

mental languor, so Urizen's rationalism is matched with the debased emotions that Blake embodies in Rahab, the whore of Babylon: "Religion hid in War, a Dragon red & hidden Harlot" (*Jerusalem* III, 75:20).

Pope and Blake deal with the failure of both order and energy. Pope, whose concern is for order, shows Dulness foisting a mock order with the irresistible power that is freed by the mind's abdication. Blake, whose concern is for the energy that makes its own constantly renewed forms of order, shows Urizen checking all movement and renewal or forcing energy into perverse and wasteful forms. Pope shows Dulness ruling the world by corrupting institutions and inverting their original nature. Blake shows Urizen's power in the false authority of all institutions, which by their nature seek to preserve and extend the power surrendered to them. Both poets work, by means of dialectical encounters, toward the ultimate exposure and consolidation of error so that it may be thrown off. Once the orders are distinguished, the self-enclosure of each has been broken, and a choice can be made. Pope dramatizes the choice in the satires as a moral intensity that leads man beyond selfhood and makes his will one with God's. Blake, who regards moral judgment, based as it is upon universal law, as the worst form of institutional tyranny, sees Urizen finally absorbed into the restored unity of all the Zoas, as the primal man, Albion, at last accepts Jesus and His doctrine of forgiveness.

They walked

To & fro in Eternity as One Man, reflecting each in each & clearly seen

And seeing, according to fitness & order.

(*Jerusalem* IV, 98:38-40)

Blake can use the mathematical symbolism of Revelation, once it is purged of the taint of Pythagorean rationalism. Elsewhere he fuses the artifice of order with the vitality of organic life, and, like Milton, he does this through the metaphor of the dance:

Thou seest the gorgeous clothed Flies that dance & sport in summer  
Upon the sunny brooks & meadows: every one the dance  
Knows in its intricate mazes of delight artful to weave:  
Each one to sound his instruments of music in the dance,  
To touch each other & recede, to cross & change & return.

(*Milton* I, 26:2-6)

every Flower,  
The Pink, the Jessamine, the Wall-flower, the Carnation,  
The Jonquil, the mild Lilly, opens her heavens; every Tree  
And Flower & Herb soon fill the air with an innumerable Dance,  
Yet all in order Sweet & lovely.

(*Milton* II, 31:58-62)

## DAVID V. ERDMAN

### America: New Expanses†

Today the inquiry into the art of Blake's Illuminated Printing is moving far beyond the simple but long prevailing question whether the design on a given page illustrates or illuminates or counterpoints the text: whether poem is like picture or picture like poem. We are now, at a minimum, concerned with what the two arts are doing in harness, *pictura atque poesis*. At maximum we are concerned with much more. But allow me at this level to make a point about the interchange or sharing of pictorial imagery between picture and text. On the seventh plate of *Jerusalem* the words describe the "opake blackening" Spectre of Los as one who "panting like a frightened wolf and howling . . . stood over the Immortal . . . among the Furnaces." The etched picture (*Jerusalem* 6)<sup>1</sup> shows us the blacksmith with tongs, fire, hammer, anvil, bellows, and a chain that operates the bellows; but the Spectre is not standing; it has no visible feet but hovers over the smith on wings, like a bat not a wolf. A moment later, in the text, the Spectre "groaning" kneels before Los at the furnace—presumably more like a man than a wolf or a bat. The effect may be called metaphorical density, but it is more than that and not quite that. Whether the Spectre is bat, wolf, or man (we are to realize) depends on how the mind sees it or him. These are alternative or simultaneous visionary forms of one form that hint at metamorphoses to tease us *into* thought, for their one form is in turn a shadow form of the human blacksmith, who is the metaphorical heroic form of the poet-artist, William Blake of South Molton Street (as he tells us within the poem). *Because* he faints at the anvil he is haunted by his spectral self-shadows: *or* because they are in his mind, he faints at the forge. The action of the poem-picture is larger and more complex than would be indicated by the picture or the words taken separately, for these point not at each other (as in the usual picture book) but beyond themselves. The artifact only opens the sensory doors to the mental theater.

In other words, the text is not there to help us follow the pictures, nor the pictures to help us visualize the text; both lead us to an imaginative leap in the dark, a leap *beyond* the dark and the fire—from perception to Intellectual Vision, a last judgment in which fools perish.

† From "America: New Expanses," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, eds. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 92-103, 109-11, 112. Foot-

notes have been renumbered and some footnotes have been omitted.

1. See color plate 26 in this edition. [Editors.]

We must attend to Blake's definition (*Jerusalem* 98) of true communication as practised by humans in paradise:

And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic which bright

Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty, in Visions  
In new Expanses, creating exemplars. . . .

Their converse involves mastery of all the arts of discourse, ornamentation, dramaturgy, exploration, and moral suasion (exemplars). Using only the arts of poetry and painting (and engraving) Blake must suggest all the others. And all must serve Intellectual Vision, seen through the window of the artifact. His illuminated pages become a prompt book of suggestions for Visions, Expanses, New Songs, and Thunderous Dramatic Forms, in which he wishes us to converse. "I give you the end of a golden string," he says. "It will lead you. . . ." His text is a clue-thread. On the thread of text the emblematic etchings are mere sketches for cosmic motion-pictures, or rather color-motion-music pictures, on a four-dimensional mental screen—the cinerama of William Blake.

The man who tried "all experiments" in art and mixed art might have been delighted at the potentialities of the cinemasters of our day—if horrified at their Satanic intellectual focus. The man who, when the sun rose, did not fixate on a "round disk of fire" but saw (and heard) "an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy . . ." abhorred the kind of realism which does not open the interior and exterior worlds.<sup>2</sup>

It was a sense of Blake's objective that led Northrop Frye to go on, after suggesting the (remote) analogy of "the union of musical and poetic ideas in a Wagner opera," to the proposition that Blake's work involves the building up of a unified structure of meaning as "a total image, a single visualizable picture."<sup>3</sup> This view is valid, at a distance from the work, but dissolves as we approach; for the visualizable picture is in motion—and is not really single. It is usually at least twofold, with a polar or antipodal or dialectical tension between two contrary images (or image systems), each striv-

2. DC 9 (E539 / K583), *VLI* (E555 / K617). For a more thoughtful consideration of the "problem in visualization that presents itself everywhere in Blake's poetry" see Harold Bloom, "The Visionary Cinema of Romantic Poetry," *Essays for Damon*, 18-35. "Blake, I think, like his master Milton (as Eisenstein hinted) wants his reader to be more of a film-script reader or even a director than a film-viewer."

[In this and subsequent notes for this essay, E and K references are to pages in David V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Garden City, N.Y., 1970) and Geoffrey Keynes,

ed., *Blake: Complete Writings with Variant Readings* (London and New York, Oxford, 1974). Blake works referred to by letter, in notes and text (followed by plate number) are 4 *Descriptive Catalogue* (DC), 4 *Vision of the Last Judgment* (VLI), 4 *America* (A), 4 *A Public Address to the Chalcographic Society* (PA), and *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (MH).—Editors.]

3. Frye, "Poetry and Design in William Blake," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, X (1951), 35-42; republished in John E. Grant, *Discussions of William Blake*, Boston, 1961, 44-49.

ing to be determinate—as, for example, the rival cities of Jerusalem and Babylon in *Jerusalem*. Beyond that, it can be apocalyptically threefold or fourfold, as I hope to reveal in the present close look at *America*, *A Prophecy*, 1793.

Physically *America* is an eighteen-page folio booklet "in Illuminated Printing" consisting of a frontispiece, an illustrated title page continuing the picture of the frontispiece, a Preludium of two and a Prophecy of fourteen illuminated pages. The work concerns a cycle of history that begins with the birth and rising of an Orc or human serpent of Independence, during the American War and Revolution, and concludes with the end of the war (in 1781) and that spirit's repression for "twelve years." The cycle is viewed prophetically from 1793, a time of auguries of a new cycle. That year, on January 21, the King of France was guillotined. In February, France and England went to war. In June, Blake issued an engraved print of a king hysterical, flanked by two chief warriors gripping sword and spear, above the caption *Our End is Come*. In October he offered *America* for sale, with the specific prophecy in its concluding lines that "their end should come"—the end of "Angels & weak men" who "govern o'er the strong"—"when France reciev'd the Demons light."<sup>4</sup>

Joel Barlow in his *Vision of Columbus*, Book Five, had rearranged the chronological and geographical materials of the historical American War into an epic pageant viewed prophetically by Christopher Columbus from a Mount of Vision in Spain.<sup>5</sup> Barlow's stage was the American coast, which Columbus could see from his Spanish mountain; his machinery consisted of one angel; his main stage device was a cloud that hid the scene during intermissions. Blake extended the stage to include the British coast, swelled the machinery to a large cast of angels and demons, replaced the Mount of Vision with the "vast shady hills" of an archetypal Atlantic "between America & Albions shore," and replaced Columbus as European spectator with the King of England, who, "looking westward" from Albion, trembles at a "vision" which is, largely, the relevant part of Barlow's *Vision*. But of course Blake's symbolic fusion of military and political and psychic history, heightened by apocalyptic imagery from descriptions of the Black Death, soars beyond the troubled fountains of Barlow's couplets. Blake's choreography is utterly new; action as well as communication crisscrosses the Atlantic and leaps from its depths to the zenith; and he departs fur-

4. See color plate 15 in this edition. [Editors.]

5. A 16 (E56 / K302); Prospectus of 10 October 1793 (E670 / K207); *Our End is Come* / Published June 5, 1793 by W. Blake Lambeth (E660); behind the alarmed trio is an oaken door frame; in later versions flames are added beside or

behind them; in the color print the door frame has been burnt up. \* \* \*

6. See my "William Blake's Debt to Joel Barlow," *American Literature*, XXVI (1954), 94-98; also my *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (1969), pp. 23-27, 57, and, for the addition of Black Death imagery, pp. 58-59.

ther from the narrative form of history, epic or chronicle, in the direction of musical form and mural allegory as in paintings of the Last Judgment by the Italians or by Blake himself. *America* we might look upon as an acting version of a mural Apocalypse.

Drawing upon both text and pictures, let us examine first the music of it and then the visualizable drama—an order which will stress Blake's departure from narrative but not from progression.

Blake, working as a musician, first gives us silence, then the early emergence of articulate sound, and finally a conflagration of apocalyptic thunders and war-clarions. Silent are all the figures in the illustrations of the frontispiece and title page: slain warriors, anguished maiden (and, above, the preoccupied—yet also the alert—reading public);<sup>7</sup> the mother and children who seem to have been, but are not now, weeping; the chained angel in the broken wall, his face buried; the dismounted cannon and broken sword in the foreground, the brokenness suggesting an irreversible silence (though later we shall see the sword reforged). Utterance begins in the Preludium, but first (in the text) in the silence of dark air stands "dumb" the dark virgin of nature: "for never from her iron tongue could voice or sound arise." (In the illustration the first implied sound is the wailing of Eve over the chained Orc: see identifications later on.) Then, as "an eagle screaming," a lion *roaring*, or whale or serpent, the hairy youth *howls* his joy. "Silent as despairing love" (A2), he *rends his chains*, seizes the womb. Then *bursts* the virgin cry—the birth of articulate desire, a "first-born smile." Fire and frost mingle in the "howling pains" of a Behmenesque Genesis.<sup>8</sup> Then in the center of the first page of "A Prophecy" is pictured a trumpet from which are blown flames undoubtedly ear-piercing as well as, according to the text, soul-piercing—indicative of the music to come, which is chiefly of flames and terrible blasts of wind and strong speeches. Here are the opening lines (with emphasis added):

The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent.

Sullen fires across the Atlantic glow to America's shore:

Piercing the souls of warlike men, who rise in silent night.

Washington, Franklin Paine & Warren, Gates, Hancock & Green:

Meet on the coast glowing with blood from Albions fiery Prince.

7. Clouds separate these two readers, and four attendant spirits, from the work itself. The alert female is reading properly; her position echoes that of Michelangelo's *Delphic sibyl*, as Janet Warner notes, and her feet and her attendant's fingers point to "PROPHECY."

8. \* \* \* I am thinking of such embraces as the following from ch. 3, "Concerning the Birth of Love," Jacob Behmen, *Works*, London, 1763, vol. II: "And so when the first desire . . . is filled with Glance of the Light, then all

the Essences (which have laid hold on the Light) stand in the first desiring will, and the will thereby becometh triumphant, and full of joy, that the child of Light is generated in it . . . and the joy (viz. the source of the Fire) fleeth upward, and the Center retaineth it . . . one form embraceth the other . . . the sourness retaineth its fierce might . . . in the sharpness of the Love; but . . . is very soft; and . . . maketh voices, tunes and sounds . . . and with the breaking through of the source, they feel one another" and so on. (Italics in original.)

Out of this pierced silence Washington speaks. When his "strong voice" ceases, a terrible blast sweeps over the heaving sea, and the eastern cloud curtains part, to reveal the Prince (over England) in his dragon form "clashing his scales." Whereupon arises in demon form the giant Orc of independence with a voice whose "thunders" shake the temple. Heard by a sympathetic ear, however, these thunders are a sweet and lusty hymn of resurrection: "The morning comes, the night decays, the . . . bones of death . . . breathing! awakening! / Spring like redeemed captives . . ." (plate 6).

Note that our imagination must have two ears as well as two eyes. To the Prince of Albion, rebellion is a horrid spectre with voice of thunder. To "coarse-clad honesty" it is "the soul of sweet delight" singing of "a fresher morning." The page is Blake's rendition of the Declaration of Independence; after "darkness and . . . sighing" the "inched soul" and "his wife and children" (remember the frontispiece) burst into laughter and song, and their song is that the Sun "has left his blackness" and the "fair Moon rejoices" and those roarsers "the Lion & Wolf shall cease." It is this sort of "duality in union" in Blake which Mrs. Bodkin approves of as "harmonized clash."<sup>9</sup>

An interchange of loud challenges between Orc and Albion's Prince—or Angel, for George III has modulated to a higher spiritual form—ends in a climactic chant of escalation delivered by the Angel (plate 9). Structurally this twenty-seven-line chant opens and closes with a two-line refrain:

Sound! sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my Thirteen Angels!  
Loud howls the eternal Wolf! the eternal Lion lashes his tail!

The first of these lines is also repeated internally twice, making cadences at the thirteenth and twenty-first lines of this trumpet voluntary; musically as well as pictorially the page is organized as a unit.

Uttering these lines, the Angel-Prince is acting as the magician or conductor of an orchestral whirlwind of war. "Thus wept the Angel voice," we are told in a kind of stage direction, "& as he wept the terrible blasts / Of trumpets blew a loud alarm." Even the answering silence is described in orchestral terms:

No trumpets answer; no reply of clarions or of fifes,  
Silent the Colonies remain. . . .

In the remaining pages of text, trumpeting and challenging give way to action. The fires "roaring fierce" are so often given as sound effects (and remember the flaming trumpet of the first page of "A Prophecy") that even where sound is not specified it is connoted. The fires and deep rolling thunder become less and less musical, however, and more and more evidently the fire and thunder of

9. Maude Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, London, 1934, 317.

incendiary cannonades. In the final page (plate 16) the fire is said to rage so high it melts the heavens, rousing the old man Urizen (the Prince's highest spiritual form) who damps the flames and noise with "icy magazines" of "stored snows"; and for "twelve years" the sound is of his "Weeping in dismal howlings" (the phrase repeated as a refrain). Barlow's focus on the December hailstorm which prevented the revolutionists' capture of Quebec evidently prompted these "snows poured forth, and . . . icy magazines"; perhaps we may see Niagara Falls at the right edge of the plate—see, not hear, because the bottom of the falls is not represented. Yet the reversion to silence is incomplete and temporary. In the final eight lines "shudderings" are shaking thrones and there is a cracking (though so sharp a word is not used) of "fierce flames . . . round the heavens, & round the abodes of men."

Let us now consider what we are shown and what we are told to visualize. Working as a painter, Blake begins not on a fresh canvas but on one filled with a vision he does not want. The scene pictured in the frontispiece<sup>1</sup> and on the title page<sup>2</sup> is taken, we discover, from his early painting, exhibited at the end of the American War: *A Breach in a City the Morning after the Battle*. We shall find out later whose shell the wall is; Orc placed in the broken wall is stopping a gap or has made a breach, but is manacled; he represents the strong governed by the weak.<sup>3</sup> We must understand that in Blake's view the Revolutionary War was sad not only because of the bloodshed and possibly some continuing impairment of liberty in America but also because it ended with tyranny still enthroned in Britain and the rest of Europe; at the end of the Prophecy it is Orc's chains that melt as thrones totter.<sup>4</sup>

But just as, musically, Blake starts with a long silence; so pictorially he starts with a static tableau before moving into the dynamic vision. In this sad scene of the frontispiece and title page, motion is still, life is at its low ebb; the warriors are horizontal, the women exhausted with weeping, the sword broken, the cannon dismounted; the Titan is chained by his wrists to the horizontal stone. Below the heavens, where hope springs, there is no motion except (in the title page) the slanting rain or sleet; no vegetation, except that imitated

in the stone. There is silence also in the absence of text. This is not the "single visualizable picture" Blake wants us to see but one that is to be erased or seen through or burnt away by the dynamic vision of the Prophecy itself, announced by the flaming trumpet on its first page. Yet he does not step at once from death to life, from stone to flame, from horizontal to spiral. He supplies first the two transitional pages of the Preludium, in which silence is broken by the very fact of the introduction of text (beneath the design at first, then above it) and by various *rehearsals* of the moment of revolutionary birth. In the text a "silent" youth suddenly, as "an eagle screaming," seizes a "dumb" (and "shadowy") female, who utters the virgin cry of articulate desire, a "first-born smile," and so on. In the pictures we are shown first that the chained Promethean lies in a middle state between the cave dweller and the man standing free.

This first page of the Preludium<sup>5</sup> is a progressive cartoon, to be read clockwise; and then counterclockwise. Forgetting the headless worm (of six coils: sixty winters?), which is there at the start and finish of the journey only if you are committed to corporeality and intellectual death, man is, at his lowest *living* stage, the self-clutching cave dweller in the dark, though he can sit up and look about even there, and next a metamorphosing root-shoot rising to air and light. Reaching the surface, he is (1) horizontal with his eyes shut, as the title-page warrior, i.e., dead or mentally asleep, or (2) able to sit up (the Titan in the wall) but still self-clutching, eyes buried despite demonic-angelic wings, or (3) chained flat, cruciform, but with open eyes looking straight up, as in Preludium 1.<sup>6</sup> The picture leaps ahead to upstanding man, and woman, already Adam and Eve, *turning about*, looking backward. They are compelled to, hearing the youth's cry, seeing him crucified; yet this dangerous retrospection is apt to reverse the progression. This plate traps hope, risen from the worm, and sends it back to the worm. Even the almost leafless tree droops.

On the second Preludium page,<sup>7</sup> however, we are shown dynamic growing things reaching up from the earth though rooted in it—a vine shooting up taller than Adam, a sprout of wheat, hopeful metamorphoses upward in the dynamic scale, and between them chainless man crouching in a furrow, ready to spring up—a stage skipped in the first page, the good news released and announced by the youthful female on the title page. Blake has reversed the direction again, forward, and turned the angle of our vision. Seeing this burgeoning phase to be *where we are now*, we know we are out of the trap, are looking and springing up free of death—even while, in the

1. *America* 1, p. 105. [Editors.]

2. See color plate 15. [Editors.]  
3. See Blake: *Prophecy*, p. 75. On the three extant versions of *A Breach* see *Romantic Art in Britain*, ed. Frederick Cummings and Allen Staley, Philadelphia, 1968, 159-160. In the version called *War* and inscribed "Inv WB 1805" the Orc figure, wingless but the same naked, curly-headed youth with face buried, is added on top of the heap of bodies in the breach; the wings of the *America*

title page remain on the eagle. Reproduced in Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, New York, 1946, opp. 254.

4. John E. Grant: This is not literally the imagery Blake uses, however, but the melting of the "bolts and hinges" of the gates of the "law-built heaven." When the book swings back again to the start, we see (in the frontispiece) that the manacles are on Orc while the gate has been melted or blown up.

5. *America* 1. [Editors.]

6. In a pen and watercolor variant at the Tate there is horror in Orc's face: the vultures are descending just above

the picture. (In Martin Butlin's *Tate Gallery William Blake*, London, 1966, pl. 5.)  
7. *America* 2. [Editors.]

words above our eye as we crouch to spring, the virgin pathetically fearful, in joy and pain of giving birth, imagines with Sophoclean irony: "This is eternal death: and this the torment long foretold." Consider the interaction: while the text rehearses struggle and outcry and change, the pictures subdue these to the potential mode yet prepare the *release* of potentials.

A grace note of yellow light behind the crouching Orc (in copy M at least)<sup>8</sup> calls attention to the rising-sun position of his head against the curve of the earth, and on the next page<sup>9</sup> we see him aloft, soaring free of the trap—yet dangling chains. How reassuring this token: he did not bypass that stage but broke through it. In this figure the manacled Orc of the frontispiece is freed, the earth-chained crucified slave of plate 1 is risen. We have the central prophecy of the poem—that tyranny is not eternal, that freedom is worth a second try—even as we reach "A Prophecy," the very lettering of which is vibrant with flight and exuberance and fruition.

Everything Blake's mind touches grows to his purpose. Even his title lettering heralds the progression from geometry to vitality. "AMERICA" on the title page is square, static, carved in stone; "PROPHECY" below it begins a forward tilt and takes color. Then "Preludium" introduces the more curved, vital lines of italic lower case with a swash capital.<sup>1</sup> Finally, "A PROPHECY" is all swash, flowing, swirling, fruitful, flowering, with leaves and lilies and ripe heads of wheat.

And only now, in the Prophecy itself, we begin to focus on the central dynamic and apocalyptic picture of the drama. The stage areas of it are indicated in the opening lines: on the right side, Albion's cliffs, where the Prince burns in his mighty tent; on the left side, the coast of America, where Washington, Franklin, Paine, and others rise and meet and stand. The two coasts are linked by fire or blood "glowing" across the Atlantic. The Atlantic itself fills the center of the area; Orc is born there; and we can see from its depths to the zenith—and beyond, for we are told that "above all heavens" resides Urizen, old Noboddaddy aloft.

Notice the link of the coasts by blood or fire: we need twofold vision to see that the same relationship can be vital or destructive. Words can give the twofold vision in one image: the Americans "Meet on the coast glowing with blood from Albions fiery Prince." And in one picture we can see flames as tendrils—or tendrils as flames.

8. In Copy E, reproduced on p. 109, the light is not shown. [Editors.]

9. Not included in this edition. [Editors.]

time of its printing the separate slip of copper with the word "Preludium" was lost; adding the word by brush, Blake reverted to the simpler italic capitals of the title page. [Copy E, p. 107, does show this contrast.—Editors.]

In the fourteen pages of the Prophecy, the main body of the work, the actions and persons of the American War and Revolution, interpreted as Armageddon and Apocalypse, are arranged choreographically on this world stage into a single Judgment Day picture—with God at the top above several cloud layers of angel-filled heavens, and the Atlantic deeps at the bottom, whence God's mocking adversary arises, mocking his stance, defying repression with naked energy. On the eastern side are Tory angels ascending and circling above Albion's cliffs, led by George the Third in his dragon form; on the western are rebel angels, led by the Angel of Boston, descending to assist the warlike patriots standing on the American shore.

For twelve of the fourteen pages the jealous wrath from Albion hurries upon America fires, chains, insults, and a bacteriological attack of forty million of Albion's angels armed with disease. The stern Americans *stand* unconsumed, the standing representing the unity of their rushing together. In the last two pages the whirlwind recoils upon Albion and inflames Bristol and London and un-  
 lings: the gates of the senses throughout Europe.<sup>2</sup>

This is Blake's dynamic "single" visualizable picture—of shifting multiple perspectives. Reaction makes more noise, smoke, and mileage, but freedom in two hours makes more progress. On the last page (plate 16) the silent, static image of the "Morning after the Battle" threatens to reassert itself as the tyrant god Urizen pours down ice and snow to reduce the rebel Orc to his Atlantic deeps, and the picture subdues to quiet: Niagara Falls as hair. We think again of the rain or sleet of the title page. Yet the work concludes with a reassertion of the main image of the conflagration of the old heaven and earth.

\* \* \*

To return to the central picture, in three further illustrations we are given glimpses of the Atlantic. Urizen in his clouds (plate 8), but with ocean waves beneath, confronts Orc on the waves, which appear as flames (plate 10). In plate 13<sup>3</sup> we see on the watery shore the female in Promethean state and the male sunk to sea bottom. Blake is here using his stage center for the physical-mental horror of war. All the other pictured "visionary forms" are either metaphors of textual detail not in the idiom of the main picture,

2. Here, as in *A Song of Liberty*, the poet conflates the whole revolutionary era of the tottering of thrones in "France Spain & Italy" because people defeated rebores in America. To quote *A 14, MHH 12, PA 18*, and *A 14-15*: the "wrath" of their unity is "the voice of God," i.e., of honest men, the "Public Indignation of Men of Sense in all

Professions"—"citizens . . . mariners . . . scribe . . . builder"—against war and obedience to tyranny; its infectious civic fire inspires the citizens of Albion to *stand* also, naked of "their hammered mail." \* \* \*

3. The illustration on plate 13 is not included in this edition. [Editors.]

not located on its stage, or constitute emblems of persons and events quite outside the poem we have been perceiving.

By the text, too, we are supplied only a few graphic elements of the single picture, plus a wealth of metaphorical and contrary or ambivalent visionary forms to fill the canvases: so that we are able to see this single dynamic vision in motion and inside out or upside down. For example, in the view that accepts Urizen as a God above all heavens in thunders wrapped, the place of Orc is that of Satan in the abyss. But in the eyes of democrats Urizen is a god of snow and ice and is really just an arbitrary shell hardening on the outer surface of mundane life; Orc is not Satan but Christ in the fearful symmetry of his Second Coming (for this was Armageddon); and the Atlantic where he appears is not an abyss but a mountain rising above the abyss of nonentity. In this view Albion and America are not separated by a great gulf but are parts of the base of the Atlantic Mountains. There are many indications that the apparently central image of continents divided by an Atlantic deep is a false or temporary image. A more "eternal" image is of Atlantean hills, seen as the One Earth of true human geography: a picture of "vast shady hills between America & Albions shore . . . from [whose] bright summits you may pass to the Golden world" (plate 10). It is "Here on their magic seats" that "the thirteen Angels" sit by night, before the divisive behavior of Albion's Prince forces them to come down and side with "warlike men." \* \* \*

But finally the central vision is dynamic because it is going, to change, to hatch into a vision of Eternity beyond the flames which are referred to as giving "heat but not light." Observe that the image is global, not in the usual sense but as the inside of a mundane egg framed by the orb'd concave sky and the concave deeps of the sea. Blake's single (but twofold) visualizable picture has a third "fold"—that it can be seen as the seed or egg or embryo of a change beyond the change. Orc is born in fire "o'er the Atlantic Sea" (plate 4), but observe that this world of bloody fire is embryonic: "enrag'd the Zenith grew, / As human blood shooting its veins all round the orb'd heaven." What look like clouds rising from burning towns, Barlow's Falmouth, Charlestown, Bristol, Groton, Fairfield, Kingston, [New] York, and Norfolk, are really "vast wheels of blood," the veins of a vast embryo.

As the Preludium hinted, this process cannot stop short of a further and more complete metamorphosis. A further or fourfold vision must follow the breaking of the Urizenic shell or, in a cognate image, the throwing down of the spears of the old cold heavens. A new humanity, a new human form of society, is the vision Blake wants us to see beyond the revolutionary drama presented on this split stage of the American and British shores of the Atlantic.

Some of the pictured and verbal images of the Prophecy are there to suggest the third or generative view of the central picture, while some are glimpses of the picture beyond the Revolution. The children sleeping with a sheep (plate 7) <sup>4</sup> are under a tree of paradise in which sit recognizable birds of paradise.

In other words, when we wind up the thread of the illuminated poem into the golden ball of a single, dynamic, visualizable orb, we are ready to enter into new expanses, through heaven's gate, built in Jerusalem's wall—or, in this instance, through the "breach in the city . . . after the battle." It may be, as Frye says, that Blake "hardly seems to have noticed that he had perfected a radically new form of mixed art." He hardly seems to have cared, any more than he cared to question a window concerning his sight. It mattered little to him whether picture penetrated poem or poem penetrated picture, if only their human, apocalyptic meaning would penetrate our hearts and minds.

#### A Note on the "Orc Cycle"

As history moved on, the Orc that appeared "in the vineyards of red France" (Europe 15:2) became Napoleon; by 1804 Blake, instead of humming "ça ira," was arguing that "Resistance & war is the Tyrants gain," that the "iron hand" which "crushed the Tyrants head . . . became a Tyrant in his stead" (*The Grey Monk*). Orc became (not the specious Urizenic dragon but) the serpent that Urizen believed him to be. This suggests a very different kind of progression: slave-rebel-tyrant, not to be equated with the cycle in *America* and the *Marriage* of restraint-freedom-restraint-freedom, i.e., slave-rebel-slave-rebel. Northrop Frye wrote a brilliant mythopoetic chapter on the "Orc cycle," and the term is now so current that some people father it upon Blake (Frye, *Symmetry*, ch. 7, esp. pp. 206ff.). Frye ranges through the Lambeth works but with his focus on the *America* pattern. Recent criticism often focuses on the Napoleonic cycle, implying the corruption of revolutionary energy (equated with "power") into tyrannic cruelty. To call this the "Orc cycle" and then read that kind of corruption into *America* is to wander far astray.

The prophetic importance of the distinction makes it worth laboring. The cycle of history prophetically examined in *America* and *Europe* is not that of rebellion-vengeance-tyranny; it is of enslavement-liberation-reenslavement, the prophet's concern being how to escape the reenslavement. \* \* \*

4. See color plate 16 of this edition. [Editors.]