

VISION AND TECHNIQUE IN PARADISE LOST AND THE FOUR ZOAS

STIPE GRGAS
Filozofski fakultet u Zadru

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Milton and Blake are considered representatives of what may be called the visionary tradition in English poetry. Focusing on *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas* an attempt is made to first, delineate the myths embodied in these texts and second, to point out their differences. After a few remarks about what is meant by the term »visionary«, the author gives a brief appraisal of the poems. Although both texts start from an identical starting-point, even the most superficial reading will uncover decisive divergences. The paper analyses the following five structural differences: (i) while Milton uses a linear, deterministic organization of episodes, in Blake's work their nature is thought to be cyclical, interchangeable, (ii) the selective and integrative use of material, (iii) the different characterization of protagonists, (iv) the different modes of representing space/distance, and (v) dissimilarities that are evident on the level of language. Relying on certain judgements propounded by George Steiner, Joseph Campbell and Arthur O. Lovejoy a proposal is put forward to explain these differences as originating in a changed perception of the world, different psychological types and in the emergence of a new stylistic formation (Romanticism).

Numerous indicators warrant the attempt to place John Milton (1608—74) and William Blake (1757—1827) within a common tradition. Besides the question of influence (which is readily ascertained) this paper contends that they are the principal representatives in English poetry of what we choose to call the visionary tradition, which can summarily be said to have produced myths of varying validity as answers to and accounts of the particular predicament of man. Concentrating our attention on two of their works, *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas*, it will be the aim of this paper, first, to briefly delineate the myths espoused by these texts and, second, to register the points of divergence which we contend bring to light certain developmental patterns of the fortunes of the visionary imagination in historical time. The visionary quality under investigation is a »constitutive« element of their poetry; the ideas, beliefs and assumptions that Milton and Blake held transformed themselves in the creative process and »became symbols, or even myth«. ¹ The myt-

¹ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 122.

hic constructs and the minutiae of poetic composition are functionally interdependent.

The presumption behind this work is that there are elements of similarity which vindicate the procedure of placing *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas* in the same class and that, diachronically, a process of differentiation set in which necessitates elucidation. What is labelled here as visionary poetry seems not to be an isolated, self-contained phenomena but shares in global processes. Throughout history it has had its zenith points where it has given the most unifying, uplifting vision of man and world, backed as it is by, we believe, the general unity of culture. On the other hand, it may sink into low tides where, unbacked and alone, through sorties of his own, the poet grapples with the riddle of existence. May it not consequently chance that the visionary faculty becomes defunct? Whatever may happen it should be stressed that the term visionary need not prejudice aesthetic qualification. Oftentimes, the truly great poet is the individual arranging scraps and bits in a visionless time («These fragments I have shored against my ruins» *The Wasteland*, 430), while a writer anchored in a period of cultural cohesion may turn out to be a chronicler of oddities, a mere propagandist. What we deem worth investigating — and this is the crux of our argument — is how the changes in the ability to embrace the whole of being (which we allege is dependent on circumstances extraneous to the book) leave their imprints on the performances of a writer devoted to this promethean task. The differences are readily ascertainable if one brings to mind and compares a poet immersed in tradition and his counterpart, a maverick wanting standards of value/communal myths.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines vision to be »something which is apparently seen otherwise than by ordinary sight«. It adds that it is of a »prophetic or mystical character« and »supernaturally presented«. We use the term to denote that all-unifying function of a particular mode of perception. Neither scientific nor religious (although not wholly separate from them), which define and differentiate the totality of being, visionary perception is an universal spiritual operation which is capable of simultaneously embracing unity and differentiation, both evil and good. One recalls Yeats's rejoinder to the anticipated question whether he actually believed in his »circuits of sun and moon«: »They have helped me to hold in a single thought reality and justice.«² The visionary faculty enables man to feel integrated in the cosmic round and to give an account of self, life and death.

The visionary poet either tries to duplicate creation by presenting it in his work or launches forth, like the biblical demiurge, to inhale a breadth of order and meaning into a world he considers fallen, bankrupt. For instance, Blake employs place names, scenes and heterogeneous actualities of his time and orders them into a puzzling cosmology.

² W. B. Yeats, *A Vision*, Collier Books, New York, 1956, p. 25.

Hart Crane in »The Bridge« turns to the alienated, schizophrenic modern world and undertakes to humanize it by imbuing it with mythic significance:

O Sleeplees as the river under thee,
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
And of the curveship lend a myth to God.

(»To Brooklyn Bridge«).

Need we point to Coleridge's relevance in this context and his concept the »primary Imagination« which he asserted »to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the infinite *I am*«. ³

For our present purposes it is justifiable to simplify the complex heterogeneity of the Miltonic and Blakean texts and assert, that »the great year of the world« represents the common theme, the rudimentary myth of both *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas*. Of course differences exist in the way the two poets articulate this idea but it is clear that the fall from edenic innocence and its renewal (Milton), and the fall into disunity and the reestablishment of the whole (Blake) are variants of the identical underlying conception. The processes charted out in their works presume a dualistic idea of being and antagonistic powers waging battle within temporality; in Milton and Blake these are mustered around the dualities of God-Satan, Reason (Urizen)-Energy (Los). The myth which is embodied in Milton's work and which delineates the workings of these forces is unmistakably embedded in the biblical and classical tradition and demands little annotation. On the other hand, *The Four Zoas* is a demandingly complex text that poses problems of understanding and interpretation. It is our contention that the idiosyncracys of structure — developmental differentiation between the two poems — can be accounted for by the fate of vision in historical time. The stages through which vision undergoes transformation need not be progressive, driving towards synthesis. As a matter of fact, we believe that the development of vision during the time period under consideration displays clear evidence of a falling away (declension) from the vision of totality which seems to have been the characteristic of the Miltonic experience of the world.

II

The Christian myth provides the point of departure for the narrative of *Paradise Lost*. It can be argued that Milton's »religious nature« once it awoke »from its sleep in the world« »quested for a metaphysical

³ S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Sch. Dent, London, 1930, p. 159.

frame to contain it, to nourish it like a plant, to make it fruitful.⁴ Christianity gave John Milton this metaphysical frame. A sketchy appraisal of the twelve books of *Paradise Lost* will clearly bring this out.

In books 1 and 2 Milton gave his vision of evil: Satan and his confederates assembled in hell. This section provides the chief evidence for what has come to be known as the Romantic reading of *Paradise Lost*: »unconquerable will« (I, 105—111)⁵ and in particular the passage depicting the Satanic host as rebels ending with the words »Better to reign in Hell then serve in Heaven« (I, 245—263). Book 2 consists of their consultations and disputes that are resolved in the decision to seek out and conquer the newly created domain (earth). It is these two sections which are the source of the Romantic revisionist reading of *Paradise Lost* according to which Satan is the real hero of the story. B. A. Wright formulated this revisionary reading in the following way.

The fact remains that Satan is the only character capable of expressing the heroism of human endeavour not only in war but in what for Milton was a more glorious field of action — the struggle with nature, the search for knowledge, the exploration of the world.⁶

The focus changes in book 3 where Satan is espied leaving hell; there is a prophecy of man's sin and fall; Christ ransoms himself as saviour; Milton provides anticipatory passages of what will eventually come to pass. Book 4 describes man in his paradisaical state; the topography of Eden; Satan discovers that human happiness is not unconditional but is dependent on his obedience to a prohibitive decree. Books 5, 6, 7 and 8 form a group because in them Raphael of the angelic host brings knowledge to newly-created, innocent man. In book 5 Raphael gives an account of the strife in heaven and explains to Adam what preceded Satan's revolt so that in a certain sense, the information of book 5 antedates book 1. The cause of his revolt seems to have been that he questioned the lore that he was created by God: »We know no time when we were not as now« (V, 859). Book 6 continues the depiction of the heavenly wars. In book 7, after the pageantry of celestial battles, the earth is in the center of attention: Raphael meticulously follows the Genesis account. Raphael describes Milton's cosmology in book 8. It abides by the medieval conception which conceives the »sederterre Earth« as the center of the universe and the rest of the cosmos as parts of a hierarchical order. Milton accedes to the *Weltanschauung* of the Middle Ages and it is proper that Raphael consults his earthly conferee to cringe before the gran-

⁴ Lawrence Durrell. *Monsieur*, The Viking Press, New York, 1974, p. 137.

⁵ All the citations from Milton refer to the following edition: *The Portable Milton*, ed. Douglas Bush, The Viking Press, New York, 1955.

⁶ B. A. Wright, »Milton's *Paradise Lost*« in *Milton Criticism Selections from Four Centuries*, ed. James Thorpe, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1951, p. 100.

deur of creation and not to ask after God's ways: man should rely on faith and not endeavour to assail the enigma of existence with reason. Book 9 might with reason be thought the denouement of *Paradise Lost*. This is the actual scene of the temptation and fall. Milton illustrates the cosmic wrong which is wrought by man's disobedience by relating disturbances in the natural order. The immediate consequence of the disobedience is the upturning of human faculties. Still amidst the fall, in book 10 the reader sees the repercussion of the crime on the Satanic host. At the end of the book Milton writes of the movement towards salvation with the promise of Christ's sacrifice. Generally, the pristine time of man's identification with nature has ended and the destiny of man as a historical being commences. In book 11 the human pair hear of the edict to be evicted from Eden. The angel Michael is to lead them but before doing so he is to give them foreknowledge of future events. From this point to the end of the work, Milton puts into verse biblical history. Michael's revelation of post-flood history continues in book 12. In conclusion, perhaps it is possible to group the books of *Paradise Lost* according to the following scheme: books 1, 2, 3: supernatural division, drama and conflict; book 4, 5, 6, 7, 8: man and his relation to transcendental powers, cosmology, creation; book 9, 10: temptation and transgression; books 11, 12: loss of pristine justice, man and his odyssey through historical time.

Blake's prophetic book, amongst them *The Four Zoos*, are surely some of the most difficult and obscure poetic works in English literature. We have chosen *The Four Zoos* for our comparative analysis because we believe that in this work Blake gives the fullest statement of his vision of being and that the processes of his mythological world, described in this work, show unmistakable thematic similarities to the myth Milton delineated in *Paradise Lost*. But while Milton makes use of an universal canon of beliefs — a vision of being sanctioned by an entire culture — Blake is of a period which lacked an established frame of references and the text he writes is abundant with idiosyncratic oddities which are impedimental to an appreciative reception.

The Four Zoos is an extensive text, divided into nine sections (labelled nights), complexly interwoven, dispensing with linear development. The pageant unfolds with Tharmas lamenting Enion, his »emanation«, who has divided from him. The symptoms of the cleavage are evinced in the division masculine (sceptre)/feminine (emanation). However, the declension goes on and Enion gives birth to Los and Enitharmon. The cause of the fall/cleavage was apparently the usurpation of absolute power by relative agencies (see for example I, 262—264).⁷ Luva and Urizen (love/reason) have undermined the harmonious whole/ oneness and in post-fall existence Urizen (reason, law) usurps, holds

⁷ All references are from *Blake, Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969.

sway: »The Spectre is the Man. The rest is only delusion & fancy« (I, 341). His antagonist is Los who has »kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble« *Jerusalem*, plate 95, 20). It is characteristic of Blakean textual strategy that the story of the fall is recounted in the first night in three different ways: a) depiction of the strife, division and conflict consequential of the lapse, b) with a laconic formula (I, 260—4) and c) in the last scene of the second draft.

At the beginning of the second night, the reader is introduced to Albion, the pristine unified man who has abdicated his power and prerogatives to Urizen who sees »His feet upon the verge of Non Existence« (II, 21). To save reality from nonbeing (this being the supreme evil in the Blakean system) Urizen undertakes to build the mundane shell (II, 25—286). Max Plowman in his introductory study of Blake comments on the significance of creation in his universe:

Although the creation of the world was necessary, it was essentially evil. It was, in fact, approaching the nothingness of pure materiality, having gone through a long series of emanations in its outpouring from the divine original. It was constituted as a merciful limit to man's Fall.⁸

The language with which creation is described connotes constriction, boundedness, the tyranny of outwardness.

In the third night, Urizen is still master but is perturbed by the promise of a »prophetic boy« (Orc) who will overturn his dominion. Lines 27—104 once more recount the fall, this time according to Ahania, Urizen's emanation. It appears that Ahania's aim is to open Urizen's eyes to the complexity of his situation but he shirks her warnings:

»Shall the feminine indolent bliss, the indulgent self
of weariness,
»The passive idle sleep, the enormous night & darkness
of Death
»Set herself up to give her laws to the active
masculine virtue?
(III, 114—16)

Ahania's banishment effects a further declension toward non-entity in Urizen. The other sceptres and emanations also undergo a progressive devolution.

The fourth night takes place in the fallen world. The sceptres and emanations, asserting the sovereignty of their respective wills, mistaking the part for the whole, are in no position to recreate, salvage the lost unity. Creation, the binding of Urizen, is revealed to be an act of mercy

⁸ Max Plowman, *An Introduction to the Study of Blake*, Frank Cass, London, 1967, p. 268.

whereby the process of dilapidation and shrinking towards nonentity is temporarily stayed. Los who is assigned these chores of creation is also transformed: »He became what he was doing: he was himself transform'd« (IV, 287).

In the fifth night the imaginative powers, Los and Enitharmon, shrink into »fixed space, stood trembling on a Rocky cliff,/Yet mighty bulk & majesty & beauty remain'd, but inexpansive« (V, 12—3), their nature impoverished. In this state of constriction, Orc bursts into life. In Urizen's stifling, repressive world Luvah, the principle of love, is transformed into Orc, the principle of strife, rebellion. In his rage (with strong Oedipal connotations), Orc »fir'd/The darkness, warring with the waves of Tharmas & Snows of Urizen« (V, 106—7). Blake provides enough evidence for the reader to identify Ore-Luvah as energy which in his myth is opposed to the material, static world (water-Tharmas) and to impeccable, cruel reason (snow-Urizen). Writing of the birth of Orc, Kathleen Raine comments: »birth of love into the world of generation, and the consequent degradation of this nature and metamorphosis into serpent form«.⁹ The episode is of importance because it clearly shows that the banished/repressed forces are not annihilated, forever uprooted/excluded from the established order, but inevitably return in changed and perhaps malignant form, and the reader intuitively that a counter-movement is under way in the text. The imposed factitious order necessarily becomes prey to what it excludes, represses, wants to expurge as otherness.

The sixth night unfolds upon Urizen exploring his world (dens). Blake identifies it as the natural world, cut off from spiritual realities: »Beyond the bounds of their own self their senses cannot penetrate« (VI, 94). Urizen, abashed by the ruins that he perceives, seeks »a void/ »Where self sustaining I may view all things beneath my feet« (VI, 197—8). Reverting to a dogmatic religious ordering of existence, he possesses himself of »a New dominion over all his Sons & Daughters, & over the Sons Daughters of Luvah in the horrible Abyss« (VI, 237).

At the beginning of the first version of the seventh night we read of Urizen approaching the caves of Orc where the »adamantine scales of justice« (VII, 10) consume »in the raging lamps of mercy« (VII, 11). By the use of oxymorons (adamantine justice, raging mercy, etc.) Blake effectively depicts Urizenic world of dislocated and distorted value systems. Hypocrisy permeates this world: »let Moral Duty tune your tongue./»But be your hearts harder than the nether millstone« (VII, 111—2). However, for all the seeming impregnability of this order there always lurks a subvertive counterpower which endangers and will eventually undermine its stability: »The Man shall rage, bound with this chain, the worm in silence creep« (VII, 143). After providing two additional

⁹ Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Vol. I, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1962, p. 202.

accounts of the fall, Blake introduces the spectre of Urthona who, recognized as »another Self« (VII, 340), conjoins with Los. The passage

»If we unite in one, another better world will be
 »Open'd within your heart & loins & wondrous brain,
 »Threefold, as it was in Eternity, & this, the fourth Universes,
 »Will be Renew'd by the three & consummated in Mental fires;
 (VII, 353—56)

signifies that a countermovement (toward reunion) is under way in the text.

The second version of the seventh night is a depiction of Urizen's efforts that consist of »reversing all the order of delight (VIIb, 22). As in the previous version of the night the text sets forth the rages of Urizen's arch enemy and there in the promisory note of redemption which, on the whole, is the function of this section.

In the eighth night the countermovement is in full stride. The poet's vision is focused upon eternity which contracts »upon the Limit of Contraction« into one man, Jesus, »to create the fallen Man« (VIII, 3). Blake relies on Christian lore to envision the process of renewal. Urizen realizes that »life cannot be quenched, Life exuded« (VIII, 421), the Zoas fall into a stupor, the emanations reemerge and the scene is set for reunification, renewal.

With the ninth night the poem comes full circle round. It unfolds amid apocalyptic upheaval which anticipates the cessation of temporality. Urizen's creation is reversed, its threads unknit. The sons of Urizen take up the plow and harness — »instruments of harmony« (IX, 302) — and relinquish the implements of war. If the reader is capable of recalling — after this marathon journey — that at the fall the sons of Urizen fled from the forges and fields into the turmoil of war, the return to the tools of husbandry marks a direct reversal, a return to pre-fall existence. Lines 390—556 set in the garden of Vala reenact the edenic state. Redemption is achieved through the realization that »Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love« (IX, 638). The final line of the poem, »The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns« (IX, 855) tells us that a passage has been made through the satanic mills (of course, in the Blakean sense) and that man, freed of the »woof« of dehumanizing religion/mystery, has prepared for a knowledge and wisdom meant for his benefit and wellbeing.

III

From the foregoing description of the myths embodied in *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas* it seems legitimate to contend that their authors set out with very similar aims. Compare Milton's formular statement of purpose:

That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

(I, 24—26)

with Blake's laconic summary of his work:

His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity:
His fall into the Generation of decay & death, & his
Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead.

I, 21—23)

A quotation from Kathleen Raine points out where the two works thematically overlap: »This is the old story of the descent of the soul from an eternal to a temporal world. In the classical myth the lure is the honey of generation; in the Hebraic, the apple on the tree of nature.«¹⁰ Using John Beer's criterion it may be argued that both Milton and Blake set out to create an epic poem: »creation of an epic poem which should record this lapse of man from his original virtue and prophesy his eventual apocalyptic awakening.«¹¹ However, alongside these similarities, even a superficial perusal of the two texts has, we hope, divulged significant, readily ascertainable, differences. *Paradise Lost* is a self-contained, finished text, given final form by the authority of the writer. Blake never carried out the final revision of *The Four Zoas*. The latter text contains variant readings; thus, for example, the reader is confounded with two parallel endings of the first night and two equally valid versions of the seventh night. Needless to say, the fact that Blake's prophetic books were not intended to be read as texts without the designs (etchings, water-colours) bespeaks the peculiar status of his poetry. Divergences in the outer execution of the two texts are symptomatic of more significant differences. The next step in our analysis is to systematize the most salient differences.

A) Our interests here focus on the structural differences of the two poems. For the purpose of the present analysis we will simplify the notion of structure by defining it as the distribution of elements within a given whole. In *The Four Zoas* the organization, ordering of the constituent parts of the poem, is cyclical, nonlinear, regressive, tossed about; the text is repetitive returning incessantly to its beginning. On the basis of what has been said in the previous sections, it would not be difficult to reconstruct the events recounted in *Paradise Lost* into a linear arrangement, to reassemble the sequence of events and see them as a narrative. Blake's interests center on spiritual states and he is willing to return a number of times to a description of a particularly significant element, in order to shed light on it from a number of perspectives (we have noted the proliferation of descriptions of the fall in *The Four*

¹⁰ Kathleen Raine, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 38.

¹¹ John Beer, *Blake's Visionary Universe*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1969, p. 4.

Zoas). As was shown in the account of *Paradise Lost*, the vision presented in the text may be viewed as strung on successive episodes, arranged in their causative order. It would impinge on authorial intentions to reshuffle their developmental order. *Paradise Lost* develops a story whose episodes are logically ordered, whereas the theme of *The Four Zoas* is the delineation of states, and since the number of these is delimited, it does not surprise that Blake tends to be repetitive (even more so if the reader keeps in mind his other prophetic books). Let us illustrate Milton's well-wrought plan by instancing a fragment from book VIII. After enumerating God's creation, Adam fawningly describes the woman. While toward all the other enjoyments that were bequeathed him he feels superior, when confronted by the woman

here only weak

Against the charm of beauty's powerful glance.
Or Nature failed in me, and left some part
Not proof enough such object to sustain,
Or from my side subducting, took perhaps
More than enough.

(VIII, 532—237)

On one level this is a panegyric to the irresistibility of female charm. Yet, considered structurally (how this passage functions in the grand drama), the fragment obviously prepares the ground for Adam's decision to join Eve in sin. If Milton did not foreground this infatuation (importance of earthly love) he would have difficulties in legitimating Adam's motivation in joining Eve in breaking the interdiction against the tree of knowledge. The characteristic organizational strategy of Blake's poetic in *The Four Zoas* is the interchangeability of episodes while, on this level of analysis, *Paradise Lost* is deterministic.

What is understood by these terms? By interchangeability we mean the possibility to reshuffle fragment throughout *The Four Zoas*, especially the metaphoric fragment that function, to use Eliot's term, as objective correlatives of spiritual states. It is our presumption that the intelligibility of the text would not be greatly diminished. As was mentioned above, Blake seems to have centered his attention on particular states (sceptres/emanations in particular), while their causal determination did not receive as much attention. (Could it be that the mimesis of states is easier to render than the exploration of their transformations and genesis). If the fragments (episodes) were functionally incorporated into an unfolding pattern, they would be contaminated by its logic and the sequence of events would assign them a function, stripping them of their independent relevance. This is the case in *Paradise Lost* where the events exhaust themselves in the goal-orientated sequence. However, we are not arguing that all patterning is missing from *The Four Zoas*. It is sufficient to conclude that it is not as deterministic as *Paradise Lost*; its nature is circular/reversible. In the Blakean text the individual episodes

have a greater amount of independence. These differences mark a singular dissimilarity between the two poets. In reading the text one perceives that Milton gradually proceeds from one episode to another, closely paying heed to the scheme of cause and result. Little unmotivated matter is there in the poem. On the other hand, we often feel that Blake dispenses with logical sequence and that his developmental logic is less one of cause and effect in temporal order than of proximity.

B) Another possible way to compare these respective works is to point out the different ways Milton and Blake made use of the material that was accessible to them. The Blakean text is integrative: his vision fuses tenets of orthodox belief to his personal myth, ranges over other kinds of religious experience (Druid, hermeticism etc.), integrates contemporary scientific systems, the geography of England and much else into the texture of his work. These heterogeneous elements become metaphors of the underlying vision. What should be stressed is that Blake's mythopoetic imagination assigns to all these elements the status of simultaneous validity. The situation is different in *Paradise Lost* and, for simplicity's sake, if Blake employs an integrative strategy, Milton is highly selective. In *Paradise Lost* Christianity and the biblical tradition hold a privileged position. When Milton uses classic lore fit functions as a simile, the images/ fables are reduced to an illustrative function, and he does so in an apologetic manner. Comparing Lucifer to certain personages from Greek mythology, Milton conscientiously qualifies his rhetorical vagaries: »Thus they relate, /Erring (I, 746—7); or, when describing the bounty of heaven: »Hesperian fables true,)/If true, here only, and of delicious taste« (IV, 250—1), i. e. true only in Christianity, in the privileged biblical discourse. A consequence of this rhetorical strategy is that these passages fail to function as metaphors, integratively, because Milton has intentionally kept two orders of reference apart. Presuming the truth of the Christian tradition gives the author a vantage point from which to assort, judge. Referring to another text but suitable to present purposes William B. Yeats wrote of these two elements falling apart in Milton: »the one is sacred, the other profane; his classical mythology is an artificial ornament.«¹² The explanation seems quite simple: being a doctrinaire believer Milton was unable to assimilate, even with a bad conscience, material foreign to the creed he adhered to.

C) An additional level on which to differentiate between Milton and Blake is to throw a brief glance at the contrastive ways in which they envision the protagonists of their epic dramas. Even though we cannot accept the main hypothesis of G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi's appraisal of Blake as a »social critic and revolutionary poet«, his comments on Blake's procedure in constructing character can be incorporated into the context of our argument:

¹² W. B. Yeats, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

Blake's characters are identified by means of their relationship with others. They change because their positions and the nature of their relationship with others change.¹³

One can speak of Urizen, Los, Orc, etc., as separate, definable entities only with great difficulties. Constant flux is their habitual state of being. The original eclipse into spectres/emanations is only the most apparent obstacle making it difficult for the reader to discern the protagonists as discriminate beings. On the other hand, the Miltonic world is peopled by individualized entities, be they gods, demons or men. It is valid to contend that the transgression of both Lucifer and the human pair amounts to a process of individuation. Assaulting the anonymity of law/norm, the transgressor is tempted, fired by the promise of otherness. Is not Satan's heroic cry one of the most radical formulations of the craving for individuality: »Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven« (I, 263).

D) While the representation of space/distance in Blake is dynamic, based on relations, abyssmal, formless, verging on the edges of infinity between being and nonbeing, Miltonic space is concrete, contained.¹⁴ A typical passage in *The Four Zoas* reads as follows:

»And if, Eternal falling, I repose on the dark bosom
 »Or winds & waters, or thence fall into a Void where air
 »Is not, down falling thro'immensity ever & (VI, 218—20)

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton draws boundaries which differentiate space. As a matter of fact, the act of creation amounts to a separation of cosmos from chaos:

what cause
 Moved the Creator in his holy rest
 Through all eternity so late to build
 In Chaos,

(VII, 90—3)

The act of this universal division is duplicated on the earth: »among these the seat of men,/ Earth with her nether ocean circumfused« (VII, 623—4).

E) Readers have commented on Milton's stilted, stylized, to some, Latinized English. We assume that his style and recognizable idiom look for its sanctions back to an established rhetorical expertise. What is proposed here is that the language Milton uses in *Paradise Lost*, with its time-sanctioned rhetoric, indicates his proclivity of writing within the

¹³ G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, *The Hell and Heaven of William Blake*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1973, p. 39.

¹⁴ One is tempted to use the distinction Oswald Spengler made in *The Decline of the West*, Vol. I, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1973: »the prime symbol of the classical soul is the material and individual body, that of the Western pure infinite space« (p. 175).

well-defined norms of tradition. On the contrary, Blake intentionally abandons what he disparages as the »Monotonous Cadence, like that used by Milton & Shakespeare« in order to be able to incorporate new material. As he continues in the introductory section of his later work *Jerusalem*:

I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both of cadences & number of syllables. Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place; the terrible numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild & gentle for the mild & gentle parts, and the prosaic for inferior parts; all are necessary to each other.

(*Jerusalem*, plate 3)

These dissimilarities on the linguistic level reflect other differences in the two texts.

Contrareities in the form and execution of *Paradise Lost* and *The Four Zoas* stem from broader assumptions, occurrences and conceptions of world and art. These have been illustrated in the previous section to which we would like to add their respective treatment of human love. In book IV of *Paradise Lost* the passage »Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source...« (750—775) eulogizes connubial love. If we briefly scan the lines it will be possible to point out some of the basic values held by the Puritan poet. In the matrimonial state Milton discerns the curbing of lust (»By thee adulterous lust was driven from men« (753), and the setting up of relations that are requisite for civic life (»Relations dear, and all the charities/ Of father, son, and brother first were known« (756—7), by the help of which man rightly assumes his position of dominion over the animal kingdom. Norms, ordinances, laws, rules, in one word, order, are Milton's shibboleths. (The organization of the angels into phalanxes (V, VI), i. e. even the powers of chaos espouse rank and order, corroborates this judgement). Contrary to this, Blake advocates freedom, the breakup of rigid authority, might be even made out to be, in clear opposition to Milton, a pleader for free love. Let us quote two proverbs from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that will attest to this assessment: »Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion« and »You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough« (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, VIII, 1; IX, 7). Whereas the Miltonic universe is hierarchially stratified, Blake's earth and hell are in dynamic turmoil, uncurtailed energy subverting all imposition of authority. On another level of investigation, it can be argued that baroque elaborateness assails Latin, classical clarity. Milton must have had a pre-wrought plan for his poem, the story crystal clear (elaborated by tradition), the frame awaiting to be bodied forth. On the other hand, Blake wrote spasmodically, starting, than breaking off to pick up the strands at the other end, returning again and again to an abandoned image or movement. Would it be acceptable to say that what ultimately differentiates the two masters is the difference

between reason and energy of which both of them wrote in such a grand fashion.

IV

In *The Death of Tragedy* George Steiner appraises Milton in a fashion which is very applicable to the problematic at hand. Pointing out the significance to literature of a common belief shared by reader and artist, he writes:

But the pact was broken during the splintering of the ancient hierarchic world image. Milton was the last major poet to assume the total relevance of classic and Christian mythology... After Milton the mythology of animate creation and the nearly tangible awareness of a continuity between the human and the divine order — that sense of a relationship between the rim private experience and the hub of the great wheel of being — lose their hold over intellectual life.¹⁵

Steiner's judgement has the utmost pertinence to our study, although we would qualify the »relevance of classic« mythology to *Paradise Lost*. Remaining within the same frame of argument, it can be argued that Blake was victimized by the breakup of the »hierarchic world image«. Christian mythology gave Milton the awareness and certainty of the contiguity of the human and divine order, whereas Blake sought to storm heaven and what are his works but human artefacts confronting a mute universe.

Joseph Campbell, exploring the distinction between »traditional« and »creative« mythology, writes:

In the context of a traditional mythology, the symbols are presented in socially maintained rites, through which the individual is required to experience, or will pretend to have experienced certain insights, sentiments, and commitments. In what I am calling »creative« mythology, on the other hand, this order is reversed: the individual has had an experience of his own... which he seeks to communicate through signs.¹⁶

It is hoped that the sketchy analysis of *Paradise Lost* and *Four Zoas* presented above has shown Milton to partake of traditional mythology. According to Campbell's criteria, it is reasonable to contend that Blake's world is one in which »all norms are in flux, so that the individual is thrown, willy-nilly, back upon himself«. ¹⁷ This is compensated for by the ability of the individual to create his own myth »through an intelligent »making use« not of one mythology only but of all the dead and

¹⁵ George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, Faber and Faber, London, 1978, p. 320.

¹⁶ Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*, A Canador Book, London, 1974, p. 4.

¹⁷ Joseph Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 677.

set-fast symbolologies of the past.«¹⁸ Our analysis has shown this to have been one of Blake's strategies in writing *The Four Zoas*.

The Jungian exposition of symbol-formation and the way it relates to collective religious systems and to individually created symbols approximates Campbell's position and is of interest in the present argument. Jung believes that the Christian epoch did a great deal in smothering the individual creation of symbols. It logically follows that once Christianity slackens its hold over consciousness, individual man will resume to create his own systems.¹⁹ Jung is of the opinion that the symbols of collective religion (Christianity in this case) suffice for most men (Milton would be numbered among them). A number of individuals are not content with collective religious systems (Blake being the case in point) and they disjoin themselves from it, blazing out a path for themselves.²⁰ For Milton Christian myths were effective enough for him to come to terms with self, his time, the universe. Individually created mythologies are not sanctioned by a broader consensus. Traditional symbols/myths are thought to have been worn threadbare and new ones are invented. In the case of Blake, there is not only the gushing forth, from the subconscious, of novel images and symbols, but the poet reassimilates myths and unorthodox beliefs that had been ostracized by official Christian dogma. Blake's text is incendiary to the extent that, in affiliating itself with what is excluded, it undermines, questions, destabilizes. A corollary of this strategy is the revisionist reading Blake gives of Milton's poetry in his *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: »The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it« (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plates 5—6)

In Arthur O. Lovejoy's evaluation of the break in occidental thought that is represented by Romanticism, there are strong corroborations for the argument that has been followed in the preceding pages. Referring to Milton's work, Lovejoy writes that the »notion of a hierarchial scale of nature is, indeed, not lacking, and the law of continuity is clearly expressed«,²⁰ so that there is no doubt that Milton is of the company of men who »through the Middle Ages and down to the late eighteenth century« accepted

the conception of the universe as a »Great Chain of Being«, composed of an immense, or... infinite, number of limbs ranging in hierarchial order from the meagrest kind of existents, which barely escape non-existence, through »every possible« grade up to the *ens perfectissimum*.²²

¹⁸ Joseph Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 677.

¹⁹ K. G. Jung, *Odabrana Dela*, Matica Srpska, 1978, knjiga prva, *Dinamika Nesvesnog*, p. 122.

²⁰ K. G. Jung, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

²¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1982, p. 164.

²² Arthur O. Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

However, a contrary principle, which advocated the counter-belief that «diversity itself is of the essence of excellence»²³ and which we have come to call Romanticism, subverted the domination of this conception of Being:

That change, in short, has consisted in the substitution of what may be called diversitarianism for uniformitarianism as the ruling preconception in most of the normative provinces of thought.²⁴

In our interpretation of *The Four Zoas* we have attempted to show Blake as continually transcending finitude, ravening for a plenitude outside the given/established, the accepted system. Let us conclude our analysis by saying that the comparative assessment of Milton and Blake attempted here, has documented the demise of one conception of the world and its paradigmatic artistic embodiment, and the onset of a counter-movement which was the dominant expression of the nineteenth century and is still highly visible on the agenda in our discourses upon culture and art.

Stipe Grgas: VISION AND TECHNIQUE IN »PARADISE LOST« AND »THE FOUR ZOAES«

S a ž e t a k

U članku se Miltonu i Blakeu pristupa kao predstavnicima onoga što bismo mogli nazvati vizionarskom tradicijom u engleskom pjesništvu. Usredotočujući se na djela *Izgubljeni Raj* i *Četiri Zoaesa* učinjen je pokušaj da se: prvo, dadu obrisi motiva koje otjelovljuju ove tekstovi i drugo, da se naznače njihove različenosti. Nakon nekoliko opaski o tome što se podrazumijeva terminom «vizionarsko» dat je sažet prikaz pjesama. Mada oba teksta imaju identično ishodište, i najpovršnije čitanje razotkriva odlučne divergencije. U radu se analizira sljedećih pet strukturalnih razmimoilaženja: (i) dok Milton primjenjuje linearnu, determinističku organizaciju epizoda, kod Blakea je uočljiv njihov cikličan, zamjenljiv karakter, (ii) selektivno i integrativno korištenje materijala, (iii) različite karakterizacije protagonista, (iv) razlike kod predstavljanja prostora/daljine i (v) razlike uočljive u jezičnom sloju. Oslanjajući se na određene sudove George Steinera, Joseph Campbella i Arthur O. Lovejoya, predlaže se da se ove razlike objasne promijenjenom slikom svijeta, različitošću psiholoških tipova i nastajanjem jedne nove stilske formacije (romantizam).

²³ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

²⁴ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 194