Incarnations of Heaven: A Study of Fantastic Imagination and the Complications Inherent to Identity Creation in the Works of William Blake

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Incarnations of Heaven: A Study of Fantastic Imagination and the Complications Inherent to Identity Creation in the Works of William Blake

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English of the State University of New York College at Brockport, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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There are always those who ask, what is it all about? For those who need to ask, for those who need points sharply made, who need to know “where it’s at,” this:

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines with their bodies. They are the standing army and the militia, jailors, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others – as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office holders – serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the Devil, without intending it, as God. A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men, serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it.

Henry David Thoreau
Civil Disobedience

-Epigraph from Harlan Ellison’s “Repent, Harlem!” Said the Ticktock Man

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Thank you all.
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Incarnations of Heaven: A Study of Fantastic Imagination and the Complications Inherent to Identity Creation in the Works of William Blake

In the late eighteenth century William Blake began to write his prophetic poems. *The [First] Book of Urizen* and *The Four Zoas* detail the creation of capitalist ideology and subsequent fall of the Eternals and man through an implied apocalypse. Likewise, Blake's didactically driven works, *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, provide a scaffolded view of his political theory which he uses to attack capitalist culture. I will use Emancipative Fantastic theory which homogenizes subversive readings of the fantastic as a mode of writing with Marxist and Althusserian readings of texts. Using this theory, are able to observe Blake's awareness of and anxiety towards capitalist ideologies in both sets of works. More specifically, because unrestricted energy and imagination does not take precedence over the moral and economically driven rules of society, Blake sees his culture as fallen. This fall results in an eventual apocalypse. The apocalypse is not caused by the disfavor of an omnipotent god; rather, it is a result of a limited imagination of a system bound by the iron-clad rules of a fallen, self-closed god. I argue that Blake observes the destructive nature of capitalist ideologies through the fantastic and its connection to divine imagination. This provides his reader with an alternative world as a prelude to the always impending apocalypse.
Introduction

Unfettering Blake's Imagination

All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics; for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper. But now we have seen my eternal lot, shall I show you yours?
-William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Any discussion of Blake demands that we call attention to the emphasis he places on imagination. For instance, in The [First] Book of Urizen and The Four Zoas he writes of monolithic gods, divided from their eternal state, some turn into dragons, and create the fallen individual. That being said, reading Blake now, after the creation and development of modern literary theory, opens up various ways to look at his imagination and the necessity for it in his work. While a great emphasis has been placed on Blake's imagination and how he views divinity through one's use of imagination (Stevenson 107), what has not been looked at is how reading this imagination as fantastic changes the way we read Blake as a poet. Reading Blake as a writer of fantasies more aptly approaches a reading of his text that is able to change the way that text is perceived.

Through what I am calling Emancipative Fantastic theory, we are able to view various aspects of Blake's poetry that explore how Marxist theory and fantasy come together in order to demonstrate Blake’s need for the imaginative eye when viewing the world. Emancipative Fantastic theory homogenizes Marxist emphasis on capital production and hybridizes it with Althusser's reading and definition of Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. These two principles (Marx's and Althusser's) are then
used, in conjunction with Rosemary Jackson's definition of the fantastic mode, to study Blake's work more fully. Emancipative Fantastic theory shows how Blake uses fantasy to reify capitalist-ideologies. Making these ideologies almost tangible limits their ubiquity. Blake offers his reader a space in which to be free. Ultimately, I argue for a reading of Blake within the fantastic genre because he offers a world-view that is not only aware of capitalist-ideologies and their abstraction of human imagination, but shows that these ideologies are antithetical to identity creation and cause an internalized apocalypse.

**Establishing a Fantastic Frame**

Studying Blake's prophetic poems, one is likely to have stumbled over his abstract narratives, filled with fantastic images. He provides creation stories alongside didactic outlines, writes of finding his dead brother in a tree, and a choir of angels in the sun. Though dramatic, it seems necessary that Blake write with these images. What he presents to his reader is the only method with which to convey the compound meaning (privileging an imagined version of the world the “real” world) he intends.

In order to discuss Blake's works in terms of their presence in the fantastic genre, the limits and focus of the genre must first be established. The two works that are widely regarded as seminal and groundbreaking to the fantastic genre are Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic* and Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion*. Both books argue for the intellectual and academic legitimacy of the
genre, and, while both are important in establishing of reading of Blake within the
genre, Jackson's argument seems more appropriate to explore the political
motivations of the specific set of works that will be mulled over in this essay.
However, because Jackson relies heavily on Todorov, his definition must be explored.

Todorov, the primary developer of Fantastic theory, determines that fantasies offer the reader a “hesitation,” this hesitation becomes the pivotal force behind fantasy writers. Through hesitation, he constructs a definition of the fantastic wherein the reader and the characters tend towards a disruption or confusion between what is real/ believable and what is not (Todorov 25). Between the two worlds exist imagination and the fantastic. Ultimately, he contends that to realize that a situation is fantastic, the reader must acknowledge that his situation is contrary to the physical world he inhabits. This acknowledgement becomes the center of the fantastic according to Todorov. In a world lacking imaginary beings, an event occurs which may not be explained by natural laws. The individual experiencing this incident must opt for either an explanation of illusion and confusion of the senses; or else reality is controlled by laws that the individual is unfamiliar with (Todorov 25).

Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings with this reservation, that we encounter him infrequently. The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The
fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (Todorov 25)

Todorov's definition provides a greater understanding of the genre that is determined by the relationship, though a hesitation, between the uncanny and the marvelous. The fantastic lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion (Todorov 41).

Todorov's fantastic is not autonomous. Rather, the ephemeral state of the fantastic leads to a life full of dangers that may evaporate at any moment because its locus is on the frontier of two genres (the marvelous and the uncanny) and rarely lasts for more than a portion of the reading (Todorov 42). However, he argues that there is a possibility for a text to remain authentically fantastic. These texts sustain their hesitation and ambiguity to the end, and even beyond the confines of the narrative (Todorov 43). Although Todorov's construction of the fantastic was the first to ratify the genre, Jackson's definition is more applicable to Blake's poetry because she engages with the social and political aspects of fantastic works that Todorov fails to consider.

In a general sense, Jackson agrees with Todorov's attention to fantasy's natural resistance against categorization, but develops a definition of the fantastic as a mode of writing that allows for a theoretical and critical study. Instead of viewing hesitation
as the penultimate form of the genre, Jackson's study explores the transcendental aspects of fantastic literature. She writes that modern fabulists use the form in order to fulfill and recapture a desire for a more complete reality by approaching writing as a means to explore a nostalgic humanistic vision in the midst of a corrupt world, whose culture and social hierarchy leaves much to be desired, and is thus subversive (Jackson 2). The most divergent aspect of Jackson's definition is her emphasis on the fluidity of the genre. She contends that, because a literary fantasy is contextualized by and produced within a particular society, the characteristics of the definition of fantasy change as a result of differing cultural constraints (Jackson 3). Using Emancipative Fantastic theory allows us to study the ideologies (using Athisser's definition of Ideological State Apparatuses) that form cultural constraints and define fantasy.

According to Jackson, fantasy is a literature of desire. Fantastic texts operate in two ways: by providing a space for, or manifesting within the reader desires which threaten cultural order, or which can expel the same desires (Jackson 3-4). Fantasies first establish the dominant order, and then offer alternatives. Reading Blake through Emancipative Fantastic theory shows that his poetry subversively attacks capitalist ideology.

Using Jackson's definition of the fantastic as one part of Emancipative Fantastic theory, we are able to facilitate a reading of Blake's work as subversive. Though his concept of imagination is Romantic in origin, we can extend this reading
by observing how he makes capitalist ideology almost materially tangible, and by
doing so offers an alternative worldview to a material world. The Emancipative
Fantastic theory allows us to (unlike Romantic readings) focus on the necessity for
imagination which is not established in a natural or material world. Because he makes
ideologies physical, Blake allows us to focus on an imagined world outside of
ideology.

In her analysis of the genre of fantasy, Jackson contends that fantasy has
always provided a clue to the limits of a culture, by foregrounding problems of
categorizing the real and of the situation of the self in relation to that dominant notion
of reality (Jackson 52). The fantastic, as a genre, allows a literary work to occupy a
liminal space wherein it can antagonize normative cultural ideologies.

In a culture which equates the 'real' with the 'visible' and gives the eye
dominance over other sense organs, the un-real is that which is invisible. That which is not seen, or which threatens to be un-seeable,
can only have subversive function in relation to an epistemological and
metaphysical system which make 'I see' synonymous with 'I understand' (Jackson 45).

This results in a disorientation or a furthering of obfuscation between reality and non-reality. However, what becomes viable for Blake's literary agenda are imaginative
elements. He writes of physical deities, angels, and giants. The audience becomes
privy to his conversations with angels and demons in The Marriage of Heaven and
Hell and the formation of the world from its ephemeral existence. Blake's genesis of “... vast clouds of blood rolled / Round the dim rocks of Urizen, so named / That solitary one in immensity” begets the image of the god Urizen sitting alone among a wash of blood (Urizen 2.41-3). The reader has likely never experienced an earth awash in blood, but through imagination the image manifests. Here, imagination is used as a physical sense, the most important in Blake's mind. The reader is removed (albeit temporarily) from a priori sense experience and imagination is privileged over reality.

Moving Man Outside of the Machine

Transcendence beyond sense experience to obtain sublimity through nature is a common and integral theme in Romantic literature. However, transcendence and sublimity are most often used as tools to study humanity from a post-lapsarian perspective with nostalgia for the old. Fantasy removes this nostalgia and the use of the fantastic allows for this transcendent quality to emerge more fluidly. Thus, an Emancipative Fantastic reading of a work places importance on transcendence without necessarily allowing for transcendence towards a pre-lapsarian state. Transcendence occurs, for Blake, outside capitalist ideology which will be explored in detail in the following chapter. Blake creates a world where the reader is forced to reexamine her own conception of the world and the self.

While the connection between Romanticism and supernaturalism, or the transcendent and sublime aspects of nature, has been studied, no scholarly precedent
exists for looking at Blake as a Fantasy writer. Much of the scholarship on Blake's imagination focuses on his Biblical source material, and emphasizes the themes of myth and childhood, or the nature of naïve literature and the importance that plays on other Romantic writers (Frye). However, there is little discussion of the political motives behind Blake's appropriation of fantastic elements, and the two most important works on the subject neither define the fantastic mode, nor offer a reading of Romanticism within the fantastic. M.H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism* studies the effects of a supernatural mode on the Romantics and the Bible as influence, but fails to look at the fantastic aspects of the works. Similarly, Tobin Siebers's *The Romantic Fantastic* considers the implications of superstition on the American Romantics and the late Gothic writers but does not discuss Blake or the early British Romantics. Neither work acknowledges the importance of looking at Blake's work outside the Romantic genre. I argue that reading Blake as a writer of fantasies opens up alternative ways of reading him as a poet, removing him from the tradition of reading his early work as simply didactic, and his latter as philosophical and prophetic. That said, by looking at the motivating force behind Blake's works through the Emancipative Fantastic, we are able to see that his poetry offers the reader a more substantive view of his political message and the efficacy of his political ideals.

Applying Emancipative Fantastic theory to Blake's poems demonstrates the cohesiveness of his poetry with the tenets Jackson constructs for the genre. This thesis argues that the fantastic affirms Blake's notion of a sublime force, located inside
imagination. Blake's imagination can be best explained as what is limited only to the extent of the human mind—“the cistern contains: the fountain overflows / One thought fills immensity” (*Marriage* pl. 8.35-6).

**The Poetic Genius and the Fallen Man**

In his book *Fearful Symmetry*, Northrop Frye analyzes Blake's aesthetic and constructs a reading of Blake's imagination explicitly tied to his artwork and the nature of his art in general. For Blake, the application of imagination in our lives, and how we perceive art manifests itself and becomes wisdom (Frye 86). Frye writes, “[a]rt proves the inadequacy of abstract and rational ideas by the rule that examples and illustrations are more powerful than doctrines or precepts...[w]isdom is the application of the imaginative vision taught us by art” (Frye 86). What we see or hear is taken in directly by the imagination which is defined by Blake as wisdom. Using this form, imaginative art becomes analogous to a filter insofar as it, when applied to experience, creates a permanent structure through which we are able to experience a complete world filled with imaginative and creative acts. When this world is inhibited or chained, Blake observes the ever impending apocalypse. The divine world of imagination is a culmination of artistic experiences, independent of space and time, which stabilize the experiential world while retaining its reality (Frye 85). Reading Blake's imagination through Emancipative Fantastic theory, the implication of divine imagination shifts, privileging the immaterial and antagonizing the material world. Blake's imagination becomes paramount in defining what it means to be human – he
creates the Poetic Genius. Through his fantastic writings, Blake subverts normative culture and ultimately conceives of an alternative to the trajectory in which humanity moves.

Beginning with the first chapter of this thesis and extending through the second, I observe how Blake sees the monologic rules of his culture in direct opposition to the transcendent qualities of human imagination. He uses the fantastic as a mode of literary discourse which explores and transcribes what he sees as the human condition. Simply put, writing with this subject matter liberates Blake from the confines of more traditional forms of literature while implementing imagination. Because he uses this specific mode of literature, it is imperative to consider the implications of the fantastic on his world view and how it works to promote the larger discussion of identity creation within his works. Blake uses fantasies to remove humankind from culturally-based ideologies such as gender.

Though, according to Jackson, the genre itself is not inherently antagonistic to hegemony, it does exhibit a proclivity towards manifesting certain subversive ideas. More specifically, fantasies position realistic literary modes against imaginary or unreal ones. Through a hesitant and polarizing view, fantasy literature antagonizes Enlightenment discourse established through dominant, normative, or realistic literature and art.

Blake himself attacks realistic or mimetic art. The notion of reproducibility in art is antithetical to his conception of imagination. For Blake, a piece of art needs to
be unique from any other. Therefore, each copy of his illuminations contain distinct elements and mechanical changes. Variations in type set, illumination colors, punctuation and spelling were all done to make each an individual art piece and to resist the problems he saw in reproductions. Blake antagonizes reproduction both through the manufacturing of his texts, but also inside the texts themselves. Blake's problem with reproduction becomes explicit when observing the fall of the Eternals in *The [First] Book of Urizen* and in *The Four Zoas*. Both poems and their relation to reproduction will be explained in chapter two.

Using Emancipative Fantastic theory, we observe Blake's use of art as a political medium to interrogate the burgeoning effects of capitalist ideology on human imagination. His interrogation, through art, antagonizes the literary culture of his time period. Jackson writes:

[T]he fantastic traces the unsaid and unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made 'absent'. Telling implies using the language of the dominant order and so accepting its norms, re-covering its dark areas. Since this excursion into disorder can only begin from a base within the dominant cultural order. Its introduction of the 'unreal' is set against the category of the 'real' a category which the fantastic interrogates by its difference (4).

The general premise of fantastic literature first establishes the rules of the real world in which the text itself is created. Then, the general nature of the fantastic
narrative becomes antagonistic towards the position of the real. This antagonism manifests in images of the unreal.

To introduce to what will be explored in greater detail in the second chapter, Jackson suggests that fantasy complicates notions of the self. “Various motifs, then, are variations upon these basic semantic elements of the 'I' and the 'not-I', and of their interrelations to resist separation and difference, to re-discover a unity of self and other” (Jackson 52). This unity becomes part of Blake's sublime. Disseminating unity (as will be explained in the conclusion) creates the apocalypse. Blake asks his reader to define herself within the text, thereby creating a more active reader with a better perception of identity that foregrounds the problems of the real and the position of identity within dominant notions of reality. This notion of an active reader who resists separation between the I and not-I becomes another important theme in Blake's work and he uses the fantastic mode to emphasize it. More specifically, in *The [First] Book of Urizen*, Los first exists in an eternal state as an androgynous and undefined being. Blake argues for a unified self, the same unity Jackson observes in the fantastic. This more unreal Los resists separation until, tormented by Urizen's laws, he splits into two distinct beings. The results of this split are apocalyptic.

Ultimately, Blake uses imagination as a means of escaping from the iron-clad rules of culture. Northrop Frye, in his analysis of Blake titled *Fearful Symmetry*, writes that the imagination in seeing a bird sees through it an 'immense world of delight'; the imagination in looking at society not only sees its hypocrisies but sees
through them, and sees and infinitely better world (Frye 59). Blake’s imagination, as Frye describes, offers the reader a view of a better world; however, this world can only transpire after a realized apocalypse.
Chapter 1

What Price Wonderland?

Many had no tales to tell, their masters made no sign of mourning a lost world. But for every atheist there was at least one who believed; one prone to moping over lost dreams of childhood, or to midnight confessions on how their search for Heaven had ended only in tears and gold.

-Clive Barker, Weaveworld

As has been established in the introduction, fantastic images subvert rationality, or rather subvert empiricism. Jackson contends that fantasies have been marginalized by Enlightenment culture because, though created by the dominant classical order, they “constituted a hidden pressure against it” (Jackson 96). Because empiricist thought and a priori sense experience are the major scientific and literary discourses of the 18th century, Blake tries, through imagination, to subvert the normative literary discourse, and at the same time he renounces empiricist thought. Blake's work suggests that he sees the actual world in conflict with the possibilities of an ideal world. Frye observes that this dualism may actually impede imaginative energy, according to Blake – an “imaginative deadlock occurs whenever what may loosely be called the ideal and the actual are brought into conflict” (Frye 237).

Blake’s subject matter, in addition to the fantastic images acting antagonistically to normative culture, allow the reader to experience a view of a world outside ideology, because he writes about rationally-based problems in a fantastic way. This also accomplishes, for Blake, a way to resolve cultural problems such as those inherent to capitalism.

Using “The Chimney Sweeper,” The Songs of Innocence and Experience, and
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, I will show how Blake attacks capitalist ideologies more subversively than he does in The [First] Book of Urizen where his attack is more subtle. Along the same lines, much of Blake's work becomes an attack on the church, and functions as a reaction to the war in France and the proliferation of capitalism and industrialization. Because of the subversive nature of his poems, we can read Blake through the lens of Emancipative Fantastic theory. This theory homogenizes aspects of Marxist textual readings while focusing on the Althusserian concepts of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), and by using a fantastic framework, Blake reifies these ISAs in order to provide an image of a world beyond culture.

The Unfettered Fantastic

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake comments on the construction of ideology. Unable to use Althusser's wording, he writes: “The giants who formed this world into its sensual existence, and now seem to live in chains, are in truth the causes of its life and the sources of all activity; but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds [...]” (Marriage pl. 16.101-4). Blake's “giants” limit the world to sensual existence, and by doing so, form “chains.” These chains are analogs to ideology. He delimits the construction of ideologies by writing that “weak and tame minds” form them and are controlled by them. Ideology is neutral, but Enlightenment ideology abstracts the individual who otherwise (according to Blake) would be able to use active imagination. Yet, the monolithic nature of the constructors shows that he understood the ubiquitous nature of ideology. These giants are imagined creatures
they blur the lines between the forcefulness of repressive state apparatuses and the
“natural” and necessary ideologies that Althusser writes of.

Blake's message against capitalist ideology attacks normative culture within a
capitalist society, and his historical position, but because his literature does not use
the dialectic of the time (Enlightenment), these fantastic images (such as the giants)
are able to extend Blake's literature outside of his sociocultural position. In an attempt
to “erode the pillars of society by un-doing categorical structures” (Jackson 176), his
literature simultaneously rejects the systemic, normative culture he sees as imperfect,
and offers fantasies which possess an inherent tendency towards freedom.

More specifically, Blake privileges non-reality by ignoring the material world.
Instead of writing scenes which describe the natural world, or an idealized one, he
finds the basis for his literature in his imagination. In doing this, Blake separates
himself from other Early Romantic writers by removing his writing from the
prelapsarian nostalgia so typified by the Early Romantics. When he ignores the
material world, privileging the imaginary, his literary form functions antagonistically
towards the capitalist obsession with material production.

In *The Songs of Experience*, Blake engages in a dialogue with his tiger: “What
the hammer? What the chain? / In what furnace was thy brain?” (*Experience* 11.13-4).
Not only does this image hint at production (hammer, furnaces, etc.) but Blake
directly engages with and questions the tiger, asking him who constructed his brain. It
becomes obvious that Blake sees ideologies as manifestations of the indoctrinated
mind. The tiger loses his energy and imagination. He is no longer “burning bright.”
This same tiger, earlier in the poem, acts as the paragon of energy and imagination
(Experience 11.1), but here the worldly and experienced tiger's mind has been formed
and constructed.

The image of the tiger seems to preempt anxieties Marx feels years before
Capital was written. In his works, Marx attacks the natural necessity of a product
value's “mastery over man” and privileges abstract qualities that objects are unable to
possess (782). However, he still is a writer within his own time and works inside
ideologies, and because ideologies themselves are neutral and ubiquitous, it is more
appropriate to note that Blake targets capitalist ideologies. In doing so, Blake's work
in many ways becomes more poignant and prophetic, as the literary movement moves
from Romanticism to late Romanticism, and further so when society moves from pre-
capitalism, to capitalism, and then to late-capitalism.

In order to not simply force a retro-fitting of a Marxist hermeneutic on Blake's
work, a study of certain points in the body of the work (specifically the prophetic
poems) needs to explore how Blake was able to escape his position in history. A
reading of Blake's work through Emancipative Fantastic theory allows us to study his
antagonism towards capitalist ideologies, while at the same time focusing on how his
use of imagination, and a specifically fantastic mode of writing, reifies these
ideologies in order to show the reader a fantastically-created world outside of
ideology.
By reading Blake as a writer of fantasies, instead of grouping his writing as Romantic, a reading more applicable to his political message resonates. In his article titled “Blake, Marxism and Dialectic,” David Putner writes on the inherent incompatibilities of a strictly Marxist reading of Blake's texts:

[...] both Blake and Marx regard dialectic as a mode of subversion, as a sign or revolutionary potential; but Blake's dialectic bears the inescapable marks of its historical location, and it is this which provides its most important distinguishing characteristics. Blake's primary concern is with the difficulty of imaginatively subversive action and writing, at a particular historical stage; and we may conclude by insisting that any detailed Marxist account of Blake's poetry must start precisely from this difficulty, a difficulty related to his own socio-cultural position, to the heritage of apocalypticism and to the uncertainties of an emerging industrial order, and not from an attempt, against the historical facts, to remake Blake in Marx's image.

(240)

With Putner's demand in mind, a reading of Blake's text that privileges imagination, and specifically his use of the fantastic mode, allows for a reading of the text which is able to momentarily escape, or at least stretch the bounds of his sociocultural position. In order to define Blake as relatively culturally independent, Putner draws parallels to Hegel and cites The [First] Book of Urizen, wherein Urizen and Los labor
to build their cities. Putner provides evidence that the nature of labor, and the nature of the psyche, are inextricably connected (226). Problematically, Urizen's labor is no different than the labor of his workers. Putner argues that this undermines a class-based reading of the text because the one in power (Urizen) enjoys the same work as his progeny (228). No emphasis is placed on the differences of the work between ruler and ruled. Thus, Urizen, the powerful creator, has no power in a class-based reading of this pericope.

However, what does become an influential difference here is the emphasis placed on the notion that Urizen is not human. Acting to shape and define the world, Urizen becomes less god-like. The monolith loses his attachment to eternity and embodies the problems that Blake faces with the rulers of his society. Because it is a fall from god-hood, the implications of the image become seemingly more powerful. While reproducing the ideologies of capitalism, Urizen loses his connection to the Eternal. In the depiction of Urizen's fall, Blake not only notes the necessity (in capitalist societies) for the reproduction of capitalist ideologies in a capitalist social system, but takes issue with it, and ultimately remarks on its alienating nature.

Althusser writes that in capitalist society “[t]he ultimate condition of production is … reproduction of the conditions of production” (85). For a capitalist society to exist, a system needs to encourage the existence and the proliferation of that society and its ideals. The encouragement is the condition which makes society possible. Blake uses the image of angels to indoctrinate and reproduce in man the
chains of ideology. “I have always found that angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning” (Marriage 21.216-8). The manifestation of angels as tangible figures demonstrates that Blake's use of fantastic images shows that there is no clear distinction in his mind between the forcefulness of repressive state apparatuses and Althusser's contention that ideologies function in order to structure the way people think. It is important to note that Blake describes these angels as believing themselves to be the “only wise” and that this mindset is a direct result of “systematic reasoning.” For Blake, both “systematic” and “reasoning” are loaded terms. “Reasoning” evokes Blake's contentions with empiricist methods of thinking, while “systematic” proffers the idea that this reasoning forms a system, the same system that forms fetters around the mind. Furthermore, the arrogance exhibited by these angels is tantamount to self-love. While Blake's anxieties regarding self-love will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, it is obvious from the quote that narcissism is viewed as a form of abstraction.

Althusser's theory is directly derived from Marx, who noted that no production is possible when the means and conditions of production are not reproducible (Marx 86). If we extrapolate this theory onto a system of ideas (i.e. culture), we are faced with the idea that for a system to survive, the ideologies of that system must be continually met and reproduced. The very foundation of this system becomes capital and wage. The foundation for a capitalist society “is ensured by
giving labour power the material means with which to reproduce itself: by wages. Wages feature in the accounting of each enterprise, but as 'wage capital', not at all as a condition of the material reproduction of labour power” (87). In a large portion of Blake's texts, heaven functions as capital wage. We see this especially in “The Chimney Sweeper,” where the children are exploited, *en masse*, and are indoctrinated with the idea that they are able to go to heaven if they follow the angel's demands, which in turn means following capitalist ideology. The angel tells the children that if they work hard in this world, they will be rewarded with heaven as their afterlife (*Innocence* 29.24).

Conditions of labor are also considered to be mindsets of the people living in the society. These conditions are how ideology reproduces itself. Again, wages, not the material productions of labor, become more important than the labor, the workers, or the material productions. Therefore, the sweep's desire to go to heaven (his desire for wage) becomes far more important, ideologically speaking, than his work or the conditions of his life.

In order for a system, which Blake would argue is antithetical to what it means to be human, to exist, the *Zeitgeist*, or general mindset of the individuals living under capitalist ideology must change. This change occurs, according to Blake, when the individual removes her own active imagination in favor of living under communal law: “One Law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression” (*Marriage* pl.125). Inculcation into an ideological mindset occurs in such a way as to make their oppression a
necessary and seemingly natural part of the society or culture – hence the creation of ideologies. These indoctrinated mindsets are established so the framework of the culture reproduces itself through ideology. As though there is an “outside” to ideology, Blake reifies ideology, making it seem like it is a substantiative thing so there may be hope for an outside. This may not be limited to capitalism, though we can, with little effort, connect just about any of our cultural ideologies back to our late-capitalist state. Althusser writes:

> The State apparatus, which defines the State as a force of repressive execution and intervention “in the interests of the ruling classes” in the class struggle conducted by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is quite certainly the State, and quite certainly defines its basic “function.” (92)

What then occurs, is a larger cultural framework that allows these ideologies to reproduce themselves. Althusser calls these Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), literally the apparatuses that proliferate the ideologies that are in place. Althusser writes that school children learn the “rules of ‘good’ behavior” (every “agent's” attitude towards labor) according to a designed structure for the job he is “destined” for, and the rules established by “class domination” which include moral and civic codes as well as a “professional conscience” (89).

Likewise, Blake acknowledges the idea that ISAs are formed through church and education. He provides the image of “Thousands of little boys and girls raising
their innocent hands ... Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor. / Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door” (*Experience* 9.8.11-2).

Here, the children are forced by the grey robed beadles to follow the motions of the church – raising their hands. The placement of the men beneath the children is a notable expression of their position in society. They represent not only the ISA of the church, but also as men at the base form the superstructure and instruct the children to do so as well. The idea that they are wise guardians for the poor, yet do nothing to help the poor except emote pity, shows their inactivity. To cherish pity, for Blake, is to cherish inactivity. Inactivity causes tame minds which form ideologies that remove imagination. Reading this image through an Emancipative Fantastic frame, the emphasis is on the image of angels. For Blake, the beadles are literally telling the children to follow ideology, least the avatars of that ideological apparatus desert them.

What becomes additionally problematic is the sense that, to follow capitalist ideologies, the individual has to submit to them. The children are instructed both by the beadles and angels to submit to the church. A literal submissiveness to the sociocultural ideas must be in place before the individual is able to be seen as a morally upright member of society. Again, Althusser elaborates on this idea and writes:

> [...] I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction
of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class “in words.” (89)

Systems like schools, religion, and the army and police are used to promote these ideologies and are thus considered ISAs, because they are used and funded by the State in order to promote the ideologies of the State. The State is the ruling power. The insidiousness of ideologies becomes obvious when we look at how these systems work to reproduce the Ideologies of the State:

In other words, the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its “practice” [which ...] must in one way or another be “steeped” in this ideology in order to perform [its] tasks “conscientiously” – the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists)... (Althusser 89).

One way to reconcile the differences between the State and the individual living inside the base is an Althusserian reading of systemic class-structure, rooted in ideologies. The base helps to make, or at least uphold, the ideologies that the State enforces. Althusser writes, “It is easy to see that this representation of the structure of every society as an edifice containing a base (infrastructure) on which are erected the
two 'floors' of the superstructure, is a metaphor, to be quite precise, a spatial metaphor: the metaphor of a topography...” (90). Because the superstructure must rest on its base, there exists a “relative autonomy” and a “reciprocal action” between the superstructure and the base according to Althusser (91). Blake, the writer, because he produces art (part of superstructure) can influence both the base and the superstructure. By creating new ideologies that might be accepted by both base and superstructure, and by breaking away from formal dialect (using the fantastic mode), there is an aspect of hope to his writing, insofar as it may be able to influence the structure of the State and the ideologies imposed by it – he reifies the ISAs in order to see beyond them. To reference Althusser again:

It is possible to say that the floors of the superstructure are not determinant in the last instance, but that they are determined by the effectivity of the base; that if they are determinant in their own (as yet undefined) ways, this is true only insofar as they are determined by the base. (91)

Thus, the base determines the entire edifice like Blake's beadles described beneath the children. However, through Blake's literature (and because he makes capitalist ideologies tangible substances), we are able to see some semblance of hope for reform of, or at least his influence on, capitalist ideologies.

Blake's poems are not simply didactic, nor are they completely prophetic, but we are able to read into them a sense that Blake, aware of his sociocultural position,
tried desperately to make his literature applicable not only to the current state of things, but also to the historical process. This becomes a disparate act, using imagination and the fantastic mode to offset traditionally empiricist views of the position of an individual in society.

The Angel in the Apparatus

Perhaps the most problematic idea is that following capitalist ideologies relates to morality, or goodness. Those who follow and live their lives through these ideologies are seen by their society as morally correct. Those who do not follow normative ideologies are seen as deviants and lacking moral sensibilities. Blake vehemently antagonizes this idea.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake writes: “And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity; / till a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from the objects; thus began Priesthood” (*Marriage* pl. 11.8-10). Blake proposes that the “Priesthood,” an organization which was formed by “abstracting the mental deities” away from the “vulgar,” has power over the people – reminiscent of Althusser’s ISAs. What the Priesthood takes away from these individuals (the “mental deities”), for Blake, may be something akin to imagination. Here, human imagination functions similarly to a god. For Blake, it is not that these ideologies are realized, it is that they are reified – made into a separate and tangible force as though they are real objects or entities. By
removing the individual's imagination, the Priesthood establishes its power over the individual. What also becomes apparent is the idea that, in so doing, the Priesthood places the individuals in contempt. Blake calls these people, through the eyes of the established power authority (the priests), “vulgar.” Again, this concept is Althusserian in that these people, because they go against the established order, are seen as morally deviant. However, Blake's emphasis seems to be placed on the act of enslavement. The Priesthood takes advantage of and enslaves these people by taking away their imagination, which is the entire basis of Blake's conception of what it means to be human. The use of the word “system” is likewise reminiscent of Althusser's theories. A system is created; a group of people in power benefits from the system, takes advantage of other people within said system by removing their humanity, and gains power from it by arbitrarily deeming the subjugated individuals morally compromised. Frye notes, “to Blake the 'priest' is the central symbol of tyranny, as he is the spokesman of the belief in mystery which produces it. And there are plenty of priests in the Bible: they are there for a warning and serve as a foil for the prophets” (149).1

1 Many thanks to Dr. Jurasiński for pointing out to me that Blake is referring to the English clergy as “priests.” There was no “priesthood” in the Church of England and perhaps Blake ascribes the word “priests” to the pastorate anachronistically. By referring to the Anglican vicars as “priests,” Blake likens them to “the Jewish priestly class that objected to Christ's activities on legalistic grounds” (Jurasiński).
Again in *The Marriage*, Blake writes “Prisons are built with stones of Law, brothels with bricks of Religion” (*Marriage* pl. 8.21). Both the law and religion function as ISAs. Here, Blake directly connects the effects of these systems to standards of morality; however Blake differs from Althusser in that he reads all ideologies as repressive. Using Emancipative Fantastic Theory, we see that Blake uses fantasy as a way to reify capitalist ideologies. We can observes that (for Blake) all ideologies are repressive, and by doing so, Blake's concept moves away from Althusser's. For Blake, ideologies do not simply produce subjects who see the world in a particular way as Althusser contends (Althusser 116). When people deviate from the ideologies imposed on them by the law, they are put into institutions that are supposed to remodel them to function within ideology. Likewise, and perhaps more harshly, the connection between brothels and religion is formed as a reaction to Blake's evident dislike of organized religion. A brothel, often associated with aberrant sexual practices, is considered morally deviant. By saying that it is built on religion, Blake insinuates that religion, when acting as an ISA, demands that individuals follow the church's tenets. When they do not, they are, as when individuals go against the law, considered deviants. The negative connotation implies that these individuals, who go against the church, are considered morally deviant as well. Frye, in his work on Blake, writes:

The English are famous for transforming their economic and political ambitions into moral principles, and to the naïve mercantile jingoism
of the eighteenth century, which assumed that freedom of action was the same thing as material expansion, there seemed nothing absurd in thinking that the unchecked growth of England's power involved the emancipation of the world. (179)

Blake, however, finds the notion of economic and political ambitions antithetical to human freedom, and when inextricably linked to moral principles, the morality of the State is likewise antithetical to how he conceives ideal humanity.

Additionally, “The Chimney Sweeper” has been often read through a Marxist framework. Traditionally, Blake's literature is either read at face value or through a cynical lens. Specifically, there has been critical argument suggesting that *The Songs of Innocence* and *Experience* should be read as their title implies, with an innocent eye or bringing worldly experience with an experienced reading (Muhlestein 79). However, using an Emancipative Fantastic lens to analyze the text brings in a hermeneutic which does not posit innocence. Though there are many controversies with the reading of this poem, and the reading of *The Songs of Innocence* and *Experience* in general, it seems most appropriate to read these poems, not exactly cynically, but with the notion of the importance of contraries in Blake's mind. In what is perhaps the most insightful passage from the poem, Blake writes:

That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;
And came an angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.
Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.
And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm. *(Innocence 19.11-24)*

Blake not only shows the creation of ideologies, stemming from the dominant order's power over submissive individuals, but that there is an inherent connection between reward, or at least the illusion of reward, and submission. Likewise, the angel, in a position of power, is a representative of the church. It seems important to note that the angel's key is shiny. Because this is the only image used to describe the key, not only does it seem artificial and superficial, but may also be read as a fetishized object. The children imagine that the angel's key will provide them freedom, but in actuality, they move from one form of confinement to another *(Innocence 19.12-7)*. Though death might not be seen exactly as a kind of confinement, it suggests that the only way to move from fetters of labor is to move
out of society altogether – death. This is suggested by Tom's waking act while the others go to work.

This angel leads the young sweepers to their death, “naked and white,” and invokes the image of a corpse. The children move from black coffins to white death. This same movement between life and death respectively is also shown through the discrepancy between the cold morning and Tom being happy and warm, alluding to the idea that Tom, with god as his father, is dead.

The final note, “[s]o, if all do their duty they need not fear harm” further implies the notion that social deviance implies moral deviance. The angel insinuates that, if the children are mindful of the ideologies of their society and perform labor, once they die they will become happy. This angel acts as an avatar of the church, and insists that the only way to be a moral individual is to become submissive to the very system that takes away individual rights. Acting in this way, the angel functions as a tool for the greater ISA of the church.

Daniel Muhlestein establishes a reading of “The Chimney Sweeper” that illuminates how capitalist ideologies work to make the sweeper submissive. He contends that the sweep's anger has dissipated, and he becomes an “advocate of submission” to higher authorities that promise him relief (74). The sweep's anxiety, caused by his labor, forces him into this position of submission, and into an imaginary relationship with the conditions of his existence (76), as “though he is ultimately circumscribed by its maxims, the narrator's intent is always to comfort; society's, to
control” (77). While Muhlestein uses a Marxist reading of the text, an Emancipative Fantastic reading emphasizes the repressive nature of the sweep's submission. The angel represents the reified capitalist ideology, and shows the force Blake saw behind ideology. Forcing these ideologies, for Blake, is a violent and oppressive act.

Using an Emancipative Fantastic reading of the text, an analysis of The {First Book of Urizen} shows that fantastic images function as ways to reach out of the historical position of the work and posit an image of a world free from capitalist ideologies. As Hilton writes in his book *Literal Imagination*:

> These formulations and assertions of the intelligibility of world and communication are bound together through the sign of the chain; this sign Blake seizes on in order to explore its nature and unlock the reader from its implications. Though perception necessarily begins enchained, linked to a past and context, in realizing the nature and operations of its restraint — the psychic and cultural fetters, locks, and manacles — perception may to some extent unchain itself. (Hilton 56)

Here, Hilton notes that Blake, by being aware of how societal chains function, is able to influence the perception of them. By doing so, Blake illuminates a way to unlock the imagination from them. This is done on multiple levels because he not only directly attacks the ideologies which are the mind's chains, but also provides his reader with a way out, through imagination. Though Hilton's reading is rooted in the historical implications of the word “chain,” the image of a chain becomes, perhaps,
more significant to an Emancipative Fantastic reading of Blake's fantastic mode.

Reading Blake's chains through Emancipative Fantastic theory, we see that Blake utilizes his literary energy to break the fetters and to forge a way of thinking outside the material world.

The beginning of the poem is marked with images of genesis. Urizen creates his world – “Times on times he divided and measured / Space by space in his ninefold darkness, / Unseen, unknown. Changes appeared...” (Urizen 1.8-10). Ideologies are formed by creating and controlling aspects of culture, literally forming a system with which to experience the world. Dividing and measuring existence, Urizen boxes up infinity and imagination in order to control and order it. It is unclear whether the “Unseen, unknown” changes appear before Urizen himself or if they are directed towards the reader. But in any instance, the inability to know these changes, that, as mentioned before, are changes which control and limit the eternal experience, places the mind in manacles. In writing about Bromion, Frye writes that Urizenic laws are “based on the principle of uniformity, therefore acting in accordance with uniform law is acting in accordance with what must be the will of God. These laws must be tyrannically imposed and implicitly obeyed: the alternative is chaos” (Frye 239). Urizen typifies tyranny by proclaiming that he is “One King, One God, One Law” (Urizen 2.84).

These limiting images continue later in the poem:

And Urizen (so his eternal name)
His prolific delight obscures more and more
In dark secrecy, hiding in surging
Sulphureous fluid his phantasies.
The Eternal Prophet heaved the dark bellows,
And turned restless the tongs, and the hammer
Incessant beat, forging chains new and new,
Numbering with links hours, days and years. (*Urizen* 4b.176-83)

Urizen's obscure delight that Blake writes of becomes another form of limiting the universe, hiding Urizen's intent. Because this passage moves into an image of Urizen working, a Marxist reading of the text can be proffered. Urizen here is forging chains and manacles in accordance to a time scale. Time, the antithesis of eternity, is marked with chains. Likewise, naming Urizen an “Eternal Prophet” becomes contrary to his work of marking time and controlling eternity.

Later in the poem, Blake connects these physical limits to a limiting of the mind:

Forgetfulness, dumbness, necessity,
In chains of the mind locked up,
Like fetters of ice shrinking together,
Disorganized, rent from Eternity,
Los beat on his fetters of iron,
And heated his furnaces, and poured
Iron solder and solder of brass. (Urizen 4b.189-95)

The “forgetfulness, dumbness, [and] necessity” are marked with negative connotation, and, when applied to the human mind, are reminiscent of a mind created within the framework of capitalist ideology. As both Marx and Althusser state implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, that in order to create a production force, the laborers must be unaware that they are being taken advantage of. He writes of forgetfulness, indicating that the individuals are unable to possess the means of revolt against their oppressors. Likewise, dumbness suggests a mindset that sees their position as natural necessity. The “chains of the mind” (ideologies) are constructed and locked up to keep people in their position at the base within society. Blake's statement of the mind being “rent from Eternity” reaffirms the disjunction between an individual living under society's ideologies and the transcendent state of humankind's imagination. By positioning these statements adjacent to an image of Los' labor, Blake demonstrates his anxieties towards ideologically forced labor.

Similarly, Hilton remarks on the relationship between Urizen and Los. This relationship shows that both Urizen and Los depend upon each other in order to survive. Hilton writes:

Urizen's chains are made by Los, “the eternal Prophet.” Urizen having separated from Eternity though his mournful discovery of self-love, Los must for the time being bind himself back by whatever means possible – any Urizen being better than none. Los must bind himself to
Urizen, and it is precisely this act of sacrifice that holds the key to their mutual resurrection. (69)

Though it is not Urizen who is portrayed here, Los tries to remove his manacles, both mental and physical. Here, the symbiotic relationship between the base and the superstructure is explored. Los (the base), living in a world created by Urizen (the superstructure), binds Urizen, then binds himself. Both bounded entities are unable to separate one from the other and function, mutually, in the same way Althusser defines a functioning hegemonic power structure. While the passage describes the symbiotic relationship between the base and superstructure Althusser notes, using Emancipative Fantastic theory we observe Los's physical oppression by Urizen, and are able to discern that, for Blake, all ideology is terrifying.

Blake also implies a connection between mental chains and death and reiterates the image shown in “The Chimney Sweeper.” In Urizen – “The Immortal endured his chains, / Though bound in a deadly sleep” (Urizen 5.261-2). This “deadly sleep” which Los is subjected to limits his mental functions and seems caused by the endurance of his chains. Sleep and death, if we read chains or fetters as physical incarnations of ideologies, remove mental energy from the individual. Thus, though he is “dead,” Los endures his ideologies because he is part of a larger Eternal, a universality that may offer him a way out.

Once again, Blake evokes the image of chains. This time Los's chains are not physically forged by Urizen. However, by viewing Urizen's self-made chains, Los
feels pity, and in doing so, limits himself:

Los wept obscured with mourning;

His bosom earthquaked with sighs;

He saw Urizen, deadly black,

In his chains bound, and Pity began

In anguish dividing and dividing,

For pity divides the soul. *(Urizen 5.28-38)*

Both the division of Los's soul and his obscurity suggest that, for Blake, pity is a self-devouring emotion. Blake forces his reader to question if pity is a social construct, caused somehow by culture. What seems more important is the inactiveness of pity. Contrary to active anger, pity does not force an action by the pitier. Rather, the individual who feels this sentiment does nothing for the object of the emotion which is shown by its coupling with bounded chains. This inaction is antithetical to energy, and, for Blake, energy is manifested in imagination; thus, pity limits the imagination. Also, because the chains and pity are connected, we are able to determine that, if pity is caused by chains, and pity causes the division of soul, then the *de facto* claim is that chains divide the individual's soul. So again, enchainment is antithetical to the complete soul.

The image of Los and Enitharmon taking their son up to the mountain to chain him up, again, correlates emotions (or lack of) with manacles.

They took Orc to the top of a mountain
Oh how Enitharmon wept!
They chain'd his young limbs to the rock
With the Chain of Jealousy
Beneath Urizen's deathful shadow (Urizen 7.391-4)

Enitharmon, serving as the female incarnation of poetic inspiration and beauty, along with Los, must bind their child, Ore, to the rock. The looming quality that Urizen possesses may again be tied to the State's power over the base. Reading this rather literally, inspiration and the children of inspiration (the hope of breaking out of an empirical mindset) are forced, under the apparatuses of ideology, to chain their imagination in order to maintain the status quo.

Because Blake's genesis does not describe the actual creation of human beings, the fantastic framework functions in a way that marks his anxieties towards societal creation, and at the same time escapes the problems of nostalgic social creation. Using fantasy, Blake employs an alternative, imaginary solution to the very real problems he sees in forming societies. The importance of these instances of seemingly transparent attacks on normative capitalist ideology, wrapped up in fantastic images, is that they call attention to the necessity of imagination to remove the cultural fetters. Though not escapist per se, fantastic literature, by privileging the immaterial, allows Blake to remove himself from the materialist and rational world he attacks. As Frye writes, “the actual makes the ideal look helpless and the ideal makes the actual look absurd” (237). Jackson, while writing about fantastic creatures as an
aid to human affairs, posits that the placement of “supernatural agents” is a way to reconcile a need for moral order. That need reveals a longing for an ideal social order – one that replaces the order destroyed by capitalism (97). It is easy to see that Blake offers his Urizenic figures as a way to escape reality. In developing a gnosis that resembles all that he sees as wrong with his culture, he employs fantasies as a way to antagonistically set his works against the culture and there by illuminates what he thinks is wrong with it.

Blake, in subverting the major literary discourse, removes himself from the socio-cultural and historic position he occupies and influences literary discourse for future generations. According to Jackson's reading of Freudian and Lacanian theories, fantasies offer up a space in which the subject is able to reverse cultural formation (177). Equally important as the cultural effects on an individual is the way in which the individual forms a conception of self. This next chapter will focus on the development of identity within Blake's culture, and his attempts at offering an alternative self-hood.
Chapter 2

The Inhuman Condition

*Genesis couldn't have been more misguided, or misleading, he thought, to picture the serpent crushed beneath a human heel. The soul was that serpent, and it could fly.*

-Clive Barker, *The Great and Secret Show*

In the ninth section of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, Blake details the birth of the first female and with it describes the anxieties that have formed from the necessity to construct individual identity. He writes: “All Eternity shuddered at sight/ Of the first female now separate, / Pale as a cloud of snow/ Waving before the face of Los” (*Urizen* 5.316-9). In this section (the birth of the female from the body of Los) the Emanation or separated female identity, Enitharmon, physically separates from Los. Not unlike the begetting of Eve from Adam, with her creation, Enitharmon signals the oncoming apocalypse. Blake writes that “All Eternity shuddered” at the sight of her creation, and with it, remarks on the terrifying power of alienation.

Eternity, or the ideal universe that Blake mentions here, is shaken and rejects the separation of the female form from Los; however, this does not seem to necessitate a reading of Blake as a misogynist. Rather, the act of her separating indicates the fall of the ideal individual. Masculinity and femininity are now separate and need to be defined separately. Like the creation of Eve in *Genesis*, the creation of the female, or Emanation, prophesies the loss of an Edenic state for man. By dividing the universe, Urizen has succeeded in dividing man as well. Unlike *Genesis*, Blake contends that the loss of wholeness when the Emanation becomes separate from the original Immortal links the alienated body with cultural ideology.
The male and female forms, when separated, indicate two different principles. Enitharmon is an idealization of the female parts of Los' immortal identity. However, the ideal form is only achieved when an Emanation is not created or defined outside of the androgynous Immortal. This ties into Blake's ideal human form. He felt that the ideal individual is comprised of both feminine identity and masculine. This idealized body is also, most importantly, one that is based in the imagination. For Blake, imagination achieves a universalized identity outside of one's culture. He literally defines divinity in human existence through an individual's use of imagination, and because he reifies capitalist ideologies through the fantastic, he deals with gender in such a way as to suggest that the creation of gender is not only a cultural construction, but that humankind was in a more perfect state, and that state can be achieved once more after the apocalypse. Blake's sentiments are echoed in *The Four Zoas*. Los, enraged, speaks to Enitharmon, "Though in the brain of Man we live, & in his circling nerves./ Through this bright world of all our joy is in the Human Brain" (*Zoas* 2.44-5). This quotation touches upon an allegorical interpretation of the nature of our "earthly brains" (2.44). The "bright world" of "joy" resides in the imaginative function of the human brain and places the imagination circling the nerves, outside sensual experience.

**The Skins of the Fathers**

In order to transition from a conversation regarding Blake's aesthetic manipulation of capitalist ideologies to a reading of identity creation in his prophetic
works, a discussion of what impedes or becomes problematic to identity creation must first be established. One way of combining identity creation with an Emancipative Fantastic reading of the text is to look at how both Blake and Marx dealt with the issue of identity formation. Because what are considered to be the prophetic works are centered upon individual consciousness or relationship to the human imagination, constructing a framework that looks at identity creation becomes especially pertinent. Through a discussion of identity creation, Blake contends that imagination becomes a freeing force. At the same time, he problematizes culturally or ideologically based identity creation. Ideological apparatuses that go into constructing a culture also limit how a subject identifies them-self within that culture. However, there is no escape from ideology. It is always already present. Blake ultimately argues that individuals need to secure their own individual identities outside of heteronormative, capitalist culture through the use of imagination. This is not atypical of the Romantic writers. However, Blake compounds imagination by using fantastic methods to provide a freeing space that allows the subject to construct an identity.

Writing in the fantastic mode offers Blake fewer restrictions. By examining works as an example of the fantastic, we see that by reifying capitalist ideologies Blake creates the idea of an individual removed from such ideologies. Since we now have established a reading of Blake's literature through the Emancipative Fantastic, we are now able to extrapolate that reading and put it into practice when looking at identity creation in some of Blake's more prophetic poems. Blake establishes the
image of the unfallen man or Eternal as a guide for how to identity one's self outside of culture. For him, the unfallen individual signifies a transcendent identity; one that is able to remove himself from the fetters of culture and the physical body. The fallen individual, for Blake, exists all around us bound by the limitations of capitalist ideology. Humanity is in a fallen state because we are so indoctrinated with ideologies that we become shadows of human beings. Blake desires to bring humankind into an edenic, Eternal state; however, Blake does not promote a prelapsarian nostalgia. There has been no ideal edenic state, except that which lives in the imagination. Blake uses imagination, specifically through the mode of the fantastic to provide this state.

The fantastic makes Blake's ideal identity creation accessible because it embodies the individual, imaginarily, through praxis. Using praxis, we are able to examine a piece of literature and imaginarily resolve the problems in the piece, thereby solve them for ourselves. This works especially well for fantasies which tackle issues inside the narrative such as identity creation and the fall of humankind. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The [First] Book of Urizen,* and *The Four Zoas* all at some point in their respective narratives tackle different parts of the issue of identity creation. *The Marriage* didactically lays down guidelines of what to try to avoid and achieve as a human being living in the world. *Urizen* shows through the creation of an imperfect world, and through an imperfect and fallen God, how not to live in the world. Likewise, *The Four Zoas,* being Blake's largest and arguably most
enigmatic work, provides its reader with a detailed description of a genesis and provides the basis for which Blake sees man going back to his unfallen state.

When reading Blake's works, we are unable to remove the idea of identity creation from the Marxist reading of the texts established in the last chapter. It is inappropriate to completely remove a Marxist reading from Blake's works because they deal with similar theoretical issues. Essentially, the matter of how to define oneself without the influence of negative ideologies becomes problematic for both men. While Marx ultimately contends that one is unable to fully remove herself from her position within ideologies, he also dismisses the idea that fictional texts offer anything other than a reestablishment of ideologies. If we allow for the idea that fantastic texts can offer a transcendent space, as Blake surely does because he uses fantastic images to reify ideology, an Emancipative Fantastic reading of the text is often more useful in acknowledging and citing the pervasive ideologies in order to subvert them.

In her article titled “The Humanized Universe of Blake and Marx,” Minna Doskow observes that Blake's vision of identity creation pairs nicely with Marx's vision of the same. Coming from their respective literary and theoretical backgrounds, both Blake and Marx believe, according to Doskow, that any meaning or substance the world has is placed upon it by the individual, and it is shaped only by the individual's work (225). Both men feel that, in order to fully participate in the world as a human being, individuals must view the world as human-centered. Blake
argues that the subject must perceive the world with human imagination acting actively upon it, and Marx sees the individual achieving self-realization through his “conscious objectification in productive activity” (226). Thus, the way the individual sees the world dictates how man behaves in the world (227). Doskow gives the example: if an individual sees an empirical world full of “dead material objects” then she herself becomes objectified and “deadened” (227).

Doskow’s article suggests a reading of Blake and Marx which offers a human-centered view of the world. She notes that, for Blake, the universe is itself part human, and the only way the universe came into being is because of man’s imaginative powers (226). Because Blake’s definition of humanity is so reliant on individual action, the problem lies in the idea of alienation. What has happened to create a “fallen man,” or in other words an alienated subject, “for Blake,[...] lies in man's loss of imagination, while for Marx it lies in the alienation of his labor under capitalism” (232).

In *The [First] Book of Urizen*, Urizen alienates man from her imagination by placing restrictions on her and forcing her into labor. Urizen acts as law-giver and proclaims “Here alone, I in books formed of metals, / Have written the secrets of wisdom” (*Urizen* 2.68-9). His books, made of metal, appear as obdurate and inflexible as his laws. The symbols reference nothing tangible except the laws Urizen has formed. Though he uses them to rule, the symbols signify nothing. Urizen's wisdom, expressed through nonsensical symbols, is likewise unintelligible, and
therefore contrary to Blake's definition of wisdom. In order to break away from Urizen's monolithic grasp, according to Blake, man must find a way, through imagination outside the system which created the tyrant. Urizen tries to establish a referential order through his iron bound laws. Yet, Blake writes this ironically, the laws mean nothing but they still control the individual. Because these laws represent a referential that does not exist, a revolution to overthrow Urizen will do nothing except replace the tyrant with another and will not “awaken” the “spirit of man” (Frye 66). In this, Blake directly engages with the problems he sees occurring in the revolution in France. Using literature to anticipate Baudrillard, Blake explores the problems of an “indefinite recurrence of a simulacral order” (Baudrillard 21).

Tyrannical and oligarchic power structures like Urizen's show their exploitative nature through alienation. Though capitalist ideologies are not explicit in Urizen, Blake's “The Chimney Sweeper” does chronicle the alienation of children through labor production. Jean Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation connects the idea of an alienated subject and the creation of simulacra with capitalism. Baudrillard states:

Because in the end, throughout its history it was capital that first fed on the destructuration of every referential, of every human objective, that shattered every ideal distinction between true and false, good and evil, in order to establish a radical law of equivalence and exchange, the iron law of its power.
Here, he writes about capitalism deconstructing the notion of particular referents. When couched in an engagement with identity creation, especially coupled with literature that complicates and even antagonizes commodity exchange, the premise that Baudrillard establishes contends that it is capital that destroys the referential particulars, that reconstitutes cultural definitions of morality, and adulterates identity creation and human desires. Blake preempts Baudrillard's premise in a letter to the Reverend John Trusler, and writes: “To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun & a bag worn with the use of Money has more beautiful proportions than a Vine filled with Grapes” (“Trusler”). Here, Blake describes how capital and the fetishization of money destroy the ideal distinction between “true” the beauty in nature (here the sun and the vine of grapes) and the false. Blake later reestablishes referential order through the use of imagination. Engaging in dialogue, he writes: “When the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea?” And he answers “O no, no, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty” (Frye 21). Blake sees more in the sun because there is more imagination going into perceiving it (qtd. in Frye 21). The imagined sun, for Blake, is in many ways more real because it is not compared to a concrete real (the guinea). The imagined sun does not actually contain a choir of angels, but Blake sees more of the emotional intensity of the sun because he uses imagination.
In various places, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* details the necessity for imagination as a way to ward off alienation. Blake writes, “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is infinite” (*Marriage* pl. 14.77). Here, Blake pointedly remarks that “perception” or sense experience mares man's ability to experience the infinite. The infinite is achieved through imagination. A central theme in *Marriage* is that the infinite or a universalized understanding may also be understood as truth, a truth which is only obtained through the active use of imagination. Blake writes that “What is now proves was once only imagined” (*Marriage* pl. 8.33), which suggests that imagination supersedes, and in many ways is more powerful than, empirical reason. The superiority of active imagination is again reiterated with what is perhaps the most quoted portion of *Marriage*, “The cistern contains: the fountain overflows./ One thought fills immensity” (*Marriage* pl. 8.35-6).

However, what becomes more important in a reading of Blake's literature is what he offers as an alternative method of identity creation. He emancipates identity creation by stating the adverse effects of identifying oneself through the tenets of a morally-skewed culture. For Blake, imagination becomes a way to access divinity. To use and value the imaginative force privileges the divine within humanity. What Doskow fails to point out is the importance, for Blake, of a universalized definition of identity. In *The Four Zoas*, he writes that the “Four mighty ones are in every man: a perfect Unity Cannot exist, but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden” (*Zoas* 1.1-2). With this sentiment, Blake expounds upon the necessity of a universal definition
of humanity. Although this might not be the same universality that Blake's contemporaries (mainly Poe) cite, the idea is still the same. Universality, or at least a universalizing way to identify oneself as human, transcends the limits of dualistic ways of identifying oneself within culture – gender, socioeconomic position, relationship to work, and relationship to nature are the major ideological constraints Blake problimitizes.

Fantastic texts in general seem to allow, in the form of the written word, a measure of escape from typical identity constructs. Texts which privilege imagination open up a space where the fantastic mode allows Blake, and writers like him, to achieve a universalizing image through the formation of an identity unlinked to the symbolic. These types of identity precede socialization, and before the ego is produced, an infinite number of selves is allowed to exist, and the subject is therefore allowed to create a universalizing identity (Jackson 91). Examples of this universalizing identity occur when there are multiple instances/ images of the same figure, or the character is defined by metamorphoses as several different creations.

On the second night of *The Four Zoas*, Vala betrays her counterpart, Luvah, who then turns Vala into a dragon: “And I commanded springs to rise for her in the black desert, / Till she became a dragon, winged, bright & poisonous” (*Zoas* 2.298-9). Vala's metamorphosis into a dragon may symbolize her sexual desires and fallen state (Hayes 157). However, what becomes important to a reading of this scene within the fantastic mode is that she maintains her identity even though her physical body has
morphed. After her change, she bears many children and destroys Luvah, and herself in the process (*Zoas* 2.299). This account of metamorphosis shows the instability of the fantastic body. When the body is destabilized, ideological distinctions, which are physiologically based, no longer function – gender becomes irrelevant. Particularity is based upon a scaffolding of limits. When these limits are removed the particular dissolves. Thus, the identity of the individual must be based outside of ideological distinctions, which allows for transcendence towards a more universal form of identity creation.

**The Significance of Simulacra**

Positioning Blake's literature in the fantasy genre removes the constraints placed upon it by more realistic genres. For example, Michael Green's article, "Dreams of Freedom: Magical Realism and Visionary Materialism in Okri and Blake," regarding the use of imagination in Okri and Blake's texts, defines their work as magical realism. In so doing, Green limits and defines Blake's modality in a way that does not quite fit his more prophetic works. Green writes:

The conflation of the world-making capacity of poetry and the temporal elision of prophecy in the works of both writers ties in directly with the presentation of the world (in both its fallen and post-apocalyptic aspects) as the unfolding of multiple discourses; however, what this does in effect is foreclose the possibility of appealing to an external or pure universality beyond human experience, which is itself
constituted through various representations (i.e. imaginatively). This leaves room for considerable anxiety, not only at a philosophical or culture-wide level, but, given the centrality of identity within attempts to rethink and reimagine the world as we know it, at a personal level too (20).

Here, Green observes that anxiety manifests when one relies on imagination in order to restructure culture. He observes that identity construction in magical realism is based on a real life referential and imagination never offers a way out because it does not offer an external experience. Green contends that imagination, because it is based in particular accounts, cannot achieve universality. Imagination, or the force that goes beyond human experience, does not rely on a particular referent because, by their very nature, fantasies skew a priori experiences. The anxiety which Green observes (for a reimagined world) does not have a basis within a fantastic text.

Because Green positions Blake's literature squarely in the genre of magical realism, the crux of his argument rests on the tenets of that genre. If we continue with our reading of Blake through Emancipative Fantastic theory, we are able to argue that Blake does indeed escape, or at least present the possibility of emancipation from the constraints of particulars, and attempts to transcend into universality. A reading of Blake also engages with theory Baudrillard writes two hundred years later and writes that Urizen saw his creations as “portions of life, similitude[s]” (Urizen 8.424). Urizen sees his world and the progeny he creates as “portions of life.” Here, the
individual becomes a simulacrum for her ideal self. Man is a sign because of Urizen's laws, and cannot be Blake's "real" man because she has fallen. The real, unfallen individual no longer exists and Urizen is unable to see that because he is unable to see using imagination. Therefore, man-the-sign, references ideal individual, but the ideal individual no longer exists due to Urizen's laws. To refer again to Baudrillard:

But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith? The whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum—not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. (Baudrillard 5-6)

Thus, if we reference images and base the universal on particulars then we perhaps exchange particulars for themselves, or rather, signs of the particulars for signs of the particulars. In Blake, the individual, when reduced to the physical body, is no longer an individual, but a shadow or reproduction of an individual.

Unlike his Urizen, Blake uses imagination and fantasy to remove his discourse from the creation of the simulacrum because he creates images that have no initial reference. There is no referential order in the idea that Urizen collapses infinity because we have no particular relation to the concept of infinity, nor can we really relate to the idea of collapsing something to which we only have a theoretical understanding. There is no image of infinity, nor is there a reference. He disseminates
the chain and places ideal human identity outside the chain. Using Baudrillard's language to write about Urizen's creation of the world, no sign of the original faith or action exists; therefore we are unable to reduce his (Urizen's) actions into signs of the action. Urizen's division of the world is not reduced and may not become weightless in the simulacral sense because what he does cannot be constituted as “real” in any way.

According to Todorov, the lack of “real” meaning in fantastic images is significant (Jackson 38). Fantastic images create a gap between sign and meaning because the “real” reaches no absolute signification in an image that has no basis in reality. These images, according to Jackson, act as “nameless things.” Only through suggestion and implication do truly fantastic, otherworldly images obtain any meaning. However, what may happen is that these images, because they lack a referential, may act as empty signs, or rather signs without meaning. An example of this is the Jabberwocky poem of Alice in Wonderland. Although meaninglessness may be the case, the lack of a reference may also function to move the sign outside the realm of objectification (40) where its usefulness can hint at universalization.

Jackson writes, “[t]he subject's relation to the phenomenal world is made problematical and the text foregrounds the impossibility of definitive interpretations or vision [...]” (48). Todorov's definition of fantasy as an extended hesitation comes into play. When a subject is unsure of the world that the text foregrounds, her relationship to the world problematizes definition. This may not necessarily demand
an impossibility of defining oneself inside a fantastic world, but rather it complicates the subject's reaction to the phenomenal world ('real' world), because in the textual world identity becomes more fluid (Jackson 49).

*Vala*, or *The Four Zoas*, gives a better picture of how identity may be created outside of ideology, specifically in the first two nights. Blake transcribes his definition of identity in the narrative of this poem. Again, examining the opening of *The Four Zoas*, “Four mighty ones are in every man: a perfect Unity Cannot exist, but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden” (*Zoas* 1.5). Here, the idea of unity hints at the notion of a universal. The “Brotherhood of Eden” begets universality, or a perfect unity of the four mighty ones for Blake means that the person is an unfallen individual. This unfallen state is ideal because the four aspects (*Zoas*) that Blake sees as necessary to form a whole being (imagination, passion, rationality, and compassion) are united simultaneously in one form. Blake dictates that in order to achieve this multifarious form, one must be unburdened by cultural ideologies or rationality. More specifically, rationality is, by nature, antithetical to imagination. Rationality is based on empirical ways of seeing the world, while imagination or the fantastic privileges world-views that extend beyond sense experience. What this means for Blake is an understanding of identity, based on the imagined world, which becomes a personal truth because it is experienced in a personal way through the individual's imagination.

Blake, through *Urizen*, provides a description of what happens to identity
when one is confined by the rules of rationality. Urizen provides this context and delimits how not to go about creating an image of oneself: “Eternity shudder'd when they saw / Man begetting his likeness / On his own divided image” (Urizen 6.336-8). Not only does this passage hint at narcissism, but it also focuses on the difference between wholeness and division. The “divided image” Blake refers to in this quote may also mean alienation. The fallen man sees himself separated from his connectedness with nature and with himself. The divide Blake objects to can be determined as opposite to the universal whole he idealizes.

Particularity may be connected with Blake's antagonism to Locke insofar as Locke argues that the only way to see the world is through the senses. With the empirical frame of reference, the entire world becomes objectified and limited to sensory experience. Imagination and universality is lost when empiricism reigns. The narrative of The Four Zoas is most succinctly captured as Los's “fall into division & his resurrection to unity” (Zoas 1.15). What is also undoubtedly true, at least in regards to Blake's world-view, is the connection between the lack of a definite particular and need to achieve universality. To look at another writer, writing barely a generation after Blake, Poe, in Eureka, explores the desire for an undifferentiated body. The supreme Nothingness Poe describes between the two cycles of creation and destruction contains Unity. Absolute Unity is so created, not only because we are unable to conceptualize Nothingness and infinity through epistemic thought, but there is a poetical essence and sublimity evoked in the void. In moving towards Unity, what
is finite or differentiated sinks into Nothingness or, at minimum, the perception of
Unity is created (Eureka 869). Absolute Unity exists in this Nothingness, and
therefore any type of definition or distinction within cannot exist. However, the
“unfathomable abysses” of Unity are not without their “unimaginable suns” (Eureka
867). The symmetry, and the Nothingness in between, creates a supreme symmetry
which Poe relates to the sublimity of the poetic nature of the Universe (Eureka 864).

Poe's image of void is not unlike Blake's divine imagination. Imagination
functions analogically to Nothingness because both achieve unity and in so doing,
free man. Because the imagination does not need, and often does not relate to a
particular, it is the limiting actions of particulars that Blake sees as controlling and
abstracting man. Therefore, imagination acts as a freeing force with which to access
unity.

To return back to the opening quote of the paper, we can see how Blake
constructs, in vivid detail, the reaction to the creation of Enithannon from Los:

The abyss of Los stretched immense,
And now seen, now obscured, to the eyes
Of the Eternals, the visions remote
Of the dark separation appeared.
As glasses discover worlds
In the endless abyss of space,
So the expanding eyes of Immortals
Beheld the dark visions of Los, [...] (Urizen 5.299-304)

Here, it seems important to note the connection between sight in the poem and how identity, or the separation of Enitharmon, is created. Blake conceptualizes ideas formulated much later by Lacanian psychoanalytic theories – in particular the Lacanian mirror stage. The remote vision indicates an abstraction or the “dark separation” Blake describes later in the poem. By using words such as “obscured” to describe the eyes of the Eternals and then writing that a “separation” “appeared” as a result of the obfuscation, Blake solidifies the connection between alienation and the loss of an ideal form. Furthermore, like the glasses of a mirror and the expanding eye of the Immortals are unlike the defining and constraining eye of Urizen. Likewise, the “glasses” which discover “Worlds” indicates a mocking jab at empiricism because scientists need tools to find new worlds, whereas the imagination needs nothing apart from the mind. Because the nature of a tool discovering what the eye or what the imagination cannot removes the active function of man from the equation.

The next section of Urizen details the creation of the first female:

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For Lacan, the mirror stage is synonymous with a Gestalt switch. The once fused pre-mirror-stage infant moves into mirror-stage identification when he perceives his body to be a “collection of discrete part-objects...” (Ragland-Sullivan 21). Furthermore, because of the mirror-stage switch, Lacan argues that adults lack the unity of a pre-mirror-stage infant and may never “perceive their bodies in a complete fashion in later life” (Ragland-Sullivan 21).
VIII The globe of life blood trembled
Branching out into roots,
Fibrous, writhing upon the winds,
Fibres of blood, milk and tears,
In pangs, eternity on eternity.
At length in tears & cries imbodied,
A female form, trembling and pale,
Waves before his deathy face.

IX All Eternity shudder'd at sight
Of the first female now separate,
Pales as a cloud of now
Waving before the face of Los. (Urizen 5.309-19)

While the idea of a life globe of blood does not provide the reader with any distinct form, the image refers (along with other bodily fluids) in a visceral way to creation. The pangs and tears that eternity feels are likewise suggestive of birthing pains. Yet, this is not a happy birth. Eternity (now capitalized) shudders in disgust at the birth of Enimathion. Los' face, here described as "deathy," marks the point that, now separated into male and female bodies, he has lost his immortality and has fallen.

As a reaction to Los's fall, Urizen exclaims, "I have sought for a joy without pain, For a solid without fluctuations" (Urizen 2.54-5). By creating laws and organizing the universe, Urizen disbands the contraries Blake holds so dear. Without
their contrary parts, Urizen creates a simulacral joy. Because there is not pain with which to compare joy, Urizen's joy becomes a sign of what he feels that joy must mean; however, Urizen's attempts to thwart the expansion of the Eternal's eye and to create a simulacrum of joy without pain functions to further divide the ideal form (Urizen 2.54). The creation of abstracted feelings, or the simulacrum of joy, ties in directly to Enimathion's separation.

The fleeing Eternals call Enimathion “Pity” (Urizen 5.18.23) and by doing so solidify her function as an object of pity. Harkening back to the second chapter, Blake does not believe pity to be a favorable attribute. Pity is marred by inactivity, and the creation of this inactive being causes the Eternals to flee. However, she is not necessarily an inactive creature. A better definition of her relationship to the Eternals is that her existence indicates a movement away from imagination and the energy created by it. Her creation instead indicates a trajectory towards the confinements of ideology. There will never be any new creation, only reproduction when she begets children (Urizen 6.362). Because she is a separate gender that inhabits a separate body, the resulting progeny may be seen as something like reproduction instead of a new creation. Blake, here, reemphasizes his distaste for reproduction, the very same distaste that is manifested in his definition of art.

In his article titled “William Blake's Androgynous Ego-Ideal,” Tom Hayes notes how the androgynous characters in Blake's writings are often shown as being somehow superior to others. Hayes constructs a reading of Blake's works, primarily
the longer prophetic works, wherein he describes the genderedness of the characters that Blake creates and how Blake saw gender. Hayes writes that, although Vala personifies the fallen state and Jerusalem the “female will” because “masculinity aligns women with nature and men with culture,” Blake does not see this alignment as necessary or prudent (160). Likewise, Jerusalem’s sexuality defines her, not because Blake feels that this is the way she should be defined, but because he expresses the desires of heteronormative culture (160) in order to prove them faulty. Hayes cites Blake in *A Descriptive Catalogue* wherein Blake suggests that transexual (Blake uses “hermaphroditic”) individuals who desire “originary wholeness” presuppose a narrative of “heterosexual division of the sexes” (160). Blake sees that there must, at some point, have been a sexual body that was later divided. The androgynous individuals, because they more closely resemble the Eternals, are evident of a more perfect state and original state. Hayes concludes his article with the idea that Blake believed, “culturally speaking, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” (161). He sees that, for Blake, individuals will be restored into their original androgynous state upon the advent of the apocalypse (161).  

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3 In 3:28 of *Galatians*, the argument seems to indicate that there is no distinction between any group of people, specifically between male or female. “There is neither [Jew], nor [Greek], there is neither bond nor free, there is neither make nor female: for ye are all one in Christ [Jesus]” (*Galatians* 3.28). Later, Galatians argues that those individuals who belong to Christ are free of all ritual obligations and constraints imposed by human institutions such as law: (But if yee be lead of the spirit, yee are are not [under] the Law” (*Galatians* 4.18) This passage may act as a springboard for
Hayes' argument shows that the creation of an ideal identity for Blake, speaking at least in terms of gender, must be accomplished outside of physiological distinctions. The body, for Blake, is only a portion of the entire being because it is only experienced through the senses (Marriage). Blake describes the importance of a neutral or androgynous gender as the ideal identity, because the universe, and therefore humanity, becomes limited and is further abstracted from the perfect state when they physically separate into Emanations.

Hayes writes, “In the world of Blake's imagination there is no such thing as an essential biological manliness or womanliness. Language itself cannot maintain the boundaries and enforce the difference between men and women” (Hayes 147). Even in Blake's historical moment, according to Hayes, “those men whose ego-ideals are restored and who therefore resist conforming to the code of heterosexual masculinity will be despised by women who accept the traditional position of woman as wife and mother an expect men to provide for them” (Hayes 148). Thus, individuals who are able to reject heteronormative culture become closer to the ideal state because they simultaneously reject phallogocentric ideologies.

What becomes important in reading this concept of an androgynous identity over culturally-dictated ideologically-gendered frameworks, is the idea that it is the imagination, something universal and ungendered, which allows for man (or woman) equally to identify as a divinity. Hayes recognizes that the androgynous character of Blake's conception of identity creation.
human perfection that Blake took from Jacob Boehme is based on the premise that
“Man Makes Himself, his own body; his image of the body the Eternal Body of Man
is The IMAGINATION. / that is, / God himself, / The Divine Body (Lacoon). For
Blake, the ideal man creates herself through her imagination, and by doing so,
removes herself from her physical body, instead, creating an “Eternal Body.” This
unfallen or Eternal state is achieved through the imagination. Frye sees the need for
achieving the Eternal body as the moral in the prophetic works. Sense experience
demonstrates the inadequacies of the body. The only way to remove these is by
“lifting [the whole] body to a fully imaginative plane by getting ride of the natural
man” (Frye 194). Lifting the body to an imaginative plane means that imagination
will undo the creation of differentiated bodies. Blake preludes the apocalypse by
contending that, come the apocalypse, androgynous bodies will be formed and culture
will be obsolete. However, the apocalyptic moment is “forever suspended” (161).
Hayes observes that this necessary anticipation is “inscribed in the phallogocentric
nature of writing itself” (161). Blake discovered the problem of the suspended
apocalypse two hundred years before Jacques Derrida wrote on the same (161). In
Blake, the prophetic works signal that illusion of a perfect sensual world is no longer
possible, “because the real is no longer possible” (Baudrillard 19). To break the
various simulacra we must transcend into the imaginative plane.
Conclusion

What is the Plural of Apocalypse?

*It turns out I suddenly find myself needing to know the plural of apocalypse.*

-Joss Whedon

The epigraph to this conclusion poses a question apropos of Blake's work. In my discussion of Blake, I have hinted that his poetry suggests, explicitly, an impending apocalypse. Though Blake's work in many ways relies on the biblical Book of Revelations, Blake's apocalypse does not tear the world asunder. Rather, this apocalypse has more to do with the concept of human integration than a strict reading of the biblical Book of Revelations (Bloom 266-7). The apocalypse, for Blake, occurs in the mind of an individual. The loss of imagination indicates and preludes the apocalypse.

Drawing on an age when the Book of Revelations was particularly relevant to its readers (54), Beer, in his article “Romantic Apocalypses,” investigates how the Early Romantic Poets (Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge) each viewed the apocalypse. He observes that the Romantic period was particularly engaged with the Book of Revelations and apocalypse because of the French Revolution and the impending centennial change (54). In the climax of his argument, Beer states that the Romantic poets were in a “state of confusion” because of the lack of a materialized apocalypse. The three poets came to believe that the apocalypse, in a sense, had already happened in the consciousness of man. Blake's view of the apocalypse is more internalized than the others (60), and he believed that the Last Judgement would be “realized in terms of good and bad art” (58). Beer notes that, in Blake's vision of
the apocalypse, the Poetic Genius (or those who see the Vision of God through imagination) are the only ones who will exist after the apocalypse (58). Blake's rendition of the apocalypse is particularly notable in that, "[w]here Blake dramatizes his own internal sense of apocalypse, Wordsworth projects his, into very forms of nature" (64). While Wordsworth writes of stationary waterfalls in *The Prelude*, Blake envisions monsters that inhibit imagination. Active, fantastic imagination separates Blake from his contemporaries. Blake's poetry is not necessarily concerned with the physical indications of the apocalypse. Rather, Blake examines the evolution of humanity and sets up his own creation myth that accounts for the fallen state of humanity (Beer 61).

However, by definition, the apocalypse comes to cleanse away sin. Sin, for Blake, is remaining within one's self (Bloom 271). Blake calls for the unity of humankind in his vision of the apocalypse in *The Four Zoas*, and he writes that this unity can only occur through man's complete knowledge of art.

Because they are separated from their eternal state, the fallen children of Los cannot be art; they are reproductions, and their multifarious state suggests plurality. These children are separated from their eternal form and have lost their immortality. Humanity, for Blake, is likewise fallen. Imaginative recuperation, or the recovery of a unified form, cannot occur in this fallen state. Because of our plural state, the apocalypse occurs all at once, and it is always, present. Like the self-enclosed Urizen, humanity can only be redeemed through the active use of imagination.
It seems that Blake's apocalypse is therefore always impending; there is no last instance. The apocalyptic moment is forever suspended. If we have learned anything from Derrida, it is that. But Blake preempts what Derrida observes in “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy.” The apocalypse never occurs but there is always a necessary anticipation of it (Hayes 161). This apocalypse will destroy capitalist and cultural ideologies. Ideologies are always already present and because of the ubiquitous creation of these ideologies, an attempt to overcome them, on any level must first note that they exist, and then try to quantify them so we see an escape. Blake does this through fantasy.

Like ideology, Blake's apocalypse is always already present because it is in the mind of the individual. We all have the capacity for imagination, but because of the bind of capitalist ideologies, imagination is stifled. If the true apocalypse comes, Blake's poetry suggests that it will destroy capitalist and cultural ideologies.

In turn, ideologies allow simulacra to form which fool us into believing that what we think is real, is real – this is a double bind. Baudrillard teaches us that the true apocalypse can never occur in a simulacral state because there must be a reversal of referents. Because the referents themselves no longer exist, their contraries no longer exist (Baudrillard 163). Blake anticipates this loss of referential order and writes of the emancipative faculty of imagination. The only way to remove our mind-forged manacles is with our mind.

The plurality of the apocalypse, for Blake, resides in idea that every mind is in
an apocalyptic state. We are limited to plurality because we are progeny of a lesser god. Humanity is a reductive abstraction of the Poetic Genius – the divine. The real hell is in the human mind (Frye 198). To escape, we need to re-see the world. Fantasy offers us a glimpse of a way out and ignores the ever present question – is a way out even possible?
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