the Songs of Innocence, e.g., "The Ecchoing Green," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "A Cradle Song," two views of the stars, the imaginative vision of the Bard and the fallen perception of Earth, are shown in the first two poems of Songs of Experience. Thus, we bring to our reading of "The

Tyger" three ways of seeing them: the vision of innocence, of the Bard, and of Earth.

The speaker of "The Tyger," if not directly the Bard, is a poet who has been touched by the Bard's vision. We hear this voice often in Songs of Experience, in "London," in "A Garden of Love," in "The Sick Rose," and in "The Human Abstract." The star images in "The Tyger," however, point to a time before the fallen world or at the moment of its fall. In commenting on the fifth stanza, "When the Stars threw down their spears," John Beer notes that this is

> not a succession of events at the beginning of time but a single complex and eternal event, in which all the components are related. . . . In this cosmic disaster, the fading of vision creates strife, strife involves the separation of energy in the shape of wrath; and, as wrath separates, only pity is left to weep over the tragedy.[18]

I believe that he is quite right here, and that this image is foreshadowed by the lines in "Night," "When wolves and tygers howl for prey / They [the angels] pitying stand and weep."

Several Biblical references that Blake must have had in mind, The Book of Job 38.4-7, The Revelation of St. John the Divine 12, and Isaiah 14.12-15, give additional insight to this passage.

When God speaks to Job from the whirlwind, he asks him a series of rhetorical questions, very much like the questions in "The Tyger" but from the opposite point of view.

> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.
> Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowst? or who hath stretched the line upon it?
> Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;
> When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

This reference to the morning stars rejoicing at the creation of the world presents a picture diametrically opposed to the warlike image of the stars throwing down their spears and weeping in "The Tyger." Yet the echoes in the syntactical patterns show the second to be a comment on the first. Can we conclude that the moment of creation which is celebrated as a time of joy by the Almighty is seen as a time of strife and sorrow by the poet who looks back to the event from experience?

Descriptions of the War in Heaven and the subsequent Fall of Satan or Lucifer in The Revelation and Isaiah provide a mythical reference for the stars throwing down their spears and weeping. Chapter Twelve of The Revelation tells of the War in Heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels which ends with the dragon being cast out and identified as Satan "which deceiveth the whole world." In Isaiah Lucifer is described as the morning star, "son of morning," who falls from heaven to hell after trying to exalt his throne above "the stars of God." In The Revelation this separation of hell from heaven is cause for rejoicing to those who dwell in heaven for "Now is come

salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ," but it brings woe to "the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

The War in Heaven, the Creation, the Fall, to Blake all are events not in the distant past or future but continually possible and continually occurring. In Blake's poem the creation of the tyger causes or symbolizes this separation of Hell from Heaven, an event marked by the stars throwing down their spears and weeping. The throwing down of spears marks the end of the War in Heaven; the tears, the beginning of pity. Two other poems by Blake, both written some seven to ten years after "The Tyger," echo this reading of the image.

In "Morning" from Notebooks 1800-03 (K 421) Blake writes:

> To find the Western path
> Right thro' the Gates of Wrath
> I urge my way;
> Sweet Mercy leads me on:
> With soft repentant moan
> I see the break of day.
>
> The war of swords & spears
> Melted by dewy tears
> Exhales on high;
> The Sun is freed from fears
> And with soft grateful tears
> Ascends the sky.

One recognizes images and themes from both "Introduction" and "The Tyger" in this apocalyptic description of the

sunrise. The stars of the night are seen as "The war of swords & spears" that is "Melted by dewy tears" as dawn approaches.[19] These tears have power to melt the steel of weapons as in "The Grey Monk." The relevant lines are, first, from the poem as it appears in Notebooks 1800-03 (K 420):

> "The Tear shall melt the sword of steel
> "And every wound it has made shall heal"

and then as it is written in the Pickering MS (K 420):

> "But vain the Sword & vain the Bow,
> "They never can work War's overthrow.
> "The Hermit's Prayer & the Widow's tear
> "Alone can free the world from fear.
>
> "For a Tear is an Intellectual Thing,
> "And a Sigh is the Sword of an Angel King,
> "And the bitter groan of the Martyr's woe
> "Is an Arrow from the Almightie's Bow."

In Milton, when Satan grows opaque against the Divine Vision, and Ulro opens in the midst of Palamabron's Assembly, all Eden that has come down to Palamabron's tent is astonished, and "tears / Fell down as dews of night, & a loud solemn universal groan / was uttered . . ." (9.30-38). Tears are not shown to have transformative power here, but they are again compared to the dews of night and are the sincere expression of grief.

A very different interpretation of the tears of the stars in "The Tyger" is put forth by most of the critics. If the stars are Urizen's, as most critics take them to be,

then their tears must be "tears of chagrin . . . fear"[20] and "self-pity"[21] (Adams), "of repentance, frustration, and hypocritical humility"[22] (Mellor), and in the political readings of the image, "they are soldiers [to Erdmann, the enemies of the counterrevolution at Yorktown and Valmy][23] abandoning their arms in contrition and a readiness for peace"[24] (Schorer). These readings are based to a certain degree on the striking similarity between the lines in "The Tyger" and these lines from Night V of The Four Zoas where Urizen is remembering past events:

> "I well remember, for I heard the mild & holy voice
> "Saying, 'O light, spring up & shine,' & I sprang up
> from the deep.
> "He gave to me a silver scepter, & crown'd me with a
> golden crown,
> "& said, 'Go forth & guide my Son who wanders on the
> ocean.'
> "I went not forth: I hid myself in black clouds of my
> wrath;
> "I call'd the stars around my feet in the night of
> councils dark;
> "The stars threw down their spears & fled naked away.
> "We fell. I siez'd thee, dark Urthona."
> (V.218-25)[25]

Erdman reads in these lines:

> Thus George assembled his council in 1774; thus Louis prepared his 'starry hosts' in 1789. . . . Each time, in the event, at Yorktown and again at Valmy, 'The stars threw down their spears & fled naked away. We fell.'[26]

Erdman is reading between the lines here. To his mind, "the troops" respond to the King's call by mustering around him

and then during the course of the ensuing battle, they turn and run. With a different emphasis, Adams sees that "the stars are . . . the legions of Urizen now fallen into the upside-down material world of his own mental construction."[27]

What is puzzling is why these lines are read to mean that the stars belong to Urizen. If one does not read between the lines, the difference between Urizen and the stars is even more striking. He called the stars around his feet, but they threw down their spears and fled naked away. That they become imprisoned in Urizen's "upside-down material world" does not mean that they lose their identity as the fire of life and vision. Adams seems to recognize some of this when he notes, "Urizen would not understand the chagrin of the stars at their woeful upside-down enclosure in the 'starry floor' of circular Zodiacal movement."[28]

Ralph Eberly sees the stars as fire from the forge or furnace of the Divine blacksmith who shapes the tyger. He interprets the "spears" to be "sparks showering down as the heavenly smiths strike hot metal with their hammers" and the "tears" to be the tempering of "the still-glowing tyger-metal" with water.[29] This reading thematically links the stars throwing down their spears with the image of the distant celestial fires in the first part of the poem. While it explains the tears as part of the smithy's craft and not as an emotional response to the creation of the tyger, one may well remember that Los weeps from anguish,

despair, and pity as he works to contain and limit Urizen in The Book of Urizen.

> For Eternity stood wide apart,
> As the stars are apart from the earth.
>
> Los wept, howling around the dark Demon,
> And cursing his lot; for in anguish
> Urizen was rent from his side,
> And a fathomless void for his feet,
> And intense fires for his dwelling.
> (BU 5.41-6.6)
>
> Los wept obscur'd with mourning,
> His bosom earthquak'd with sighs;
> He saw Urizen deadly black
> In his chains bound, & Pity began.
> (BU 13.48-51)

Urizen himself weeps from self-pity as he is chained and created anew by Los (see Plate 22, The Book of Urizen, Erdman 204). This interpretation of the stars as furnaces where the creative energy of the tyger is forged and given shape, thus, can be seen to combine the two conflicting readings of the stars as compassionate guardian angels and self-pitying Urizenic angels.

The stars in "The Tyger" evoke many different images. They are furnaces of creation; they are Lucifer and the fallen Angels throwing down their weapons in defeat after the War in Heaven; they are Eternal presences weeping at the creation of the tyger. In all of this one can see the wedding of the stars of vision and the stars of destiny in one enigmatic image, the furnaces where the "fearful symmetry" of the tyger is forged.

Summary

In this chapter we have discovered that the stars in Blake's early lyrical poetry vary in meaning according to the perceiver. To the innocent eye, the stars are in many ways synonymous with the world of visionary dreams. They protect the innocent with a vision of Eden, a vision not of some far-off allegorical abode, but a vision that is within and that transforms the individual in this world. There are two contrary visions of the stars in the world of Experience. The earth-bound perceiver sees them as "Starry Jealousy" and as the restricting Zodiacal cycles of the fallen world; the Bard sees them as the key to liberty. If one "controls the starry pole" he can transform the fallen world and free his humanity. These two contraries are united in the rhetorical questions and the star imagery of "The Tyger." Here the stars are the furnaces of creation where vision and destiny are wedded to shape the "fearful symmetry" of the Tyger and this natural world that we inhabit.

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES

[1]We will want to recall this early image of Reason when we encounter Urizen's "starry wheels."

[2]David V. Erdman in Blake: Prophet Against Empire, rev. ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 75, interprets this sketch as a coda to the Edward the Third fragment. In his reading the young man is dying from the Black Death, a victim of the sins of the country's rulers.

[3]We will meet these void spaces between the stars again when we are told in Jerusalem, "The Spectre reads the Voids Between the Stars" (91.37).

[4]Peter Fisher, The Valley of Vision: Blake as Prophet and Revolutionary, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 24.

[5]Ibid., 165.

[6]I am basing my description of the illuminations of Songs of Innocence and of Experience on the Geoffrey Keynes edition (New York: The Orion Press, 1967). This edition is a reproduction of the color facsimile of a copy printed and colored by Blake in 1826. In most of the plates that include stars there are variations in numbers and position from copy to copy. David V. Erdman has made note of these variations in The Illuminated Blake (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1974.

[7]According to Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, the constellations only appear in Copy Z, printed by Blake in 1826.

[8]Dated 1825.

[9]Fisher, p. 18.

[10]Jill Purce, The Mystic Spiral: Journey of the Soul (New York: Avon Books, 1974), Plate 4, Commentary.

[11]Ibid., Plate 5, Commentary.

[12]Elizabeth Sewell, The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 235.

[13]Milton and the Spirit of Plato, from the Illustrations to Il Penseroso, reproduced in S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary, Illustration IX.

[14]John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 74. All poems by Milton will be quoted from this text unless otherwise noted.

[15]Adams, p. 66. Italics mine.

[16]Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, Blake's Human Form Divine (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p. 64.

[17]Ibid., p. 65.

[18]John Beer, Blake's Humanism (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1968), pp. 65-66.

[19]Frederick A. Pottle in Explicator, VIII, No. 5 (March, 1950), 39, has given a similar reading of "The Tyger" interpreting the lines in question "at the first level" to read "When the stars faded out in the dawn and the dew fell." He comments, "It is true that the stars, speaking scientifically, have nothing to do with the formation of dew, and that the dew 'falls' all night long. Still the precipitation is heaviest at the point of lowest temperature, which is usually just before sunrise."

[20]Adams, p. 67.

[21]Ibid., p. 69.

[22]Mellor, p. 64.

[23]Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, p. 196.

[24]Mark Schorer, William Blake: The Politics of Vision (New York: H. Holt, 1946), p. 45.

[25]Erdman, FZ V.64.21-27.

[26]Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire, p. 194.

[27]Adams, p. 67.

[28]Ibid., pp. 67-68.

[29]Ralph D. Eberly, Explicator, VIII, No. 2 (Nov., 1949),

CHAPTER III

EARLY POLITICAL POEMS AND PROPHECIES

In this chapter I have grouped together three of Blake's early poems about war from Poetical Sketches (1769-78); The French Revolution (1791); "A Song of Liberty" (1792); and three early prophecies: America (1793), Europe (1794), and The Song of Los (1795). All of these poems are political in emphasis, and within this political mythology the stars are often seen as metaphors or symbols for the established power of Monarchy. The stars in their fixed orderly courses, remote and cold, revolving above us in the night sky, are appropriate symbols for the tyrannical rule of kings. In contrast, the rising sun that dispels the mystery and treachery of the dark night and reawakens the energies of life becomes a symbol for the revolutionary forces in America and France that are overthrowing the rule of Empire when Blake is writing these poems.

As early as The French Revolution we will also recognize that the stars tell us as much about our perception of the world as they do about the powers of monarchy. There is more than one sun in Blake's prophetic language. The dying sun by which most of us see the world reveals a tyrannical order outside of man that is symbolized by the stars in their fixed courses. The sun of inner vision, in these

prophecies identified with Orc, also has stars associated with it, and these stars shine forth the promise of liberty. What we ultimately see in these political prophecies is that the stars are portions of Eternity shut down by our limited senses and perceived as our restricted vision dictates.

I am discussing the poems in the order in which they were written so that we can see the mythology taking shape as the meaning of the stars in this mythology develops and changes. From the earliest poems one is made aware of the symbolic dimension of vision. That is to say, what one sees in the night sky reveals his reality whether it imprisons or transforms him.

In the earliest poems, those from Poetical Sketches, the tyrannical forces of monarchy are seen as comets rather than as stars. It is the ordinary men who in the regularity of their actions are compared to the stars. In these poems, Blake seems to be accepting and agreeing with medieval and renaissance imagery of microcosm and macrocosm that sees man in a peaceful society as a reflection of the orderliness of the stars. The King who compares himself to a comet is judged irresponsible and dangerous because he regards himself as somehow above the natural law that controls most men.

In The French Revolution, Blake alters this poetic language so that the figure that pictures man as a microcosm is identified with the old order of monarchy. In this very early work (1791) we discover that he has already elaborately

worked out a poetic prophetic language. This language uses the sun and the stars to show us the difference between seeing the natural world as a system of abstract laws and relationships that rule over us and recognizing that we are the entire cosmos because we continually create it.

"A Song of Liberty" has a somewhat different focus. Its prophetic language dramatically presents the cyclic struggle between the forces of energy and repression in our world by identifying the first with the sun and the second with the stars in the night sky. In this poem Blake uses the most straightforward of definitions for the sun and the stars: the stars represent tyrannical monarchy; the rising sun, the emerging force of revolution in America and France.

The prophecies, Africa, America, Europe, and Asia, apply the prophetic language of the stars to reveal the role of perception in shaping our world--its politics, religion, morality, and science. In a sense, these prophecies combine the approach to sun and star imagery found in The French Revolution with that of "A Song of Liberty." America and the illuminations that frame The Song of Los (Africa and Asia) juxtapose two ways of seeing, ways of seeing that correspond to the old and new orders of The French Revolution. Like The French Revolution these works emphasize and celebrate apocalyptic vision, a vision that comes from the blood-red sun of Orc and that melts away outer surfaces to reveal the infinity that is within. The stars seen in this way are

images of liberty, not of bondage. The text of Africa and Asia and all of Europe are more like "A Song of Liberty" in emphasizing the continuing cycle of revolution and repression. The stars in this cycle, however, not only represent tyrannical monarchy but also portions of infinity that are shut away from man as his perception is limited. They are, in effect, the sun of his inner vision that has been fragmented and structured according to the dark night of the material world.

Stars as Mirror

The earliest works that I will discuss in this chapter are three pieces about war from Poetical Sketches. "Gwin, King of Norway" is the only one of the three that is a finished poem. The prose speech entitled "Prologue to King John" sets the stage for a drama that was either never written or destroyed. Likewise, King Edward the Third is an incomplete blank verse drama in six scenes. While "Gwin" and the "Prologue to King John" have long been recognized as characteristic Blakean statements against tyranny and war, King Edward the Third, an apparent patriotic endorsement of the bloodshed of war as a necessary evil to assure English liberty, was considered with "War Song of Englishmen" as an anomaly in Blake's poetry. David Erdman, however, argues in Prophet Against Empire that what we have of the drama should be read ironically; that the finished drama

would no doubt have revealed the tragic outcome of such ruthless, overzealous "patriots" in the Black Death and the Hundred Years' War that followed; and that the jingoistic celebration of war, "War Song of Englishmen" was intended as a part of this drama and should also be read ironically.[1] The star imagery, which is markedly similar in "Gwin" and King Edward the Third, identifies the forces of monarchy with comets that blaze in the night sky. The stars themselves represent the ordered universe, or, in King Edward the Third, the world of ordinary men. As we shall see, this star imagery clearly supports Erdman's contention.

In "Gwin, King of Norway" the imagery of war is overwhelmingly that of blood and gore. The husbandman, the merchant, the shepherd, and the workman all must leave their peaceful tasks to engage in bloody combat. The raging armies are compared to "warring mighty seas" (70) which become "a sea of blood; nor can the eye / See to the trembling shore!" (75-76) As famine and death cry on the verge of this sea, the sea itself drowns men and horses until,

> The god of war is drunk with blood,
> The earth doth faint and fail;
> The stench of blood makes sick the heav'ns,
> Ghosts glut the throat of hell!
> (93-96)

The imagery shows the people overwhelmed by the destructive power of war as they would be by a natural cataclysm. In contrast, the Kings, the War's leaders, are compared to

"blazing comets, scattering death / thro' the red fev'rous night" (83-84); they are the cause of war's disaster.

The simile of "blazing comets" is used twice in the poem. In the first simile, cited above, Gwin and his noblemen, "seen raging afar," are compared to the comets. Both the remoteness and the destructive power of these tyrannical leaders are emphasized. Comets have long been considered to be harbingers of disaster. For example, in 1664, a comet appeared shortly before the descent of the Plague on London. Daniel Defoe wrote that it passed directly over London so that it was "plain" it "imported something peculiar to the city alone. . . ." He described the comet as, "a faint, dull languid colour, . . . its motion was very heavy, solemn and slow, and it accordingly foretold a heavy judgement, slow but severe, terrible and frightful, as was the Plague."[2] Likewise, in 1665 another comet, also noted by Defoe, appeared a little before the Great Fire. In contrast to this image of the leaders, the people are victims. It is said of them, "Beneath his arm like sheep they die" (85).

In the second appearance of the simile it is the meeting of Gwin and Gordred, the tyrant and the giant from the north that rebels against him, that is illustrated. This time the simile adds to its meaning omens of the Last Judgement and Apocalypse by echoing The Book of Revelation (6.13).

> Like blazing comets in the sky,
> That shake the stars of light,

Which drop like fruit unto the earth,
  Thro' the fierce burning night;

Like these did Gwin and Gordred meet,
  And the first blow decides;
Down from the brow unto the breast
  Gordred his head divides!
(101-108)

In the "Prologue to King John," a bitter denouncement of the tyranny that damns the land of England and its citizens to the bloody destruction of war, "the stars of heaven" are said to "tremble" as "the roaring voice of war, the trumpet, calls to battle!"[3] Similar images of the heavens being sickened, horrified or otherwise disturbed by the spectacle of war are found in all three of these early works.

In the first scene of King Edward the Third, the King and his noblemen are again pictured as comets while the ordinary people are the stars of heaven that are disturbed by their war. The English military forces have just landed on the coast of France, in Britanny, "A country not yet sown with destruction, / And where the fiery whirlwind of swift war / Has not yet swept its desolating wing" (i.47-49). The King distinguishes himself and his warriors in their mission of war from other men:

The world of men are like the num'rous stars
That beam and twinkle in the depth of night,
Each clad in glory according to his sphere;--
But we, that wander from our native seats,
And beam forth lustre on a darkling world,
Grow larger as we advance! and some perhaps
The most obscure at home, that scarce were seen
To twinkle in their sphere, may so advance,

> That the astonish'd world, with up-turn'd eyes,
> Regardless of the moon, and those that once were bright,
> Stand only for to gaze upon their splendor!
> (i.32-42)

Within the medieval setting of the poem, that the King places himself outside the natural harmonious order of the universe and identifies himself with the unpredictable, malefic comets signifies his overweening pride and ambition. He is concerned with splendor, not with being a proper leader of men. The King's ruthless, wrongheaded behavior is underscored by the ironic contrast between the England that he leaves behind, a land overflowing with the "honey" of commerce (ii.14), and the soon to be devastated country that he is invading. That he does this all in the name of Liberty, "the charter'd right of Englishmen" (i.9), further illustrates his corruption of order.

In this dramatic fragment we encounter the Pythagorean ordering of the stars and planets for the first time in Blake's poetry.[4] The Pythagorean universe is geocentric with the seven "planets"--Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon--revolving in homocentric spheres around the earth, which, in its turn, contains four spheres, fire, air, water, and, the lowest, earth. The outer rim of this system is the empyrean or the fixed stars, the moving force or primum mobile of the twelve spheres. In many works this system is referred to as having eight spheres, regarding earth as one sphere. Pythagoras used

mathematics and simple geometric forms to explain the structure of this universe which in its perfection of numerical relationships yields the "music of the spheres." As has clearly been expounded in Arthur O. Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being[5] and S. K. Heninger's Touches of Sweet Harmony,[6] this harmonious ordering of the universe places man in a hierarchy that leads from the least perfect things on earth to the divine perfection of the empyrean and God. The ordered spheres are used, throughout Renaissance poetry, as an image and symbol of the beauty and rightness of the universe; thus, the image is most appropriate in Blake's unfinished drama that owes so much to Shakespeare. It clearly speaks of the "unnaturalness" of King Edward and foreshadows the devastating Plague and war that, history tells us, is to follow the ill-starred invasion. In The French Revolution and Europe Blake will again use this image of the spheres, but with a much different meaning.

In these very early poems, then, the tyrannical forces of Empire are identified not with the stars but with comets. The heavens are presented as a mirror that interprets what happens on earth, and in this mirror the people are like the stars in the heavens that are fixed in a natural and peaceful order only to be overwhelmed by the unpredictable, preternatural portent of a comet.

Tyranny versus Revolution

"Book the First" of The French Revolution, set up in type in 1791 but not published until after Blake's death, is a dramatic presentation of the beginnings of the revolution of 1789. As Bloom has observed, "Though the poem . . . deals with social unrest, its images are of a natural world collapsing . . . ."[7] The stars in this poem are part of a universe of tyranny and repression that is dying; the fire is going out of it. As it dies a new universe will be born based not on tyranny and repression, but on freedom and liberty. The King is a dying sun, the center of a universe that is enforced upon us from outside; the sun of the new universe grows from the fires within the people and the people's leaders. The star imagery, in effect, reveals two ways of seeing the structure of the world and of ourselves; the old way sees laws--natural, political, and moral--dictated to us from outside, from the hierarchical order of the visible universe; the new way sees individual freedom discovered by looking within ourselves and recognizing our brotherhood with other men.

Throughout the poem night and darkness are identified with tyranny and oppression, with the old order. The past five thousand or six thousand years, since presumably the Fall in the Garden of Eden, has been one long night in which the light of the stars has represented the hierarchical

order of the universe. In this hierarchy the King and his noblemen are like the sun and the stars, the rulers of our destiny to whom all owe obedience. The noblemen also compare themselves to lions and eagles and to the heart and head in the body. This long rule of monarchy is referred to by the Duke of Burgundy as "the starry harvest." To those locked up in one of the seven towers of monarchy--Horror, Darkness, Bloody, Religion, Order, Destiny, and God (it is no coincidence that there are also seven planetary spheres in the Pythagorean universe)--it has been, contrariwise, a dark time of suffering and slavery.

The poem is set for the most part in the Louvre where the Nobles are meeting to discuss what course of action they will take. Will they work with or against the Commons? The debate between the old and the new orders is voiced principally by four speakers: the Duke of Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris speak for the old order; the Duke of Orleans and the Abbé of Sieyès, for the new. Each man bases his political argument on a vision of the cosmos that reveals very different definitions of the nature of humanity. The stars figure prominently in each man's vision as one of the most accessible signs of the order of the universe.

The Duke of Burgundy contrasts images of grandeur and hierarchic order with those of simplicity, uniformity, and violence in his speech as "the ancientest of peers."

"Shall this marble built heaven become a clay cottage,
this earth an oak stool, and these mowers
"From the Atlantic mountains mow down all this great
starry harvest of six thousand years?
"
. . . . . .
"Till the power and dominion is rent from the pole,
sword and scepter from sun and moon,
"The law and gospel from fire and air, and eternal
reason and science
"From the deep and the solid, ..."
(89-94)

To the Duke, the order of absolute monarchy is the most reasonable political order; the fixed hierarchical structure is mirrored in the heavens (the pole star, the sun, and the moon) and in the elements (fire, air, deep [water] and solid [earth]). It is so rigidly fixed that he sees the forces working to replace absolute monarchy with constitutional monarchy as "mowers / From the Atlantic mountains" (a reference to both America and Atlantis) who wish to destroy six thousand years of "starry harvest." If they are allowed to pursue their course, the whole world as we know it will be torn apart because the abstract laws of religion, science, and government will be rent from the physical world and chaos will result. To prevent this, the Duke says, nobles have gathered the King's "starry hosts" around the rebellious city (98-100). The Duke concludes: "The eagles of heaven must have their prey!" (105) As the eagles maintain their superiority in the hierarchy of the animal kingdom by being predators, the nobles will devour the rebels to maintain their right to authority.

In his speech the Duke uses the stars and the sun and moon as images of the underlying order of the universe, an order that when translated into political terms reads monarchy, e.g., just as the sun and moon rule day and night, man also needs rulers; just as the pole star, the one fixed point in the heavens, holds power and dominion over the stars that revolve around it, the monarch must be the one fixed point in the body politic. What he perceives to be the natural order of the universe dictates the political order that we should have.

Throughout his speech, however, the Duke's high-sounding rhetoric identifying monarchy with the order of the stars is revealed to be a sham by his own debased character. Blake intentionally juxtaposes his exalted claims for the rights of monarchy with images that clearly show his ruthlessness, "around him croud, weeping in his bright robe, / A bright cloud of infant souls" (87-88), and his vanity, "Till our purple and crimson is faded to russet . . . / And the ancient forests of chivalry hewn, and the joys of combat burnt for fuel" (92-93). Ironically, his final celebration of his superiority over the rebels dramatically reveals his bloodthirsty, bestial nature: he wishes to devour the rebels as an eagle would its prey.

As the Duke of Burgundy is a bloodthirsty beast who pretends to be a king (he is compared to a lion as well as an eagle, both creatures that figure in heraldic emblems),

the Archbishop of Paris is a Satanic reptile who pretends to be a priest. He rises to speak, "In the rushing of scales and hissing of flames and rolling of sulphurous smoke" (127). Although both men present essentially the same inflexible argument regarding absolute monarchy, the Duke argues from a position of power, whereas the Archbishop argues from a position of fear. The Archbishop thinks of the cosmos as the corpus mysticum with God and his angels, and he envisions the collapse of this cosmic order.

He relates to the council a dream of "the terrors of heaven" (128). In this dream the heavenly spheres that once led man upwards from earth to God in ascending concentric rings have disappeared so that beneath the dim form of God is "the awful void" with "myriads descending and weeping thro' dismal winds . . ." (134). When God speaks in the dream He tells of "a godless race / Descending to beasts" who "look downward and labour and forget my holy law" (138-39). They have burst the bars of Chaos and "prepare their fiery way / Thro' the orbed abode of the holy dead, to root up and pull down and remove . . ." (141-42). Here he uses a complementary image to the Duke's mowers of the starry harvest; however, he has substituted a religious body of angels, "the holy dead," grouped in their harmonious spheres around God, for the noblemen who are "the starry hosts" of the King.

These two images, the corpus mysticum and the body politic, were used throughout the Middle Ages and the

Renaissance to indicate the relationship between the universe as macrocosm and man and society as microcosm. Leonard Barkan in Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World explains how these two images or concepts illustrated man's felt and logically considered relationship with the universe. He also shows the heuristic and propagandistic purposes of these concepts; he explains how a writer would emphasize either the hierarchical structure of the parts of the body or the co-operative interdependence of all the body's members, depending on his political or religious persuasion.[8] It is interesting that the Archbishop of Paris further illustrates his cosmic argument for hierarchy by identifying the rebels with the feet that threaten to trample the heart and the head of the kingdom. We will see how the Duke of Orleans singles out this part of the Archbishop's argument and asserts, contrariwise, that all the body's members are necessary to the health of the kingdom. The Duke of Orleans thus places himself within the long tradition that Barkan discusses, the tradition of seeing the universe and man as macrocosm and microcosm. To stress co-operation rather than hierarchy as the underlying order identifies Orleans with the liberal proponents of constitutional rather than absolute monarchy, but it also distinguishes him from the more radical Abbé de Sieyès. As Barkan points out, this liberal interpretation of both the body politic and the corpus mysticum has a history of influence on European

thought almost as long as the more conservative view of rigid hierarchy.

The Duke of Orleans refers to the star imagery already developed by the Duke of Burgundy to make it clear that his position is not for the destruction of the old order but for its reform. He asks: "Can the fires of Nobility ever be Quench'd, or the stars by a stormy night?" (181) He argues that the Nobles should not fear the collapse of the universe but that they should reconsider their interpretation of the order of this universe. He objects to their reading the corpus mysticum or the body politic as a hierarchy: ". . . learn to consider all men as thy equals, / Thy brethren, and not as thy foot or thy hand . . ." (193-94). To replace this hierarchical view, he builds a rather elaborate argument for a very different vision of the nature of man as microcosm.

His argument is basically that all men share the same fire or life force and this makes them equals. This fire, he says, should be used "for growth, not consuming" (179). His rhetorical questions challenge the Archbishop's rigid hierarchical interpretation of the corpus mysticum and the body politic on three fronts. He asserts first that each part of the body has a function of equal importance: ". . . can the soul whose brain and heart / Cast their rivers in equal tides thro' the great Paradise, languish because the feet, / Hands, head, bosom, and parts of love

follow their high breathing joy?" (183-53); secondly, that the rebels as well as the nobility number among them men of intellect and vision and that their existence does nothing to take away the grandeur of the nobility: "Have you ever seen Fayette's forehead, or Mirabeau's eyes, or the shoulders of Target, / Or Bailly the strong foot of France, or Clermont the terrible voice? and your robes / Still retain their own crimson . . ." (187-89); and thirdly, that each man has his own brain and heart and that each man should, consequently, be allowed to have control over his destiny: "But go, merciless man! enter into the labyrinth of another's brain / Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run. Go, thou cold recluse, into the fires / Of another's high flaming rich bosom, and return unconsum'd, and write laws" (191-92).

Orleans' vision of man is democratic, but he argues that this posits no threat to the stars of nobility. Perhaps it does not if nobility is read to be a designation of individual character and integrity instead of a fixed class distinction. One of the Proverbs of Hell in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell states, "He whose face gives no light, will never become a star" (7). But the Duke of Orleans is addressing the nobility and clergy as represented by Burgundy and the Archbishop of Paris, and they quite definitely view their nobility as a fixed class distinction. His assurances to them that the stars of nobility will not be put out by the stormy night of social change are, thus,

in a sense, contradicted by his admonishment that all men are equal. The dramatic situation of the poem underscores this contradiction.

As Orleans rises to speak he looks at the Archbishop who, we are told, changed "as pale as lead" and "Would have risen but could not: his voice issued harsh grating; instead of words harsh hissings" (176-77). The Archbishop who sleeps in a golden tower (the highest of metals) at midnight (129) is changed to lead (the basest of metals) and can only hiss like a lowly reptile. These transformations show that while there are still some illusions of the legitimacy of the old hierarchy, it has been exposed by the democratic vision of men like Orleans.

The Abbé de Sieyès, the other spokesman for the new order, also refers to the stars, using imagery designed to answer the argument of the Duke of Burgundy, much as the Duke of Orleans answers the hierarchical body image of the Archbishop of Paris with a co-operative one. The juxtaposition here is interesting. The old and the new order each have a representative from the clergy and the nobility to voice arguments, but the imagery places the speech of the Duke of Orleans against that of the Archbishop, and the words of the Abbé against those of the Duke of Burgundy. The argument of the Duke of Orleans is primarily a moral one: we must consider all men as brothers and respect them no matter what their occupation or situation. He wishes to

reform the body politic but not to change it radically. The reform will result from man's right understanding of the corpus mysticum, an understanding that all men are equal in the body of Christ, in contrast to the Archbishop's view that only the chosen few, those that correspond politically to the head and the heart, are fit to be admitted to God's circle. The argument of the Abbé de Sieyès asserts that you cannot have the inner moral change that is the substance of Orleans' argument without radically altering the political structure; in fact, the structural changes that he envisions shake the very foundations of the universe as we know it just as the Duke of Burgundy warned and the Archbishop feared.

The Duke of Burgundy warned that the rebels would change the "marble built heaven" to a "clay cottage" and rend the law of abstract hierarchical power from the sun, moon, and stars. The Abbé describes the time when this power was established and sees it as a limitation that subjected "the millions of spirits immortal" to a slavery of ignorance, brutality and fear so that men became beasts. He pictures it as follows:

> "When the heavens were seal'd with a stone, and the terrible sun clos'd in an orb, and the moon
> "Rent from the nations, and each star appointed for watchers of night,
> "The millions of spirits immortal were bound in the ruins of sulphur heaven
> "To wander enslav'd' . . . ."
> (209-12)

In his image the Abbé emphasizes the separation of sun, moon, and stars from the body of the nations, a separation brought on by the establishment of the stony law that Burgundy celebrates in his image of "marble built heaven," a separation that is the Fall in Blake's mythology. The sun, moon, and stars then become as much prisoners to this order as the "millions of spirits" who are bound in the darkness of earth, "in the ruins of sulphur heaven." It is not clear just what is meant here by the stars being "appointed for watchers of night." Perhaps these are the "starry hosts" of nobility, watching the world from their position of aloofness. But one might also remember that in "A Dream" from Songs of Innocence the glowworm that guides the Emmet home is called "the watchman of the night" and is pictured as an angel. Perhaps the stars here are meant to be the spiritual bodies of those bound in the darkness of earth.

The Abbé's description of the beginning of the new order helps clarify the star imagery of the separation or fall. He explains the change from old order to new in two ways: the first images the dawning of a new day when night will be past and the universal voice will be heard; the second pictures the expansion of the eyes and heart of man so that Space as we know it will disappear, and the sun and the moon will cease to be distant bodies apart from us. The changes that he speaks of are apocalyptic; the true revolution is a revelation that man has the power to make a

new life for himself and for other men. In this new life the nobles and priests willingly put off their emblems of power to work beside the peasant and the peasant puts off his savage ignorance for gentle knowledge. As our relationship with others is altered so is our relationship with the cosmos: ". . . the instruments of heavenly song sound in the wilds once forbidden . . . the happy earth sing[s] in its course. / The mild peaceable nations [are] opened to heav'n, and men walk with their fathers in bliss . . ." (23-37).

Heaven with its stars does not disappear, but it is somehow wedded to the earth. This union is not achieved by establishing a metaphorical relationship of macrocosm to microcosm, though the imagery does sound something like the musical spheres of Pythagoras. In the Abbé's universe the heavens again become a part of man because the separation between outer and inner ceases to exist. His speech tells us that the space that separates us from the stars is synonymous with the space that separates the plowman from the priest and the peasant from the nobleman. If we listen to the revelation of the universal voice we will realize that each of us embodies the whole universe including sun, moon, stars, and all people. The world is only "out there" because we think of it in that way. And this "thinking-of-it-in-that-way" is the separation or fall in the Abbé's speech.

What we have just learned about the sun and stars, their use as symbols of hierarchy by the old order and as the gates to inner vision by the new order, can be demonstrated in other images within the dramatic action of the poem. Throughout the poem there are, in effect, two suns. The King is the dying sun of the old order. As his Nobles gather around him early in the poem he is compared to "the sun of old time quenched in clouds" (68), but when he sees the fiery strength of his armies from the window, "then his bosom / Expanded like starry heaven, he sat down: his Nobles took their ancient seats" (81-82). His military power provides the universe of monarchy with enough energy to stand firm at the debate. The other sun is the revolutionary Nation. Significantly, as the Nobles are compared to stars that expand from the bosom of the sun to occupy their fixed seats, the Commons as they convene in the Hall of the Nations are said to be "like spirits of fire in the beautiful / Porches of the Sun to plant beauty in the desart craving abyss, they gleam / On the anxious city" (54-56). The Nobles separate from the King creating the fixed distances between people and between heaven and hell ("the ruins of sulphur heaven" in the Abbe's speech) that characterize the universe of the old order. The Commons, however, stand in the porches of the Sun; the new sun, the revolutionary Nation (a political embodiment of what will later be the Human Form Divine in Blake's poetry), is light and

energy that comes from within and encompasses all.

In "The French Revolution: Revelation's New Form" William F. Halloran discusses this image of the new sun as an example of how Blake uses simile to expand the poem's space. The full simile is as follows:

> For the Commons convene in the Hall of the Nation,
> like spirits of fire in the beautiful
> Porches of the Sun, to plant beauty in the desart
> craving abyss, they gleam
> On the anxious city; all children new-born first
> behold them; tears are fled,
> And they nestle in earth-breathing bosoms. So
> the city of Paris, their wives and children
> Look up to the morning Senate, and visions of
> sorrow leave pensive streets.
> (54-58)

After discussing the basic analogies in the first three lines, Halloran goes on to discuss in great detail the extended simile that makes up the rest of the description. His analysis is telling enough that I would like to quote a rather large part of it.

> The word "So" in the fourth line . . . joins "them" in line 3 to push "new-born" children back into the "spirits of fire" simile. The initial analogies are thus extended: the people of Paris who look up to the "morning Senate" and lose "visions of sorrow" are like "new-born" children who first behold a new world fashioned by a creative sun from the "desart craving abyss." In other words, the "new-born" children seem at first to be the real children of Paris looking at the sun-like Commons. Then we move to the suggestion that the men, wives, and children of Paris are the first-born of a newly created world. Besides extending and enriching the analogies, the syntactical ambiguities obscure the distinction between what is happening in Paris and what is happening in the mind of the poet, between reality and vision. Movement in and out of the

> simile leads the reader from a recognition of analogy (two separate pictures) to the impression of identity (one picture doubly conceived). The poem's space is not only expanded, but transformed.[9]

As Halloran has elaborately worked out, Blake in his image of the new sun shows the reader how to see the world anew so that he and his world are transformed. The movement in the reader's experience from "recognition of analogy" to "impression of identity" that Halloran traces is very much like the change from seeing the stars as part of a macrocosm that is related metaphorically to the microcosm of man and his society, to seeing them as a part of man as the Abbé de Sieyès does. In the Abbé's vision, the vision of the new sun, the distance that separates the new-born children from the citizens of Paris, the morning Senate from the rising sun, and the priest from the plowman, disappears and identity is realized.

The new sun is identified with Fayette towards the end of the poem. As Fayette stands before the army that he orders to move ten miles from Paris, he is compared to a flame of fire. As he lifts his hand, "Gleams of fire streak the heavens, and of sulphur the earth" (278). After he gives the order the infantry is said to "glitter like fire" as it marches out of the city to take its position ten miles away (292). The Senate is then left in peace "beneath morning's beam" (306).

The resulting image is again similar to the earlier image of the Nobles expanding from the bosom of the Sun/King to take their ancient seats in the starry heaven. Instead of being arrayed beside the King and looking out at the dark night below, however, the soldiers have taken the fire away from the King's seat of power where he and his peers are left "Pale and cold" (294). The King is not allowed to die. The "pale fires" of the dead revive his frozen blood, but "king" is now spelled with a lower case "k", the soldiers that supported the monarchy are gone, and the Senate meets in the light of the new dawn. The power of the hierarchy is gone. The king is now human; he no longer assumes the tyrannical power of "divine right." In addition, the fire of the army that glitters as they march joyously away from Paris is now fire from the new sun, fire that they receive from Fayette as he gives his command. A transformation has taken place so that the watches that they assume ten miles from the city assure its peace and freedom, in contrast to the starry hosts of the King who contained and imprisoned man in the dark night of tyranny.

Two other images that are deserving of our attention are the comparison of Aumont to a comet when he announces the Abbé's arrival at the King's council and of the Abbé de Sieyès to a morning star when he returns with the Nobles' message to the Commons. In each case the comparison relates to us how the message is received by the audience. Aumont

tells not only of the Abbé's arrival but also of the eerie presence of the ghost of King Henry the Fourth, a King known for his egalitarian views and programs, who is described by Aumont as walking before the Abbé "in flames." It is appropriate that Aumont is likened to a comet for he brings a message of fear and superstition. He and the troops interpret the presence of King Henry's ghost as a sinister omen, as a prophecy of doom. Similarly, but in a more pregnant image, the Abbé de Sieyès is compared to the morning star when he returns to tell the Commons that the Nobles have refused to order the troops' removal from Paris. We are told that he is "Like the morning star arising above the black waves, when a shipwreck'd soul sighs for morning" (255). It is appropriate that he is compared to a star because his message is from the Nobles, but his description as the morning star carries additional meaning. The morning star, though it may shine brightly, shines no light on the objects of this world and therefore gives no life to the shipwrecked soul. It does, however, give promise of morning. The Commons has requested the co-operation of the Nobles in establishing a rule of constitutional monarchy, but they have refused. Their adamant entrenchment behind a fixed unyielding position, however, ironically ensures the demise of their world order and the dawn of a new order.

Thus, we have seen in a very early work how Blake establishes the meaning of the star imagery in all its

prophetic complexity. The stars are used by Blake to show how men see themselves and the order of their world. If the stars are seen as a circle outside of us, then they influence us to a tyrannical political and religious order. If they are seen as a part of us, then we are freed to build a new world order based on co-operation and liberty. What Blake will discover in some of his later works is that the fires of Voltaire and the clouds of Rousseau that appear over the head of Fayette in The French Revolution do not inspire the men of the new order to true inner vision but instead turn them outward again to yet another imprisoning world of "starry wheels."

Cycles of Tyranny

"A Song of Liberty," sometimes placed by Blake at the end of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell as a concluding poem, presents the bold outlines of a political mythology that delineates the struggle between the forces of Energy and Repression in our world and prophesies the end of Empire and the triumph of Liberty. The struggle begins with jealousy and results in a world structured according to the moral laws of the ten commandments, laws designed to contain and limit "the sons of joy." The stage for the action of the drama is the cosmos itself. Orc, who embodies the forces of Hell or revolutionary Energy, is a fiery sun; the King, who embodies the forces of Heaven or tyrannical

Reason, is envisioned with his warriors as the remote stars, fiery but cold.

In one sense the imagery of sun and stars is much more simply drawn than in The French Revolution; in another sense, it is much more complicated. Instead of two suns and, consequently, two ways of seeing the universe including the stars, in "A Song of Liberty" the forces of Empire are strictly identified with the stars in the night sky and Liberty is seen as a fiery new-born wonder that is hurled through the night sky by the starry tyrant king to become the sun for our earth. (This new-born wonder will be called Orc in the prophecies that are to follow.) What complicates the imagery is Orc's dual identification with the dawn of a new day of Liberty when "Empire is no more" and with the sun of our world that is part of a continual cycle of night and day. This cycle is symbolic of the continual struggle between Heaven and Hell, Reason and Energy, passive and active, Empire and Revolution, mind and body, a struggle that defines the fallen world. This dual identification of Orc is achieved by juxtaposing two "times" so that the action of the poem is simultaneously occurring both before the creation of our world as we know it and at the beginning of the French Revolution.

The first verse describes the birth of Orc from the Eternal Female. "The Eternal Female groan'd! it was heard over all the Earth." Verses two through six then call on

nations where Empire holds sway--Albion, America, France, Spain, Rome--to throw off political and religious tyranny. In verse seven the Eternal Female takes "the new born terror" in her trembling hands. One recognizes here the birth of an Energy that promises to be a threat to the tyrannical Empires of the world.

But then in verse eight we are suddenly on the mountains of Atlantis, "infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the atlantic sea," where Orc "the new born fire" stands before "the starry king." We seem to be out of time, before the creation of our world; yet we must also be in the present historical time that the first seven lines have described to us. By juxtaposing the Fall and Creation with the historical events of the time, Blake is showing that we continually create our world anew; that the Fall and Creation are not events in the far distant past but that they exist in each moment of time when we separate the world that we perceive with our five senses from ourselves. This separation which is continually occurring also sets in motion the historical cycles of our world, cycles of Repression and Revolution, cycles that Northrop Frye has aptly called "Orc cycles."

In this particular poem the stars function to make dramatically clear the contrast between the dualities into which we have separated ourselves. The stars are the cold, fixed, remote lights of the night sky. To the naked eye

they represent the perfect immutable laws of the universe. It is no wonder that the tyrant kings are identified with them. In contrast, our particular star, the sun, is warm and life-giving. The amount of warmth that it gives changes from dawn to dusk, from season to season, from day to day. It warms our skin and gives light so that we can see; our survival depends on its closeness. Its rays penetrate the earth and make the life of growing things possible. We do not see it or experience it as a light far away in the heavens, but as an energy that is at the very center of ourselves. The sun, then, is clearly an appropriate symbol in a political sense for revolutionary energy and in a more fundamental sense for body energy or for what one might better call "creature" energy.

The details of this symbolic struggle between the stars and the sun are drawn with bold strokes here. The contrast between "the new born fire" and "the starry king" exists before the Fall, before "the new born fire" becomes our sun. The new-born energy howls; he is called "terror" and "wonder." The king is cold, stern, formidable, old and what is more important for the action of the poem, jealous. His jealousy causes him to hurl Orc out of heaven which results not only in the separation of "hell" from "heaven," but also in the fall of the starry king with all his trappings of Empire, "his grey brow'd councellors, thunderous warriors, curl'd veterans, among helms, and shields, and chariots,

horses, elephants, banners, castles, slings, and rocks." They fall "All night beneath the ruins; then, their sullen flames faded emerge round the gloomy King." The King then leads "his starry hosts thro' the waste wilderness" and "promulgates his ten commands." The starry king has here become the God of Mosaic Law. The star imagery, thus, identifies the Mosaic Law as a way of seeing and ordering the world that is the foundation of Empire. It is this hierarchic "stony law" taken in its most fundamental sense that Orc as the rising sun "stamps to dust" in the closing lines of the poem.

Although "A Song of Liberty" is significantly different from The French Revolution in the way the sun and star imagery is delineated, thematically it says much the same thing. This is clearly seen in the last statement of the poem before the chorus:

> . . . the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while
> the morning plumes her golden breast,
> Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the
> stony law to dust, loosing the eternal horses
> from the dens of night, crying:
>
> EMPIRE IS NO MORE! AND NOW THE LION & WOLF SHALL CEASE.

This imagery is more violent than that of the Abbé de Sieyès. Here Orc stamps the stony law to dust whereas the Abbé speaks of a revelatory change that will cause the priests and the nobles to come down from heaven and embrace the peasants and the soil. (The Abbé's speech is given, of course,

before the recalcitrant refusal of the nobles to join the forces of revolution.) Nonetheless, in both cases, there is a fundamental change in the old order. The chorus that ends "A Song of Liberty" explains that this change must come about, "For everything that lives is Holy." Again we have a statement against hierarchy, a statement that echoes the Duke of Orleans' emphasis on the brotherhood of all men and that also sums up the reasons for the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

That the function of the stars is exclusively given to Empire, Repression, and Heaven and that of the sun to Revolution, Energy, and Hell in this poem is particularly appropriate when one reads it as a conclusion to The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. The stark contrast between the stars and the sun reflects the fixed dualities of Heaven and Hell into which we divide our world. In addition, by telling the story of the separation of Hell from Heaven and of the Fall that created a false Heaven bounded by the fixed law of the stars, the sun and star imagery makes it clear that the false Heaven must come down before the Marriage of Heaven and Hell can take place.

Thus, we can conclude that "A Song of Liberty" presents the strictest reading of the stars as the powers of Empire that we have yet encountered. The poem does so, perhaps, because Blake so strongly associated it with The Marriage of Heaven and Hell where he wishes to draw sharp distinctions

between the dualities of our world. Although there are two realms of stars in the poem, those before and after the fall, both are inhabited by the old tyrant King with his counsellors and warriors. It would seem that Orc's fall here is only one in a long succession of falls, that the history of mankind is the story of these cycles of energy and repression.[10]

Urizen versus Orc

I would like to consider the next three prophecies together. Harold Bloom has shown how chronologically America and Europe fit between the two books of A Song of Los so that one might read them in the order of Africa America Europe Asia to discover their historical time sequence.[11] Clearly America can be seen as following Africa, for the last line of Africa, "The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent," is also the first line of America. Likewise, the first two lines of Asia, "The Kings of Asia heard / The howl rise up from Europe!" place it immediately after Europe.

The use of sun and star imagery varies greatly from piece to piece. There is no direct mention of the stars in the text of either Africa or Asia; however, the illuminations that frame the two books present striking images of the sun and stars. In the illumination that separates Africa and Asia, the stars shine out on a peaceful faery world that

makes an effective contrast to the fierce struggle chronicled in the prophecies. Of the three suns pictured in the first and last illuminations, two will be of particular interest to us, the darkened orb that represents Urizenic law and the blood-red orb that Los has shaped in his furnace. The latter is identified in America with Orc who in turn is compared to the planet Mars, a comet, and a serpent who glows as it twines itself about in the heavens. In Europe, this serpent is held up as the religion of the tyrannical King. It appears as a Serpent temple, a jeweled serpent, who is clearly the night sky with the stars on its back, and it tells of the fall and the closing down of the senses.

What we discover ultimately is that the stars are portions of eternity placed in the orderly procession of the heavens when our senses shrank or shut down. The stars and our senses are, in a way, synonymous, for they are both gateways out of or into ourselves. What we see in the stars is what our senses allow us to see or dictate that we see; we can discover how we see the world by determining how we see the stars. Africa, Europe, and Asia tell a bleak story of the shutting down of the senses first through Abstract Religious Law and then through the Philosophy of the Five Senses of Newton and Locke. Thus, the stars are seen as separate from man, and yet as evidence of the order of the natural universe that man must worship and pattern himself after. This is seeing the world according to the darkened

sun of Urizen. The celebration of Orc, in America and to a lesser degree in the other works, reveals another possibility, that of melting away the five senses with the fiery blood-red sun of inner vision to reveal the Infinite. With Orc, and with the fairies as well, we discover that "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (MHH 4).

In discussing the star imagery in these four prophecies I will first consider the three sun images in the framing illuminations, then look closely at how two of these suns define the vision of each of the prophecies. We will discover that a discussion of our "daystar," the sun, will lead us to a discussion of the stars in the night sky, for no longer are they categorically separated from one another as symbols as they were in "A Song of Liberty."

The magnificent full-page illuminations that begin and end The Song of Los present three suns pictured in ways that may remind us of the sun imagery in The French Revolution. The picture that precedes the title page shows a sun whose bright rays are occulted by darkness. In some copies the darkness that blocks out or hides the sun appears to be "mysterious hieroglyphs," in others the darkness is more chaotic.[12] Below this sun a white-robed figure, his back to us, kneels before a white stone altar as if worshipping this hidden or, perhaps, dying sun. In contrast to

this sun, obscured by a woven darkness of runes, is the sun of Los pictured on the last page of the book. The blood-red sun in this last picture has just been shaped by the young naked Los who bends over it, resting from his labors and holding his iron hammer. The expression in his eyes shows exhaustion, apprehension, and, perhaps, despondency. Behind Los the rays of yet another sun, brighter than the blood-red one, are seen rising behind clouds.

If we think back to The French Revolution we can recognize the occulted sun in the dying sun of the French King, the blood-red sun in the fire that comes from Fayette and other revolutionary figures, and the bright rays of the rising sun in the morning sun that breaks as the Senate meets. The first sun is then the sun of the old order, the center of a hierarchic universe perceived as outside of man but of which man is a part. This sun, as the center of this universe, dictates political, social, and religious structures to man. The second sun is a fire and energy that is within man. In the picture it is blood-red because it represents the blood or heart of man and because, as seen in the political context of the poems, it is revolutionary energy that leads to war. The third sun is the sun of the new order that is made possible by the revelations of the second sun.

These three suns take on additional meanings in the prophetic language of Africa, America, Europe, and Asia.

One very important change in meaning is brought on by the entrance of the mythic figures, Urizen, Los, and Orc. These figures represent faculties within each individual person as well as being embodied in forces that the individual perceives in the outside world. Thus, Urizen is our reasoning power; in the political world he becomes a tyrant King; in the religious world, an Old Testament God; in science, he is Newton; in philosophy, Locke. In the frontispiece illumination he worships the darkened sun that will be identified not only with monarchy but also with all abstract law that imprisons man. Los is our poetic or prophetic genius; we have heard the voice of this genius in the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience. In Africa it is Los's children, the inspired writers of the many different holy scriptures, that give Urizen's religious laws to the nations. Los, however, appears in the closing illumination as the reshaper of this runic sun. In his forge he has shaped or created a blood-red sun, a sun that is identified throughout the four prophecies with Orc. Orc is an enigmatic figure. Although he clearly represents revolutionary energy in the outside world, it is more difficult to determine what force or power he is within the individual, perhaps primal energy. One reading of the picture might be that in transforming the Urizenic runic sun to shape the blood-red Orc, Los has freed the sun of the natural world to rise in all its brightness, no longer obscured by Urizen's abstract laws. When the voice

of Orc prophesies the apocalypse that will come with revolution in America, he speaks words that support this reading:

> " . . . 'The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning,
> "'And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night;
> "'For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease.'"
>
> (Am 6.13-15)

The last line echoes "A Song of Liberty," but notice how the new order in America includes the night as well as the day. This inclusion will be important in our reading of these four prophecies, for we will discover that the blood-red sun of inner vision, who is Orc in these prophecies, promises us not only a new day, "a fresher morning," but also a night with constellations that speak of hope instead of bondage.

The two suns that will most concern us in our reading of these four prophecies are the darkened Urizenic sun and the blood-red sun of Los. Africa provides the historical background for both America and Europe by tracing the long history of the dominance of Urizen's darkened sun as a shaper of man's vision. America celebrates the transformative powers of the fiery blood-red sun, Orc, as created by Los; at the same time, it shows how Albion's angel sees this revolutionary power as destructive and bestial. Europe reveals the repressive powers of Urizen's tyrannical universe. Orc's transformative powers do not work in Europe; it takes Newton and the power of his vision of the natural world to

free Orc from his chains and when he is freed he appears not as a transformed human wonder but as wheels of blood rising as the sun in France. Asia brings these political prophecies to a close by showing the continued strength of the "woven darkness" of Urizen's sun despite the change in his powers effected by Orc. Orc himself has been freed, but his fiery vision has been clouded considerably by the philosophies of Voltaire and Rousseau.

Let us look closely at each of these prophecies in turn.

In Africa Orc is chained down on Mt. Atlas. He howls there as the children of Los give Urizen's Laws to the Nations of Africa, the place where civilization originated in Blake's mythology (BU). The fact that Orc is chained down on Mt. Atlas should connect him in our minds with Prometheus who was chained there by Jupiter for stealing fire from Heaven. In the five-line prelude to The Song of Los Africa is referred to as "heart-formed Africa" making it an appropriate place imagistically for the blood-red fire of Orc to be chained.

While Orc is chained, the long unrelenting history of the darkening of vision by Urizen's Abstract Religious Laws unfolds. These laws bind the people "more / And more to Earth: closing and restraining: / Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete" (4.14-15). This history will be repeated in Europe but with a much more complex system of

images that includes the stars. In Africa this philosophy, the culmination of centuries of Urizenic law, is given into the hands of Newton and Locke; its effect on the four continents is seen in the last four lines.

> Clouds roll heavy upon the Alps round Rousseau & Voltaire,
> And on the mountains of Lebanon round the deceased Gods
> Of Asia, & on the desarts of Africa round the Fallen Angels
> The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent.
> (4.18-21)

We have seen Voltaire and Rousseau as the heralds of Revolution when they appeared over the heads of Fayette and the army in The French Revolution. Here something different is happening. The completion of the Philosophy of the Five Senses which shuts down our perception to see according to the darkened Urizenic sun immediately precedes this description of clouds rolling heavy upon the Alps around Rousseau and Voltaire, and the presence of the two philosophers is paralleled to the deceased Gods in Asia, the Fallen Angels in Africa, and the Guardian Prince of Albion who burns in his nightly tent from the fires of the American rebels and his own repressive wrath. Orc chained on Mt. Atlas is himself a Fallen Angel and is pictured as such in the Frontispiece of America. We are discovering through these images that the ideological fathers of the Revolution are actually the inheritors of the darkened vision of Urizen's laws and that the blood-red fires of Orc have been chained by these very same laws that Voltaire and Rousseau inherited.

In America, Orc finds the strength to break his chains in his passion to embrace and impregnate the shadowy daughter of Urthona. This marriage of Hell and Heaven, of Fire and Frost, of Energy and Matter, of God and Nature prefaces the most celebrated appearance of Orc in Blake's poetry. Orc, the blood-red sun of inner vision, "the image of God who dwells in darkness of Africa" (the heart) (2.8), and who falls to give life and vision to America, is shown in all the glory of his transformative powers and in all the terror of his destructive force.

In two of the cancelled plates for America (b and c), Blake would have given almost equal weight to a description of Orc's adversary, Albion's Angel. These two plates associate Albion's Angel who guards England for monarchy (he is called the Guardian Prince of Albion) with the sun and stars of Urizen's fallen universe. His hall where King George III holds council was built when "Urizen call'd the stars round his feet. / Then burst the center from its orb, and found a place beneath; / And Earth conglob'd, in narrow room, roll'd round its sulphur Sun" (b.5-7). Likewise, he is imaged with "twelve demons" or the twelve signs of the Zodiac on his shield and with "fifty-two armies" to suggest the fifty-two weeks of the year. He stands on "the vast stone whose name is Truth" (c.10) usurping the power of the pole star to control the universe to his own ends. His appearance is likened to "a constellation, ris'n and

blazing, / Over the rugged ocean" (c.23).

We can only surmise why Blake cancelled the plates, but we can observe that the result is to add greater emphasis to the emergence of Orc, his origins, and his actions. As regards the star imagery, the cancellation removes an extended reference that identifies the stars with Urizen and monarchy. A similar but much shorter reference is made by Orc on Plate 8 of America when he calls himself "the fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands / What night he led the starry hosts thro' the wide wilderness" (8.3-4). We will notice, however, that Orc not only prophesies that he will stamp that stony law to dust but that he also identifies himself with "the fiery joy" that came before Urizen's starry universe. We will see in the discussion that follows that this universe of fiery joy can be seen as an alternative universe based on inner vision and that it includes the stars as well as the blood-red sun.

There are essentially two images of Orc as the blood-red sun in the prophecy. We meet both of them early in the poem as he arises over the Atlantic immediately after the appearance of Albion's Prince to the Americans in the form of a dragon. The first image of Orc is what the King of England sees as he looks westward, a "terrible" human form, glowing red, as if heated in a fiery furnace. The second image of Orc is the vision of Albion's Angel as he stands beside "the Stone of night." He sees Orc as the planet Mars

and also refers to him as a serpentine Spectre who stretches his length across the heavens. The first image, then, pictures Orc as a form shaped in a fiery furnace (the association with Los's furnace is obvious); the second image reveals him as a force in the cosmos. Both images are seen as destructive by those on the side of Empire and as transformative or apocalyptic by those on the side of Revolution.

This is how the King of England sees Orc as he rises over the Atlantic:

> Intense, naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as the wedge
> Of iron heated in the furnace; his terrible limbs were fire
> With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark & towers
> Surrounded; heat but not light went thro' the murky atmosphere.
>
> (4.8-11)

This fiery Wonder rises in clouds that are "vast wheels of blood" (4.6). His presence, a response to the wrathful oppression of England, signals war and destruction to the King. That Orc glows like a wedge of iron heated in a furnace will connect in our minds with Los and the picture that ends Asia, but it also carries an association with weapons of war. We will see that for most of the people in America this fiery human form means transformation, not consummation, but, for the King and for Albion's Angel, as we will vividly see in Europe, the flames can only mean destruction.

Plate 8 dramatically describes the transformative powers of Orc's fires. As befitting the fires of an

alchemical furnace, they "inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consumed" (8.15). Instead, "Amidst the lustful fires he walks: his feet become like brass, / His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like gold" (8.16-17).[13] His fires also transform the thirteen governors of the American colonies whose "lineaments" are revealed "naked & flaming" as they throw down their golden scepters (12.3-6); the Priests who "in rustling scales / Rush into reptile coverts" (15.19-20); and "female spirits of the dead pining in bonds of religion" who "feel the nerves of youth renew" and are left "naked and glowing with lusts of youth" (15.22-25).

I make reference here to an alchemical furnace to emphasize the psychological changes that are part of the images. What happens in each case of transformation is that the inner desire or identity of the individual is made manifest as outward forms that have been imposed are shed. It has long been recognized that the art of some visionary alchemists was concerned with reconstructing or restoring the fallen fragmented self to its pre-fallen wholeness. To this kind of alchemist, the attempts to change lead into gold or to marry mercury and sulphur were symbolic of the psychic changes that he wished to set in operation. While it is true that Blake clearly disagreed with the approach of alchemists who seemed to be after a magic formula that could produce the desired changes (See Jerusalem 91.33-36),

his image of Orc as a blood-red sun forged in Los's furnace, a fiery sun that then has transformative powers of its own, suggests the work of some of these visionary alchemists. (Much of his other imagery does this as well, e.g., the four-fold Albion who is fragmented in the fall and must be resurrected again in wholeness.)[14]

As the fires of Orc rage across the land, making the plagues recoil back to Europe, bringing sickness and anguish to the Angels of Albion, deforming their ancient heavens, and freeing the female spirits, we should always keep in mind the blood-red sun of Los, for though the fires may rage without, the true fires of transformation are those that come from an inner vision that is symbolized by this blood-red sun. In the culmination of the transformative powers of these fires of Orc, they melt the five gates of the "law-built heaven" of Empire, "And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men" (16.23). This "law-built heaven" is the "marble built heaven" of the Duke of Burgundy in The French Revolution. That it is said to have five gates may allude to the fact that there are five visible planets, each of them marking out a fixed sphere. As imagery in Europe will show, it most certainly connects with our five senses so that the melting of these five gates frees humanity from the bondage chronicled in Africa.

The second image of Orc places him in the larger cosmos. It is a most peculiar image and one that bears close

attention. On Plate 5 after the King of England has seen Orc appear glowing with the intensity of a wedge of iron heated in the furnace, Albion's Angel sees him somewhat differently.

> Albion's Angel stood beside the Stone of night, and saw
> The terror like a comet, or more like the planet red
> That once inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere.
> Then Mars thou wast our center, & the planets three flew round
> Thy crimson disk; so e'er the Sun was rent from thy red sphere;
> The Spectre glow'd his horrid length staining the temple long
> With beams of blood . . . . . .
> (5.1-7)

Albion's Angel sees Orc not as a fiery human form but as a comet or Mars, the red planet. We have already discussed the sinister meanings that are traditionally associated with comets. Obviously, Albion's Angel reads Orc's appearance as a harbinger of cataclysmic change, and the additional association with Mars connects this change with war. But Mars is also said once to have "inclos'd . . . the terrible wandering comets in its sphere" and to have been "our center" before the solar system that we now have was formed. The reference to Mars as being the origin of comets might come from a confusion of comets with asteroids. In the late eighteenth century Wilhelm Olbers, a German physician, discovered both that asteroids "come from a belt of debris lying between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter" and

that comets "originate in an exurban dump of our solar system beyond the orbits of the planets."[15] The allusion to Mars as the original center of our universe with the "planets three" orbiting around its "crimson disk" has not, as far as has yet been determined, an antecedent. In The Illuminated Blake Erdmann refers to the meaning of the allusion as "elusive" and gives no possible source (p.143). The only reference to Mars that I have found that is anywhere near what is being described here is in Jacob Boehme's Aurora.

It has become widely accepted that Blake read Boehme although it is not clear to what degree he was influenced by him. Critics seem to be in general agreement, however, that whatever sources Blake used were never taken whole, but instead were transformed to fit Blake's poetic myth. This means that one can never safely interpret Blake's images by simply glossing them with a source because Blake may very well be using the same image as someone else but with a very different meaning. Clearly, Blake's images must be understood in the context of the individual poem and of his work as a whole.

Nonetheless, we might better understand this image of Mars as the original center of our universe if we look at Boehme's version of the birth of the sun and the planets in Chapter 25 of Aurora. Boehme explains that before our sun was created the Light of God and "the Body of this World" existed distinct from each other. They existed in this way

because Satan in his Wrath had separated the Body of this World, what Boehme also calls the Old House of God or the Old Body of God, from the Meekness and Light of God. The Body of this World was bound in darkness, Death, and Anguish until it was warmed by its own Fire-source inside the Body. The Heat from this Fire-source, however, became so severe that "the Love in the Light of God broke through the Heaven of the Partition" between God and the Body. Then the Heat was changed into "competent Meekness" and alleviated the Anguish.[16] "The Body of the Sun remained there standing in the Midst or Center as a Heart.[17] . . . But when the Sun was kindled, then the horrible Fire-crack went forth upwards from the Place of the Sun."[18] The Fire-crack became the planet Mars. Much of what Boehme says about Mars sounds very much like Orc:

> And there it is now as a Tyrant, Rager, and Stirrer of the whole Body of this World; for that is its very Office, that with its Revolution in the Wheel of Nature it moves and stirs all, from whence every Life takes its original.[19]

If we think back to "A Song of Liberty" and then look at what we have already discovered about fiery Orc in Africa and America, we will discover both enlightening similarities and differences between Blake and Boehme. In "A Song of Liberty," just as in Boehme, before the creation of our solar system there are two distinct worlds: the world of the starry king and the world of Earth. As in Boehme's

"Body of the World," the Earth is in darkness, sickness, and anguish. Then the Eternal Female, Earth, gives birth to the "new-born fire," its own Fire-source. (Boehme, likewise, uses a birth metaphor to describe the origin of this fire.)[20] What happens next in Blake is quite different from Boehme. In Blake the starry king is jealous of this fiery energy from Earth, or perhaps, Boehme's term "the Body of this World" might be more revealing here; the king, thus, hurls the fiery wonder out through the starry night and he becomes our sun. In Boehme the Light of God responds mercifully to the suffering that the excessive self-generated heat is causing "the Body of this World." His act of Mercy not only changes the Heat to "competent Meekness" but it also creates our solar universe, with the Sun giving forth light and heat and Mars raging with the wrathful and destructive properties of fire. Boehme also refers to Mars as "a poisonous venomous Enemy of Nature, through whose rising up and Birth . . . all Manner of poisonous, venomous, evil Worms and Vermine are come to be."[21] Yet this Mars is the mover from whom "every Life takes its original." This separation of Heaven from Hell, with Heaven being passive and good, and Hell being active or energetic and evil, is precisely the doctrine that Blake wished to expose as false in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and most of his works. It seems, then, that Blake agrees with the idea of a fire from within "the Body of the World" as well as the Light of God preceding the

creation of the sun, but he equates this fire not only with heat but also with joy, energy, and life. He expresses his turnaround from Boehme in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" (4). Orc calls himself "The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands" (8.3); the fiery joy preceded the world that Urizen builds based on the Mosaic Law. The simile that compares Orc to the planet red that was once our center gives this primacy a cosmological dimension.

In interpreting this reference to Mars as once being the center of our universe we must not forget that it is part of a simile that describes the way Albion's Angel sees Orc. Albion's Angel would read Mars as the planet or God of War. Orc, to him, is the terror of War; he is a demon. Thus, "the Specter" in the last part of the extended simile is both Orc and War, and it is seen as a serpent staining the temple of heaven with beams of blood before the Sun "was rent" from Mars. We now have Orc being two things at once: he is the red planet that was once our center (I have read this not only with Albion's Angel as meaning War but also in a revelatory sense as meaning the blood-red sun of inner vision); he is also the Spectre/serpent (Again we know that Albion's Angel sees this as War, but we might discover in this image a visionary meaning as well).

The term "Spectre" is used in The French Revolution for the ghost of King Henry IV. It is elsewhere used by Blake to indicate one part of man who is a quaternary consisting of "The Humanity, in deadly sleep and its fallen Emanation, the Spectre, & its cruel Shadow" (J 15.7).

Also in Milton 13: 8 we learn that the Spectre of Luvah (a later embodiment of Orc) is War. Damon says that the term spectre can be considered as one's "compulsory machinery."[22] In this image from America we might best understand the Spectre as simply an apparition, the appearance of spirit in the material world. To Albion's Angel the Spectre Orc is a serpent who stained the temple of heaven with blood. On Plate 8 Orc announces himself in a similar way, "I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree" (1.1). The difference is that Orc celebrates his existence as the serpent and refers to the tree as "accursed," while Albion's Angel condemns the serpent that befouls the holiness of heaven.

These two different views of Orc as serpent, the Angel's and the Devil's as it were, correspond to the two views of Orc as the planet red discussed above. The image of Orc/ Spectre/ serpent "glowing" as he stains the temple of heaven in the text of Plate 5 suggests the stars in the night sky. In many of his later works, Blake will clearly picture this image of a serpent stretching across the night sky with the stars of the Zodiac on his back. In fact, we will meet it

very soon in Europe. This image of the Spectre-serpent in America, occurring as it does just after the reference to Mars as the center of the universe, may also remind us of the passage in The French Revolution where the Sun-King expands his bosom to create anew his starry hosts that then sit in council around him (81-82). But if the stars that expand from the Sun-King are his counsellors and armies, where and what are the stars of the Spectre Orc? It is my contention that the pictures on Plates 5 and 11 can be seen as constellations in the night sky, constellations that show us the Spectre Orc, first, through the eyes of Albion's Angel, and, secondly, through the eyes of a Rebel Angel.

In commenting on Plate 5 in The Illuminated Blake Erdman suggests the following:

> What we see . . . is a revolutionary tribunal of three naked youths up in the heavens, like Orc risen in chains . . . , with fiery sword and scales of justice. . . . At the top the King, bound, is found wanting . . . then sent hurtling to the bottom where his possibly decapitated body is encircled by a blood-red serpent with human face but forked tongue. (p. 143)

It seems to me more than coincidence that the three figures at the top of the page are similar both in image and position to the three constellations: Libra, pictured with balance scales; Hercules, the heroic Giant, the Strong Man who fights evil, here shown ready to hurl the condemned King to perdition; and Virgo, the Virgin also seen in star lore as

Astraea, the goddess of Justice, and often depicted with a sword in one hand and scales (Libra) in the other. The serpent that encircles the condemned King would then be Serpens and the King himself would become Ophiuchus as he enters the coils of the snake. The constellations of Ophiuchus and Serpens that are pictured together in the night sky as a man struggling with a serpent appear just below Hercules. There is no sense of struggle in Blake's picture; instead, the condemned man is falling head or neck first through the seven coils of the snake and into the flames beneath.

The constellations of Virgo and Libra traditionally mark the autumnal equinox, the time when there is a struggle between night and day for supremacy. Finally the night proves the stronger and the Sun god is slain. Some old star maps even picture an altar around which a serpent twines between the constellations of Virgo and Libra. In star lore the Sun god is slain in Scorpio, he lies in the grave for the three decans of Sagitarrius, and then rises again at the Winter Solstice. In Blake's depiction the Sun god is the King whose symbol is the dying Sun, the Sun of the Old Order, but as we shall see there is hope for redemption in Blake's mythology as well.[23]

Albion's Angel appears on the illuminated plate as a contorted figure, suspended above the flames. He buries his head, clutches his hair with his hands, and covers his ears with his forearms to block out the vision. Nonetheless,

the pictures vividly depict the way Albion's Angel sees Orc or Revolution. Later, he uses words to describe his vision of Orc:

> "Ah terrible birth! a young one bursting! where is the weeping mouth,
> "And where the mothers milk? instead those ever-hissing jaws
> "And parched lips drop with gore . . . . . "
> (9.22-24)

Plate 11 reveals quite a different vision of Orc or Revolution. Here the text is concerned with the rejection of British rule by Boston's Angel. He announces ". . . no more I follow, no more obedience pay" (11.15), because he realizes the hypocrisy and injustice of such tyrannical rule. He is no longer fooled, and now sees the Revolution for what it truly is, as shown in the pictures that surround the text, a release from hypocritical laws that restrain humanity, a rebirth, a return to innocence.

A swan, with a naked man astride him, flies across the top of the page right under the line, "And Boston's Angel cried aloud as they flew thro' the dark night." There are four other birds as well in this section of the plate. To the left of the text appears the Pleiades, depicted with eight stars as in "Introduction" to Songs of Experience. Below the text a giant smiling serpent is giving a ride to three children, who vary in age from a young adolescent girl who holds the reins of the serpent to a young babe who

is helped on by his older brother. Above serpent and children is a new moon with bright star (Venus?) beside it and two birds that soar upward toward the Pleiades.

In "Introduction" to Songs of Experience, the only other appearance of the Pleiades as eight stars in Blake, the star group is pictured with Orion's belt and Aries, three constellations that mark the southern sky in Autumn. The Pleiades has been traditionally associated with Festivals of the Dead in many different cultures. As I noted in my interpretation of the earlier poem, the addition of the eighth star may indicate a release from the death associated with the Autumnal Equinox. In America this eight-starred Pleiades appears with a flying swan above and a friendly serpent below, the former mounted by a young man, the latter by three children. In star lore these figures would be recognized as Cygnus the Swan and Hydra the Water Snake.

As Virgo and Libra traditionally mark the Autumnal Equinox, Hydra and Cygnus are associated with the Summer and Winter Solstices, respectively. Hydra, the longest constellation in the heavens, stretches out just below Cancer which marks the Northern Gate, the entrance for souls into this world. The Beehive, a star cluster in Cancer, which looks like a misty cloud when seen with the naked eye, is said to be the abode of the souls, the place where they enter this world. In star lore they come through this Gate and tumble out onto Hydra's back, attracted by the liquid

nourishment in the Cup that is pictured there. Hydra, thus, represents the material world as our home, in a birth of innocence. It also represents a primal energy, an innocent sexual energy. Cygnus, on the other hand, marks the Southern Gate, the gate by which souls leave this world. Through this Gate, which is pictured in the constellation Capricorn, the new-born power of the Sun emerges invigorated with new life, ready to begin a new cycle. Cygnus marks this gate of rebirth or immortality both because it is the constellation associated with the first decan of Capricorn and because it is identified with Orpheus the poet whose powers of transformation awakened the dead to life. In the night sky Orpheus' lyre appears to the right of Cygnus just where the large bird appears in Blake's picture.

Through the eyes of the recently converted American Rebels, Orc is not a devouring serpent but a force entirely different. He seems to unite the power of innocence with the vision of Orpheus. The constellation Cygnus is also depicted on star maps as the Northern Cross, symbol of Christ's crucifixion. Orc describes himself as a serpent "wreath'd round the accursed tree" (8.1). Traditionally the serpent must be sacrificed for the soul to be released. Here in Blake's vision, however, where "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul" (MHH 4), the serpent (body) does not have to be sacrificed for the soul to be released from the bondage of death.

In America, then, Blake emphasizes the blood-red sun of inner vision and prophesies, in both text and pictures, the infinite world that will appear when this sun melts our gates of perception, our senses, the stars. The vision of Orc as a bloody destructive force of war is also there, but the revelatory or apocalyptic vision certainly supersedes it. In Europe we will see that Orc's transformative powers are not so powerful as they were in America, that the focus instead is on the shutting down of these gates of perception, and that the appearance of Orc forbodes further destruction rather than promising liberty.

The history that is traced in Europe is roughly the same that is outlined in Africa; but many more particulars are added, and the whole of the history is brought to bear on the struggle between monarchy and revolution in Europe at the close of the eighteenth century. The long reign of Urizenic law during which time the sons and daughters of Los pass on the "religion" of monarchy to the people is seen in Europe as the eighteen hundred years between the birth of Christ and the triumph of revolution over tyranny in America. This triumph is short-lived, for in Europe Newton, not Orc, brings down the reign of monarchy, and Newton's Philosophy of the Five Senses, as we learned in Africa, is a culmination of these eighteen hundred years of Urizenic law, not a break from it. We discover that "the Last Judgment" announced when the trump of doom is blown

for monarchy is actually another fall, and that Orc's emergence as the rising sun in France signals no true apocalypse but the continuing cycle of destruction and war.

The star imagery that communicates all of this is among the most complicated and the most powerful in Blake's poetry. This imagery is shaped by two mythical structures. First is Blake's mythology of the two falls of Man, falls that are continually occurring or cyclical. These falls tell how our vision became limited to the Urizenic sun. In a prefatory poem we are reminded of the Eternal perspective of these limitations, but in the prophecy proper Orc himself becomes victim to the fall and fails to provide the transformative vision of America. Second is a reinterpretation or parody of the traditional view of Christ's birth and resurrection and the Last Judgment as presented by John Milton in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." The two mythologies weave together as the story of Europe unfolds. I will examine each mythology in turn and consider the star imagery in their light.

In Blake's mythology, as related in The Four Zoas, there are two falls. One occurs at Creation when the Human Form Divine is fragmented and the harmony of Eden is broken. Urizen seizes power from Urthona (Los's name in Eternity) in the North to build his mundane shell or star world. His star world is "infinitely beautiful" (FZ II.240);[24] it is created "like a golden chain / To bind the Body of Man to

heaven from falling into the Abyss" (FZ II.266-67).[25] This star world is described as many worlds that travel

> . . . . . in silent majesty along their order'd ways
> In right lined paths outmeasur'd by proportions of number, weight
> And measure, mathematic motion wondrous along the deep,
> In fiery pyramid, or Cube, or unornamented pillar square
> Of fire, far shining, travelling along even to its destin'd end.
> (FZ II.272-276)[26]

It reminds one of the Pythagorean universe in the way it is measured with mathematics and geometry and in the harmonious music of its movements. The only difference seems to be in the emphasis on "many worlds." Perhaps what Blake is showing here is both the infinity of the created worlds, and Urizen's finite limitations of them within the measurement of reason.

This fall corresponds to the Creation in Genesis wherein Jehovah shapes the world as the Garden of Eden. In Blake's myth Jehovah is the Demiurge Urizen. In Europe this "Fall" is seen as cyclical,

> Again the night is come
> That strong Urthona takes his rest;
> And Urizen unloos'd from chains,
> Glows like a meteor in the distant north,
> (3.9-12)

and it occurs as the Christ child descends in the person of fiery Orc to be bound in the circles of the Demiurge. This descent of Christ as Orc is the incarnation of spirit in

matter, but, interestingly enough, the "matter" or "body" is fiery Energy, an Energy that we have come to identify with Revolution. The binding of the Son of God or this Energy in the circles of the Demiurge is an enactment of the first fall or Creation. We may again be reminded of a passage from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy. . . . Energy is Eternal Delight" (MHH 4).

The Frontispiece of Europe pictures this first fall or Creation. The Urizenic sun appears not as an orb darkened by runes or hieroglyphs, an object of worship, but as the circumference around the Demiurge or architect of our world. Instead of the white-robed worshipper that we see below the darkened sun in the Frontispiece to The Song of Los, Urizen appears here kneeling in the golden circle of the sun reaching out to draw the boundary of reason around man's universe with his right hand that extends to become a pair of golden compasses. Dark clouds almost surround this golden sun, but they have parted to reveal the naked God and to allow for the descent of his hand. The circle that Urizen draws with his compasses will be an image of the circle of the sun itself. As the history in Africa attests, this is the world of the God of Abstract Law, of Reason, of the Philosophy of the Five Senses, the God whose law will darken his sun until it becomes the dying sun of Tyranny.

The second fall in Blake's mythology corresponds to the Deluge in the Bible and is represented by the threatening giant serpent with five coils (for the five senses) on the title page of Europe. At this fall the star world collapses, space rushes in to shut off Eden and make it a lost Atlantis, and Urizen finds himself in the South in an upside-down world. In this world the north pole is "A raging whirlpool [that] draws the dizzy enquirer to his grave" (E 10.31). The stars and the senses are overwhelmed by the Flood, the waters of materialism. After this fall Urizen builds yet another world based not on the mathematical measurements of the crystal spheres but on the "Cumbrous wheels" (FZ VI.196)[27] of Vortices in a Void. Urizen weaves a Web of Religion to connect these Vortices one to another, and it branches all around Los's Heaven.[28] He then forces Orc who has now become a serpent to climb up into the Tree, to be crucified, in order "that he might draw all human forms / Into submission to his will" (FZ VII[a].164-65).[29] This is the Serpent temple, the religion that demands human sacrifice and war. In The Four Zoas and in Europe this temple is pictured both as stars in the night sky and as a stone edifice built for human sacrifice in the South of England (references to Stonehenge and Tyburn are obviously intended).

On Plate 10 in Europe this image of the Serpent temple powerfully evokes an identification of our senses with the

stars. We are told that the precious stones of this temple "Of colours twelve" were "Plac'd in the order of the stars, when the five senses whelm'd / In deluge o'er the earth-born man" (10.9-11). Then each of our senses, "Turn'd outward, barr'd and petrify'd against the infinite" (10.15). "Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent" (10.16), and this Serpent temple was placed in the heavens as the constellations, "Image of infinite / Shut up in finite revolutions" (10.21). The shutting down of infinity is thus shown in the stars; that is all our senses will allow us to see, and we see them, falsely, as far away and separate from us. "The ever varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens" (10.13) are restricted to "a mighty circle turning" (10.23), the primum mobile or eighth sphere of the Pythagorean system. The spiral ascents are fixed into the seven coils of the serpent, pictured to the left of the text. The seven coils are the seven planetary spheres; the stars of the Zodiac appear as jewels on the serpent's back. Man becomes an Angel and "God a tyrant crown'd" (10.23). The result of this shutting out of infinity is that man is separated from his own humanity. He sees his humanity crucified on Urizen's Tree of Mystery in the person of Orc, his inner vision (the stars) fragmented and ordered according to the dark night of the material world, and he is drawn to worship this tyrannical order perceived as outside of himself.

The world that results from the first fall is imaged in the circle of the compass, the Pythagorean world of harmony, beauty, and perfection charted in the stars. One may be reminded of the circle imagery in "The Ecchoing Green" where rest follows play as night follows day as Beulah is a land of temporary refuge from the rigors of Eden, but the confinement of the circle cannot contain the energy that spirals downward in a second fall to create a whirlpool world of vortices in a void. "The ever varying spiral ascents" of the unfallen world are confined within the finite circles of Urizen's compass and are fixed there as vortices. The void is the darkness surrounding the stars, a serpent on whose back the stars of Eternity appear as jewels. Biblically, the first fall corresponds to the Creation and the Birth of Christ; the second fall, to the Deluge and the Crucifixion. Scientifically, the world of the first fall is Pythagorean; that of the second, Cartesian and Newtonian (the vortices are part of Descartes' physics; the void figures in Newton's).[30] In Blake's own mythology the two worlds take on the names of Beulah and Generation.

In the lament of the nameless shadowy female that serves as a prelude to the prophecy of Europe, the effects of both falls are described in star imagery. The nameless shadowy female (she will later be called Vala and is an embodiment of Nature) pictures herself as an upside-down Tree of Life with her "roots . . . brandish'd in the heavens" and her

"fruits in earth beneath" (1.8). She laments her plight as follows:

> "I wrap my turban of thick clouds around my lab'ring head;
> "And fold the sheety waters as a mantle round my limbs.
> "Yet the red sun and moon,
> "And all the overflowing stars rain down prolific pains.
>
> "Unwilling I look up to heaven! unwilling count the stars!
> "Sitting in fathomless abyss of my immortal shrine.
> "I seize their burning power
> "And bring forth howling terrors, all devouring fiery kings."
>
> (1.12-2.4)

The imagery here echoes Boehme's Aurora. To Boehme, "the stars with their powers reign in the veins and drive forth the form, shape and condition in man."[31] This is the universe created by the Demiurge Urizen with his golden compasses. The stars on the outer rim of the circle rain down their influences; from them comes the power of life and the life that is born is always just one more "devouring fiery king." But this is also the upside-down world after the Deluge. The void and vortices of this world are indicated in the following lines:

> "I bring forth from my teeming bosom myriad of flames,
> "And thou dost stamp them with a signet; then they roam abroad
> "And leave me void as death."
>
> (2.9-11)

There seems to be no way out of this cycle of "Consumed and Consuming" (1.10), and there is not as long as one remains imprisoned in the circle.

The stars, thus, are key images in defining the fallen worlds that are created when our perception is limited. Both fallen worlds are defined by the darkened Urizenic sun. But what of the vision of Eternity that in America is revealed through the blood-red sun of inner vision, Orc? In Europe we are reminded of this vision of Eternity in the short prefatory poem in which Blake tells of meeting a fairy who dictates the whole of Europe to him. The first lines of this poem are a song of the fairy:

> "Five windows light the cavern'd Man; thro' one he breathes the air,
> "Thro' one, hears music of the spheres; thro' one, the eternal vine
> "Flourishes, that he may receive the grapes; thro' one can look
> "And see small portions of the eternal world that ever groweth:
> "Thro' one, himself pass out what time he please, but he will not;
> "For stolen joys are sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant."
>
> (iii.1-6)

This song both recognizes the senses as windows that show man a way out of the finite world that he has shut himself up in and holds man responsible for willfully refusing to pass out of the finite world to the infinite. This song may remind us of the picture of the King and Queen of Fairies reclining on lilies beneath the stars, the full-page illumination that separates Africa and Asia in A Song of Los. The stars and our senses are both gateways to infinity. The stars in the picture of the King and Queen of Fairies can

serve to remind us, as this short poem at the beginning of Europe does also, that eternity is still there even though we continually shut ourselves off from it.

Nonetheless, in the main body of Europe, there is no realization of this vision of Eternity as there is in America. In America Orc, as our sun of inner vision, melts the gates of perception; in Europe Orc is chained and repressed within the tight circles of Urizen's world.[32] Imagistically, what happens to Orc can be seen when the two falls are juxtaposed on Plate 10 of Europe. Orc, as primal or revolutionary Energy, perhaps seen here in his identification with Christ as the Energy of the Imagination in each individual, is infinite. When chained by the tyranny of established order, he becomes a serpent "wreath'd round the accursed tree" (Am 8.1). He is then held up as a Serpent temple by a religion that demands the continual crucifixion of Energy or the Imagination in human sacrifice and war. Thus it is that when the Serpent temple is lifted above England the young people see and hear "Albion's Angel howling in flames of Orc, / Seeking the trump of the last doom" (E 12.12-13). The fires of Orc here consume but do not transform.

Albion's Angel tries to blow the trumpet to signal the Last Judgment, for surely this fierce struggle between the hellish revolutionary forces and the divinely ordained order of monarchy must mean that the apocalypse is at hand.

Albion's Angel fails, but Newton succeeds. The blowing of the trump of doom by Newton is significant to our study of star imagery. We see that the end of the tyrannical rule of monarchy is not achieved by revelatory powers of Orc or an Abbé de Sieyès; instead, it is effected by the scientific views of Newton. Thus, we see the collapse of the hierarchical Pythagorean universe:

> Yellow as leaves of Autumn, the myriads of Angelic hosts
> Fell thro' the wintry skies seeking their graves,
> Rattling their bones in howling and lamentation.
> (E 13.6-8)

Ironically, this collapse, which is seen by Albion's Angel as an apocalyptic event, corresponds to the second fall or the Deluge of the five senses. Also ironically, Enitharmon continues to call forth her sons and daughters who control the seven planetary spheres to their revelry, not knowing that "eighteen hundred years were fled" (E 13.10). Thus, when the red sun of Orc rises over France at the end of Europe, we do not anticipate that the dawn will bring "a fresher morning" when "the Lion & Wolf shall cease" (Am 6.13-15). In fact we are told that "Lions lash their wrathful tails! / The tigers couch upon the prey & suck the ruddy tide" (E 15.6-7). This imagery tells us not only that the English monarchy prepares for war against revolutionary France, but also that the revolutionary force of Orc is not able to inspire the apocalyptic changes that were

promised in America. Instead, this force is swept up in the continuing cycle of repression-revolution-repression-revolution.

In the imagery here at the ending of Europe we are also beginning to see the role of the Serpent temple in this cycle. As Orc was made victim by Urizen the tyrant King of the old order, so will he also be used by the Reasoning Newton of the new order. The Serpent temple seen in the stars displays the crucifixion of Orc as Jesus on the Tree of Mystery. We will see that it also shows the confinement of energy by the laws of Nature. In either case, be it the temple of hypocritical Christianity or Natural Religion, it demands the sacrifice of the Individual to the Law, the sacrifice of the Imagination to the rigid demands of Reason.

So far we have seen how the mythology of the two falls as imaged in the stars provides a structure for the prophecy of Europe and how Orc, chained down in this world, is unable to transform this saga of the fallen world to a celebration of a new one. In Europe, Blake also parodies the mythology of a poem by Milton, to his mind England's greatest poet. The stars figure in this parody primarily as the crystal spheres of Pythagoras but also as the Serpent temple, Milton's Typhon. Blake's parody shows how traditional Christian mythology is clouded by the darkened Urizenic sun and how true prophetic vision reveals the tyranny implicit in it.

The prophecy of Europe begins with lines that parody Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity":[33]

> The deep of winter came,
> What time the secret child
> Descended thro' the orient gates of the eternal day:
> War ceas'd, & all the troops like shadows fled to their abodes.
> (3.1-4)

Milton's poem, which Blake illustrated in 1809, is a celebration of the birth of Christ. It is a gentle poem that speaks of the reign of peace and harmony that Christ's birth ushers in. The music of the Choir of Angels who appear to the shepherds heralds this reign though "wisest Fate" assures us that Christ must first die on the cross to "redeem our loss" and "to those ychain'd in sleep, / The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep" (149-56). Until this time, we are told, at least our bliss has begun,

> "for from this happy day
> Th' old Dragon under ground
> In straiter limits bound,
> Not half so far casts his usurped sway."
> (167-70)

Five of the last seven stanzas of the poem chronicle the pagan gods who are put to rout by the birth of Christ. In the last of these stanzas the infant Christ himself takes on the strength of a Hercules:

> Nor all the gods beside,
> Longer dare abide,

> Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
> Our Babe to shew his Godhead true,
> Can in his swadling bands controul the damned crew.
> (224-28)

In one of Blake's illustrations of this poem, "The Flight of Moloch,"[34] the Christ Child appears with flames behind him and arms upraised. The flames ascend around the blackened stone Idol of Moloch as the God's bat-winged spectre flies away from the fires. In this illustration Christ looks very much like the "fiery new born wonder" Orc.

In Europe Orc is this secret Christ child, the incarnation of spirit in matter. A picture of him appears in a circle of flames just beside the first four lines quoted above. In Blake's poem, however, the birth of Christ results not in peace but in a centuries-long dominion of woman as Virgin Queen.

In parody of the music of the "Crystall sphears" in Milton's poem, music that rings with such harmony in celebration of Christ's birth that time almost "run[s] back" to "fetch the age of gold" (135), Enitharmon calls her sons and daughters to her crystal house where they sing the true music of Christianity and the monarchical government that accompanies it. This music "Bind[s] all the nourishing sweets of earth / To give us bliss, " "laugh[s] at war," and "Despise[s] toil and care" (4.5-8), but, most importantly, it proclaims the dominion of woman.

"Go! tell the Human race that Woman's love is Sin;
"That an Eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
"In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come.
"Forbid all Joy, & from her childhood shall the little female
"Spread nets in every secret path."
(5.1-9)

This is Christianity revealed to be a Thou-Shalt-Not morality that represses all joy and energy for the attainment of heaven, "an allegorical abode where existence has never come." The sons and daughters of Los are the gods or angels of this Christianity; the kings and queens of the ruling monarchy. From the perspective of European history, eighteen hundred years of it, the birth of Christ in no way ushered in peace. What it did usher in was the binding of "all the spirits of life" (4.3).

In the star imagery here Blake is again incorporating the Pythagorean music of the spheres, and as in The French Revolution, the spheres are interpreted in terms of his own myth. According to Pythagorean tradition, the music of the crystal spheres is created by the movement of the planets and the sun and moon in circular paths around the earth. The planets are five: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The sphere of the Sun is between that of Venus and Mars. The fixed stars are the eighth sphere and revolve around all the rest. These "Seven Wanderers" are not fixed in their movement as the stars in the eighth sphere but instead follow their own course. They apparently make

their daily and nightly journeys from east to west across the sky, moving with the stars in the Zodiac. This apparent motion is, of course, the result of the earth turning on its axis. In actuality, as can be noted if one observes the position of the planets and moon over a period of time or if one observes the changing rising and setting positions for the sun, each of these wanderers is traveling slowly eastward against the background of Zodiacal stars. In addition, the five planets occassionally reverse, moving toward the west for a while in retrograde motion only to reverse again to travel once more in normal motion.

This motion of planets, sun, and moon with the fixed movement of the stars of the Zodiac behind them creates the music of the spheres. According to star religions, derived in part from Pythagorean doctrine, it also creates patterns of destiny for nations and men. As the gods move through the Zodiac, grouping together from time to time, they map out the destiny of nations below. In the cosmos that Blake describes on Plates 3 and 4 of Europe the fixed stars belong to Urizen. They "look out and envy Los," who is called "possessor of the moon," when the sons and daughters of Los "strike the elemental strings" of the music of the spheres. The image created here echoes the narration of Africa where Urizen gives his laws to the children of Los and they pass them on to mankind. The fixed stars that rain down their influences in the Preludium of Europe

as the sons of Urizen are the circle drawn around the Universe whose music is made by the children of Los, "the bright wanderers." This music, in effect, defines the religion of men.

Within this cosmos Urizen is described "unloosed from chains . . . like a meteor in the distant north" (3.11-12), a reference to his assumption of the controlling power of the pole star, the rightful position of Urthona. Orc, on the other hand, is bound. He is the first son of Enitharmon and responds to her call:

> The horrent Demon rose surrounded with red stars of fire,
> Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.
> (4.15-16)

This image will remind us of his appearance in America as the red planet that "once inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere" (Am 5.4). These red stars of fire that encircle him here seem to be his bondage. As Enitharmon descends into his red light, she is inspired to sing the song of Woman's Dominion that the distant heavens echo. Here we see the energy of Orc, Christ himself at the beginnning of the poem, chained down within the circles of Urizen's compass and Enitharmon's spaces (spheres).

In the illumination on Plate 4 Enitharmon lifts the bedclothes from off the sleeping Orc as if playfully asking him to join the revelry of her sons and daughters in the sky above. In the text she offers to crown him "with

garlands of the ruddy vine" suggesting a Dionysian feast. This theme is further carried out on Plate 8 when Palamabron is called "horned priest skipping upon mountains." Rintrah, as a complement to the lunar Palamabron is called "Prince of the Sun," an epithet that suggests Apollo. His "innumerable race" is said to be as "thick as the summer stars" (8.9-10).

The universe that is figured here is a parody of the one that Milton describes in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity." The harmonious music of the spheres becomes the loud revelry of the children of Los and Enitharmon. Instead of the pagan gods vanishing, they are very much in evidence in Palamabron, a horned Priest, Rintrah, the furious sun-king, and their consorts. The dominion of this world lasts for 1800 years until the revolution in America; until, as is also recorded in America, Albion is smitten with his own plagues.

The retreat of Albion's Angel and his bands from America result in their fall. After lying buried beneath the ruins of their council hall for one hour, "they arise in pain," "as the stars arise from the salt lake" (9.15). Their temporary defeat by America and regrouping gives occasion in the poem for a powerful description of what is the second fall in Blake's mythology, the fall that occurs at the Deluge and that results in the formation of the Serpent temple.

I have already discussed how the Serpent temple is imaged as the stars and how it represents the closing down of our senses in the material world. There would be no clear relationship between this star image and Milton's poem if Blake had not illustrated "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" in 1809. The last of six illustrations of Milton's poem, entitled "Descent of Typhon and the Gods into Hell,"[35] pictures Typhon as a monstrous six-headed human figure with a long serpent tail that encircles his human body and then stretches up to disappear in the darkness of the night sky only to be continued by a long trail of stars that reach across the sky and above the peaceful manger scene. Surrounding Typhon are various figures that are descending to Hell with him. Satan, positioned just below the feet of Typhon, is a comely male figure with scales only around his stomach and loins. He points upward as if to mark the descent. The manger scene which is placed immediately above the fallen Typhon is dwarfed by the turmoil in the bottom two-thirds of the picture. The picture, of course, refers to the lines in Milton's poem that describe the pagan gods being routed by the power of the Christ child, but as an illustration of the separation of Hell from Heaven, all the energy seems to be in Hell. If we think of the second fall, the Deluge, as described in Europe, we see man being shut into the folds of the material world so that the vision of eternity is shut out from the surging energy of the body.

All that is left of the union of the two is the imprint of the body of the serpent in the stars.

In Milton's poem the Last Judgment which is anticipated by Christ's birth is marked by "The dreadful Judge" spreading his throne "in middle Air" (164). Likewise, in Europe Urizen, Blake's Jehovah, appears "on the Atlantic; / And his brazen Book / That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth / Expanded from North to South" (11.2-5). This is the stony law that Orc stamps to dust in America, but in Europe it is joined by the Serpent temple which demands that humans be sacrificed to this law, and Orc does not stamp it to dust.

Thus, in Europe, in a very complex system of imagery that includes the mythology of two falls and a parody of traditional Christian mythology, Blake shows that we shut infinity away from us as the stars are apart from the earth. We learn that the stars only represent the tyrannical order of monarchy because we willingly accept the shutting down of our senses that removes our vision of infinity which should reside within us and places it in the heavens above. The stars themselves are portions of Eternity, and they are not outside of us but a part of us. We need somehow to break out of the tyrannical cycle of falls that successively shut down our senses in order to see them in this way. Europe tells us that neither the political revolutions of the day nor the new science will do this for us.

There are no stars in the text of Asia, but some of the imagery in the poem relates to what we have discovered about the stars in America and Europe. Most importantly, the description of Urizen spreading his woven darkness over Asia in answer to the anguished cries of the Kings of Asia shows the continued strength of the power of monarchy and the Urizenic vision. We are told that Urizen's "Books of brass, iron & gold / Melted over [Europe] as he flew" (7.14-15) to Judea; Orc's flames threaten the power of his Laws. Nonetheless, his power survives. We are also told that it is the "thought-creating fires of Orc" (6.6) that so trouble the Kings of Asia. They fear the spread of his revolution as he arises "like a pillar of fire above the Alps, / Like a serpent of fiery flame" (7.28-29). Orc is in Switzerland because this is where Voltaire and Rousseau, the Fathers of the French Revolution and noted philosophers of the five senses, reside. We are not surprised, then, when this appearance of Orc is followed by the shrinking of the earth. In the last lines of the poem, the Grave, the Earth, gives up her dead who stand naked, breathing with life, as before a Last Judgment. The Grave, however, "shrieks with delight & shakes / Her hollow womb & clasps the solid stem" (7.35-56). She desires that the tyrannical generative cycle continue with the impregnating force of Orc's serpent of fiery flame.

Summary

By tracing the star imagery in Blake's political poems, we have discovered some basic differences between the stars of Urizen and the stars of vision. The perception of the former is shown historically, and perhaps in our individual mental development as well, to have two stages that Blake calls falls. In both stages the stars are seen as outside of us. The first sees the relationship between man and the stars to be one of microcosm to macrocosm, a metaphorical relationship that recognizes underlying structural similarities. As the greater universe is structured, so the smaller universe of man and society, by divine command, is also organized. The key to the underlying structure appears to be line and number; the political order that is dictated (according to the most powerful perceivers of this world) is hierarchical. The logic that is used is deductive; hence, the all encompassing circle as the symbol of this universe. The second stage sees the relationship between man and the stars to be one of created perceiver to created universe perceived. Based on a mathematics of motion instead of line (the vortex instead of the circle), man, the perceiver, measures the universe mapped out by the stars in order to determine the natural laws that define it and hold it all together. Man, as a part of the objective natural universe that he explores, is, then, governed by the natural laws that he discovers. Politically, this new Urizenic order is

identified with the revolutionary forces in France that overthrow monarchy; it is not clear what shape the new political order will take. It is clear that the inductive logic that is used, based as it is on the Philosophy of the Five Senses, spirals the mind and body of man down into the abyss and away from the realization of his humanity.

The stars of vision, on the other hand, seem to shine through in the fallen world waiting to be discovered by the revolutionary, the poet, or the prophet. The key to understanding these stars is neither analogy nor logic but identity. As man has become a "little groveling root outside of himself" (J 33.17), it is usually difficult for him to recognize that the stars are a part of him, but at moments of revolutionary fervor (the Abbé de Sieyès and Orc in America) and poetic inspiration (Blake himself), this insight is there. In these political prophecies, the stars of vision show both that the true political revolution causes revelatory changes in the individuals that experience it, and that the only lasting political change must be the result of the liberated vision of the citizens. In the revolutions of his time, Blake saw the potential for such revelatory changes in America and in the early stages of the French Revolution, but, on the contrary, he saw that by 1794 the French Revolution had become a force for the shutting down of the senses in the Natural Religion of the philosophical leaders and that the ensuing repression of the Urizenic Empire showed no signs of abating.

CHAPTER THREE: NOTES

[1] Erdman, Prophet Against Empire, pp. 63-74, 79-85.

[2] A Journal of the Plague Year (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company, 1904), p. 22.

[3] Keynes, p. 34.

[4] The Pythagorean universe is identified by many with the Ptolemaic universe. Ptolemy was an astronomer who lived some two and a half centuries after Pythagoras. Ptolemy's cosmology is essentially Pythagorean, but was much more complex with its equants, eccentrics, and epicycles. Also, Ptolemy placed less emphasis on the Pythagorean idea of universal harmony. At times, particularly in The Four Zoas, Night II, Blake seems to combine the complexity of the Ptolemaic universe with the musical emphasis of the Pythagorean. I use the term Pythagorean as the most basic and inclusive.

[5] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936).

[6] (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1974).

[7] Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 63.

[8] (New Haven: Yale University, 1975).

[9] Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 54-55.

[10] In Europe and The Four Zoas we will see that there are actually two Falls in Blake's mythology: one marked by Creation, the other, by the Deluge; and that these Falls are cyclical. The fall chronicled in "A Song of Liberty" corresponds to the second Fall, the Deluge, and this explains why the starry King is such a tyrant before as well as after the fall.

[11] Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 161-62.

[12] Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p. 174.

[13] Harold Bloom in Blake's Apocalypse (pp. 123-24) notes that this image in Blake is like that of the walkers in the furnace in Chapter 3 of Daniel. He comments: "Orc's man is one stage higher than Nebuchadnezzar's image: the feet of iron and clay have become brass; the thighs of brass have become silver; the silver breast has joined the head in being golden. The allegorical suggestion is that the risen body is improved in its values, and indeed the heart and the brain have been made equal."

[14] Blake critics who have recognized this include Milton O. Percival, Peter Fisher, Kathleen Raine, and Northrop Frye.

[15] Timothy Ferris, The Red Limit (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1977), p. 35.

[16] [Jacob Boehme], The Works of Jacob Behmen, I (London, 1764-81), p. 253.

[17] Ibid., p. 249.

[18] Ibid., p. 253.

[19] Ibid., italics Boehme's.

[20] Ibid., p. 248.

[21] Ibid., p. 253.

[22] Damon, p. 382.

[23] The mythology of the two Falls as presented in Europe and The Four Zoas gives added insight to this picture. With this mythology, one recognizes Libra, Hercules, and Virgo as constellations of the world of Law and Justice established by Urizen after the first Fall; one then sees Ophiuchus falling into Serpens as an enactment of the second Fall. In Europe the defeat suffered by the King of England at the hands of the American rebels is depicted as the second Fall.

[24] Erdman, FZ.II 32.7.

[25] Ibid., 33.16-17.

[26] Ibid., 33.22-26.

[27] Ibid., VI.72.22.

[28] As Donald Ault has explained in Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), this is precisely what Newton does to Descartes'

physics by referring to the principle of integration between the basic particles of the universe and the laws that set them in motion as "mysterious" (pp. 5-8). According to Ault, Newton vacillated throughout his life between calling this principle "The mysterious attractive force (and its corollary repulsive forces)"and "the hypothetical elastic 'ether'" (pp. 8-14). Newton's followers did not hesitate to interpret this force as spiritual, as God's work.

[29] Erdman, FZ VII[a] 81.5-6.

[30] Ault, passim.

[31] Boehme, p. 263.

[32] The picture on the second page of the Preludium can be read as a foreshadowing of the failure of Orc to triumph over the forces of the "all devouring fiery kings." The picture looks very much like the constellations of Draco, the Dragon, and Hercules as they appear in the night sky. On star maps Hercules appears with one foot on the head of Draco and another in a kneeling position. Draco represents the destructive, devouring, anarchic principle in nature that the shadowy female is lamenting in the Preludium. In star lore, Hercules is the hero who eternally does battle with the dark forces of chaos symbolized by the Dragon. In Blake's version, the hero, Orc, turns his back on the terrifying spectacle of the "all devouring fiery kings"; this dragon of chaos is too much for him.

[33] On the Morning of Christ's Nativity: Milton's Hymn with Illustrations by William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Cambridge: The University Press, 1923).

[34] Ibid., p. 27.

[35] Ibid., p. 28.

CHAPTER IV

EPIC

In Blake's epics, The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem, the star imagery reveals how our vision became altered and how we can again discover its transformative powers. In each of the poems the epic hero is both the protagonist of the poem, (at times, Albion, at other times, Los, or Milton) and the reader himself who learns of his own fall that continually occurs and of the redemptive vision that enables him to regain his original humanity. The stars are instrumental in showing each stage of this process: the fall itself, the fallen perception that imprisons us, and the redemptive vision. We are told, among other things, that we only see the hem of a garment when we see the stars; that we do not wish to enter the bright furnaces of the stars themselves to discover the imaginative vision of Eternity. The beauty and the accuracy of the vision as described in the star imagery of these epics functions to inspire our humanity to this courageous act.

It is this thrust of moving the reader "to virtuous action" that most clearly distinguishes the star imagery in these epics from that in the lyrical poems and political prophecies. The kind of thrust that I mean is indicated in "Introduction" to Songs of Experience where the reader

is asked to "Hear the Voice of the Bard" and is told that "his lapsed soul" "might controll the starry pole / And fallen fallen light renew." Throughout most of the lyrical poems and the political prophecies (and the minor prophecies, The Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los as well), the reader is not called upon to act so directly. In the epics he is not only given this call to action, but he is also presented with a much more detailed explanation of how he fell and of how he can find the path back to the Human Form Divine.

In the earlier poems Blake's understanding or vision of the stars is essentially the same as it is in the later epics, but just as he fitted the vision to the genre in lyric and political prophecy so does he also in epic. In the lyrical poem the vision of the stars is fitted to the emotional range of the song; in the political prophecy this vision is structured to trace the history of political struggles and man's fallen perceptions. The scope of the epic is wider and the call to action, stronger. At the same time, the interest of the poem becomes more psychological and individual.

To accommodate this change in scope many more characters appear. A central figure in all the epics is Albion, the Eternal Man, who is fourfold in his Human Form Divine. The word "Man" is somewhat misleading here, for in the Eternity of Blake's mythology, each of us is fundamentally bisexual.

Within each Humanity exists a "Man" whose Emanations, both Male and Female, are the means by which Man converses with Man and Man is united with Man (J 88.3-11). The Emanation, a term that Blake probably gleaned from the Cabbalah, means literally, "to flow forth from a source." In the Cabbalah the term is used to designate the creation of the spiritual essence of the universe from God as opposed to a creation out of nothing. In Eternity, "Man is adjoin'd to Man by his Emanative portion, who is Jerusalem in every individual Man" (J 44.38). The fourfold Humanity is also made up of four faculties, the Four Zoas. They are Tharmas, "the Parent power," the all-encompassing body sensations; Urizen, "the Prince of Light," the reason; Luvah, "the Prince of Love," the Emotions (Orc is one of his avatars); and Los, "the Prophet of Eternity," the creative imagination. Each of these Zoas also has an Emanation. Their names, listed in the same order as the Zoas from which they spring; Enion, Ahania, Vala, and Enitharmon.

Some of these characters will be more important than others in understanding the star imagery, and still other characters will emerge as this chapter unfolds. Of fundamental importance, however, are the concepts of the Eternal Man and Emanation. The stars help us visualize these very important "concepts" which are the "Eternal lineaments" that reveal the Human Form Divine.

In this chapter I will focus my attention on the star imagery in Milton, as both representative of the star imagery in these epics and as the most easily accessible of the poems. It is also the epic that most clearly defines the call to "virtuous action" in star imagery. In tracing the different appearances of the stars in Milton, however, I will in every case note how the same or similar meanings are presented in the other epics. The three main sections of this chapter are the three main divisions of the epic adventure in the poems: the fall, the fallen world, and the redemptive vision. We will see what the stars tell us about each.

The Fall

In these epics there are many different stories of the fall, told by all the main characters and some of the minor ones. These stories show the way the fall is viewed by the different parts of oneself. In every case one sees that the orthodox view of the fall as the sin of pride and disobedience is wrong. Man falls because he errs by building his own Selfhood in opposition to the Human Form Divine. An understanding of this fall is seen as a key to virtuous action, for within the moment of the fall one can recognize truth by distinguishing it from falsehood; one can find redemption in the recognition of error.

In Milton the central and all-encompassing event of the poem is the epic hero's fall from Eternity to the Hell of this world. Milton falls as a star into Blake's garden at Felpham and enters Blake's left foot. Los sees Milton's fall as unique in the history of mankind, for he is "one of the holy dead" who willingly returns to earth from Eternity (23.56-58). Milton willingly falls so that he can annihilate "the Selfhood of Deceit and False Forgiveness" (M 16), the Selfhood that is responsible for man's original continually occurring fall from the Living Form of the Imagination. Each person who lives in the world errs by asserting his Selfhood in this way, but the error is not recognized as responsible for the fall by any orthodox religion. In fact, this error is the very foundation of those religions. Thus it is that the Eternals who hear the Bard's Song with Milton in heaven consider the Bard's definition of this error to be blasphemy. Milton's descent and union with Blake marks a recognition of this error and results in Blake / Milton walking "forward thro' Eternity" (21.14) to build Jerusalem "In England's green & pleasant Land" (1.16).

In Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton Joseph Wittreich traces the history of what he considers to be the emblematic predecessors of this portrayal of Milton as a falling star. He notes Prometheus, Lucifer, all the appearances of falling stars in The Revelation, and Swedenborg

to support his interpretation that "the falling star represents both the embodiment of error and the source of its exposure."[1] He goes on to say that the image "fuses Blake's themes of Milton's error and self-redemption with his themes of self-redemption and the redemption of the whole society which Milton is ready to accomplish."[2] If we look at the image within the context of the poem, we will come to a similar if more imaginatively complex conclusion. By reading the star imagery as a prophetic language, we see two visions of the fall that reveal its significance, visions that are substantiated and elaborated in the other two epics.

In order to read the stars prophetically and thus to understand the full significance of Milton's fall as a star, we must begin by recognizing the star images in the Bard's Song that show Milton his errors and his path to redemption. The first star configuration is associated with the story of Satan and Palamabron, the story that dramatizes the fall; the second star configuration shows the result of this fall, the separation of the Divine Vision from man.

The cause of man's fall into error is stated clearly at the beginning of the Bard's Song:

> . . . . . Albion was slain upon his Mountains
> And in his Tent, thro' envy of Living Form, even of the
> Divine Vision,

And of the Sports of Wisdom in the Human Imagination,
Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus for ever.
(3.1-4)

The murder of the Eternal Man "thro' envy of Living Form . . . the Divine Vision . . . the Sports of Wisdom in the Human Imagination" occurs and is recounted innumerable times in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem. Each time the envy originates from a sense of separateness, from the emergence of one's reasoning power and sexuality. (The fall, thus, is reenacted each time a baby is born and grows up in this world.) The envy results in an attempt to seize power over what is perceived as separate, over the "Living Form." For Milton, the Bard clothes this story of envy slaying vision in the garment of folk-tale with the traditional theme of "exchanging roles." The star imagery associated with this story of Satan and Palamabron illustrates this usurpation of power.

In this version of the fall, Satan, who we later learn is "Urizen / Drawn down by Orc & the Shadowy Female into Generation" (10.1-2), is called "Prince of the Starry Wheels" (3.43). He is the last born son of Los and Enitharmon and is designated "the Miller of Eternity" (3.42) who is made subservient to the Great Harvest and to the labors of Rintrah, who drives the Plow that breaks the ground, and Palamabron, who follows with the harrow to break up and aereate the soil for seed and plant growth. As Satan's Mills are among the stars, so also are the plow and

harrow that work among the constellations of Jehovah. The contrast is between living and mechanical form. In Milton this contrast is expressed by Los:

> "O Satan, my youngest born, art thou not Prince of the Starry Hosts
> "And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night?
> "Art thou not Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the Woof of Locke?
> "To Mortals thy Mills seem every thing, & the Harrow of Shaddai
> "A Scheme of Human conduct invisible & incomprehensible."
> (4.9-14)

Satan is both "the Miller of Eternity" and "Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the Woof of Locke." To Newton as to all those caught in the world of mortality, the Mills of Satan seem to be all that there is, for they cannot see or comprehend the Harrow of the Almighty. The Mills grind flour for bread, "the staff of life," often a symbol for knowledge. To recognize the intellectual structure of the universe and to see these Natural Laws as the foundation of all is like taking flour to be an original food, manna from heaven. Satan is the last son of Los and Enitharmon; his Mills of Reason or Natural Law should not be seen as all powerful because they depend on the Plow and the Harrow to breathe life in the soil and to shape and seed the soil so that wheat can grow. And they depend on the Harvesters of this wheat. When one's vision stops at the Mills, however, the world is as the illuminations on Plates 4 and 6 show it

to be. The Druid trilithons of sacrifice and tyranny rule the landscape. The people themselves have become like stones except for the two weavers, on Plate 4, who weave the woof of Locke, a world that recognizes only what the senses or experiential mind perceive.

A similar passage in Jerusalem recognizes much the same thing. Jerusalem addresses Jesus:

> "Art thou alive, & livest thou for evermore? or art thou
> "Not [Nought] but a delusive shadow, a thought that liveth not?
> "Babel mocks, saying there is no God nor Son of God,
> "That Thou, O human Imagination, O Divine Body, art all
> "A delusion; but I know thee, O Lord, when Thou arisest upon
> "My weary eyes, even in this dungeon & this iron mill.
> "The Stars of Albion cruel rise; thou bindest to sweet influences,
> "For thou also sufferest with me, altho' I behold thee not."
>
> (60.52-64)

In each case, the Living Form has been made invisible by the fall, "To Mortals thy Mills seem every thing," but in Eternity these Mills of Reason, of the mechanical laws of the universe that draw the stars into "cogs tyrannic / Moving by compulsion each other" find their rightful place subservient to the Living Form of the Imagination. The moving force of the Imagination or Eden is seen, when it is seen, as "Wheel within Wheel, in Freedom revolv[ing] in harmony & peace" (J 15.18-20).

In the action of the story of Satan and Palamabron, Satan out of deceitful false pity (it appears that he

deceives himself as well as others) exchanges roles with Palamabron and drives the Harrow while Palamabron looks after the Mills. The results are disastrous. Palamabron's horses are maddened "with tormenting fury" (7.20), and when Satan compels the Gnomes, Palamabron's servants, "to curb the horses" by throwing "banks of sand / Around the fiery flaming Harrow in labyrinthine forms, / And brooks between to intersect the meadows in their course" (12.17-19), he finds himself "orb'd . . . round in concave fires, / A Hell of [his] own making" (12.22-23). Palamabron is equally unfit for Satan's work. Under his management all the servants of the Mill (the Genii) get drunk on wine, dance, and song. (One is reminded here of the drunken revelry of the sons and daughters of Los and Enitharmon in Europe, "the music of the spheres.") The end result is that Satan is thrown out of Eternity to be confined in a moony Space by Enitharmon, a "Hell" that is the world that we live in.

The immediate moral of the tale seems to be, "Every Man's Wisdom is peculiar to his own Individuality" (4.8), and as we learn later, "Individual Identities never change nor cease" (32.23), for they are our "Eternal Lineaments" (32.30). It is through a discovery of these Eternal Lineaments that each person's salvation is to be found. As regards the star imagery, there is something more particular here than just the realization that we are deluded when we only see the starry wheels of mechanical laws in the heavens

and that our delusion results from our reasoning mind usurping the power of the imagination. The star imagery, read in the full dimension of prophetic language, helps us explore our Eternal Lineaments. It does so in a figure that is similar to the image of the fearful symmetry of the tyger being forged in the Furnaces of Los in Songs of Experience.

Rintrah, Wrath, and Palamabron, Pity or Mercy, are contraries. In the Divine Vision they are not contradictory or destructive of one another, but instead are necessary for the progression that is life. The Mental Wars that are Eternity depend on the struggle between such contraries. Rintrah breaks the ground in a violent act of separation; in a world divided into two sexes an analogy to this act is copulation. Palamabron combs the soil so that air and space and a covering of dirt allow for the generation of the seed and the growth of the plant. As Rintrah's role is masculine, Palamabron's is feminine. The Biblical Harrowing of Hell by Jesus shows the spiritual dimension of this action, the bringing of Eternal Life to those condemned to Eternal Death. To Blake these contraries are operative in every imaginative act. If seen in the stars, the Plow of Wrath and the Harrow of Mercy would bind us to sweet influences, the symmetry of the tyger would not be fearful, and it would not seem a contradiction that He who made the tyger also made the lamb. The "fearful" symmetry of the tyger results from the Error and Selfhood of Satan which to Blake is a way of seeing with

the reasoning mind that is a negation and not a contrary. It is a negation because it disallows polarity and instead insists on "One King, One God, One Law" (BU 4.40), on good and evil, right and wrong, angels and devils.

Thus, in the moment of the fall our Eternal Lineaments are revealed when we recognize the contraries within us and simultaneously recognize the error of the negation of these contraries that creates our fallen world. This moment is described again and again in Blake's poetry; a star image often pictures it. In "The Tyger" one sees the moment as the self-pitying Urizenic angels (the negation) fall away to reveal the Wrath of the tyger and Lucifer (one contrary) together with the compassionate guardian angels and the lamb (another contrary) in the furnaces of the stars. In Milton the whole of the story of Satan and Palamabron, which is just such a moment, takes place among the stars so that when Leutha describes the Fall she sees it as a third part of the stars being drawn from Heaven by Satan as in Revelation 12.14 (M 12.25-56). Satan's negating self-pity has separated wrath from pity. This negating world of wrath and self-pity falls as a third of the stars, but the contraries, Rintrah and Palamabron, are left with Los to keep the Divine Vision "in time of Trouble" (J 95.17). When Milton hears this story of Satan and Palamabron as it is sung by the Bard in Eternity, he knows immediately that he is that Satan. In his works and his life he has

sacrificed Vision to a Negating Reason and Religion. Thus, he puts off the robe of promise and the oath of God, garments with which he was clothed in Eternity (M 16 and 15.13), and steps naked into "the Hells, my Furnaces" (M 14.32) by becoming a Star. The moment of his fall as a star into Blake's garden encompasses the entire epic adventure of the poem in which his negation is cast off and he is united once again with the emanation that is his contrary.

Thus it is that a realization of the story of the fall in the star imagery reveals both the negation that makes up the starry wheels of the fallen world outside of man and the contraries that eternally define the individual in the creative furnaces within him. If the negation can be annihilated, then man is free to realize the Eternal vision of his Humanity.

The second star configuration in the Bard's Song presents a picture of the fallen world that is built by Satan, the negation of man, a world where man has been separated from the Divine Vision.

> All things begin & end in Albion's ancient Druid rocky shore:
> But now the Starry Heavens are fled from the mighty limbs of Albion.
>
> (M 6.25-26)

The picture of this fallen world that appears immediately below these lines on Plate 6 shows a huge Druid trilithon on a rocky landscape with a tiny horseman beneath it. Five

or eight stars (depending on the copy) and a waning moon in a late phase appear in the night sky. One of the stars is "caught" in the arch of the trilithon. In the foreground a tiny shepherd appears with his flock, the flock resembling the rocks of the landscape. This picture of the fallen world tells Milton that the "limbs" of Albion (this earth, England, our bodies) have become a huge Druid stone trilithon, built to measure and control the natural universe and to sacrifice man's humanity to its law and religion.

The Druids, according to Blake, were not confined to England but were practitioners of natural religion involving star calculation and worship, and human sacrifice in every land. We know that this was a current idea during Blake's time.[3] Farfetched as the idea may seem, the work of Mircea Eliade would support this view of the Druids, at least as it is imaginatively conceived by Blake. In The Forge and the Crucible Eliade demonstrates that primitive societies, in evolving from the idea of creatio ex nihilo to the concept of creation by hierogamy, act out this hierogamy in blood sacrifice so that "the stage [is] reached where creation or fabrication [are] inconceivable without previous sacrifice."[4] He goes on to cite an example of this: "During building rites . . . the 'life' or 'soul' of the victim is transferred into the building itself; the building becomes the body, structurally speaking, of the sacrificed victim."[5] In other words, what Blake calls "the Druids" has been historically

a part of the social evolution of man in many different countries.

Blake is also saying that the Druids continue today. Blake's picture seems to record how a religion that began with shepherds drawing pictures in the night sky, "as the Plowman or Artificer or Shepherd / While in the labours of his Calling sends his Thought abroad / To labour in the ocean or in the starry heaven" (M 39.54-56), culminated in a stony religion of human sacrifice, a religion that is not past, but that has reached even more horrid proportions through the support of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, the scientist or philosopher who sees the measurement and control of the natural world as his goal. One sees the horseman, the traveller, dwarfed by the huge trilithon, which is the "limbs of Albion"; the structure has become the body, a body extended by mind in the star religions and by machines in this modern world in an attempt to predict and control human destiny. The attempt appears to be "successful" as Albion, our humanity, has fallen into a stony, drugged sleep:

> . . . . . Milton saw Albion upon the Rock of Ages,
> Deadly pale outstretch'd and snowy cold, storm cover'd,
> A Giant form of perfect beauty outstretch'd on the rock
> In solemn death . . . . . .
> (M 18.36-38)

In the copies where five stars appear on Plate 6, one sees the stars as the five visible planets that represent the five senses as the restricted vision of the Druid world.

When eight stars appear, one sees the star that is caught by the trilithon as Milton himself. When he descends to earth to "reclaim the Hells my Furnaces," he becomes the Eighth Starry One. The picture then not only illustrates the fallen world of the Bard's Song but also tells Milton that even though he is in heaven, he is not free from this world for " . . . the Nations still / Follow after the detestable Gods of Priam, in pomp / Of warlike selfhood contradicting and blaspheming" (M 14.14-16). He must descend to this world to annihilate this selfhood in himself, for it is only by annihilating this selfhood in oneself that it can be eradicated from the world.

This image of the stars separated from man as a dramatic sign of the result of the fall first appears in Blake's poetry in the Abbé's speech in The French Revolution (1791). The image is based on the Cabbalistic tradition of Adam Kadmon, "a tradition," as Blake himself defined it, "that Man anciently contained in his mighty limbs all things in Heaven and Earth . . . 'But now the Starry Heavens are fled from the mighty limbs of Albion'" (J 27). Throughout The Four Zoas and Jerusalem this separation is described as a gradual process that occurs in stages. As such, the imagery allows the reader to glimpse or to imagine what it would be like if the stars were not far away from us in the heavens. Likewise, the imagery in Milton that shows the epic hero bringing the star world back down to earth and

literally being reunited with the limbs of man by entering Blake's left foot, shows our imagination that this union of stars and man exists here in the present for those who have the eyes and the courage to see.

As the first vision of the fall in the Bard's Song as read in the stars shows us the error of negation falling away from the Eternal lineaments of the contraries, so the second vision of the separation of the stars from man ultimately turns this vision into a path of redemption by showing the distinction between States and Individuals. The Seven Angels of the Presence instruct Milton concerning the difference between States and Individuals; in Jerusalem it is Erin who gives this instruction to the Daughters of Beulah:

> "Learn therefore, O Sisters, to distinguish the Eternal Human
> "That walks about among the stones of fire in bliss & woe
> "Alternate, from those States or Worlds in which the Spirit travels."
>
> (49.72-74)

If we look closely at some of the imagery in the three epics that tells of the separation of the stars from man, we will discover just how this distinction is realized.

Two pictures from Jerusalem are perhaps the best indication of the complex series of star images concerning the separation of the stars from Albion in that poem. On the title page, Jerusalem appears as a moth with three-fold

wings containing the sun, the moon, and the stars. This beautiful image is sexually alluring as the soft outlines of Jerusalem's body seem to fade into the "universe of starry majesty" on the wings. In marked contrast, on Plate 25, Albion, with sun, moon, and stars drawn on the skin of his naked body, is being tortured by the three females who surround him. He is being disemboweled as a victim of Druid sacrifice. An angry sun appears on his right thigh; a waning moon, on his left. The Pleiades, this time with seven stars, is just below the moon; the three stars of Orion's belt mark his waist. One large star appears on his right shoulder; another, on his right knee.

In Eternity Jerusalem, the Emanation, is the part of Man that joins him together with others; in our world of Experience she is called Liberty. When the Divine Vision is denied, this Emanation separates from Man and, like her picture on the title page, fades away into the natural universe. In the poem, Albion turns away from the Divine Vision and attempts to hide Jerusalem inside him. At the same time, he denies that she exists and clothes himself in the fallen universe of Vala (J 34.2-9).[6] In doing this, he has separated the soul or the mind from the body. Thus, when the sacrifice of Albion by his cruel daughters is described in the text of the poem, we discover that there are two garments of starry majesty. The outer garment they take whole from him (this is the starry universe of Vala

that they wish to preserve); the inner garment "they cut asunder . . . searching with / Their cruel fingers for his heart, & there they enter in pomp, / In many tears, & there they erect a temple & an altar" (J 66.27-29). The end result of their cruel sacrifice of Albion is described as follows:

> The Stars flee remote; the heaven is iron, the earth is sulphur,
> And all the mountains & hills shrink up like a withering gourd
> As the Senses of Men shrink together under the Knife of flint.
>
> (J 66.81-83)

His inner vision has been torn asunder and replaced by their religion that turns all vision outward. His outer garment has been removed far distant, and yet, at the same time, is "the groveling root" that is now his body. It appears that the stars that flee remote are the stars of both Jerusalem and Vala, of both inner and outer vision.

Erin, interpreted by Damon as "the purity and holiness of the body,"[7] sees the stars on Albion's body as "terrible surfaces" that "are beginning to form Heavens & Hells in immense / Circle, the Hells for food to the Heavens" (J 49.60-62). She asks that these surfaces be removed so that Albion can be redeemed. Erin encloses these stars in a Rainbow, after they have been removed and have become the Wheels of Albion's Sons (50.22), as a promise of this redemption and as a place of protection for Jerusalem.

The separation of the stars from man brought on by the Selfhood differs from the separation advocated by Erin. In the first separation, as Erin herself explains, the Selfhood withers the Human Form so that the senses no longer perceive Eternity. It then creates a heaven out of its own Selfhood "in which all shall be pure & holy / . . . in Natural Selfish Chastity to banish Pity / And dear Mutual Forgiveness . . ." (J 49.27-29). It is this surface of a false heaven that she wishes to remove from Albion so that these negating worlds, these errors, can be created into States. They are created into States by enclosing them in the rainbow of forgiveness, an action that is illustrated on Plate 14. This means that man's fallen perceptions that enslave him in a world created by the errors of his own Selfhood are freed by a vision of the continual forgiveness of sin which to Blake is the power of the imagination, the power that allows us to distinguish between our own individuality and the errors that we fall into.

Three passages from The Four Zoas show three different star worlds: the world of Tharmas; the world of Urizen before the separation; and the world of Urizen and Los after the separation but before Orc has been subdued. In each case the imagery challenges our imagination to picture what it was like before the stars were completely separated from the earth. If the imagery is successful, then we realize stages in our own psychological and emotional lives when we

were not separated from the stars as we now are. Blake would see these stages as states of innocence or experience that allow for true imaginative vision. In each case, these states are surrounded by falls into error that would negate the liberating vision.

The first image sets the stage for the other two and actually for the entire epic of The Four Zoas. It tells us that all is within the mind of man but that he is asleep and does not realize it. Los addresses Enitharmon. He is angry with her and tries to impress upon her that even though they are immortal, man has fallen away from them in sleep. He pictures their dilemma as follows:

> "Tho' in the Brain of Man we live & in his circling Nerves,
> "Tho' this bright world of all our joy is in the Human Brain
> "Where Urizen & all his Hosts hang their immortal lamps,
> "Thou ne'er shalt leave this cold expanse where wat'ry Tharmas mourns."
>
> (I.302-05)[8]

The image is very much like a riddle. The stars, the immortal lamps of Urizen's hosts, are in the Human Brain where Enitharmon--Space, the emanation of Los (Time)--lives; but as long as man is asleep and does not realize this, Enitharmon is condemned to be the cold earth below the stars "where wat'ry Tharmas mourns." The stars have not fled, but it is as if they had.

The second passage describes Los and Enitharmon in the paradisal starry world that Urizen creates, the Garden of Eden:

> For Los & Enitharmon walk'd forth on the dewy Earth
> Contracting or expanding their all flexible senses
> At will to murmur in the flowers as small as the honey bee,
> At will to stretch across the heavens & step from star to star,
> Or standing on the Earth erect, or on the stormy waves
> Driving the storms before them, or delighting in sunny beams,
> While round their heads the Elemental Gods kept harmony.
> (II.205-301)[9]

This fantastic scene causes Urizen to envy Los and Enitharmon because it fills his imagination with a lost vision of innocence that for him is in the past. Because he has seized control as shaper of the world, he cannot go back to that vision of innocence but must look forward instead to terrifying visions of futurity "in the unform'd void" (II.294).[10] To Los and Enitharmon the delight of this freedom to expand or contract "their all flexible senses" lasts but a moment. It is only a brief respite from their quarreling and from their mission to separate Ahania from Urizen. The description of their frolicsome play among the stars is followed by a song of Enitharmon in which she calls forth the nine bright spheres of harmony and celebrates the dominion of woman. As in Europe the ordering of the stars according to the will for power emerges as the shaping force of the universe: "And nine bright spheres of harmony rise round the fiery king" (II.348).[11] In their innocent play among the stars, Los and Enitharmon are like the child who wishes to explore the Land of Dreams; but as the world of

unbelief and fear keeps the child from this land, so reason and sexuality shut this world off from Los and Enitharmon.

The third passage shows Orc as he is first chained down in Urizen's fallen world, while yet his imagination is free to explore the full range of its power.

> His eyes, the lights of his large soul, contract or else expand:
> Contracted they behold the secrets of the infinite mountains,
> The veins of gold & silver & the hidden things of Vala,
> Whatever grows from its pure bud or breathes a fragrant soul:
> Expanded they behold the terrors of the Sun & Moon,
> The Elemental Planets & the orbs of eccentric fire.
> . . . . . .
> His bosom is like starry heaven expanded; all the stars
> Sing round . . . .
> (V.121-31)[12]

Here the energy of the fallen world or fallen body that was created by our reason and sexuality is still able to experience union with the cosmos, including the stars, through the senses. Later, Orc will be made subservient to Urizen who will tell him to read his book, "his" constellations in order to discover the rules of the universe (VII.90-94).[13] In the above passage, however, even though Orc is bound down in the fallen world, his bosom "like starry heaven expanded"; he is one with the stars. Orc's expansive energy here may remind us of the energy of the Abbé's vision in The French Revolution.

When Milton reunites the stars and man by literally bringing the star world back down to earth, the event is

not seen as an apocalypse that abolishes the fallen world for all time. Instead, the event is a revelation to Blake and to the reader that redemption lies along the path of Self-Annihilation. When Milton becomes the Eighth Starry One he enters a "State about to be Created, / Called Eternal Annihilation" (M 32.26-27). This act has culminative significance in Blake's star imagery. In the political prophecies we saw how the Pythagorean universe with the eight spheres represents the tyranny of a Urizenic universe where the seven planetary spheres, sometimes pictured as the sons and daughters of Los and Enitharmon, are controlled by the eighth sphere of the fixed stars. In this eighth sphere, the Demiurge Urizen fixes the devouring cycles of our lives. By becoming the Eighth Starry One, Milton changes the vision of the universe from a transcendent one of the Demiurge reigning down his influence from the empyrean to an emanative one with the creative structure of the universe coming from within man.

The seven planets and the eight spheres appear throughout Milton as the Seven Starry Ones or the Seven Angels of the Presence and the Eight Immortal Starry Ones. The Seven Angels of the Presence are also called the Seven Eyes of God and are named in all three epics: Lucifer, Moloch, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, Jehovah, and Jesus. As the Angels of the Presence, they watch over and guide mankind. Their appearances tell of the fall of the Immortal Four-fold

Humanity into the planetary worlds of Time and Space, where the Demiurge rules, and their reunion again in Jesus the Savior. As Milton sits upon the Couch of Death, Lucifer instructs him of this continuing cycle:

> "We are not Individuals but States, Combinations of Individuals.
> "We were Angels of the Divine Presence, & were Druids in Annandale,
> "Compell'd to combine into Form by Satan, the Spectre of Albion,
> "Who made himself a God & destroyed the Human Form Divine.
> "But the Divine Humanity & mercy gave us a Human Form
> "Because we were combin'd in Freedom & holy Brotherhood,
> "While those combin'd by Satan's Tyranny, first in blood of War
> "And Sacrifice & next in Chains of imprisonment, are Shapeless Rocks
> "Retaining only Satan's Mathematic Holiness, Length, Bredth & Highth
> . . . . . .
> "Judge then of thy own Self: thy Eternal Lineaments explore,
> "What is Eternal & what Changeable, & what Annihilable.
> . . . . . .
> "Whatever can be Created can be Annihilated: Forms cannot:
> "The Oak is cut down by the Ax, the Lamb falls by the Knife,
> "But their Forms Eternal Exist Forever. Amen. Hallelujah!
> (M 32.10-18,30-31,36-38)

The five planets, the sun, and the moon that we view in the sky above are the angels compelled to their forms by Satan (Urizen), the Demiurge, who in this fallen world is the Eighth One, the Ruler of the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, within which the other spheres are forced to revolve. This world of the Demiurge is the one worshipped by all natural religions, be they the star religion of the ancient Druids

or the materialism of today. Because it is a world without inner vision, it is necessarily a world of tyranny, war, and slavery.

The form given to the Seven Angels by the Demiurge is not the only form they receive, however, for "the Divine Humanity & Mercy gave us a Human Form." These mysterious seven who become eight with Satan in the heavenly spheres of the Demiurge also become the Eight Immortal Starry Ones when united with the Divine Vision, the Human Imagination, through the redemption of Milton: "For God himself enters Death's Door always with those that enter / And lays down in the Grave with them, in Visions of Eternity" (M 32.40-41). Thus, when Milton enters his shadow, his sleeping body, "tho' darkened and tho' walking as one walks / In sleep" (15.11) becomes an Eighth Image Divine and when he appears before Blake's cottage it is "midst the Starry Seven." The imagery tells us that the forgiving power of Jesus, the Seventh Starry One, depends on the Self-Annihilation of Man. Without this self-annihilation through which man realizes the human form divine within himself, Jesus' whole system of forgiveness of sins is just one of the starry wheels of Urizen's tyranny. With Milton, man must become the eighth starry one, an act that requires a continual struggle against error and falsehood within oneself to achieve the imaginative vision that will rebuild Jerusalem.

Milton's descent to earth marks the end of error and the beginning of this struggle. The fall, thus, becomes a moment of revelation that leads to redemption. Blake emphasizes the importance of this moment throughout the poem Milton by depicting it in a series of five plates: the title page, Plates 2, 17, 32, and 37. The pictures on these Plates and the passages that describe them make it dramatically clear that the struggle for the freedom of redemption is essentially a struggle in perception.

On the title page our epic hero stands naked, his back to us, stepping forward on his right foot into the chaos that swirls around his name and the name of Blake's poem. His right hand, five fingers stretched apart, splits his name in two and reaches beyond it into chaos. When one turns the page to Plate 2 to begin the first book it is as if Milton's five fingers become the five points of the star from which light streams down to illumine the name, Milton. Within the letters of the name appear tiny human figures, some contemplative, some somber, one a winged child who holds a star on a string like a kite. These figures seem to indicate that the rays of the descending star are life-giving as do the two giant human figures of male wheat and female grapes below. In the winged child we see the state of innocence that brings the star world close to us; Milton through his redemptive act is bringing this vision of life to all humanity.

Plates 17, 32, and 37 are actual pictures of the star falling on Blake's foot. The poem describes the event several times. One such description is as follows:

> But as a wintry globe descends precipitant thro' Beulah bursting
> With thunders loud and terrible, so Milton's shadow fell
> Precipitant, loud thund'ring into the Sea of Time and Space.
>
> Then first I saw him in the Zenith as a falling star
> Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift:
> And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enter'd there.
> (15.44-49)

The pictures present three views of this event. The first on Plate 17, just four lines high, stretches across the plate between the two stanzas quoted above. As an illustration of the event, it emphasizes the powerful impact of the descent on Blake and his "sweet Shadow of Delight" who "stood trembling by [his] side" (M 42.24-48). As the star falls on the left foot of the male figure he falls backward in a faint. The female figure turns aside, her face hidden in her hands. The male and female figures are separated by what appears to be the remains of the stone altar that had grown out of the body of the slain Abel two plates before. Among other things, this altar represents the rocky Druid religion that Milton has come down to annihilate in himself. The altar in this plate is larger and much more dilapidated than in the previous one, and the stones nearest the star seem to be melted by the heat of its descent.

The other two pictures are full-page portraits of the male figure and the falling star. The first is entitled William and shows flames, smoke, and a coal-black cloud shooting from the star. The second, the mirror image of the first, is entitled Robert and shows the figure in an other worldly blue star-light. Robert, Blake's younger brother, died as a young man after the two of them had experimented several years together on different engraving processes. Soon after Robert's death, he appeared to Blake in a dream and gave him the details for the engraving process that Blake then used on his illuminated poems. As these two pictures show, Robert, though in Eternity, was considered by Blake to be one with him throughout his life. The pictures also show, with dramatic clarity, Blake's understanding of eternity existing within a moment of time. Later in the text Blake describes this moment:

> Terror struck in the Vale I stood at that immortal sound.
> My bones trembled, I fell outstretch'd upon the path
> A moment, & my Soul return'd into its mortal state
> To Resurrection & Judgment in the Vegetable Body,
> And my sweet Shadow of Delight stood trembling by my side.
> (42.24-28)

Blake also says that he did not realize what happened to him in the garden when he saw the "vast breach of Milton's descent" until much later.

> . . . I knew not that it was Milton, for man cannot know
> What passes in his members till periods of Space & Time

Reveal the secrets of Eternity: for more extensive
Than any other things are Man's earthly lineaments.
(21.4-11)

It is significant that Blake comes "to know" his revelation through the periods of Space and Time that make up our earthly lives and that this knowledge is linked to his "extensive" earthly lineaments. What we are seeing here in Milton's descent as a falling star is what the star imagery has been telling us all along: our fall into this world with "starry floor" and "wat'ry shore" is actually our path to Eternity.

When the star falls, "all this Vegetable World appear[s] on [Blake's] left Foot / As a bright sandal form'd immortal of precious stones & gold" (M 21.12-13). With this sandal on his foot, Blake walks forward into Eternity. We recognize these precious stones as the jewels on the back of the serpent energy of the natural universe, jewels that were placed in the heavens as stars at the fall. This whole vegetable universe is, thus, pictured as a starry floor; if we would only realize it as such the fall would free us instead of imprisoning us. The struggle for this freedom and for the harmony and peace that it brings becomes essentially a struggle in perception. Whether one sees the stars as the imprisoning fallen world or the redemptive imaginative world depends on a whole complex of circumstances and emotional and psychological concerns that Blake

explores in these epics. The epics are designed to move the reader to the virtuous action of Blake and Milton, and just as the stars mark the path in this central moment in Milton so they continue to do so throughout these works.

In the remaining two sections we will follow the epic adventure of these poems along this pathway marked by the stars. We will discover that the difference between the fallen world and the Human Form Divine is the difference between measuring the Void between the stars with the Spectre and seeing the stars themselves with Los.

The Fallen World: The Void Between the Stars

We have discussed the revelatory power of Milton's union with Blake as a falling star and thereby discovered that the fall is a path to redemption, a path that can be traced in the stars. We have not yet examined two simultaneous occurrences that indicate the distinctions in perception that must be made as one journeys along this path. The first occurrence is the black cloud "redounding" from Blake's foot as the star falls. Both the full-page picture of Blake on Plate 32 and the text tell us of this. The black cloud is Milton's shadow, a body that he must enter when he falls into this world. In the epic journey to redemption it is shown to be a delusive covering over the Eternal vision that negates this vision but that appears to be "reality." The second occurrence is the appearance of

Los who stands behind Blake as "a terrible flaming Sun" and binds on the sandal of precious jewels and stones with him. We are told of this union of Los and Blake in the text (M 22.4-26), and in a full-page illumination (M 47). When Los and Blake journey together to Golgonooza, Los's City of Art, they are met by Rintrah and Palamabron who see the vegetable world on Los's foot not as a world of precious jewels and stones but as the black shadow. What we ultimately discover in the star imagery are the distinctions that must be made between seeing the shadow and seeing Los's vision of the Eternal flaming sun. In Jerusalem Blake expresses it most succinctly: "Los reads the Stars of Albion, the Spectre reads the Voids / Between the Stars among the arches of Albion's Tomb sublime" (91.36-37). In the epic adventure itself, in Blake's poetry and, one would conclude, in life, it is not always clear how one distinguishes between shadow and vision and what one sees in each case. The last two sections of this chapter are an attempt to map out these distinctions as they are made in the epic poetry. First, we will look at the shadow of the fallen world as it is seen in the heavens above us.

Peter Fisher has observed that "Blake does not suggest that the state of Generation into which man is born is itself a dream, but that man is a dreamer in it, and he makes a dream out of it."[14] This dream of generation is the shade that is woven over the baby's head in the lullaby of "The

Cradle Song." In our discussion of the dream worlds, one, associated with the stars, offered visions with transformative power; the other, a shadowy world without stars, wove the soul into the dark confines of generation. Similar distinctions are made in the epic poetry in the presentation of the dream that is our vision of reality in this fallen world. This dream is projected on the sky which is "an immortal Tent" (M 29.4) built around our vision by Los and his sons to limit infinity for our redemption. If one sees the shadow, with the stars appearing as points to mark the boundaries of these shadows, then he sees the imprisoning dreams of Generation and Ulro. If one not only sees the stars but enters them in his imagination, his vision is transformed and the covering shadow falls away.

When Milton descends into Blake's garden his shadow is revealed to be the Covering Cherub. Blake uses this symbol as early as The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (14) to denote the delusory vision of Nature that keeps man from the Tree of Eternal Life. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell the symbol refers directly to the Angel with flaming sword who guards the Tree of Life after Adam and Eve have been expelled from the Garden of Eden. As the symbol is developed in Milton, The Four Zoas, and Jerusalem, it more visibly becomes the "cherub that covereth" in Ezekiel 28.13-16. In the passage from Ezekiel the prophet addresses the King of Tyrus who has set himself up as God. To Blake the

address refers to all people or churches who have fallen into error by setting up the Selfhood as God; for truth is thus allegorized into Moral virtue as defined by the Selfhood, and true prophetic vision that depends on the progression of contraries and that must reside in each individual is negated. We will remember that Blake begins Milton with a quote from Moses: "Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets" (1.17). The passage from Ezekiel reads as follows:

> Thou hast been in Eden in the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering . . . . . .
> Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.
> Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.
> By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Blake's symbol of the Covering Cherub, which is elaborately described towards the end of Milton as containing the twenty-seven Churches and Heavens of Beulah, the twelve Gods of Ulro, and the forty-eight constellations that mark the heads of the mysterious Polypus, dramatically reveals the night sky as an image of the negating shadow in all its dimensions. I would like to discuss each of these dimensions in turn: the twelve Gods of Ulro, the starry wheels of mechanical abstract form; the Polypus of Generation, the

amorphous vegetable body without mind; and the twenty-seven Heavens and Churches of Beulah, the fixing of vision into States that results in tyranny for those who fail to distinguish these States from Individuals and in redemption for those who do.

The twelve Gods of Ulro who are identified as Satan (M 37.60) are seen in the night sky as the twelve signs of the Zodiac. In Blake's prophetic language they connect with the circle of destiny, the sphere of the fixed stars which Urizen draws around the Universe and from which he looks out in envy and despair. In the political prophecies and in Milton we have seen how Urizen is identified with the eighth or ninth sphere (depending on whether or not you count the earth) of the fixed stars while Los and Enitharmon are identified with the spheres of the seven wandering "planets." This identification continues throughout the epics culminating in Jerusalem with the starry wheels of Albion's twelve sons, who are under the tyrannical rule of the Reasoning Spectre or Urizen, revolving as the constellations of the Zodiac above the seven furnaces of Los:

> The Starry Wheels revolv'd heavily over the Furnaces,
> Drawing Jerusalem in anguish of maternal love
> . . . . . .
> O what avail the loves & tears of Beulah's lovely Daughters!
> They hold the Immortal Form in gentle bands & tender tears,
> But all within is open'd into the deeps of Enuthon Benython,

> A dark and unknown night, indefinite, unmeasurable,
> without end,
> Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination
> (Which is the Divine Body of the Lord Jesus, blessed for
> ever),
> And there Jerusalem wanders with Vala upon the mountains,
> Attracted by the revolutions of those Wheels . . . . . .
> (5.46-47,53-60)

In this passage we see a definitive picture of the starry wheels. They appear in the "indefinite, unmeasurable" void that opens within the Eternal Man when Urizen tries to seize control and man falls from unity. The revolution of their wheels, which structures all according to an unending circle of opposition and annihilation, attracts both the soul (Jerusalem) and the body, the natural world (Vala). Accordingly, these wheels become the foundation of both religion and science, yet they are delusions because they measure the void that closes up the light of the Eternal Sun into the stars of the constellations.

In all three epics the starry wheels function to reduce the human to a negation, to the void, by abstraction. This power of abstraction is to Blake the basic mode of operation of the reasoning faculty in the fallen world. In Blake's mythology there are four levels or states of existence: Eden, Beulah, Generation, and Ulro. In these epics the starry wheels of abstraction pull man's perception from the higher dimensions to the lower ones, until he is locked in the stony, one-dimensional world of single vision. For example, in Jerusalem we are told how the abstraction of the

starry wheels divides the Sixteen Sons of Jerusalem who live in fourfold Eden into the Twelve Sons of Albion, thus reducing the world to three dimensions (74.23-27). By moving from fourfold to threefold, from Eden to Beulah, the fourth dimension which becomes the transformative power of Los (Time) in our fallen world is lost, and man is caught in a three-dimensional world of length, breadth, and height where abstraction is inevitable. In The Four Zoas Urizen falls first into a threefold starry world of Beulah, then into a twofold world of opposition and logic, and finally into the stony world of negation, Single vision, and Newton's sleep. At each stage, the starry wheels mark his fall. In Milton and Jerusalem the starry wheels of abstraction alter man's sexual identity by drawing the fourfold into the threefold, the threefold into the twofold. In Milton it is in Satan's Starry Mills that men take "their sexual texture, woven; / The Sexual is Threefold; the Human is Fourfold" (4.4-5). Likewise, in Jerusalem (18.39-46) Albion lies outstretched beyond the Night of Beulah while the Starry Wheels turn in his loins, absorbing him into the Polypus of the vegetative world of Generation; he has fallen from threefold to twofold in his sexuality.

At the beginning of the last chapter of Jerusalem the sun is described as a "Wheel of fire" that "devour[s] all things in its loud / Fury & thundering course" (77.2-6) as it makes its annual path, the ecliptic, from west to east

through the starry wheels of the Zodiac. The discovery of this movement was one of the first astronomical achievements and "led man to an understanding of the motions of the earth--the spinning that brings us night and day, the journey around the sun that gives us the seasons, and the wobbling that accounts for a succession of pole stars."[15] In Milton Blake takes issue with this "understanding": "As of a Globe rolling thro' Voidness, it is a delusion of Ulro" (29.15-16). The sun, the source of our vision in this fallen world, moving through the abstracting starry wheels "against the current of Creation" (J 77.5-6) symbolizes for Blake "Natural Religion" which is in actuality a denial of the Nature which Jesus creates "from his fiery Law / By self-denial & forgiveness of Sin" (J 77.20-22).

The twelve Gods of Ulro, who are united in Satan who is the God of this world, are Gods of Abstract Religious Laws. To Blake, they are quite literally the Gods of this world because it is the worship of the abstracting reasoning faculty that has created the world that we live in. Thus the starry wheels of abstraction are the raison d'être of the Covering Cherub that shadows the heavens.

As the starry wheels of the Zodiac reflect the abstract mind that revolves within us and reduces all to a void of doubt, despair, and death, shrinking Man himself "Into a little root a fathom long" (J 77.7), the forty-eight constellations that move across the heavens with the Zodiac

are the Polypus, "Forty-eight deformed Human Wonders of the Almighty" (M 37.54). They are the vegetated man that results from the grinding wheels of abstraction, a body with no thought or vision. The starry wheels separate the mind from the body but pull the body along with them in their revolutions into the void.

It is instructive to our understanding of Blake's prophetic language to read in Milton that "every Man born is joined / Within into One mighty Polypus, and this Polypus is Orc" (29.30-31). In the political prophecies and in The Four Zoas we saw how the energy of the body, which is Orc, is chained down in Urizen's world by Los and Enitharmon. The results are the revolutionary cycles of dark and light, of tyranny and rebellion that make up both our natural and social history. Orc, as Los's son, gives energy and movement to Urizen's dead world of Ulro, but, contrarily, Orc himself is vegetated away from the human by the abstract ratio of Urizen. Orc becomes a serpent in The Four Zoas and is made to climb up into Urizen's Tree of Mystery, Urizen's constellations, in order to draw the human into submission to the Law. In this form Orc is the vegetative body, but he is also Luvah, the emotions, without Los, the imagination. As such, he is very much like Los's description of what man is without his furnaces of transformation, "a Polypus of soft affections without Thought or Vision, [which] tremble[s] in the Heavens & Earths thro' all the

Ulro space" (M 24.37). At times in Jerusalem, this serpent (Orc) seems to merge with the Tree of Mystery to become "a mighty Polypus nam'd Albion's Tree" (66.47), a "Polypus of Death" that "wither[s] the Human Form by Laws of Sacrifice for Sin" (49.24).

As it appears with or in the Covering Cherub when Milton descends, this Polypus is described as follows:

> And the Forty-eight Starry Regions are Cities of the Levites,
> The Heads of the Great Polypus, Four-fold twelve enormity,
> In mighty & mysterious comingling, enemy with enemy,
> Woven by Urizen into Sexes from his mantle of years.
> (M 38.1-4)

It may surprise us at first to see the Polypus that we have come to identify with the twofold world of generation referred to as a "Four-fold twelve enormity." But when we also see that the Heads of this Great Polypus are the Cities of the Levites, the priests of Israel, descendents of Levi, who "were not assigned a separate tract of land, but were given forty-eight cities of refuge scattered through the lands of the others,"[16] we recognize that the "Four-fold twelve" is a parody of the fourfold sons of Jerusalem who are sixteen in Eternity. It is fourfold as the elements are fourfold. As what might be considered an illustration of this, the drawing of a star whose tail grows into a stem appears to the side of a passage that describes the four elements:

> And all the Living Creatures of the Four Elements wail'd
> With bitter wailing; these in the aggregate are named Satan
> And Rahab; they know not of Regeneration, but only of Generation:
> The Fairies, Nymphs, Gnomes & Genii of the Four Elements,
> Unforgiving & unalterable, these cannot be Regenerated
> But must be Created, for they know only of Generation.
> (M 31.17-22)[17]

The "mighty & mysterious comingling enemy with enemy" that is seen in the Polypus is more difficult to explain. This would seem to refer to a passive state between Beulah where "contrarieties are equally true" (M 30.1) and Generation where Element opposes against Element in Corporeal Strife (M 31.24-25). We are told that this "mysterious comingling" is "woven by Urizen into sexes from his mantle of years," a reference to the evolutionary development of generation. This "mysterious comingling" also indicates the Hermaphroditic form that is described by Blake as underlying our generative nature and that characterizes the first of the three cycles of the twenty-seven churches.

Whether the Polypus is fourfold in parody of Eternity, twofold in Hermaphroditic sterility where propagation is only a sterile duplication of the Self, or twenty-sevenfold in imitation of the twenty-seven churches (M 34.40-43), it is always a "self-devouring monstrous Human Death" (M 34.43). As viewed in the Heavens, it is clearly the forty-eight constellations, divided by Blake, at one point, into the twenty-seven and twenty-one constellations of the

northern and southern skies (M 37.47-51). The constellations of the northern sky are said by Blake to be ruled by Orion, a star configuration appearing throughout Blake's poetry as the binding of man into the restrictive cycles of the Circle of Destiny. Likewise, the southern constellations are said to be ruled by Ophiuchus, a constellation that we saw in America (5) as a symbol of the fall of man into the serpentine cycles of the natural world. In all these forty-eight constellations the darkness behind the stars are the Polypus of the body of man that is pulled by the Priests that are the stars themselves, the heads of the Polypus, into the abstracting revolutions of the wheels of the Zodiac. This image reflects what the abstract reasoning power has done to the human body, its energies, its thought, its affections and its vision.

Although Blake describes Milton's Shadow, which contains the twelve Gods of Ulro, the Giant Polypus, and the twenty-seven Heavens of Beulah and their Churches, as if it is synonymous with the Covering Cherub, he also says more pointedly that "the Heavens are the Cherub" (M 37.60). In order to understand this very complex image of the Heavens and their Churches that seems to hold some precedence in the images that make up the Covering Cherub, we must first come to an understanding of the Emanation and of Beulah and their place in the mythology of these epics. The twenty-seven Heavens themselves are not star images, but they are,

I believe, symbolically visible as the phases of the moon and related in several ways to the seven "planets" which are images of the seven divine presences and the seven furnaces of Los.

As the first book of Milton is primarily concerned with delineating Milton's error of Selfhood and thus giving a understanding of the fall from his perspective, the second book tells us about the Emanation, their perception of the fall (Milton's Emanation, Ololon, is referred to as a plural entity throughout most of the poem), and Milton's apocalyptic union with this emanation. To understand the fall from Ololon's perspective is to understand Beulah.

Beulah is both the land of sweet repose from the great Mental Wars of Eternity, and the place where our Humanity falls asleep and consequently falls into the generative world. Beulah was created at the request of the Emanations, the created forms that join Man to Man in Eternity, to provide a "Temporal Habitation" (M 30.29), a "pleasant / Mild Shadow" (M 30.32-33) for rest. Because of this, Ololon feels responsible for the fallen worlds of Generation and Ulro:

> ". . . . . how is this thing, this Newtonian Phantasm,
> . . . . . .
> "This Natural Religion, this impossible absurdity?
> "Is Ololon the cause of this? O where shall I hide my face?
> "These tears fall for the little ones, the Children of Jerusalem,
> "Lest they be annihilated in thy annihilation."
> (M 40.11-16)

Milton answers her with a powerful call to action that throws aside despair. He tells her that "All that can be annihilated must be annihilated" (40.30), that their task is to annihilate the negation so that they can once again be contraries, that part of this negation is the sexual garments, and that these must be wholly "purge[d] away with Fire / Till Generation is swallow'd up in Regeneration" (41.27-68). Beulah is not the cause; the Emanation is not the cause; the negation is the cause. Thus, Blake's vision of Eternity is clearly revealed to include "the Temporal Habitation" of the moony spaces of Beulah.

Ironically, the nontemporal "heaven" of orthodox religion is just such a place of pleasant rest and passivity. To Blake, however, the infinite realm of Eternity is one where the activities of War (struggle) and Hunting (discovery) are embraced "in fury of Poetic Inspiration, / To build the Universe stupendous, Mental forms Creating" (M 30.19-20). These "heavens" of Beulah are errors controlled by the Churches that cover the vision of Eternity. Blake would have us rediscover these "heavens" as "temporal habitations" or States that are visions in a dream that reflects the Eternal struggles of our Poetic Imagination, visions that provide a place for our Imagination to rest. As the Eternal Sun represents this fiery Intellectual life of Eden, so the moon in its cyclical phases represents these temporal habitations or heavens of Beulah. Eden and Beulah

are contraries. In some ways, the myth of Beulah here is not unlike the myth of Endymion where the moon represents the Sleep that takes the place of Death.

The twenty-seven churches are named twice in Blake's poetry in Milton 37.35-43 and Jerusalem 75.10-26. Kathleen Raine tells us that the general pattern for these churches comes from Swedenborg and Boehme (Swedenborg was, of course, himself influenced by Boehme).[18] Swedenborg describes four churches, but he subdivides the fourth of these, the Christian, into five. He calls them "heavens" because they describe man's inner vision that is then projected on the world. Boehme describes seven churches.[19] Blake's twenty-seven churches, beginning with Adam and ending with Luther, with the first nine representing the Hermaphroditic, the second nine, the Male hidden in the Female (Moral Law), and the last nine, the Female hidden in the Male (Religion hidden in War), seem from our historical perspective to be made up almost entirely of error. This error is one dimension of the lunar cycle as Blake sees it, the dimension that is seen on each of the twenty-seven consecutive nights in the heavens above (the twenty-eighth phase between the cycles being invisible). The other dimension of the lunar cycle is found in the Lark's flight each morning at sunrise, the dimension of redemption. Let us look closely at two magnificent passages about the Larks in Milton to see how this prophetic vision is presented.

We first meet the Lark, "Los's messenger thro' the twenty-seven Churches" (M 35.63) in the Song of the Birds near the beginning of the second book of Milton:

> The Lark sitting upon his earthy bed, just as the morn
> Appears, listens silent; then springing from the waving
> Cornfield, loud
> He leads the Choir of Day: trill, trill, trill, trill,
> Mounting upon the wings of light into the Great Expanse,
> Reechoing against the lovely blue & shining heavenly
> Shell,
> His little throat labours with inspiration; every feather
> On throat & breast & wings vibrates with the effluence
> Divine.
>
> (31.29-38)

The body of this tiny Lark which has been given to him by Los as a defining line around the Divine Vision is clearly a vehicle of this Divine Vision and nothing less. We may remember a similar observation that is made in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (6): "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight clos'd by your senses five."

When the Lark's morning flight and song are described a second time in Milton they mark Ololon's descent and reveal the relation between the Lark and the twenty-seven churches and heavens.

> Just at the place to where the Lark mounts is a Crystal
> Gate:
> It is the entrance of the First Heaven, named Luther; for
> The Lark is Los's Messenger thro' the twenty-seven Churches
> That the Seven Eyes of God, who walk even to Satan's Seat
> Thro' all the Twenty-seven Heavens, may not slumber nor
> sleep.
> . . . . . .

When on the highest lift of his light pinions he arrives
At that bright Gate, another Lark meets him, & back to back
They touch their pinions, tip tip, and each descend
To their respective Earths & there all night consult
with Angels
Of Providence & with the Eyes of God all night in slumbers
Inspired, & at the dawn of day send out another Lark
Into another Heaven to carry news upon his wings.
Thus are the Messengers dispatch'd till they reach the
Earth again.
In the East Gate of Golgonooza, & the Twenty-eighth bright
Lark met the Female Ololon descending into my Garden.
(35.61-36.10)

The Gate into the heavens is made of crystal for the moon is the first "planet" of the crystal spheres. The first heaven that the Lark enters is here named Luther, the last of the twenty-seven heavens listed. We are told in Jerusalem that "where Luther ends Adam begins again in Eternal Circle" (75.24), a statement that is certainly true of the lunar cycle, and when applied here suggests that we are still in the phase of Luther and are about to pass again into the phase of Adam to begin the cycle anew. We are told that the purpose of the Lark's flight through the twenty-seven heavens is to keep the Seven Eyes of God, who have, at times, been identified with the seven "planets" as the Seven Starry Ones, from falling asleep. Then it is made clear that this is the daytime mission of the Larks, for nights are spent in consultation with Angels of Providence and in inspired slumbers with the Eyes of God.

The redemptive role of the Larks is clear. They preserve the visionary cycle of Eden and Beulah in this

fallen world. In the day, a Lark fills whichever heaven is in phase with song to keep the Divine Vision awake. At night they rest with angels and the divine presences in dreams of vision. Much of the experience described here is ineffable. The images reveal truth that is difficult to translate into words; for example, the beautiful image of reflection, "They touch their pinions, tip tip," tells us something of Beulah where individuals are joined as one image for a moment before the different states that they inhabit separate them. One realizes that there is no easy gloss in Blake's prophetic language. One cannot say that the twenty-seven heavens are synonymous with the phases of the moon. Nonetheless, a meaningful correspondence is there. On the immortal Tent of the sky it is the phases of the moon at night and the flight of the Lark in the day that create images (the Lark mainly an auditory one) that indicate the existence of the twenty-seven heavens to us.

This imagery reaches its climax when the twenty-eighth bright Lark meets Ololon as she descends into Blake's garden. We are later told that Ololon descends as "a Moony Ark . . . / In clouds of blood, in streams of gore, with dreadful thunderings / Into the Fires of Intellect" (42.7-9). The Moony Ark is the crescent or New Moon.[20] Ololon's descent marks the beginning of a new lunar cycle. The apocalyptic signs that accompany her descent and the Truth that has been revealed to both Milton and Ololon would

indicate that this new cycle may be free from the errors of the past cycles.

Thus, this last image of the Shadow in the night sky, the twenty-seven heavens, seen as the twenty-seven visible phases of the moon, reveals a redemptive as well as an imprisoning vision. This is not surprising for in Blake's earliest poems we learned of the dual function of Beulah, the moony land of Shadows. As we examine the redemptive vision of the stars in the next section, we will discover that the furnaces of transformation appear both in the stars of the forty-eight constellations and as the seven planetary spheres. Most importantly, however, they are to be found within us.

The Redemptive Vision: The Stars Themselves

Los's vision of the stars and the natural world is one that shows us precious jewels and stones instead of shadow. As he binds on the sandal of precious jewels and stones with Blake, he appears as "a terrible flaming Sun." This is the Eternal Sun that was the stars before their light was shut down and fragmented by the Void that came into existence with the fall. This Eternal Sun is related to the blood-red sun of inner vision that we saw in the political prophecies, for it is by seeing with this sun of inner vision that is forged in the furnaces of Los that the Eternal Sun is once again realized. In The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem,

Los, as Eternal prophet, takes on a major role in man's epic journey to redemption. He not only exhorts us to take action but he also unites us in the Imagination and shows us the way. The way that he shows is essentially a realization that the furnaces of creation and transformation are within us.

Los's furnaces are imaged in the night sky as early as "The Tyger" where they are the stars that throw down their spears when the tyger is created. In The Four Zoas the furnaces belong first to Urizen who uses them to shape his starry world before the flood (FZ II.135-286)[21] and then to Los who seizes the ruined furnaces after the Deluge and builds them anew (FZ IV.149-52).[22] After Los binds Urizen by working in the furnaces to shape a human body, the Finger of God touches the Seventh Furnace and puts a limit to Eternal Death (FZ IV.170-279).[23] The scenario for all this action is both somewhere among the stars and within the mind of man. The furnaces are seven in number in correspondence with the seven days of Creation in Genesis. It is not until Jerusalem that the seven furnaces are clearly identified with the seven planetary spheres. In fact, in The Four Zoas the term "the Starry Wheels" was later added to the passage where the Finger of God touches the Seventh Furnace, in such a way as to identify the Furnaces with the Starry Wheels which in Jerusalem clearly refer to the Zodiac. The full passage is as follows:

> Then wondrously the [Deep beneath del.] Starry Wheels
> felt the divine hand. Limit
> Was put to Eternal Death. Los felt the Limit & saw
> The finger of God touch the Seventh furnace in terror.
> (IV.275-77)[24]

In Milton the star that the epic hero enters as a pathway to earth is imaged as a furnace of Self-Annihilation that makes him the Eighth Starry One, and the Fires of Intellect rage around the Eight Starry Ones as Ololon descends (42.9-10), but Los's furnaces are imaged burning in the remotest caverns of the forty-eight constellations that are the Polypus (37.54-59). We will see that Los's furnaces maintain a consistent function throughout Blake's poetry; however, their location in the starry heavens, when they are imaged there at all, varies from poem to poem.

S. Foster Damon notes that Blake's presentation of Los's furnaces seems to change from one of simple image to one of symbol. He also notes a parallel evolution in Blake's understanding of the actual operation of the casting mills and their furnaces. Damon conjectures that shortly before Blake wrote the vivid description of the furnaces on Plate 6 of Milton, he must have actually witnessed casting mills in operation.[25] Damon comments:

> This new vividness of the "minute particulars" came simultaneously with a symbolizing of the whole process. The breaking up of the ore, the smelting in the furnaces, the release of the molten metal, and the casting into a new form, while the slag is discarded, represented to Blake the poetic process itself.[26]

One might conjecture further that a reading of the stars as the furnaces of creation is an image that comes readily to mind from observation and one that is supported and was supported in Blake's time by our knowledge of how the world is made out of the stuff of the stars. The more symbolic representation of the furnaces as the seven planetary spheres seems to come from an identification of the furnaces with the Seven Eyes of God. As we shall see, both readings have prophetic import in Blake's mythology.

There are several passages in Jerusalem where the furnaces are quite definitely identified with the planetary spheres. In the previous section we discussed one such passage (J 5.46-60) where a distinction seems to be made between the abstract starry wheels of the Zodiac and the furnaces that are the planetary spheres. The following passage focuses on the redemptive function of the fixing of this system. Los is speaking:

> "Yet why despair? I saw the finger of God go forth
> "Upon my Furnaces from within the Wheels of Albion's Sons,
> "Fixing their Systems permanent, by mathematic power
> "Giving a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off for ever,
> "With demonstrative Science piercing Appolyon with his own bow.
> "God is within & without: he is even in the depths of Hell!"
> (12.6-16)

Again we recognize the sphere of the fixed stars structuring the other spheres within its circle, but this time the permanent fixing of Systems by mathematic power is seen

ultimately to have a redemptive function because it gives a body to Falsehood. One might read this passage together with the passages in Milton that describe the epic hero's transformation into the Eighth Starry One, a transformation that changes "God" from transcendent to emanative, to see the fulfillment of this prophecy.

In Jerusalem the fulfillment of this prophecy does not come until Albion throws himself into the furnaces to discover that "All was Vision, all a Dream: the Furnaces became / Fountains of Living Waters flowing from the Humanity Divine" (96.36-37). This climax is prepared for, however, by the appearance of Jesus in the furnaces (60.5-9) and by the designation of the Seventh Furnace (Jesus is the Seventh Eye of God) as the place of redemption (48.44-47).

Whether the furnaces appear as seven or as the myriads of stars in the night sky, their consistent function, as Damon has stated, is the throwing off of the not Human, the dross, to reveal the Human Form Divine, the perfected metal. Los, as smithy, is a civilizing hero. In the previous section we discovered how the abstracting starry wheels reduced the dimensions of ourselves and our world from fourfold ultimately to a one-dimensional death. Los's furnaces work in just the opposite way. They create the threefold sexual out of the twofold Hermaphroditic. They build beautiful forms within man that free him from the death of the generated body:

> And every Generated Body in its inward form
> Is a garden of delight & a building of magnificence,
> Built by the Sons of Los in Bowlahoola & Allamanda.
> (M 26.31-33)

The furnaces are pictured on the Mundane Shell that Los builds around the Polypus that vegetates and petrifies "Around the Earth of Albion among the Roots of his Tree" (M 5.24). They are pictured there as the fire of stars, as the planetary spheres, or as visionary fiery heavens. They are ultimately, however, the furnaces of our own bodies where inner vision is forged. These furnaces which are invisible to "the Vegetated Mortal Eye" (J 53.5) are, nonetheless, to be found within ourselves where they transform the vision of shadow into the vision of redemption. Several passages from Milton and Jerusalem can help us understand this.

In the passage from Milton that describes Milton's Shadow as the Covering Cherub, the furnaces of Los rage in "the remotest bottoms" of caves that exist within the "Forty-eight deformed Human Wonders of the Almighty," the Polypus.

> From Star to Star, Mountains & Valleys, terrible dimension
> Stretchd out, compose the Mundane Shell, a mighty
> Incrustation
> Of Forty-eight deformed Human Wonders of the Almighty
> With Caverns whose remotest bottoms meet again beyond
> The Mundane Shell in Golgonooza, but the Fires of Los rage
> In the remotest bottoms of the Caves that none can pass
> Into Eternity that way, but all descend to Los
> In Bowlahoola & Allamanda & to Entuthon Benython.
> (37.52-59)

We do not see these furnaces when we look at the sky with

our mortal eye because the mighty incrustation of the Covering Cherub shows us instead "Forty-eight deformed Human Wonders of the Almighty" and the "Cities of the Levites, / The Heads of the Great Polypus" (38.1-2). We project onto the heavens our false understanding of God, religion, and salvation. Contrary to Blake's admonishments, we do seek our "heavenly father . . . beyond the skies / [Where] Chaos dwells & ancient Night & Og & Anak old" (M 20.32-33). With the redemptive vision of Los, however, we realize that in "the remotest bottoms" of these images is the truth that we must descend to, the furnaces within ourselves. There we must transform ourselves by putting off the negation of the selfhood and by realizing our eternal lineaments, a process that is analogous to both the digestive function of the stomach (Bowlahoola) and the smelting of metal in a furnace. If we do this we will be able to transform the imprisoning vision of the stars to a redemptive one.

The following passage from Jerusalem shows Los in his furnaces doing just that:

> Perusing Albion's Tomb in the starry characters of Og & Anak,
> To Create the lion & wolf, the bear, the tyger & ounce,
> To Create the wooly lamb & downy fowl & scaly serpent,
> The summer & winter, day & night, the sun & moon & stars,
> The tree, the plant, the flower, the rock, the stone, the metal
> Of Vegetative Nature by their hard restricting condensations.
>
> (73.15-20)

Los creates the universe in his furnaces by divine analogy.

Og and Anak are giants or gods placed by Jehovah to guard the Gates of Eternity both within (in the smallest flowers) and without (in the stars on the Mundane Shell). Los, however, looks within "the starry characters of Og & Anak" and discovers an Eternal Vision that he then recreates by divine analogy in shaping the world.

A passage from Milton describes the constellations and all of this natural universe as they are seen with the transformed vision that results from Los's labors. The constellations are no longer the Starry Wheels or the Polypus.

> Thou seest the Constellations in the deep & wondrous Night:
> They rise in order and continue their immortal courses
> Upon the mountain & in vales with harp & heavenly song,
> With flute & clarion, with cups & measures fill'd with foaming wine.
> Glitt'ring the streams reflect the Vision of Beatitude,
> And the calm Ocean joys beneath & smooths his awful waves:
> These are the Sons of Los, & these the Labourers of the Vintage.
> Thou seest the gorgeous clothed Flies that dance & sport in summer
> Upon the sunny brooks & meadows: every one the dance
> Knows in its intricate mazes of delight artful to weave:
> Each one to sound his instruments of music in the dance,
> To touch each other & recede, to cross & change & return:
> These are the Children of Los; thou seest the Trees on mountains,
> Uttering prophecies & speaking instructive words to the sons
> Of men: These are the Sons of Los: These the Visions of Eternity,
> But we see only as it were the hem of their garments
> When with our vegetable eyes we view these wondrous Visions.
> (25.66-26.12)

The redemptive vision of the stars reveals them with the shadow of negation fallen away. It requires that one go

through the furnaces of affliction, this world of experience that requires one to labor continually separating truth and falsehood. Nonetheless, when one enters these furnaces in Self-Annihilation he discovers that they are "Fountains of Living Waters" (J 96.37) where he can "bathe in the Waters of Life, to wash off the Not Human" (M 41.1). The labor is rewarded not with continual suffering as in this generated world but with a liberated vision of Eternity.

In The Four Zoas and Jerusalem the apocalypse that is prophesied in the political prophecies and in Milton is finally realized. The apocalyptic imagery of the heavenly bodies that included the Sun in "A Song of Liberty," and the Sun and the Moon in America, is joined by the stars in The Four Zoas to reveal that the true apocalypse is one of perception or vision.

> The Sun has left his blackness & has found a fresher morning,
> And the mild moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night,
> And Man walks forth from midst of the fires: the evil is all consum'd.
> His eyes behold the Angelic spheres arising night & day;
> The stars consum'd like a lamp blown out, & in their stead, behold
> The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds!
>
> (IX.825-30)[27]

Summary

In The Four Zoas, Milton, and Jerusalem, Blake's major prophetic works and his three epic poems, the stars provide

a map for the epic adventure of the hero. They tell us about the fall: how it happened and how it reveals the path to redemption; the fallen world: how it is a shadow that our fallen senses project over Eternity; and the redemptive vision: how the furnaces of self-annihilation transform our fallen vision so that we again see Eternity. In addition to providing such a map, the stars also move us to the virtuous action of self-annihilation by the beauty of their appearance and the truth of their instruction.

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES

[1](Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 183.

[2]Ibid., p. 185.

[3]S. Foster Damon in A Blake Dictionary, pp. 108-09, explains the romanticized tales of the Druids that presented them as descendents of Noah, and that attributed all prehistoric remains throughout Europe and England to them. Blake seized upon these theories and adapted them them to his own purposes.

[4]Mircea Eliade, The Forge and the Crucible (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 31.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Erdman, J 31.

[7]Damon, p. 128.

[8]Erdman, FZ I.11.15-18.

[9]Ibid., II.34.9-15.

[10]Ibid., II.34.8.

[11]Ibid., II.34.62.

[12]Ibid., V.61.18-28.

[13]Ibid., VII[a].79.20.

[14]Fisher, p. 215.

[15]Will Kyselka and Ray Lanterman, North Star to Southern Cross (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1967), pp. 16-17.

[16]Damon, p. 239.

[17]Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, 34.

[18]Kathleen Raine, Blake and Tradition, I (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 327.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Blake also depicts the crescent or New Moon as an Ark in Jerusalem (See J 18.24.39). Nicholas O. Warner in "Blake's Moon-Ark Symbolism," Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly, 14, No. 2 (Fall 1980), 46-60, presents an interpretive analysis of Blake's depiction of this symbol throughout his work.

[21]Erdman, FZ II.28.25-33.36.

[22]Ibid., IV.51.32-35.

[23]Ibid., IV.52.20-56.27.

[24]Ibid., IV.52.23-25.

[25]Damon, p. 147.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Erdman, FZ IX.138.20-25.

"CAN SUCH AN EYE JUDGE OF THE STARS": AN EVALUATION

The Males that work at Los's furnaces ask this question about the generated mortals that they are creating among Druid Rocks (M 5.29-37). We may well ask this question of ourselves. The answer, provided by Blake's poetry, is not unless a vision of innocence and prophecy can cleanse our "doors of perception." Los's City of Golgonooza is built with this mission in mind, and the images of Blake's poetry, including, with centrality and consistency, the stars themselves, show us how to go about it.

In Blake's prophetic language the stars shine forth with the vision of Eternity. This is recognized by the child who sees them with a vision of innocence which reveals them to be divine presences that protect him with dreams and visions. This is also recognized by the prophet ("Would to God that all the Lord's People were Prophets"), who sees the stars as the key to redemption. If man can but realize the power of his imagination, he can renew the light of the Eternal Sun that is seen fragmented in the stars in the night sky. With this renewed light, the negating vision of the fallen world will, indeed, fall away, and the contrary vision of Eden and Beulah will remain.

This vision of the stars is consistently presented throughout Blake's works. As his poetic genius moves from

song, to political prophecy, to epic, the star imagery is shaped to fit purpose, but the essential meaning does not change. Blake's prophetic language and the stars as words in this language have more than one dimension. If seen in the one-dimensional world of Ulro, the stars are points which map out the void that structures the universe according to mathematics and geometry. If seen in the two-dimensional world of Generation, they are the heads of the Polypus, the body that grows but does not think or see, flames that consume but do not reveal. If seen in the three-dimensional world of Beulah, they are visions to which we aspire, possible redemptive, possibly imprisoning. It is only when they are realized in the fourfold world of Eden that the light of the stars is revealed to be the Fires of Mental Struggle where contraries live without destroying one another.

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