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THE FLEECE-LINED CLOCK: TIME, SPACE, AND
THE ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE IN WILLIAM BLAKE

*This clock that strikes the time is fleece-lined;
it is a woman;
it is Death.*

THERE IS A GRAIN OF SAND that Satan's watch-fiends cannot find;¹ also, there is a moment in each day that Satan's watch-fiends cannot find (*Milton*, II, p. 423). If it were not so, the artistic experience could never take place and man could never be regenerated.

Of the grain of sand that Satan cannot find, Blake says, "'tis translucent and has many Angles:" and "Opening into Beulah, every angle is a lovely heaven" (*Jerusalem*, II, p. 483). Since translucence is a term commonly used by the poet to indicate mental perception and Beulah is the place of rest and love preceding the passage of souls through the gates of Urthona into eternity, we may conclude that this grain of sand potentially furnishes a way for man to avoid Satan and achieve Spirituality.

The moment in each day that Satan cannot find is the "Eternal Now", which is the continually present possibility of organizing experience into its proper perspective, enabling the imaginative man to see the whole range of his experiences and their implications (*Annotations to Lavater's "Aphorisms"*, p. 720). The imaginative man of Blake's prophetic works is Los, who walks up and down among the spaces of the six thousand years of man's temporal existence. He is the bard "Who Present, Past, and Future sees" (K. 65). His perceptions in the vegetated or visible world penetrate the invisible and this mental activity, along with that of his sons, builds the eternal city of time:

. . . . the Sons of Los build Moments & Minutes & Hours
And Days & Months & Years & Ages & Periods, wondrous buildings;
And every Moment has a Couch of gold for soft repose,
(A Moment equals a pulsation of the artery),
And between every two Moments stands a Daughter of Beulah
To feed the Sleepers on their Couches with maternal care.

And every Minute has an azure Tent with silken Veils:
 And every Hour has a bright golden Gate carved with skill:
 And every Day & Night has Walls of brass & Gates of adamant,
 And every Month a silver paved Terrace builded high:
 And every Year invulnerable Barriers with high Towers:
 And every Age is Moated deep with Bridges of silver & gold:
 And every Seven Ages is Incircled with a Flaming Fire.
 Now Seven Ages is amounting to Two Hundred Years.
 Each has its Guard, each Moment, Minute, Hour, Day, Month & Year.
 All are the work of Fairy hands of the Four Elements;
 The Guard are Angels of Providence on duty evermore.
 Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery
 Is equal, in its period & value to Six Thousand Years,
 For in this Period the Poet's Work is Done, and all the Great
 Events of Time start forth & are conceiv'd in such a Period,
 Within a Moment, a Pulsation of the Artery. (*Milton: I*, pp. 412-413).

The passage cited can be considered as the triumph of the poetic mind; the poet has organized experience into comprehensible eternal form. This achievement arising from the temporal world is possible because:

There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find,
 Nor can his Watch Fiends find it; but the Industrious find
 This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found
 It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed (*Milton: II*, p. 423).

The sons of Los in the passage depicting the building of the City of Time may be said to have located the perceptive moments available to humanity. They have engraved the temporal into eternal artifice. They have utilized the ever-available moment, multiplied it, and renovated every other moment.

But we have done some rather over-simplified interpreting of these two figurations, i.e. of the moment and the grain of sand. Though they both lead us to conclude that the artistic experience is never closed to humanity, their peculiar relationships with one another still must be defined. The moment of the eternal now cannot take place without the existence of the grain of sand; that is, the grain of sand must be available to the mentality which is capable of rendering it translucent.

Also, it must be considered, through insistence upon the need for transforming the grain of sand and the need for the inspirational moment, Blake emphasizes counter possibilities, i.e. non-translucent or opaque grains of sand, and uninspired moments. If there were not opaque grains of sand and un-

inspired moments, the artistic experience would never have to take place. In other words, there is a Hell, most often called Ulro, which must be conquered. The Daughters of Beulah, from Milton's track see:

"... the Ulro a vast Polypus
Of living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space growing
A self-devouring monstrous Human Death . . . (p. 420).

Ulro must be conquered through mental fight, for it *is* the mentality bound within the circle of the physical world. The female emanations provide clothing for the spectres of humanity, that is, they provide a physical body for fallen man, and plunge him "into the river of space for a period, till/The dread Sleep of Ulro is past" (*Vala, or the Four Zoas*, p. 336).

When the mentality of man lapsed into sleep and was divided from eternity, this world as we now perceive it in its physical aspects came into being. Man fell to the limits of Adam and Satan, called also the limits of Contraction and Opacity. Blake figures this fall of man and his subsequent condition, which is fundamentally one of narrowed perception, along with the limited nature of his fall, in the *Four Zoas*:

The Empyrean groan'd throughout. All Eden was darken'd.
The Corse of Albion lay on the Rock; the sea of Time & Space
Beat round the Rock in mighty waves, & as a Polypus
That vegetates beneath the Sea, the limbs of Man vegetated
In monstrous forms of Death, a Human polypus of Death.
The Saviour mild & gentle bent over the corse of Death,
Saying, "If ye will Believe, your brother shall rise again."
And first he found the Limit of Opacity, & nam'd it Satan,
In Albion's bosom, for in every human bosom these limits stand.
And next he found the Limit of Contraction, & nam'd it Adam,
While yet those beings were not born nor knew of good or Evil.
Then wondrously the *Starry Wheels* felt the divine hand. Limit
Was put to Eternal Death (p. 292-3).

The five senses render man his perceptions of the fallen world which he inhabits. They enable him to see the opaque grain of sand. They put a limit to eternal death.

The five senses are simultaneously the salvation and the damnation of man; they both bind him within the Mundane Shell or the cave of existence, and also form the starting point for his deliverance from bondage. Had man fallen in his perceptions to the point that his five senses became inoperative, he

would have become annihilated with, of course, no possibility of re-ascending. But man finds himself saved from annihilation. He is in a state of contraction with the potential for expansion: "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,/Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, p. 183.)

How do you know?

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern (p. 187).

In *Milton, Book II*, there is a detailed description of the establishment of the closed cave of existence. Here, too, is found some elucidation of the relationship between the establishment of the rational state and time-space concepts. Blake figures Satan as falling from his state in eternity when the Eternals proclaim him to be a self-deceived tyrant and a murderer of the just. Satan refuses to take responsibility for having maddened the Horses of the Harrow of the Almighty; rather, he blames Palamabron for having allowed him to drive the horses. The female will, specifically Enitharmon, protects the guilty, rationalizing Satan in his banishment from Heaven by creating a space for him; whereupon the assembly of the Eternals ratifies "the kind decision" of Enitharmon and gives a "Time to the Space" (*Milton: I*, p. 389).

According to this myth, the spatial-temporal world is bestowed by eternity and this bestowal of time and space is to be viewed as an act of kindness. Fallen man is not extirpated but is provided with temporal and spatial recognition. The abode for Satan (who is man in his imperceptive, fallen state), becomes the present world of time and space:

"The Visions of Eternity, by reason of narrowed perceptions,
Are become weak Visions of Time & Space,
fix'd into furrows of death" (*Jerusalem: II*, p. 495).

The rebellion of Satan must be interpreted as a mental act. It is the mind shutting off the comprehensive view which Blake construes it to have in eternity. This contraction of the mentality is, nonetheless, to be considered as a beneficial evil. Blake sees the coming into existence of the rational power (that is, of Urizen or the scientific mind) as a merciful occurrence:

. . . In Eternity the Four Arts, Poetry, Painting, Music
And Architecture, which is Science, are the Four Faces of Man.
Not so in Time & Space: there Three are shut out, and only

Science remains thro' Mercy, & by means of Science the Three
Become apparent in Time & Space . . . (*Milton: I*, p. 411).

"Whatever is visible to Generated Man"/ says Blake, "Is a Creation of mercy & love from the Satanic Void" (*Jerusalem: I*, p. 447). Had the rational power never gained dominion, the original, unified divine body of intellect would have been left untried and anything approximating complete experience would have been impossible. The mentality would have remained naïve and undeveloped, innocently and somewhat insipidly calling:

Little Lamb,	Let me pull
Here I am,	Your soft wool
Come and lick	Let me kiss
My white neck;	Your soft face:

Merrily, Merrily, we welcome in the Year (*Songs of Innocence*, p. 61).

More appropriately we welcome in the Circle of Destiny, the 6,000-year cycle of human experience in the time world, that painful period, called "the Time of Trouble", (*Jerusalem II, IV*, pp. 470, 563), when reason dominates and the ceaseless mental fight of the artist against it eventually brings greater perceptiveness, a departure from naïveté, and the establishment of Golgonooza, the City of Art, which is synonymous with the New Jerusalem and the Higher Innocence. Remaining in the original state of unity, or in the condition of "oneness", or innocence, would have murdered humanity (*Four Zoas*, p. 260). Mercifully, then, Urizen descends and falls not to annihilation, but to a limit which is bounded by his five senses; mercifully, also, the intellect, which is permanent, is retained in the fallen Man, allowing the possibility of re-ascension. In his Satanic state, or opaque state, Man will see the world as a physical entity; the grain of sand will bespeak solidity and stability to him. In his perceptive state, he will see that the grain of sand is itself translucent, has many angles, and opens into Beulah.

Achieving this kind of perception and leading others to it, is Blake's deepest concern. He does not claim to be the constant visionary poet; he falls into the sea of time and space, sees the sands of Urizen, and admits that his own visions become infected, "alas, too often" (*Vision of the Last Judgment*, p. 649). The point is that perceptiveness, even for the visionary, is difficult to achieve because the contraries of Satan and Adam, or of the rational and poetic powers, are continually warring in the mind of every individual.

The intention of the poet is to conquer the Satanic state, not through destruction, annihilation, or denial, but by assimilating it into the mentality,

recognizing its uses in the time world, and remarking its limitations. This is why the poet of Blake's prophetic works is continually labouring at his furnaces; he is incessantly refining his outlook until he has hammered out productions of time with which eternity is in love (*Heaven and Hell*, p. 183). Vision demands both desire and industry. When the artist is spiritually productive, the state Satan disappears and translucence is established; the contraries are married and become equally true.

Essentially, then, the artistic act in Blake is the marriage of contraries. Blake's philosophy, in fact, is all oriented to the reconciliation of contraries, of eternity and time, of the poet and the reasoner, of experience and innocence. Thus, if the philosophic system illustrates that in order to attain ultimates contraries must be married and the artistic act itself is the marriage of contraries, eternity, where the lion lies down with the lamb and all contraries are reconciled, is the ultimate city of art. Art and eternity are one.

But the time world is at enmity with art. Urizen is the God of this world; he is the great opposer of the imagination; he is the reasoner hoping to build kingdoms out of rocks and sand. He is the soul of science, a portrait painter, Napoleon, the Papal See. He is the great accuser, an appropriater of universality, the Self-hood personified. This Self-hood exists in every man, even in the mind of Los who is the giant poet attempting to keep "the Divine Vision in the Time of Trouble" (*Jerusalem II, IV*, pp. 470, 563).

The great opposer of art, then, is the self-hood which insists upon autonomy, using whatever means are available to preserve its individual identity. The most common mode of presenting this opposing of the self in the procuring of vision is to figure Enitharmon, the Emanation or female counterpart of the poet Los, fleeing from the poet's advances, fearing to lose her identity through union with him.

The possible union is critically complicated by the fact that the female portion of the mentality itself is capable of contrary states which must be reconciled before she is able to unite with the poet; Enitharmon both realizes herself to be Los's aid and companion and also realizes her separate powers. Sympathetic to Los, she prepares the lovely regenerative beds of Beulah and guards the moments of inspiration (*Milton: I*, p. 412); separate from Los, she is able to "controll the spaces, regions, desert, flood & forest" (*Four Zoas*, p. 258). She is, in fact, space perceived by man in his present existence. The female aspect of the mentality is that perceptive power which enables man to see the objects of creation and to observe spatial conditions and relationships. The

female is not only the womb, or space; she is to be identified with all physical manifestations in space. Naturally, but also detrimentally, these physical manifestations, seen through the use of the five senses, are considered by Man to be positive, or in Blake's term, to be Masculine; to the senses, they constitute a reality. Thus Blake is able, rather ambiguously, to insist that Space, a woman, is a real being; and at the same time, since she is shadow or emanation, to adjudge her creations to be impermanent and unreal.

Seemingly positive manifestations of sand, flood, and forest are actually temporary productions of man's emanation which afford stability and places of residence until he awakes. Also, demands made by the female carried out by the male are to be considered as perversions of energy. War, tyranny, poverty, all that is inhuman, and therefore not art, proceed from the female will.

Looking at the productions of the female mind from this standpoint brings us to the conclusion that space and its contents may be considered negative or illusion, rather than positive or real. Blake calls them vanities and equates them with death. This power of the mind which convinces us that there is a real physical world and that perversions are positive acts is termed by Blake the masculine portion of the female. In other words, the natural world, which seems to be a substantial, vital creation (masculine), is rightly understood as feminine delusion, or death (*Last Judgment*, p. 649).

This feminine delusion, as has already been asserted, is necessary to Man's regeneration. Though the natural world has no intrinsic value of its own and will eventually disappear, it is the starting place, or the Limit of Contraction, from which man can begin to expand his view. Thus the female mind is both heaven and hell, in that it either assists or thwarts Man; it can aid him in the opening of his perceptions or it can trap him into the belief that his disposition in space, the objects of space, his own physical make-up, and his physical activities are ultimate realities. Vala, the emanation of Albion (sleeping humanity), makes the heretical claim that "The Human Divine is Woman's Shadow" (*Jerusalem: III*, p. 515). If man is trapped by such a Urizenic conception, he sees only the grain of sand which Satan's watch-fiends (Reasoners) can find. His higher perceptions are closed; his state is one of sleep or Death. His tenacious clinging to the material world is the embracing of the masculine portion of the female, which, Blake says, is Death (*Last Judgment*, p. 649). The hermaphroditic mind commits mental incest and produces the state of Ulro, Blake's hell.

But there is a grain of sand which Satan's watch-fiends cannot find.

Impregnated by the power of the intellect (Los), the spatial world can become translucent. This means, of course, that the female will and her controls are given over; the intellect through desire and industry finds the moment which organizes every other moment and a transformation through unity takes place. The female loses her controls and identity (which we have noted is the constant fear of the emanation) and the grain of sand becomes translucent. In eternity, says Blake, there are neither female wills or queens (p. 648).

The female's willingness to give over her dominance and identity and to become lamb-like and passive comes only after agonizing pursuit by and torment to the Poet. He is, after all, endeavouring to subdue a portion of his own personality, able to achieve the visionary knowledge of the single universal that "we are One Family, One Man, blessed forever" (*Jerusalem: III*, p. 503), only when he can subdue his emanation, reject his own self-hood, and conquer the fear of the death of his spatially-oriented body. In order to achieve such a view and to communicate to others that all religions are one and that religion, art, eternity, and humanity comprise the four-fold vision, man must "wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep" (*Heaven and Hell*, p. 184).

The imagery of this quotation from the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* suggests the constant identification Blake makes of the poet with the tiger, the wrathful Los-Christ-Milton figure who penetrates the darkneses which have fallen upon Eden. This is the glowing-eyed figure who must be relied upon to mentally devour the dark. He multiplies the moments of perception until the dark body of Urizen is transformed into a forest of translucent eyes.

This figure is the mind in its perceptive state, destroying the Masculine Portion of the female, which is death, and simultaneously assimilating the lamb-like, passive aspects of his own emanation. This wrathful mental onslaught seeks out every tyranny, every blindness, every darkness of the spatial world and devours it "time after time" until the dim Chaos brightens "beneath, above, around," until eternity is seen "Eyed as the Peacock" (*Jerusalem: IV*, p. 565).

Only when the organs of perception have opened so as to bring the realization that space, seen by the ordinary eye, is delusion and vanity, can the city of art be constructed. In other words, the imaginative power must create its own peculiar horizons; the mentality provides the true spatio-temporal relationships which destroy the ordinary concepts of space and time:

For every Space larger than a red Globule of Man's blood
Is visionary, and is created by the Hammer of Los:

And every space smaller than a Globule of Man's blood opens
 Into Eternity of which this vegetable Earth is but a shadow (*Milton: I*, p. 413).

It is evident that, not the female, but the poetic spirit hammers space into its proper perspective. Furthermore, the Earth itself is the "nameless shadowy female" who must be reconciled to the eternal; the earth is the mother, lamenting the loss and decay of her children, the forms of the visible world; the earth, or Space, is the giant female shadow or emanation of eternity divided from its imaginative source. She prepares the area "We were plac'd . . . by the Universal Brotherhood & Mercy/With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark Satanic death,/ . . . that the seven eyes of God may have space for Redemption" (*Milton: I*, p. 403; cf. Rev. 5:6).

This Redemptive area, which we have characterized as feminine, provides a location for all the events of time to take place. Time, says Blake, is a Male, and his "Real Vision . . . is in Eternal Youth" (*Last Judgment*, p. 649); mortals call him Los (*Milton: I*, p. 405). Time, then, is the poet; he controls "the times & seasons & the days & years" (*Four Zoas*, p. 259). Figured as a powerful youth emerging as the dawn in Blake's painting "Glad Day", he is the ever-present inspirational power which is able to organize every event and object of the spatial world into its proper perspective.

But even as Space, the female, has a deluding Masculine Portion, Time, the Male, has a deluding feminine portion. Both Time and Space have Spectres. Space is divided into the contraries of states of innocent acceptance and Urizenic rejection; Time is split into the contraries of true and false perception, youthful vision and aged imperception. Blake decries the depiction of the Eternal Youth Time as "bald and aged" (*Milton: I*, p. 259) but in describing his painting *Vision of the Last Judgment* admits: "I have . . . somewhat accommodated my Figure of Time to the common opinion, as I myself am also infected with it and my Visions also infected, and I see Time aged, alas, too much so" (*Last Judgment*, p. 649).

It is not surprising that Blake, who felt truth to be discernible only through recognition of the eternalness of his own intellect, suffered disillusionment whenever he failed to look "through the eye" and fell to the Urizenic view. Ironically, the very objects and acts that were to be looked upon only as the shadow of reality, sometimes imposed themselves as ultimates and ensnared the poet. Doubtless, Blake felt that one of the chief snares or feminine delusions was the beauty of the spatial world. He seldom dwells at length on natural objects, and he asserts that what is of value is not to be found in nature.

He quotes assertively from Michelangelo, "For what delights the sense is false," and in his annotations to Wordsworth (p. 821), he says: "Natural Objects always did and now do weaken, deaden and obliterate Imagination in Me" (p. 820).

Whenever the Imagination was deadened, Blake felt himself to be overwhelmed by the "sea of time and space", and the vigour of the Time figure, Los, diminished. He began to look like old, gray-bearded Chronos, the time-god of the Greeks.

To the Greeks, Blake attributes the promulgation of the false idea that time is a cumulative process, aggregating minutes and years, and is therefore to be characterized by senility and decrepitude. His charge is essentially that a Urizenic tradition has infected the vision of Time and the consequence is destructive to ultimate perception.

Blake construes the Greek Muses to be the "daughters of Mnemosyne, or Memory, and not of Inspiration or Imagination". They are called reconstructors of Mathematic form (disciples of Urizen) and the assertion is made by Blake that when the spirit of poetry became dependent upon Memory, "Reality was Forgot, and the Vanities of Time & Space only Remember'd & called Reality" (*Last Judgment*, p. 638). Man closed himself up and began to see only through the narrow chinks of his cavern.

Man reduced to equating the vanities of time and space to reality is in the grasp of his Spectre or Reasoning power. He is reduced to a "Ratio/Of the Things of Memory" (*Jerusalem: III*, p. 533). Compositions proceeding from this ratio must necessarily be duplicates rather than originals, for the imaginative sense is dormant.

On the other hand, when the imagination is at work, according to Blake, knowledge becomes "Immediate by Perception or Sense at once" (*Annotations to "Berkeley's Siris"*, p. 718). Such a comment not only underlines Blake's idea of the "Eternal Now" but also marks him as a believer in knowledge through connaturality, that is "knowledge . . . produced in the intellect but not by virtue of conceptual connections and by way of demonstration" (Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason*, p. 22).

Sequential time is readily understood from a rational point of view. That is why time seen as aged has become the "common opinion" according to Blake. On the other hand, the concept that all the events of history, both past and future, can be contained momentarily causing both recollections and contemplation to disappear and thus obliterate the demonstrable movement of

time is, of course, empirically invalid; but this viewpoint is imaginatively or connaturally comprehensible.

This latter type of comprehension is, to Blake, completely valid. Whatever can possibly be imagined is as real as that which can be empirically approached. Hence, Blake's poetic rendering of the gaining of knowledge through "Immediate . . . Perception or Sense at once":

"I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand Years ago
 "Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six Thousand Years
 "Are finish'd. I return! both Time & Space obey my will.
 "I in Six Thousand Years walk up and down; for not one Moment
 "Of Time is lost, nor one Event of Space unpermanent,
 "But all remain: every fabric of Six Thousand Years
 "Remains permanent, tho' on the Earth where Satan
 "Fell and was cut off, all things vanish & are seen no more,
 "They vanish not from me & mine, we guard them first & last.
 "The generations of men run on in the tide of Time,
 "But leave their destin'd lineaments permanent for ever & ever" (*Milton: I*, p. 401).

Obviously, in the imaginative experience comes a comprehension of a kind of time that is foreign to demonstrable experience, for this time is no longer sequential nor cumulative. It no longer has linear extension from past to future, but is continuously present.

By keeping in mind Blake's exact identification of the prophetic spirit (Los) with the "eternal now" (also Los), we can escape the error of expecting that through the imaginative experience a new kind of objective time will be perceived. The imaginative experience does not bring about the knowledge of a kind of time other than clock time, but the experience itself is the time that is other than clock time.

Whenever the imaginative faculty organizes experience so as to construct a work of art, the potential, or the female, by surrendering her will, is fused with the perceiving faculty into a single entity. The character of this union of time and space in which space is indispensable but time is the organizing and energizing agent, is the experience of "supreme energy" or what Blake would call eternal vision of all that exists.

Space no longer seeks autonomy; she has no will; energy is no longer perverted; death is no more; clock time disappears; "Death is Chain'd to the Cross, & Time falls together with death, dragged down by a demon crown'd with Laurel" (*Last Judgment*, p. 639). "In Eternity", says Blake, "Woman is

the Emanation of Man; she has No Will of her own" (p. 649.) Disorder and division are no longer evidenced; the contraries are resolved. The lion and the lamb are reconciled. The living creatures in new expanses converse in visions and engage in "Creating Space, Creating Time, according to the wonders Divine/Of Human Imagination" (*Jerusalem: IV*, p. 567).

Before reaching such a state, however, the lapsed souls of men must be remade by "Time's hammer on the anvil of space" (*Four Zoas*, p. 336). Man must proceed through the Circle of Destiny, "for [he] cannot know/What passes in his members till periods of Space & Time/Reveal the secrets of Eternity" (*Milton: I*, p. 399).

Space & Time, are, to Blake, simultaneously realities of the senses and conceptualizations of the visionary experience. Viewed only as a sensual reality, the clock in its spatial disposition is opaque and associated with feminine delusion and death; but viewed by the imagination, the clock that tolls the time has a translucent face; ringed with the peacock's eyes, it opens into Beulah and beyond.

NOTE

1. Geoffrey Keynes, ed., "Jerusalem: II", *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, p. 483. All references to Blake's works are cited from Keynes' centenary edition of Blake's poetry and prose, The Nonesuch Press, London, 1948.