

## The Lost Traveller's Dream: Blake and the Seductions of Continuity

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NOT particularly noted for his effusions over the literary works of his contemporaries, Blake nevertheless is reported to have heard Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode with "intense" delight. Crabb Robinson, who read the poem to Blake in 1826, tells us that one passage in particular "threw him almost into a hysterical rapture":<sup>1</sup>

—But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
 A single field which I have looked upon,  
 Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
 The pansy at my feet  
 Doth the same tale repeat:  
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?<sup>2</sup>

Through Crabb Robinson's anecdote Blake's excited response to this passage is well-known, but the anecdote remains tantalizingly inexplicit in import. Why did Blake, whose admiration for Wordsworth was ever hedged with intense wariness, have this response? And why to this passage in particular? Blake apparently reserves his greatest rapture neither for those notions in the "Ode" most congenial to his own visionary temperament, such as the child trailing clouds of glory or the earth apparelled in celestial light, nor for Wordsworth's more tempered joy in the embers of recollected experience. The ecstatic response is reserved instead for a characteristic Wordsworthian moment of sundering or discontinuity. In the midst of his participatory celebration of a gladsome day, the ambling poet abruptly becomes a "halted traveller,"<sup>3</sup> suddenly fixated upon particular emblems of past experience that speak through their silence, through their loss

of the "something that is gone." And they leave the poet also "at a loss." In the instant that he is stirred to ask, through the ventriloquial Pansy, "whither?" and "where?" he becomes not merely a halted but a lost traveller. There are states of bliss somewhere, it is implied, but not where the poet is, and though he longs for them he neither knows where they are nor how to find them.

It is a somber theme and on the face of it hardly an occasion for rapture. But Blake's raptures over the works of others tend to occur when those works powerfully articulate his own convictions of essential truth, or when they represent states he recognizes and express feelings he has felt. Our standard conceptions of Blake, however, seldom accord much prominence to the kind of preoccupations concentrated in the passage from Wordsworth that so moved him — preoccupation with a search for continuity between past and present, with the nostalgia attached to a particular place, with a sense of discontinuity arising together with a sense of recollection, with the experience of loss and of being lost. Yet Blake's intense response to the passage suggests that the issues it raises have a deep importance for him, that they emanate from a visionary landscape where he himself has trod. My aim in this paper is to trace the reflections of these issues in Blake's own poetry and to suggest why they are significant. Such a study need not lead to the discovery of a Wordsworthian perspective in Blake where none was suspected before (for as we shall see, his formulation of some of the characteristic problems of that perspective and his judgment on them are vigorously his own), but it may well reveal a Blake more complexly humane, more attuned to ambivalences of feeling within himself and to the tragic dimension of human experience generally, than the imperviously self-assured dogmatist to whom some commentaries and critical synopses may have accustomed us.

In Blake's poetry, a certain set of related themes — temporality and sense of place, continuity and discontinuity, nostalgia and loss — attach themselves to the motif of the lost traveller, someone who is neither here nor there, one who

cannot find his way back to where he came from or his way toward his destination. An early instance is Tiriell, who blind and inexorably driven to wander to and fro between the land of his parentage and the palaces of his children, illustrates the motif with considerable force.<sup>4</sup> Other representative instances (by no means an exhaustive list) include the Sunflower of *Songs of Experience*, a traveller whose journey is never done, as its turning face endlessly repeats a course from the point of day's origin to that of day's end, with ultimate solace ever beyond its grasp; the "cold Earth wanderers" of "The Mental Traveller" who "never knew" those "dreadful things" seen by the Mental Traveller himself (11. 4-5) though they experience them continually in their cyclic pursuits of material acquisition, the allures of sexuality, and returns to infancy; "the weak traveller confin'd beneath the moony shade" (*Milton*. 15:33), who sees, instead of the infinity of the earth spread before him, distant globes rolling backward behind his path (15:23-24); finally, the meandering Emanations of *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, of whom the most important is Jerusalem herself, "wandering[ing] with Vala upon the mountains, / Attracted by the revolutions of those Wheels" of the astronomical heavens, endlessly measuring temporal cycles of generation and decay (*J.5:60-61*).<sup>5</sup>

Without effacing the differences among these various actual or would-be-travellers, we can nonetheless observe how compulsive they all are in their behavior. They move as toward a goal, but this motivation is curiously blended with a fixation upon their origins. They seem to thirst simultaneously for the solaces of their infant past and the solaces of the future, and they apparently believe that both solaces are consubstantial. Their attraction to cycles is an attraction to continuity, the binding together of times past, present, and future. But instead of achieving a co-presence of all times, they experience a profound alienation from both origin and goal. Their will makes travellers of them; they are imbued with a desire to seek destinations. But their mode of perception confuses destinations with origins, and their experience proves

both unattainable; their journeys thus become mock-journeys, and they themselves are lost.

## II

It would be useful at this point to examine the wanderings of one such traveller in greater detail. A grander poetic descendant of the compulsively meandering old Tiriell, Urizen in Night VI of *The Four Zoas* undertakes one of the most impressively arduous journeys in Romantic literature as he tries to find his way to the World of Urthona. Night VI is largely a reworking and massive expansion of Chapter VIII of *The Book of Urizen* ("Urizen explor'd his dens"), and this expansion endows Urizen's experience and character with a richness not found in the intensely expressed but somewhat skeletal earlier account. At the end of Night V, when Urizen awakens from the comatose state that followed from his fall earlier in the poem he recalls the bliss of unfallen times and laments his betrayal by Luvah, his brother and ancient enemy (*FZ.V.64:22-65:8*). At this point he declares his project:

I will arise Explore these dens & find that deep pulsation  
That shakes my caverns with strong shudders. Perhaps this  
is the night  
Of Prophecy & Luvah hath burst his way from Enitharmon  
When Thought is closed in Caves.

(*FZ.V.65:9-12*)

Luvah, he surmises correctly, has been reborn as Orc to Los and Enitharmon in the World of Urthona, and Urizen will confront him again, this time subduing him once and for all. Thus the project arises from a memory of the past and is an attempt to find an occasion in future time to replay these events in a way that will rectify their original baleful effects. After deciding on his course, he moves in Night VI with remarkable energy: "swift flew the King of Light" (VI.70:24); "On his way / He took. high bounding over hills & deserts floods & horrible chasms" (VI.69:23-24). "Making a path toward the dark world of Urthona" (VI.69:29), he seeks to establish a line of continuity between the past and the past returned.

Unfortunately for Urizen, everything in Blake's description of the conditions of the journey and the features of this path conspires to undermine one's faith in the efficacy of such purposeful journeying. First of all, if Urizen is ultimately successful in reaching the World of Urthona it is because he was "shut up in the deep dens of Urthona" when he awoke from his coma originally in Night V (V.63:23), and he has since been meandering in a vast circle. Second, the dominant imagery in the description suggests not a finite journey with clearly marked stages of progress but a sense of endless sequences, the same kinds of events taking place "time after time" (VI.72:1): "Infinite was his labour without end his travel" (VI.69:25); "which way / So ever I my spirits turn no end I find of all" (VI.72:32-33). Blake's language itself attains at times to incessant, repetitive quality of that which it describes:

falling he fell and fell  
Whirling in irresistible revolutions down & down  
In the horrible bottomless vacuity falling falling falling

(VI.71:21-23)

In this "horrible bottomless vacuity" a third element of disorientation appears, a void of undifferentiated space to match the endless repetition of action. The "path toward the dark world of Urthona" turns out to be "pathless" (VI.70:2, 70:16), without any secure coordinates by which Urizen can mark his progress. His way "from Chaos to chaos from void to void a road immense" (VI.72:15) is an "Abyss" (VI.71:23). While Urizen's way is lost amid vacuities, it is also ridden with all sorts of local obstacles, particularly in the form of hostile monsters:

he strove  
In vain for hideous monsters of the deep annoyd him sore  
Scaled & finnd with iron & brass they devourd the path  
before him

(VI.69:25-27)

Many in serpents & in worms stretched out enormous length  
Over the sullen mould & slimy tracks obstruct his way

(VI.70:32-33)

But these attackd him sore  
Seizing up his feet & rending the Sinews in the Caves  
He hid to recure his obstructed powers with rest & oblivion

(VI.71:8-10)

The way is blighted by too many yawnings, directionless voids on the one hand, too many tangible obstructions to forward progress on the other; there is no real path. Urizen, for all his unremitting purpose, is a lost traveller.

The cosmos of Urizen's journey thus supplies him with immense frustration: where he would seek a definite end, a point of rest, he is forced into incessant labour; where he needs an open access to his goal, he is confronted with resistant obstacles. But there is yet another frustration more poignant than these, and Urizen encounters it repeatedly. As he travels forward, he continually discovers tangible mementos of his past, and they provide an aching nostalgia for unfallen times and a horrible measure of the dimensions of his loss. At several points in the dismal journey, these encounters prompt reminiscences of what Urizen's unfallen life was like. Indeed upon emerging from his coma in Night V he dwells on his past life as if this memory rather than some vindictive design on Luvah, were the chief preoccupation of his awakening consciousness:

Once how I walked from my place in gardens of delight  
 The sons of wisdom stood around the harpers followd with harps  
 Nine virgins clothd in light composd the song to their  
     immortal voices  
 And at my banquets of new wine my head was crown'd with joy  
 Then in my ivory pavilions I slumberd in the noon  
 And walkd in the silent night among sweet smelling flowers  
 Till on my silver bed I slept & sweet dreams round me hoverd

(V.64:1-7)

Nothing could be more remote from Urizen's pell-mell journey through a flood of disorienting experiences than the atmosphere evoked here. The remembered figures and their activities are not in themselves so significant in creating this atmosphere as is the sense rendered of ordered relations. Things and activities are given a location: "in gardens", "at my banquets", "in my ivory pavilions", "among . . . flowers", "on my silver bed". There is a pervasive sense of surroundings: when Urizen walks, he is "followd", sons "stood around", "dreams round me hoverd", the palace is surrounded by gardens, joy surrounds like a crown, light surrounds like clothing. The emphasis is on a reassuring proximity, on spatial contiguity rather than temporal passage.

Later, in Night VI, another of these evocations suggests the same spatial sense:

Art thou O ruin the once glorious heaven are these thy rocks  
 Where joy sang in the trees & pleasure sported on the rivers  
 And laughter sat beneath the Oaks & innocence sported round  
 Upon the green plains & sweet friendship met in palaces

(VI.76:38-77:2)

These lines give to human delight a local habitation. The varied forms of delight are distributed among the varied parts of a single, hypothetical landscape: rivers, oaks, plains, palaces, a landscape of innocence.<sup>6</sup> Such recollections gain in pathos by the wanderer's encounters with their fallen residues.

These residual forms now inhabit the hostile monsters that obstruct Urizen's path. They have become "dishumanized" (VI.70:31) and have suffered dreadful kinds of metamorphosis: "Some as columns of fire or of water sometimes stretchd out in heighth / Sometimes in length sometimes englobing wandering in vain seeking for ease" (VI.70:37-38). This metamorphosis imprisons them in self-enclosure and inarticulateness:

His voice to them was but an inarticulate thunder for  
 their Ears  
 Were heavy & dull & their eyes & nostrils closed up  
 Oft he stood by a howling victim Questioning in words  
 Soothing or Furious no one answered every one wrapd up  
 In his own sorrow howld regardless of his words, nor voice  
 Of sweet response could he obtain tho oft assayd with tears  
 He knew they were his Children ruind in his ruind world

(VI.70:39-45)

There are few passages in Blake more brilliant and affecting than this, coming as it does hard upon an extravagant catalogue of hostile and alien monstrosities athwart Urizen's path. Indeed the whole passage is built on pregnant contrasts forced into sharp juxtaposition, contrasts between "howling" and "words", between the reality of uttered pain and the vain wish for "sweet response", between "victim" and "Children". During this play of contrasts Urizen shows an increasing grasp of the truth, manifest in the sequence from "questioning" to "tears" to knowledge. We move from an obsessed traveller stopping to question alien forms for directions to a father recognizing his lost children, and the extraordinary final line of the passage is,



"children". It is clear that they are children in no ordinary sense of physical likeness, for their present "dishumanization" involves no loss of an anatomically human shape but rather the loss of a responsive voice; it is this alienating loss that makes them now appear exotic, monstrous, and noxious. The lion Urizen seizes now was even in the unfallen state a lion, but one that gave instructions. If such forms were children once, they could be so only in the sense that the creative eye and ear of the unfallen Urizen perceived his surroundings collectively as an extended loving family centered about him. To put the matter another way, Blake is associatively suggesting that Urizen's remembered children are the equivalent of a remembered landscape.

This landscape is the place where everything was contiguous, neighborly, touching him and each other. Having lost this sense of contiguity, Urizen seeks to invest the abyss of time that has succeeded it with the principle of continuity, of moments bound each to each. He cannot forsake his desire for relatedness and now seeks to maintain it by making his origins the motivation for his temporal progress toward his ends, or failing that, by trying to find in his present encounters evidences of his past relations. There is nothing ignoble about such aspirations; they endow Urizen with all the dignity and heroism he displays on his journey. To adhere to the principle of continuity in the face of lost contiguity is alluring because it appeals to the remnant of our fallen divinity that still thirsts for the preservation of relation across the abyss of time.

It will not work, however. As Blake relentlessly shows, time does not in fact afford continuity, only discontinuity. Encountering monsters, Urizen is jarred to discover they are children; attempting to treat them as children he discovers they are monsters after all. They mock the past, stand athwart an easy progress to the future, but when thrust aside, yield to an abyss where the very idea of time as a field of continuity becomes absurd. The hope of continuity is, then, a seductive delusion. It prevails over Urizen as his moment of truth in the encounter with his children recedes behind him on his track. Defeated in his attempts at communication with the children,



And wintry woes succeed; successive driven into the Void  
Where Enion craves: successive drawn into the golden feast

(I.13:11-18)

The thematic content of this passage, isolated from its context, centers upon a shift from bliss to woe (the references to Enion and to the golden feast allude to preceding and succeeding descriptions of despair and strife), but its imagery describes a shift from place to time, from dwelling to travelling. The unusually rich description of the scene, encompassing a spectrum of colors and a panorama of natural and civilized forms, gains in poignance by the withered aspect of the three lines that follow, barren of visual description. All sense of spatial surroundings disappears from these lines, replaced by a sense of compulsive movement ("drawn", "drawn away", "driven") and temporal iteration (in the self-illustrating triple repetition of "succeed; successive . . . successive"). Even more striking, however, than the contrast between spatial and temporal states of existence is the declarative simplicity with which the change from one state to the other is asserted; no blame-fixing fingers are pointed, no errors chided, and in the absence of such indicators, the process seems weighted with an unfathomable inevitability. We are no more invited to ask why spaciousness is forsaken for the gulf of time that we can expect Wordsworth's "Tree, of many, one" to explain why that which it speaks of as gone has departed.

In another sense, however, the reason for the change is implicitly presented in the situation described. The "children of the elemental worlds" dwell "not long in harmony" for, quite simply, they dwell not long as children, and as they change, their landscapes change and retreat into nostalgia. A passage such as this links the recurring motif of the lost traveller with Blake's more fundamental notion of the transition from Innocence to Experience, contrary states of the human soul through which all of us must inescapably pass. And as we pass through them, the temptation arises, also inescapably, to find in connected moments, or continuity, an adequate substitute for connected places of bliss forever lost.

Blake himself is hardly immune from this temptation, as his recurrent personal psychomachia of Spectres tracking down Emanations serves to convey.<sup>8</sup> In one sense the Spectres of Urizenic survivors of the fall from place into time, and the Emanations are the retreating idols of nostalgia. In another sense the Emanations represent in themselves a prelapsarian consciousness, diffused in neighborly space, becoming self-consciousness, that is consciousness of the self as an enclosed entity moving through time. Thus Milton's Emanation Ololon was in Eden a river or a region or a community, but in time an individual wandering woman (see *Milton*:21:15-27). Jerusalem, the Emanation of Albion, is also "a City yet a Woman" (*FZ*.122:18) but in prelapsarian times, when her pillars stood from Islington to Marybone, (*J*.27:1) she was more a city, and now in the fallen present depicted throughout *Jerusalem*, with her pillars toppled and anguished wandering her lot, she is more a woman. Her situation, moreover, is no mere allegorical abstraction for Blake, for those pillars stood among his own boyhood landscape of bliss, "The Jewsharp-house & the Green Man; / The Ponds where Boys to bathe delight: / The fields of Cows by Willans farm" (*J*.27:13-15).<sup>9</sup> Blake is one among those children of Albion who name Jerusalem "Liberty" (*J*.26), and for the poet this is in part the lost liberty of one's early home of innocence. The cosmic drama of Jerusalem's alienation from Albion is also on another level a drama as simple as Wordsworth's encounter with singular tree and field that speak of loss, as Urizen's encounter with children who are "now not Vocal," or as any incursion of nostalgia in our own lives, for all humanity is ultimately identified in Jerusalem's name (*J*.99:5). In personalizing Jerusalem's significance for him, Blake universalizes it as well, showing that his experience is the common experience, his loss, ours.

### III

I have been suggesting as Blake's view of our condition a situation in which we are all travellers, pained in mid-journey by the apparent discontinuity between our present and our past and seeking routes that promise soothing continuities (though these prove to exist mainly in our fantasies). In the face of so

uncompromising a vision of our situation, what route remains? Another kind of traveller sometimes appears in Blake's works, the "traveller thro' Eternity" of *Milton* (15:21ff.), for example, or the Mental Traveller, in the poem of that name, wayfarers not subject to a linear mode of progressive nor bemused by seductive destinations. The Mental Traveller moves with impersonal observation not from one place to another but among all the permutations of a single given of experience, the strife of the sexes, set in a perspective in which all times are recurrent and all spaces co-present. Figures such as this establish the pattern followed by Los as he appears in *Jerusalem*, particularly in one of Blake's great journey passages, where an exemplary resistance to the seductions of continuity is central.

The search through Albion's bosom in Chapter II of the poem provides the keystone of this argument and, as such, deserves extensive quotation:

Fearing that Albion should turn his back against the Divine  
Vision

Los took his globe of fire to search the interiors of Albions  
Bosom, in all the terrors of friendship, entering the caves  
Of despair & death, to search the tempters out, walking among  
Albions rocks & precipices! caves of solitude & dark  
despair,

And saw every Minute Particular of Albion degraded &  
murderd

But saw not by whom; they were hidden within in the  
minute particulars

Of which they had possessed themselves; and there they take up  
The articulations of a mans soul, and laughing throw it down  
Into the frame, then knock it out upon the plank, & souls are  
bak'd

In bricks to build the pyramids of Heber & Terah. But Los  
Searchd in vain: closd from the minutia he walkd, difficult.  
He came down from Highgate thro Hackney & Holloway towards  
London

Til he came to old Stratford & thence to Stepney & the Isle  
Of Leuthas Dogs, thence thro the narrows of the Rivers side  
And saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion,  
running down

The kennels of the streets & lanes as if they were abhorrd.  
Every Universal Form, was become barren mountains of Moral  
Virtue: and every Minute Particular hardend into  
grains of sand:

And all the tendernesses of the soul cast forth as filth  
& mire,

Among the winding places of deep contemplation intricate  
To where the Tower of London frownd dreadful over Jerusalem:

A building of Luvah builded in Jerusalem's eastern gate to be  
 His secluded Court: thence to Bethlehem where was builded  
 Dens of despair in the house of bread: enquiring in  
     vain  
 Of stones and rocks he took his way, for human form  
     was none:

(J.45:2-27)

There are enough similarities between this depiction of Los, "travelling thro' darkness & horrid solitude" (45:39) and that of Urizen, examined earlier, to enable us to view their essential differences as contrapuntal. Cavern exploration provides the predominant image: just as Urizen explores his dens, Los searches "the interiors of Albion's Bosom, . . . entering the caves of despair & death" (45:3-5). The same dismal atmosphere of opacity and hardship prevails in both passages; the same failure at restoring the lost connections appears the loss of both travellers. Like Urizen, Los encounters a universe of obstacles through which he must "walk, difficult." These obstacles, moreover, are the residual forms of a dread metamorphosis:

Every Universal Form, was become barren mountains of Moral  
 Virtue: and every Minute Particular hardened into grains of sand

(45:19-20)

Los's attempts to elicit response from these fallen forms is virtually interchangeable with Urizen's, for once again, they have lapsed, dehumanized, into inarticulateness: "enquiring in vain / Of stones and rocks he took his way, for human form was none" (45:26-27). The world of the Fall remains what it is, whether beheld by the King of Reason or the Prophet of Eternity.

Given the common basis of that world, we are forced to examine and account for strong differences that emerge in the presentation of the two journeys. First of all, there is the matter of motivation. Urizen's motivations are almost entirely self-preoccupied; they are his own dens he wishes to explore, his own world; he seeks restoration of his own past bliss, or failing that, a repaying of old scores. Los, on the other hand, explores the dens of his friend Albion and not his own, nor does a moment of regard for his own personal anguishes (and they are plentiful, as other passages in *Jerusalem* make clear) intrude among his

labours to stem the losses of his friend. The relevant point here is not the superiority of Los's altruistic motives over those of Urizen, but rather the daring that impells him to risk openly the same consequences that Urizen provokes blindly and involuntarily. Seeking continuity of the self, Urizen encounters only discontinuity, the terrors of "dishumanized" monsters. But different terrors, "the terrors of friendship," loom over Los at the outset. He understands well what sort of torment attends the effort of sustaining mutual relations in a fallen world, a lesson Urizen learns too late.

As Los differs from Urizen in initial motivation and understanding, he differs as well in his modes of travel and the perceptions they engender. Blake depicts Urizen floundering hectically through a vast abyss cluttered with diminished forms. But there is no such abyss in the *Jerusalem* passage; instead of the succession of monsters, burning wastes, citadels of torment, and similar exoticisms that Urizen encounters, we have here a strictly finite space, sharply localized and precisely named, the contiguous neighborhoods of familiar, contemporary London, through which Los travels on a plottable journey from north to east to south.<sup>10</sup> The forms of opacity are found not hanging in a void but in "the kennels of the streets & lanes" outside one's very door. Moreover Los never flies or wanders or falls; he walks. The distinction suggests care and deliberation. Such deliberation permits Los to observe not only his estrangement "from the minutia" of Albion's ancient estate but also the outward forms of these minutia as impregnated with significance. If we recur to Urizen's journey, we note that individual encounters lack this pressure of significance:

... he beheld women marching oer burning wastes  
 Of sand in bands of hundreds & of fifties & of thousands  
     strucken with  
 Lightnings which blazed after them upon their shoulders in  
     their march  
 In successive vollies with loud thunders swift flew the King  
     of Light  
 Over the burning desarts Then the desarts passd. involved in clouds  
 Of smoke with myriads moping in the stifling vapours.  
 (FZ.VI.70:21-26)

We glimpse here only fleeting, successive impressions, indistinctly large masses caught in a flickering turbulence, impetuous onward movement; space is expansive, time inexorably bears each horror away from observation in an instant. But although he literally moves from place to place, Los really travels more in the manner of the Mental Traveller, from outward observations, which are indeed located in specific space, to their extended implications free from temporal or spatial limitations.

Although the journey is local and consecutive, the geography of London is continually dissolving into pools of enlarging association. Somewhere along his route Los may observe marks of weakness and woe on the face of a fellow Londoner, and soon we are on a journey inward to the "articulations of a man's soul" which graphically are converted into bricks, which in turn bring us backward and away to a coalescence of ancient space and time, to Egyptian pyramids designed for Hebrew patriarchs (45:9-12). Or, on the banks of the Thames, observing the "filth & mire" of London streets, Los's perceptions move fluently from these particulars to generalized concepts ("universal form[s]"), to mythic geography ("barren mountains"), and thence to its abstract equivalent ("Moral Virtue"), in a single arc of comprehension (45:19-20). Each object of perception sends forth spreading ripples of significance that join the present and the ancient in time, the near and the remote in space, the outward and the inward in spiritual meaning.

By rendering perception in this way Blake seems to transfer the problem of discontinuity from the traveller to the reader. If Urizen encounters the discontinuities of metamorphosis and spatial hypertrophy, his progress still has the appearance of a journey, however vexed its course. But to move between present time and patriarchal time, between souls and bricks, the Tower of London and Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the hospital of Bedlam (united in a single reference [45:25]), while at the same time following a walk through city streets, provides a dissociative experience of quite another sort. The acts of Los seem informed by a *willed* thrust toward discontinuity, first, self-directed as he sunders himself from personal concern and

leaps deliberately into the darkness of Albion "in all the terrors of friendship", and second, directed to those of us who would follow the movement of his mind as it abolishes the proprieties of ordinary spatial and temporal perceptions. Moreover he does not apparently share Urizen's nostalgia for contiguity. Both Urizen and Los are preoccupied with loss, but Urizen hankers after a lost landscape, fields of relation spatially extended, whereas Los concerns himself with the perversion of "Minute Particulars," the discrete atoms of individuality that compose Albion's unfallen being. Indeed Los's mode of perception tends to dissolve contiguity, for he starts with a contiguous space immediately before him, the adjoining neighborhoods of London, but we are not led to behold it as a panorama of things side by side, but as a series of depths that lead away in different and far-reaching directions from the contiguous surface. In contrast then to Urizen, who seeks to substitute continuity in time for a lost sense of contiguity, Los turns his back on nostalgia and makes the contiguous an occasion for the discontinuous, as it he senses that the other option is in any case unavailing. But in this breakdown in one's "normal" mode of perception, this defeat of ordinary expectation, things apparently disconnected begin to coalesce until an impression emerges that all fallen forms, Bethlehem and Bedlam, the Tower and the pyramids, are identical, one form, the fallen body of Albion. In place of Urizen's progression from lapsed contiguity to delusive continuity, Los establishes discontinuity as the prelude to a vision of identity. This is an uncompromising and discomfiting endeavour, aimed to enlarge, consolidate and confront the dishumanizing metamorphosis of the world. With such knowledge we can stop wandering.

The Urizen of *The Four Zoas* is a man of feeling, Los of *Jerusalem* a man of knowledge. That Los fails to detect the agents of Albion's transformation is neither here nor there. Preoccupations with cause and effect belong to Urizen's world of presumed continuity, binding the future to the past. Los's task is to identify each object of the fallen world with every other until all shall be seen to compose one massive body of deformation that can be then thrown off forever. It is a commonplace of

Blakean criticism that Los in *Jerusalem* is the poet's surrogate, and his way is the way that Blake as an artist believes he must take, for his art is nothing other than the full articulation of reality. The course of the artist, then, is to turn against the yearnings of the man, to sunder poem and protagonist from an easy sense of relations, to renounce the claims of feeling. Thus Blake asserts that "You must leave Fathers & Mothers & Houses & Lands if they stand in the way of Art" (*Laocoön*, E 272), and the "if" in this stark insight is little more than a cushion conceded to tender sensibilities, for of course the landscape of feeling, of filial relations and contiguous surroundings, *must* stand in the way. One will have to leave it in any case, and it is better to make a sharp break for the sake of art, the way of knowledge, than to be seduced into the false belief that time holds preserving continuities with one's early home. But it is vain to pretend that there is no pain in such sundering, no desolation in one's willed alienation from the ordinary continuities of perception and presentation, no terror in risking a full confrontation with the shape of fallen reality. It is small wonder that Los "walks, difficult". In terms of personal cost, real seeing is fully as heavy a trial as delusive yearning.

The ultimate reward of such seeing, one hardly needs to add, is a total transcendence of the terrors of fallen existence. In another but not alien context Harold Bloom has argued that "poetry must leap, it must locate itself in a discontinuous universe, and it must make that universe (as Blake did) if it cannot find one. Discontinuity is freedom."<sup>11</sup> In the same passage he also remarks that "the Covering Cherub" (Bloom's term, appropriated from Blake and Ezekiel, for the poet's obsession with the past that blocks creativity) "is a demon of continuity." In Blake's myth the functions of the Covering Cherub largely overlap with those of his Satan, who is repeatedly called "the Limit of Opacity" (*FZ.IV.56:19* and *passim*), that ultimate obstacle to seeing which perpetually disguises itself as a fountain of insight. Perhaps it is Satan as such a demon of continuity whom Blake late in his career addresses as "The Accuser who is The God of This World," in lines of such urbane and distanced calm that they suggest the

poet's own transcendence of continuity's seductions and discontinuity's terrors:

Though thou art Worshiped by the Names Divine  
 Of Jesus and Jehovah: thou art still  
 The Son of Morn in weary Nights decline  
 The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill

(Epilogue to *The Gates of Paradise*, 11. 5-8)

For advanced sensibilities of the first decades of the nineteenth century the "Jesus and Jehovah" of their world might be "natural piety" or that faith in the continuity of days bound each to each. For Blake, however, such faith is a "dream," an *ignis fatuus* leading the traveller ever further astray, faith in the light-bearer of a false dawn. The counter-faith that undergirds the calm of his late address to Satan is won by a different sort of journey, painful like that of Los in London, laborious decades of willed discontinuities of which the dissociative surfaces of his epics remain the record.

But it would be a doctrinaire view of Blake to see him only as an artist of severe discontinuities and not a man of feeling as well. Early and late in his career, Blake, like Wordsworth, remembers a landscape as the visible form of bliss: the Ecchoing Green, England's green and pleasant land (*Milton*.1:16), the fields from Islington to Marybone. Perhaps a version of this remembered space reappears pictorially on the very last plate of *Jerusalem*, where (in the Mellon copy), after the consummating embrace of Plate 99 bathed in the crimson flames of identity, Los and his family are depicted serenely *side by side* against the backdrop of a green landscape, ancient stones, and the glories of day and night. Does this sequence indicate a strength of pastoral nostalgia prevailing over a more strenuous apocalyptic temperament? Any answer must of course be conjectural. But even so stern a poet as Milton allowed the first pair of lost travellers a final retrospective glance at Eden as well as a hint of soothing continuities in the future, and this indulgence of pathos at such a point is of course essential to the power of *Paradise Lost*; indeed its power was sufficient to prompt Wordsworth to continue, as it were, from this point into his own great work as if the Fall had never taken place.<sup>12</sup> Blake is more

reserved in this regard, closer to Milton's stern aspect. Yet readers should cherish those moments in Blake when "all-too-human" pains mingle with the more majestic pain of visionary prophecy, catching the poet in their sweep, for such moments measure the complexity of his temperament and the scope of his genius.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 544.

<sup>2</sup>"Ode: Intimations of Immortality", 11. 51-57, *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936).

<sup>3</sup>The phrase "halted traveller" is Geoffrey Hartman's, although he does not, I believe, ever apply it to this passage in the "Ode." Nonetheless his description of the effects of this "halting" as they appear generally in Wordsworth's poetry entirely fits the episode in question here: "a moment of arrest, the ordinary vital continuum being interrupted; a separation of the traveller poet from familiar nature; . . . a feeling of solitude or loss or separation" (*Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964], pp. 17-18'.

<sup>4</sup>For a clear account of Tiriell's meanderings see G.E. Bentley, Jr.'s "Introduction" to his edition of *Tiriell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup>All my quotations of Blake are from *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, Fourth Printing (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970). Subsequent citations (by plate and line numbers for engraved works; by "Night", MS page, and line numbers for *The Four Zoas*; line numbers only for lyrics; and otherwise by "E" followed by the appropriate page number in the edition) are incorporated into the body of my text. *The Four Zoas* is abbreviated in citation as *FZ*, *Jerusalem* as *J*.

<sup>6</sup>The language of the passage just quoted revives that of the *Songs of Innocence*; indeed there seems to be a direct re-echoing of "The Ecchoing Green", particularly its second stanza: "Old John with white hair / Does laugh away care, *Sitting under the Oak*, / Among the old folk, / They laugh at our play, / And soon they all say. / Such such were the joys . . ." (11. 11-17; the words here italicized or their approximations are repeated in *The Four Zoas* passage. Sport is mentioned in the first and third stanzas and a green field, of course, in all three).

<sup>7</sup>Harold Bloom is, as far as I know, the only critic who has connected this passage in *The Four Zoas* to Wordsworth, although the analogue he cites is The Simplon Pass description in *The Prelude*, Book VI (where crags are said to speak as if with a voice), rather than the "Intimations Ode"; see *Blake's Apocalypse* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), p. 262.

<sup>8</sup>See particularly the Notebook lyric "My Spectre around me night & day" (E 467-468).

<sup>9</sup>The two country inns named here, the ponds, and the farm were all closely accessible to Blake in his childhood. For the biographical and geographical details, see David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, Revised

Edition (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 473-474.

<sup>10</sup>See S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971), p. 244.

<sup>11</sup>*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>See the famous echo of Milton's "The World was all before them," near the end of *Paradise Lost* (XII.646), in Wordsworth's "The earth is all before me," near the beginning of *The Prelude* (I.14).