AN IMAGINATIVE MANIFESTO:
"THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL"
&
"MILTON"

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English

by

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"I must create a system or be enslav'd by another Mans,
I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to create".

Thus did William Blake declare his poetic intentions, and he proceeded to create an astounding body of poetry—unique, psychologically profound, and exciting to read. In order to achieve any significant understanding of Blake's poetry, however, it is essential for the reader to comprehend the fundamental element of Blake's thought: Imagination. Quite simply, "it is the human existence itself." (p. 131)

The Imagination, for Blake, is the acting and perceiving individual, and nothing can exist beyond one's creative perceptions. Everyone possesses Imagination, therefore visions of reality become a unique and relative mental process—"Every Eye sees differently. As the Eye, such the Object." (p. 634) Consequently, there are as many kinds of reality as there are men. By the word "Eye" Blake isn't only referring to the
corporeal organ; the eye is to look through, not with, hence vision is a strictly mental perception. Obviously, there are degrees of imaginative perceptions, and the more developed the Imagination, the more intense the vision of reality.

What it will be questioned when the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire Somewhat like a Guinea. O no no I see an innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy holy holy is the Lord God Almighty. (p. 555)

In the Age of Reason, Imagination was regarded as a serious intellectual affliction, prompting Dr. Johnson to write, "All power of Fancy over reason is a degree of insanity." To Blake, however, "Man is all Imagination," (p. 654) and further, the imaginative spirit is the basis for all great works of art: "The one power alone makes a poet: Imagination the divine vision." (p. 655)

The gulf between Reason and Imagination in 18th century thought was a critical one to Blake, and led to the development of his dialectic--"the two contrary states of the human soul." (p. 7) The relationships of contraries are of vital importance in Blake's system, and the separation and struggle between Reason and Imagination (and Imagination is synonymous with Energy, because "Thought is Act." (p. 612)) are the principle themes of Blake's major works.

"The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" is Blake's
manifesto presenting his dialectic conception of the mental universe, and his definition of the Imagination. An unusual combination of prose and poetry, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" is a scathing satire of conventional orthodox morality, a prophetic vision of apocalypse and a proclamation of spiritual freedom that, as the title indicates, results in a new universal unity.

The significance of the "Marriage" lies in the simplicity and clarity with which the poem embodies the major artistic principles of Blake's thought. "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," as a creative manifesto, demonstrates quite succinctly Blake's conviction that the Imagination, and the dialectic nature of the soul are essential elements of human existence. Equally important is Blake's emphasis on the role of the poet as a visionary and prophet.

Blake's brief epic, "Milton," is a masterful example of the application of the poet's imaginative manifesto set forth in the "Marriage." The frank criticism of John Milton, in plate 5 of the "Marriage" is a convenient reference point and an obvious indication of Blake's artistic expectations. These observations make the succeeding epic appropriate for examination. It is in "Milton" that Blake applies the imaginative precepts stated in the "Marriage" and skillfully weaves them into
the poem, in order to dramatically illustrate the contrary states of the soul, and most importantly, the redemption of Milton's prophetic Poetic Genius from the Puritanical errors of the historical man.

It is my intention, in this paper, to examine and define the artistic principles fundamental to Blake's work as presented in the imaginative manifesto of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." I wish to provide a clear demonstration of the application of those principles by discussing the structure, and particularly, the content of "Milton."

Examined thus, these two poems will reveal the artistic theory, and inspired poetic intentions of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," evolving into the exuberant, intense, visionary stanzas of "Milton."

In the "Marriage," Blake goes beyond the moralistic simplicities of "Good" versus "Evil" to the far more intense discipline of the imaginative, in contrast to the unimaginative, life. Blake retained the conventional labels for his dramatis personae, but ironically the Angels are representative of the unthinking (therefore unimaginative) rigid moralists, while the Devils clearly represent the dynamic, creative rebels.

The argument that prefaces the "Marriage" is an introductory poem that obliquely presents Blake's idea of
contraries as manifested in society. The cultured priests (Angels) drive "the just man into barren climes," where he (Devil) "rages in the wilds." (p. 33) Clearly a prophetic figure, the "just man" is Blake the poet, rejected by a society unwilling to heed his apocalyptic warnings. Rintrah, roaring and shaking, is symbolic of the political turmoil of Blake's day, but his appearance at the beginning and end of the Argument ironically demonstrates the cyclic "revolution-tyranny-revolution" preceding apocalypse.

In Plate 3, the theory of Blake's contraries is made explicit: "Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human Existence." (p. 34) These inherent qualities, when properly balanced, result in wisdom. If one element dominates or destroys its contrary, then the result is a negation. An imbalance between Reason and Imagination is a precise example. Reason without Imagination is sterile—Imagination without Reason is chaotic. The Songs of Innocence and Experience are Blake's most obvious illustrations of the contraries. Innocence without Experience is an undeveloped imaginative state—no progression—and Experience without Innocence is a cruel, terrifying existence. The ideal—an "organized innocence"—develops from a tension, a self-correcting
balance between the two contraries.

Acutely aware of "Rational Power," and "Bacon and Newton and Locke who teach Doubt and Experiment," (p. 201) Blake realized that the reductive nature of rationalist thought was dangerous to the Imagination. Doubt, the prerequisite for empiricism, was the cornerstone of the scientific, Urizenic process that Blake rejected. Doubt, therefore, was indicative of a loss of faith in one's own existence. Consequently, to those who doubt, Blake's unequivocal "Everything that lives is holy," will be nonsense, existence will be suspect, and the doubt becomes a suppressive, restrictive force—a negation. The individual "who doubts from what he sees will ne'er believe do what you please," precisely because he has forced his thought along Urizenic, restrictive lines.

Good and Evil are described, respectively, as the passive Reason, and the active springing from Energy, or the creative Imagination. The definition of Evil as active energy is a significant one. Blake discards the accepted notion of good and evil being separate forces, and instead, views Evil as a falling away from Good. Evil is an error, not a distinct, malignant power, and because of its imaginative origins, it can be seen as misguided Energy (repressed or hindered). For Blake, perverted Energy is preferable to passivity: "All act
is virtue." Still more to the point, Blake states, "Active Evil is better than Passive Good." (p. 581)

The voice of the Devil in Plate 4 is similar in tone and structure to Blake's two earlier companion pieces, "There is No Natural Religion," and "All Religions are One." In the "Marriage," the Devil (now associated with Energy and Imagination) lists three orthodox Christian principles concerning religion, followed by the "diabolical" contradictions. The focal point of Plate 4 is an integral part of Blake's thought. The Devil's voice is stating emphatically that "Man has no body distinct from his soul"—(p. 34) for Blake there is no dualism in existence, as Christian belief would have it (i.e., separation between God and Man; body and soul; good and evil). In our fallen world, a separation does seem to exist, but eternally all things are inextricably part of everything else. All men are part of Albion, all perception is part of a universal Poetic Genius. Energy is part of Reason, and "Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy." (p. 34) Energy, of course, as the creative, imaginative source is "Eternal Delight."

(p. 34)

Those who restrain desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.
And being restrained it by degrees becomes
passive till it is only the shadow of desire. (p. 34)

The opening lines of plates 5 and 6 are a prototype for Blake's succeeding works depicting the fall of mankind, and the negating imbalance between Reason and Imagination. Most notably, "The Book of Urizen," "Jerusalem," "The Four Zoas," and, more specifically, "Milton," all trace the fall, and the shadowing of desire in humanity. The key to Blake's vision is most clearly seen in his commentary on John Milton, and "Paradise Lost."

Blake perceives the decline of creative energy in Milton's poem, but the dynamic qualities of Satan redeem Milton's status as a true poet. Milton's error was in the complete separation of Christ and the "original archangel called Satan" resulting in "the Governor or Reason called Messiah," dominating and casting out Desire (Satan). The sterility of Reason excludes the creative power of Imagination, and the Father becomes "Destiny, the Son a ratio of the five senses and the Holy Ghost Vacuum!" (p. 35) With a cold, rationalistic Father and Son, the spiritual value of the Holy Ghost is left to no purpose.

Blake's recognition of Milton's error will prove to be a crucial point, and the final "note," a confident observation that Milton did indeed possess the fire of creative energy, and was "of the Devils party without
knowing it," (p. 35) is an accurate indication of Blake's high regard for Milton, and his concern with the perverting of Milton's Poetic Genius. Later, expanding on this theme, Blake would create "Milton," a brilliant poem that superbly encompasses the "Marriage's" principles of Imagination and the dialectic nature of the human soul, resulting, finally, in the redemption of Milton's Poetic Genius from the sterility of rationalism.

The first "Memorable Fancy," an introduction to the Proverbs of Hell, reiterates Blake's point of the intense creative energy of the artist's life--"the enjoyments of Genius" in the fires of Hell. The "mighty devil" with corroding fires is Blake himself, and the couplet is a beautiful illustration of the scope of imagination (the bird as "an immense world of delight." (p. 35)) restricted by man's fallen, inadequate "senses five."

Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" are basically a parody of the Old Testament proverbs, and serve to break down conventional moral thought. They are succinct reinforcements of the "Marriage's" premise that imaginative energy is the foundation for human existence, and of the evil nature of restraint: "He who desires but acts not, breeds Pestilence." (P. 35)

The fact that "a fool sees not the same tree a wise man sees," (p. 35) is Blake's image of the degrees in
individual imaginative perception. Because of the discrepancies in creative vision, "the tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way." (p. 677) The shocking proverb, "sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires," (p. 37) dramatically underscores the poet's belief in the virtue of action. In the same way, the allegorical "the tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction," emphasizes creative energy rather than practical, rational responses to life. Imagination is "the soul of sweet delight" (p. 36) and its "Exuberance is Beauty." (p. 37)

The divinity of humanity, to Blake, naturally includes the divinity of Imagination: "The eternal body of man is the Imagination." (p. 271) A deliberate denial or reduction of the Imagination corresponds to a denial of one's own humanity; "God only acts and Is in existing beings or Men." (p. 39) Plate 11 describes Blake's view of the restraint by degrees from the time of the "Ancient Poets" with their "enlarged and numerous senses" to the modern man who has forgotten "that All deities reside in the human breast." (p. 37) This is a restatement of Blake's vision of fallen man, and the imbalance between Reason (the attempt "to realize or abstract the mental deities") and Imagination (that "animated all sensible
The second "Memorable Fancy," a parody of the traditional banquet scene in satiric literature, provides a precise interpretation of the prophet and his function in society. "Every honest man is a Prophet he utters his opinion both of private and public matters." (p. 607)

To Blake, and discernible in his portraits of the Hebrew prophets, a firm conviction of the holiness of life, and the discovery of the infinite in everything, are the developments of the Poetic Genius. The only voice of God is the "honest indignation" of the visionary who desires to raise "other men into a perception of the infinite," (p. 38) and thereby intensify imaginative energy in the fallen world.

Blake's ultimate vision of apocalypse--when all of mankind utilizes its collective Imagination--is detailed in plate 14. The concentration of creative vitality will be so extreme that the fallen world "will be consumed and appear infinite and holy." (p. 38) This apocalyptic vision can only occur with "an improvement of sensual enjoyment." (p. 38) Not as simply hedonistic as it seems, Blake's phrase means to emphasize the necessity of expanding the five senses (keeping in mind that perception is a mental process) through a simultaneous expansion of the Imagination. If Imagination, the "door of perception,"
was clear, then man could indeed see everything "as it is, infinite."

Blake, "by printing in the infernal method," will, with his artistic creations, assist man's broadening vision, and his consciously developed Imagination will enable him to see beyond the "narrow chinks of his cavern."

Plate 15, the third "Memorable Fancy," is a continuation of the preceding plate. After the Imaginative improvement, comes the application of that creative energy. The "Printing house in Hell" is Blake's allegory for artistic creation, and demonstrates the triumph of Imagination (Eagles and Lions of fire) over the restrictive morality of the Vipers.

Blake's "Giants," symbols of creativity, are restrained by the weak-minded (that is, imaginatively deficient) according to the 49th Proverb of Hell--"the weak in courage is strong in cunning." (p. 36) In plate 16, Blake renames his dialectic--Imagination, here, is the Prolific, Reason is the Devouring--but he remains insistent on the necessity of a tension between the two contraries. "Whoever seeks to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence." (p. 39) As reconciliation connotes submission, Blake realizes that any reduction of either contrary would result in a negation. Religion attempts
to reconcile the Reason and the Imagination by practically eliminating the Imagination in man—"Is not God alone the Prolific?" (p. 39)

Jesus Christ, as the epitome of the active, creative individual, came with a sword to insure the separation of the contraries. Blake, too, in "Milton" declares his zeal to preserve the vital dialectic in human existence, that will lead to apocalypse and the visions of eternity.

I shall not cease from Mental fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In Englands green and pleasant Land. (p. 95)

The next "Memorable Fancy" is a prose rendition of the 45th Proverb of Hell: "Expect poison from the standing water." (p. 36) The Angel imposes on the poet the traditional vision of Hell, which vanishes as soon as the Angel does. The poet realizes that the horrors of Hell are merely an imposition of an orthodox, narrow-minded moralist and that the danger of such a stunted Imagination is indeed similar to standing water—it "breeds reptiles of the mind." (p. 41) In addition, Blake condemns the Angel's "eternal lot" by ridiculing rationalist philosophers (only "Analytics") as a mob of apes, snatching and picking at one another. In the closing proverb, "Opposition," seen as the carefully balanced tension between Reason and Imagination, "is true Friendship." (p. 41)
Swedenborg is Blake's target in plate 21, in addition to the parodies of the mystic's "memorable relations." The Swedish mystic and the orthodox Angels, "have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise, this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning." (p. 41) Swedenborg, initially attractive to Blake for his apocalyptic visions, eventually turned to faith in Predestination—the "Father of Destiny" that Blake abhorred.

Plate 21 clarifies Blake's point that poets, like all artists, are far superior to the individuals who with "mechanical talents" merely rework the visions of others. These unimaginative people only "borrow" from the strength of another's creative force, and the resulting work is merely "a candle in sunshine." (p. 42) This visionary capacity of artists that Blake discusses here is a vital precursor to, and a major theme of, the poem "Milton." In "Milton," Blake makes the distinction quite definite between a "mechanical" reworking and a deliberate attempt to recreate an imaginative vision that results in a rebirth of Milton's true vision in the creative imagination of Blake. Anything less of an artistic effort, in Blake's eyes, is a feeble glimmer against the Divine brilliance of creative vision.

The final "Memorable Fancy" is a prose illustration
of the proverb that ends the "Marriage." The Devil, in his "flame of fire," rises to confront the Angel on the cloud. These figures are symbolic of Blake's contraries, Reason and Imagination, and are seen in subsequent poems as the mythic characters Orc and Urizen.

God, as we have seen, only "acts and Is, through man's existence." Logically then, the worship of God is the recognition of divinity in all men, "honouring His gifts in other men each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best ..." (p. 42) In Blake's eyes, the "greatest men," worthy of honor, are the artists--those who act and are more fully than others.

The Urizenic Angel, "mastering himself," (i.e., successfully repressing his emotions) answers the Devil with the example of Jesus Christ, the sanctioner of the decalogue. The Angel's statement recalls Blake's comment that the story of the fall of man "has been adopted by both parties." The Angel's view is a gross misconception for Blake, and he later corrects the error (exemplified in "Paradise Lost") in his redemption of the poet's vision in "Milton." Here, Blake demonstrates the divinity of Christ, who embodies all that is most active and creative in man, and the impossibility of such an individual fully existing without violating the ten commandments. Jesus, divine and "all virtue" was, most importantly, an
energetic, imaginative man— he "acted from impulse, not
from rules." (p. 42) The virtue comes not from pas-
sively obeying a rigid list of regulations that is
oppressive because of its conformity, but rather from the
unrestrained imaginative vision that, like Jesus, can
perceive the forgiveness of sins. The supreme test of
Imagination is the forgiveness of sins. 5

Blake's Angel, in this final "Fancy" is apparently
enlightened, and the merging of the Devil's infernal
energy—the "flame of fire"—with the Angel, results in
Elijah, the prophet. The prophet is a synthesis of
Reason and Imagination, one who has balanced the contrary
states of the soul, and has achieved vision through an
organized innocence.

"The Song of Liberty," while not a part of the
"Marriage," was associated by Blake with it. "The Song
of Liberty" makes essentially the same case the "Marriage"
does regarding the struggle between Reason and Imagination,
only, here, from an eternal perspective. The unnamed
figures are the mythic characters that will appear in
Blake's subsequent prophetic poems.

The "Eternal Female," later known as Enitharmon,
gives birth to the "new born howling terror": Orc. Orc
is flung into the sea, evoking images of the setting sun,
and indicating the cyclic nature of Orc in the fallen
world. Urizen, the "jealous king" falls too, and resorts to promulgating "his ten commandments." Orc rises again (in the east) at the end of the poem, and destroys Urizen's restrictive code--"Stamps the stony law to dust." (p. 44)

The final apocalypse is an exhilarating vision of joy: eternal horses are freed from caves of darkness, priests and tyrants are no more, gone are the restraints and morals that poisoned man and closed off his imaginative vision; "For Everything that lives is Holy!" (p. 44) This triumphant final line appears several times in Blake's work. "America," and "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" both echo the holiness of life, and the divine individuality that renders any code of conformity unholy.

"The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," with its relatively simple structure, accessible symbolism, and clearly stated principles, is an excellent introduction to the thought of William Blake. The function of the Imagination is the cornerstone for Blake's poetry, and the relationship of Imagination to Reason is the central theme of his prophetic works.

A genuinely funny satire of 18th century thought and theology, and rich with insights, the "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" provides a clear definition of the nature and value of man's imaginative existence, and clarifies the
relationship of contraries. Both of these elements are a valuable basis for understanding the struggles represented by Blake's characters in "Milton"; for it is in the later poem that Blake synthesizes his creative prerequisites, and renders a spectacular example of the imaginative tenets of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," culminating in the magnificent visions of the redemption of Milton's, and, ultimately Blake's Poetic Genius.

Blake's recognition of John Milton, not only as one of the greatest English poets, but as an inspired prophet, is crucial to an understanding of his intentions in the epic poem "Milton." "Paradise Lost" depicts the nature of a fallen, tyrannical society, and it is implicit that the only one capable of justifying the ways of God to man is the inspired poet: the visionary or prophet. Regarding himself as the successor to the English poetic tradition, Blake endeavored to produce an epic that would unite the imaginative visions of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, and himself into a prophetic literary culture.6

As a visionary and prophet, Blake saw that "One power alone makes a poet--Imagination The Divine Vision," (p. 654) and that Milton's imagination was the real Milton. The deliberate attempt, on Blake's part, to recreate Milton's vision--as "Paradise Lost" was a deliberate re-creation of the vision of Genesis--is the
rebirth of the real, visionary Milton into the creative imagination of Blake. 7

"Milton" is a study of Milton's spiritual development, an analysis of his errors, and his relationship to Blake. While Blake respected the true imaginative impulses behind Milton's poetry, he deplored the 17th century emphasis on Reason, and the Puritan concern with morality. 8 These were central elements in Milton's thought and Blake expressed his dissatisfaction by vigorously criticizing those ideas in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell": "But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son a ratio of the 5 senses, and the Holy Ghost, vacuum!"

"The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," with its almost dogmatic insistence on the cultivating of an active Imagination, and the necessity of prophets in society, is essentially the blueprint for the dramatic action in "Milton." Here Blake exposes Milton's creative error and, cleansing the doors of perception, as directed in the "Marriage," proceeds to redeem the Imagination by vividly portraying the struggle of the contraries, and the burst of creative energy that occurs when organized innocence is achieved.

The original defect that Blake discovered was that Milton had aligned himself with the repressive, Urizenic forces of human nature: "the history of this is written
in Paradise Lost, and the Conqueror or Reason is call'd Messiah." (p. 34) In order to redeem Milton, Blake had to correct the error--Puritan morality--and reveal moral virtue in its true and hideously self-righteous form.Blake's Milton comes "to wash off the Not Human"--the decayed moral conceptions of man--and to "clothe him with Imagination."

The Preface to Blake's "Milton" makes a sharp distinction between classic literature and the "sublime of the Bible." (p. 94) The imaginative, inspired visions of the Biblical prophets are infinitely superior to the works of Homer and Plato, "Stolen and Perverted" from their original, Biblical source. Blake notes that both Shakespeare and Milton, "curbed by the general malady," failed to attain their full imaginative potentials.

The argument is directed primarily against the classicists of his own age who insisted on the artistic standards of Greece and Rome. Blake declared, however, that neither Greek nor Roman models were necessary "If we are but just and true to our own Imagination." (p. 94)

The dedicatory quatrains (now famous as a hymn entitled "Jerusalem") emphasize Blake's insistence on creative energy and Imagination. His defiant assertion that:
I will not cease from Mental Fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In Englands green and pleasant land (p. 95)
is an affirmation of the "Marriage's" definition of Energy
as "the only life," and "Eternal Delight." (p. 34)

The final quotation from Numbers "Would to God that
all the Lords people were Prophets" (p. 95) indicates that
Milton will be redeemed as a visionary prophet without the
restraints of Puritan convention and morality.

Blake's introductory argument in "Milton" is nearly
identical in tone and content with the argument that
opens "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." Both arguments
focus on the significance of the prophet and his inspired
vision. "The just man [that] rages in the wilderness," (p. 33) is the same one who staunchly declares that he
"will not cease from Mental Fight," and the apocalyptic
tone of Rintrah's roaring and shaking (in the opening and
closing lines of the "Marriage's" argument) is mirrored
in the hymn that describes the apocalyptic arrival of the
visionary with his "Bow of burning gold, and Arrows of
Desire." (p. 95)

"Milton Book the First" opens with a brief invoca-
tion, followed by the Bard's prophetic Song. Blake
invokes the Daughters of Imagination, and carefully
stresses "my right arm, and the Portals of my Brain," in
order to demonstrate that inspiration is only an aid to
the active, individual Imagination. Milton, we are told, though in Heaven, is unhappy. Seeing himself separated from his Six-fold Emanation (thought to be his three wives and three daughters) he resolves to descend into the fallen world to redeem his Emanation, and thereby restore the balance of contraries necessary for an enlightened imagination, the eventual transcendence of Beulah, and the awakening of Albion, the infinite vision of mankind.

The Bard's Song, which inspires Milton to reincarnate himself, describes the contest between Satan and Palamabron. This lengthy section, in plates 3-14, has some biographical basis, but to read "Milton," as Frye observes, "as a grotesquely overwritten account between a sulky megalomaniac and a conceited dilettante," is reducing the poem from a visionary drama that illuminates Blake's concept of the Imagination, to a futile exercise in revenge. True, Blake's relationship with his patron Hayley reached a crucial point during the composition of "Milton," but the episode served to provide Blake with a contrast between "those who restrain desire" (Hayley) and himself, "A mighty Devil folded in black clouds." (p. 35)

The description of the three classes of men that begins plate 3 is a reiteration of Blake's vision of the
fallen world revealed in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." The existence of the Elect (Urizenic), and Reprobate (Satanic) is an indisputable fact of fallen life, but Blake is adamant in his statement that these contraries should remain so—"they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence." (p. 39) The third class, the Redeemed (Prophetic), is the literal tension, the ideal balance, between the two contraries, and is capable of becoming either Elect or Reprobate. Blake employs this struggle between Elect and Reprobate in his narration of Satan and Palamabron. The remainder of plate 3 is a horrific vision of the Urizenic man—the stifled Imagination and the limiting senses.

"The Marriage of Heaven and Hell's" strong sentiment that "man has clos'd himself up, till he sees all things thro narrow chinks of his cavern," (p. 39) is here elaborated. Urizen's Imagination "lay in darkness and solitude, in chains of the mind lock'd up," (p. 96) amid the snows of "doubt and reasoning." Vision is "closed in 2 little caves," Hearing is "petrified," and Los, the observer, "became what he beheld ... enraged and stifled without and within."

The final lines of plate 3 record the birth of the Urizenic Satan as the "Miller of Eternity," grinding down
the creative Imagination with deductive reasoning. "O Satan art thou not Newtons Pantocrator weaving the woofe of Locke?" (p. 97)

Plates 4 and 5 again delineate the poet's vision of the three classes of men, but more importantly, focus on the Satan/Hayley, Palamabron/Blake conflict. Blake, chafing under Hayley's well-meant criticisms and advice, writes: "Every Mans Wisdom is peculiar to his own Individuality," (p. 97) and the Bard very pointedly insists that "Corporeal friends are Spiritual Enemies." (p. 97)

The injunction in the "Marriage" to "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires," (p. 37) is echoed by Blake's comment in "Milton": "If you account it Wisdom when you are angry to be silent and not to show it: I do not account that Wisdom, but Folly." (p. 97)

The repression of emotional energy in favor of rational proprieties is decidedly destructive--both to the artist and those nearest him. The strength of the Imagination is vividly shown as Palamabron/Blake returns with the "Fiery Harrow"--intense poetic inspiration--and as Satan/Hayley faints beneath the onslaught of Imaginative energy.

Concluding plate 5 is another passionate Song, reminiscent of the "Marriage," that condemns the restrictive nature of man's sight:

Ah, shut in narrow doleful form/Creeping in reptile flesh upon the bosom of the
Plates 7 and 8 are the most explicit in their detailing of the quarrel between Hayley and Blake. Satan/Hayley "with incomparable mildness ... offered his service," until eventually the patron had turned from a solicitous benefactor into a polite, but persistent image of discouragement--"Seeming a brother, being a tyrant." (p. 100) Palamabron and Rintrah, both Satan's opponents, represent both sides of Blake's own variable disposition. The Palamabron mood regarded Satan as well-intentioned despite the conflicts, but Rintrah was stung into indignation "for Satan's soft dissimulation of friendship." (p. 100) It is the injured but understanding Palamabron who prays, "O God protect me from my friends," while Rintrah's rage finally infects Satan and the true nature of Satan is revealed. As the mask of concern and "mildest speech" fall away, Satan exposes his hatred and jealousy of the imaginative Palamabron, and ranting about his Urizenic "principles of moral individuality," (restrictive dictates of one imposed on all, in contrast to the creative individuality of each man) becomes "Opake against the Divine Vision." The revelation is clear: "Satan is Urizen!" (p. 102)

Palamabron/Blake, in plates 10-11 resolves not to associate with the Urizenic Satan, and draws the parallel
between Satan and the Biblical God, Jehovah, who "compell'd others to serve him in moral gratitude and submission." (p. 104) Blake recognizes how the imaginative inferiority of Hayley is a hindrance to a poet, and dangerous to the unsuspecting artist. "To do unkind things in kindness!... to say/The most irritating things in the midst of tears and love/These are the stings of the Serpent." (p. 105)

The fourth and fifth Memorable Fancies in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" originally illustrated Blake's realization of the danger of artistic associations, and concluded that "Opposition is true Friendship." (p. 41) Here, the recognition of Hayley as a "Corporeal Friend" but "Spiritual Enemy," confirmed Blake in his vocation as an artist and resolved him to never again be tempted from his creativity by the blandishments and "soft, delusory Love" of a patron.

Plate 14 begins with the Bard's passionate cry that Imagination is "the eternal all-protecting Divine Humanity." The Poetic Genius is that power which stimulates inspiration in all men, and such is the strength of the power, that the end product, as Blake had stated in the "Marriage," is always the Truth—"Truth can never be told so as to be understood and not be believ'd!" (p. 37)

Milton appears, and in a spectacular, significant
scene of choice, announces his intention to seek his Emanation, and in addition, to annihilate the Selfhood (the Urizenic self concerned with moral virtue) in order to correct his previous errors and eliminate the Satanic spectre. Milton realizes that without his Emanation, he is one-sided, lacking the contrary necessary to achieve creative balance—"I in my Selfhood am that Satan"—and the redemption will occur only in the descent to "the depths of direst Hell" which (Blake ironically adds) "is this earth of vegetation on which now I write." (p. 108)

Milton's descent is an unusual account of a fall through a vortex, and his appearance as a fiery streak of light is an obvious parallel to Milton's own Satan in "Paradise Lost." The poet espies Milton's shadow "in the Zenith as a falling star," (p. 109) and reports that the shadow entered his left foot. The creative inspiration of this vision, however, is diminished by a black cloud that also emanated from the same foot and spread over Europe. This black cloud is representative of the Puritan doctrine that constituted Milton's "fetter" on his Poetic Genius.

Milton's human shadow continues to journey to the Mundane Shell—Urizen's fallen world—and again Blake creates a miserable vision of "our Vegetated Earth." The "howlings" enumerate the acute sufferings inherent in a
rigid, moralistic society that demonstrates no compassion to "the sick Father & his Starving Family," "the Prisoner in the stone Dungeon," or "the Slave at the Mill." (p. 110) The hypocrisy of the Church is harshly condemned and the priests "take the Image of God, Even Pity & Humanity but [their] Clothing shall be Cruelty." (p. 110) The Proverb of Hell that says, "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion," (p. 36) is a direct antecedent to Blake's condemnation of fallen society in "Milton."

Plate 19 marks the confrontation of the poetic Milton with Urizen, and the wrestling match that ensues is a parody of the Biblical struggle between Jacob and the Angel. Milton's contest with Urizen is symbolic of the Imagination struggling to remain free from the oppressive influence of Reason. In a highly effective image, Blake depicts Urizen "pouring on to Milton's brain the icy fluid from his broad cold palm," (p. 111) in the rational effort to literally freeze all imaginative activity. But Milton, in his attempt at redemption, endeavors to recreate a new man who embodies the essential contraries of Reason and Energy. By this action, Milton seeks to redress his error and rather than destroy the Urizenic influence, he molds new creative flesh onto the old bones of moral principles.
Thus Milton stood forming bright Urizen & his
Redeemed portion Thus formed the clay of Urizen.
(p. 113)

The electrifying impact of Milton's redemption is
enough to stir "Albion's sleeping humanity" and a hopeful
proverb follows that echoes the "Marriage's" profound
query: "How do you know but that every Bird that cuts the
airy way/Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your
senses five?" (p. 35) Here, Blake extols the "little
winged fly" and admonishes mankind to expand its vision
despite the obstacles of "gates of brass and bars of
adamant" on every human heart.

Milton's entry into Blake's left foot completes the
re-creation of Milton's vision and extends Blake's own
Imagination. One of the lovely poetic passages hidden
within the bulk of the poem appears, heralding "Milton
the Awakener": "When Luvah's bulls each morning drag the
sulphur Sun out of the deep ... Strong and vigorous they
drag the unwilling Orb." (p. 114-15)

Los' descent and approach, in response to "Milton
the Awakener," signify the surge of prophetic vision and
creative Imagination, and Blake's self description as
the "Shadowy Prophet" is quite clearly the same poet who,
in the "Marriage," nurtures the "desire of raising other
men into a perception of the infinite." (p. 38)

The remainder of "Milton Book the First" (plates
23-29) is devoted to Los' observations on the historical consequences of Milton's religious error, and the apocalyptic nature of warfare in Blake's own time. In the final plates, Blake is progressing toward his supreme vision of Generation, or the fallen world, becoming the world of Los--the imaginative sphere of Beulah.

Los, in explanation to his sons, Rintrah and Palamabron (distinct from Blake, now) demonstrates that despite Milton's poetic energy, his legacy of Puritanism has woven a new religion for Blake's time: Deism. The Deist belief had serious manifestations for Blake, in that prominent rational thinkers of the age adhered to the natural faith, and claimed "Self-righteousness with Cruel Virtue." It was precisely this trend that Blake had criticized in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," when he noted that the scientific minds of society thought of themselves as the only wise, with a "confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning." (p. 41)

Los recites the apocalyptic prophecy of Milton coming to break the bonds of jealousy (Hayley) and inspire the poet at Felpham's Vale (Blake). He proclaims himself the last of the four Zoas--the "Watchman of Eternity"--which is the prophetic role that belongs to those of vision. Blake's superb image of the impending Last Judgment takes the form of a vivid allegory of the Last
Vintage, and the most potent, beautiful poetry is found in this final section of Book I.

The brilliant description of the glory of Imagination comprises plate 26. Blake renders magnificently the "immense world of delight" of the gorgeous clothed Flies that dance & sport in Summer Upon the brooks & meadows: every one the dance Knows in its intricate mazes of delight artful to weave ... To touch each other & recede; to cross & change & return. (p. 122)

To see these tiny specimens of life in such an intimate, unique way is the potential of all men of Imagination with cleansed doors of perception. Yet despite the originality of such creative vision, these sights are only a miniscule portion of the vast Visions of Eternity, only "the hem of their garments when with our vegetable eyes we view these wonderous visions." (p. 122)

Blake's agonized vision of war, as a Wine Press, is a devastating indictment of human conflict, and the poetic imagery is correspondingly powerful and fascinating.

But in the Wine-presses the Human grapes sing not, nor dance/They howl & writhe in shoals of torment; in fierce flames consuming,/In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fires. In pits & dens & shades of death: in shapes of torment & woe. (p. 123)

The corporeal world is redeemed in the closing passages by Blake's illustration of the limiting physical
senses overcome by the ascendancy of individual vision. In spite of the severe limitations of the "Optic Nerve," the man with a widened scope of Imagination is like the diamond within--clear, pure and dazzling in its infinite possibilities. This center of existence is the core of Imagination in man; the intense visions of Imagination are within.

The only glimpses available to the fallen man of his infinite, imaginative core are seen in the "Moments & Minutes & Hours," that are carefully guarded by Providence. These moments are vital--"for in this Period the Poet's Work is Done"--and they are the inspirational impulses of the Poetic Genius. Eternity becomes a true vision to those who see beyond the shadow of "this vegetable earth," and, as stated in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," a discovery of the infinite in everything leads to the Last Judgment, wherein "the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy." (p. 38)

The redemption of the corporeal world of Experience characterizes "Milton Book the First," and the essential contrary--the world of Innocence--is the focal point in Book the Second. Blake's deliberate separation of the contraries is based quite clearly on the "Marriage's" bold statement that "Without Contraries is no progress." (p. 34) Milton, in his final act of redemption,
destroys his Selfhood, and is reunited with his Emanation, the female will of Ololon. This event climaxes in Blake's vision in the garden, and the expectant tone at the close of Book II heralds the apocalypse of the universal Imagination.

The outstanding image in Book II is that of the union between Milton and his Emanation, and it is this image that corresponds most directly with the entire concept of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." Blake's imaginative manifesto was created to introduce and illustrate the existence of contrary states. More importantly, Blake emphasized the requisite unification and balance between these contrary states of the human soul in order to achieve his ideal of "organized innocence"--an exuberant creativity channeled into artistic form.

The word "marriage" connotes an intimate, spiritual union, and Blake's designation of a marriage between the diametrically opposed states of Heaven and Hell clearly intends the reader to see the sacred relationship between all opposites, and the necessity for an equality or balance in those relationships. In the second book of "Milton" Blake envisions Milton's redemption as an act of marriage--a union with his contrary--which will redeem the Poetic Genius from the obscuring clouds of moral virtue--Milton's Selfhood.
The historic Milton had failed to recognize the importance of the female will (the aggregate of all the poet had loved) and, in fact, regarded it as a sinister influence. The Emanation, Milton's contrary, represents only hostility and fear, in Milton's mind, and obviously lacks the spiritual aspect of a love relationship. Blake, in constructing Milton's conclusive act of redemption, removes the suspicion and fear of the Emanation, and thereby removes the obstacle that had prevented the vital union of contraries, and had resulted in Milton's error.

The vision of Beulah (meaning "married" in Hebrew) in the introductory plates 30-31, provides the most extensive treatment of the state of the contraries (or organized innocence) in Blake's poetry. It is presented as a resting place for the Immortals in Eternity from the dynamic force of creative energy—"a place where contraries are equally true." (p. 128)

The poetic imagery in this last book of "Milton" is Wordsworthian in its celebration of nature, and illustrative of the Proverb of Hell: "Where man is not nature is barren." (p. 37) The Lark, emblem of Spring and rebirth, is depicted as an "immense world of delight," that joyously announces the sunrise;
then springing from the waving Corn-field! loud
He leads the Choir of Day!
His little throat labours with inspiration; every
feather
On throat & breast & wings vibrates with the
effluence
Divine ...

(p. 129)

The delicate beauty of Nature is evident throughout
Beulah, and is expressed in Blake's lines that repeat the
concept of the center of Eternity in all living things:

the Flowers put forth their precious Odours!
And none can tell how from so small a center comes
such sweets/Forgetting that within that Center
Eternity expands.

(p. 130)

The superb vision of the sleeping Rose recalls the
"Marriage's" simple epigram that "Exuberance is Beauty."

(p. 37)

The Rose still sleeps/None dare to wake her. soon
she bursts her crimson curtain bed
And comes forth in the majesty of beauty. (p. 130)

Milton's speech, in plate 32, summarizes Blake's
Platonic ideal of the permanence of Individual Identities
or Forms, and the transitory nature of States. The Fall,
for Blake, was a consequence of Satan's imposition of a
Spectre of Albion (vegetable humanity) onto the Human
Form Divine, forming a perishable body subject to the
empirical limitations of Height, Length and Breadth. The
Imagination, imprisoned within the corporeal "cavern,"
was regarded as "madness and Blasphemy."

Self-annihilation, Milton's final task, is the
individual determination to distinguish the Imagination--
"Human existence itself"—from Reason and Memory, both states, and both "created to be annihilated." Only then, by annihilation of those repressive influences (in Milton's case, religious morality) and a restoration of the equality of Contraries, can the Poetic Genius exercise its imaginative potential. All of this is indicative of Blake's "Mental Fight," and reflects the "Marriage's" notion that "the most sublime act is to set another before you." (p. 35) Imagination and creative energy are Eternal Forms for Blake, and must be developed within the human consciousness, for, as the "Marriage" warns, "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water & breeds reptiles of the mind." (p. 41)

In plate 33, the Divine Voice, in an effort to comfort Ololon, furnishes a dramatic contrast between the fallen state of man separated from his Emanation, and the joyous union that will result from an annihilation of the Self. Annihilation will open the way for an acceptance of the female will, and eventually the marriage; a sacred union that will symbolize the ideal state of organized innocence. That is, dynamic Energy and cautious Reason will unify in a mutually beneficial state.

Olonon's descent to Milton traces her course through Chaos where the contraries, rather than maintaining a balanced tension, war "beneath Negation's Banner," in an
effort to destroy each other. Negation, or Doubt, as we have seen, is deadly to the Imagination, and encourages the sterility of Reason. Chaos, of course, is our corporeal world, where imaginative vision is frozen, and "Brotherhood is Changed into a Curse & a Flattery."

(p. 134) Still, Ololon's descent is decidedly apocalyptic, and Blake, significantly, describes his perception of her journey as one of the illuminating "Moments" that Satan cannot find. In this moment of inspiration, two of Los' messengers appear, the Wild Thyme, and the Lark (images of rebirth and emerging creativity) and they accompany Ololon down to Blake's garden. The Lark, seen with the poet's visionary eye, is a mighty Angel.

Blake's intentional understatement of his meeting with Ololon in the garden is an effective prelude to the climactic confrontation with Milton and the final, overpowering vision of the marriage of Milton and his Emanation. Blake sees Ololon first, respectfully addresses her as a Daughter of Beulah, and in a marvelous touch of the mundane in the midst of such a wondrous sight, invites her into his cottage.

Milton descends, next, and carries with him his Human Form containing the Monstrous Churches that had contributed to his error. In plate 38, in an impressive scene that sustains its power and urgency until the last lines
of the poem, Milton addresses Satan and boldly declares his mission: "I come to Self Annihilation!" (p. 138) Milton resolves to put off "all that is not of God alone," including the hypocrisy and restrictions preached by the law-infested Church. Milton's relinquishing of his Selfhood redeems his Poetic Genius and Blake's surge of vision becomes a sudden, blinding flash of "solid fire." The rebirth of the poetic Milton into the visionary Imagination of Blake awakens Albion in Blake's mind, and he becomes a prophet who not only sees the approaching apocalypse, but is followed by it.  

Plates 40-41 reiterate Milton's act of Self-annihilation and Blake's language in this exhortive passage is vividly expressive of his intense dislike for the conventional Negations of fallen society; "This Newtonian Phantasm This Voltaire & Rousseau, This Natural Religion! This impossible absurdity!" (p. 140) In truly majestic tones, Blake's Milton declares:

I come in Self annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration/To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour/To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albion's covering/To take off his filthy garments & clothe him with Imagination/To cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration.  

Ololon reveals herself as Milton's Contrary and prepares to "marry" him--to join the contraries necessary for creative progression. Her spectre of Virginity divides from her with a shriek, and the moment of union
is beheld by Blake as a terrific vision of Jesus the Saviour—the harbinger of the Last Judgment.

The shock of the final scene is so overwhelming that Blake faints from the intensity of the vision, and his "Soul returnd into its mortal state," with his wife, his "sweet Shadow of Delight," by his side. Immediately, the Lark begins to trill, and the Wild Thyme becomes visible on the hillsides in their roles as Los' messengers of renewed inspiration.

The entire poem ends on a confident, challenging note, echoing the close of the "Marriage," prophesying the imminence of apocalypse.

Blake's "Milton" is a dramatically effective poem that not only stands as one of the poet's greatest prophetic works, but also as the poem that most clearly, concisely and successfully incorporates the fundamental imaginative precepts set forth in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." Blake's vision of the grandeur and creative energy of the Poetic Genius, and its tragic obstruction in the fallen world, through an obliteration of the contraries, is the thematic link between "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" and "Milton." "Milton," however, weaves the relatively simple, accessible symbolism of the "Marriage" into a profound, complex tale of creative inspiration, frustration, poetic prophesy, and visionary
triumph that celebrates the strength and vitality of the Imagination.

Like "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," which ends with an exhilarating vision of the apocalypse, Blake's "Milton" closes on an equally expectant note--the brink of the Last Judgment--with the ringing tones of a triumphant visionary poet who has delivered his imaginative manifesto, and its poetic application, "which the world shall have whether they will or no."

Man is all Imagination
Notes

1. William Blake, "Jerusalem," The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, David V. Erdman, ed., p. 151. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition, and will be designated by a page number only.


7. Ibid., p. 322.


9. Ibid., p. 296.


12. Ibid., p. 352.


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