

VISIONS2011:
[RE]SOLVING THE REBUS OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S *VISIONS OF THE*
DAUGHTERS OF ALBION

by

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Abstract

Lost-and-found purity is central to William Blake's illuminated book *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In *Visions*, Blake's central character Oothoon embraces the otherness of her sexual desires, flies off to be with her lover Theotormon, but not before being brutally raped and impregnated by Bromion. The assault leads to Theotormon's refusal to be with Oothoon because of her putatively compromised state. Today, in the shadow of queer conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and virginity, how do we understand Blake's narrative of loss and rejection, of injurious force and sexual violence? This thesis lays the critical groundwork for a queer reading of the text that is more than critical – i.e. that is a re-visioning of the text's details, and is re-writing of its narrative premise.

Through unconventional scholarly approaches, this thesis tackles issues of identity in Blake's *Visions* from three separate vanguards that each further break open the heuristic and speculative possibilities in Blake's work. Approaching Blake's *Visions* from a Numerological perspective via deconstructing the central characters' names and explicating the poem through their respective algorithms, the first section examines eighteenth century conceptions of the soul and its place within literature through locating and recognizing the souls of Blake's poetry of lost souls. Considering sexual essentiality and the potential recovering of virginity, the second section reads *Visions* from the vantage of Schizosexuality (a fourth component to the hetero-/homo-/bisexual paradigm) to liberate Oothoon from both literal and metaphorical chains. From these critical approaches of Numerology and Schizosexuality, the thesis concludes with a visual book. Through inverting the gender axes of the love triangle central to Blake's *Visions*, the visual book queerly re-visions *Visions* by following a male-Oothoon (Oathe13) flying off to be with his male lover (a homo-oriented Theotormon – Zucchicarro34) but not before being accosted by a female-Bromion (Aquabolt21). The critical chapters together with the visual book complete this thesis' queer re-vision of Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1:	
Numerological Interpenetrations in Blake's <i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	11
Chapter 2:	
Schizosexuality and Blake's <i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	38
Visual Book:	
<i>Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air</i>	62
Figures	140
Bibliography	144

Visions²⁰¹¹:
[Re]solving the Rebus of William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*
Introduction

"Oothoon needs a further audience beyond what the poem can provide within its own boundaries."

– Caroline Jackson-Houlston ("Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*
and Romantic Literary Treatments of Rape" 161)

"[T]he prerogative of any artist (and a prerogative which Blake enjoyed to the full) is to grapple with the body of [the] text, to spawn monstrous offspring if necessary."

– Jason Whittaker ("Blake and Contemporary Queer Art" 96)

Lost and found purity is central to William Blake's illuminated book *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In *Visions*, Blake's central character Oothoon embraces the otherness of her own sexual desires, flies off to be with her lover Theotormon, but not before being brutally raped and impregnated by Bromion. The assault leads to Theotormon's refusal to be with Oothoon because of her putatively compromised state. Today, in the shadow of queer conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and virginity, how do we understand Blake's narrative of loss and rejection, of injurious force and sexual violence?

My objective in this thesis is to lay the critical groundwork for a queer reading of the text that is more than critical – i.e. that is a re-visioning of the text's details, and is a re-writing of its narrative premise. There is a clear case within the text of *Visions* for reading the poem queerly, for, as Bethan Stevens, in her essay "'Woes &...sighs': Fantasies of Slavery in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*," argues, the sighs that the Daughters of Albion "eccho back [to Oothoon]" after they "hear [Oothoon's] woes" in

the conclusion of the poem (Blake, *Visions* 11:13) are, indeed, “expression[s] of... sympathy, but they also contain [a] desiring element” (Stevens 142), for sighs are “all the more libidinized for being non-verbal” (ibid). Same-sex desire among women lights up the text, and my thesis follows this route as well as turns in a different direction in focussing, too, on homoeroticism between men. For example, I also see the rape as a homoerotic, male-male rape through reading it patriarchally as Bromion’s raping of Theotormon’s property. As well, I see a homoerotic electricity in Bromion’s and Theotormon’s gazes as “the eyes of the envier” that mirror the same-sex longing through the Daughters’ echoing of Oothoon’s sighs (Blake, *Visions* 7:11).

This echoing of the sighs, too, interests me for my queer reading of Blake’s *Visions* both with the sexual connotations and without them. Why do the Daughters “eccho back [Oothoon’s] sighs” not once, not twice, but three times (5:20; 8:2; 11:13)? Is it, as Stevens remarks, for erotic reasons? Or is there something else at work here? James King, in his book *William Blake: His Life*, argues that “[the] choral figures [of the Daughters of Albion] have no visions [at all]” (94) because Oothoon’s plights make them unhappy, and “all they do... is [echo back to her]” (ibid). Blake titles this poem to be the “visions” of these Daughters, yet they show us nothing and only parrot back to us the narrative as Oothoon cries it. They *tell*, but do they understand? They are not, as King says, a clever chorus, and we should not trust them. I do not trust them. In my thesis, I explore this distrust through evaluating the prescribed notions of optimism at its conclusion – i.e. trying to find that glimmer hope. Helen Bruder, in her book *William*

Blake and the Daughters of Albion, suggests that “[a]fter reading *Visions* we might well ask, is there *no* hope in store?” (83 – emphasis original). She goes on to write that “a more apt way to end the discussion, than conjuring false signs of optimism, is to look in detail at precisely why Oothoon fails” (ibid). But does she fail? I disagree with Bruder’s premise of failure here completely because, as the echoes ensue past Blake’s etching of “The End” on his final plate of *Visions*, the poem does not end, and, therefore, the discussion cannot. I add to the discussion that, while not a complete victory *per se*, Oothoon’s circumstances are not a complete failure either, for she is not a “straight” (but a “queer”) sexual being. For instance, in addition to wanting an orgy of women (with or without the potential for penetration), Oothoon craves to fornicate with anything that is beautiful (including the sun!), for, as Oothoon says, “If in the morning sun I find [beauty]: there my eyes are fix’d / In happy copulation” (9:22-10:1). Literally anything (not just penises, breasts, vaginas, and the intercourse of all three) stroke Oothoon’s libido in her post-virginal condition.

The issue of virginity, furthermore, fascinates me because if Bromion had not raped and allegedly perverted Oothoon’s purity (or, rather, if Oothoon had not lost her virginity), her plight would never have occurred. The rape did happen, though: her nature was sullied, and her dilemma did transpire. But if she could undo it, would Theotormon be with her? Would *Visions*, in a sense, resolve itself? The historicity of virginity as an idea becomes accentuated when paired with the discourse in Blake’s 1793 culture. Bruder shows that, discursively, “some of the signs Blake was compelled to employ [such as

virgin and whore] compromise the progressive aspects of [his] text” (84). Bruder seems to be suggesting that Theotormon is *not*, in fact, condemning Oothoon, but that the language of the poem (the only linguistic operations available to Blake) *is*. I am arguing, however, that today, after over two-hundred years of audiences reading Blake’s *Visions* in traditional and in queer/gendered manners, we now have the rhetoric, essentially, to liberate Oothoon.

Queer and gendered readings of *Visions* bring out its hidden homoeroticism, uncertainty of “optimism” in the ending, and ambiguity on the permanency of virginity. Yet, for the purposes of my thesis, it is the work of Tilottama Rajan (a decidedly not-queer theorist) that ends up being the most instructive. In her book *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice*, Rajan argues that Blake works in “reference to future readers [with future] readings [of his work] whose content Blake could not have anticipated but whose possibility he allows for at the level of form” (234). By this, she means that Blake’s creative process (one of an intertextuality through which he rewrites the cultural texts of history and society rather than using the literary texts of his period as the grounds for appropriation) invites interventions from readers because there are possibilities in his text, lodged in its form, that are left in suspension. Blake writes in a way that is not period/time specific because he, in producing his oeuvre, does not engage with his present but with “our” past(s) as well as with “our” future(s). Rajan says that Blake’s texts function “in relation to previous and future history,” and incorporate interpretations from audiences of both histories, because

the pointed ambivalence of his texts effectively promotes retrograde readings as well as proactive postulations (ibid).

Looking back, then, at concepts of gender, sexuality, and virginity in light of Rajan's hermeneutic rather than queer/gendered approach, I now situate and identify myself as one of those "future readers" whom Blake could not have anticipated and yet for whom he creates an opening. Queer and gendered readings of *Visions* are illuminating up to a point, but they shrink away from the next step. There is another way to read *Visions* queerly, and it is one that emerges from the "first" queer reading (the "first" being the critical analysis that queer theory and critical practice energizes). The next step, the "second" way to read *Visions* queerly, is to re-do Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* – i.e. to re-vision and re-perform it in a queer fashion.

I have, then, structured my thesis in two simultaneous parts: 1) a critical analysis of the poem that leads to the visual book; and 2) the visual book itself, queerly re-visioning Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, that is a contemporary, creative interpretation. My visual book mirrors Blake's illuminated book in that I have combined creative writing with studio artwork to create one whole. The artistic components to this visual book are photographic documentations of performances to the camera that illustrate the events of my "new" narrative of Blake's *Visions*. In order to queer further my interpretation of this poem, I have developed the structure of the narrative to fit less typically in the twenty-first century. In other words, I asked myself how would the narrative of this poem read today if the gender axes of the love triangle central to it were

inverted? Like what would that look, and how (if at all) would it suggest at/promote a “new” resolution? The narrative of my visual book follows a male-Oothoon (Oathe13) flying off to be with his male lover (a homo-oriented Theotormon – Zucchicarro34) but not before being “raped” by a female-Bromion (Aquabolt21). I am deliberately using the verb “to rape” here ironically because my inversion of the gender roles creates an interesting dynamic for the rape in *Visions* – would a female-Bromion rape? Would she be capable of it?

Asked this very question, Georgia Dimitrakopoulou answered, “No,” and maintains that “men rape; women seduce.” However, if rape is physical (“man’s” realm) and seduction mental (“woman’s” realm), then seduction is nothing more than psychological rape. For my thesis, the psychological elements of sex and sexuality are vital. Rajan reads the poem as “continu[ing] the rape [of Oothoon past line 17 where it occurs] by dramatizing the rendering apart of Oothoon’s psyche,” yet if her psychology were, indeed, shattering, a reconfiguration of it would save her (234). For example, if someone can systematically comprehend that moving from heterosexuality and into homosexuality (or vice versa, for that matter) determines that one has yet to experience [hetero- or homo-]sex, one can, indeed, become a virgin again for a new lover. Oothoon, unfortunately, in her love cannot (or can she?) as Theotormon’s gender matches Bromion’s; Oathe13, however, can, as his gender is opposite of Aquabolt21’s.

The two pieces (critical and creative, respectively) grew both together and separately as I embarked upon this project. It very much was a case of not having been

able to complete one without having completed the other, and, as that type of project is a puzzle in itself to complete, the two did, as I said, grow both together and separately with each leading to, while also coming out of, the other. Initially, the critical analysis was to focus on the gender, sexuality, and virginity, yet upon becoming the characters (both textually and visually) in recreating *Visions* for the twenty-first century and wholly forcing myself to become part of Blake's poem, I discovered more about it than just that which I had initially set for myself to discover. Ultimately, I discovered a hidden path of Numerological orientations in Blake's character naming and artistry in *Visions* as well as a newfound sexuality (schizosexuality) that explains and aims to solve the dilemma of gender, sexuality, and virginity in this poem. My critical chapters, then, each deal with one of these theories (Numerology in Blake and Schizosexuality in Blake, respectively) while my visual book (*Visions²⁰¹¹: Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air*) completes my queer re-vision of Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Visions²⁰¹¹:
[Re]solving the Rebus of William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*
Chapter 1

A Rose by any Other Word Would Cease to Be:
Numerological Interpenetrations in Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*

"Your name holds a great many keys to your individuality."

– Alan Oken (*Numerology: Demystified* 90)

"What's in a name?"

– Juliet Capulet (William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* 2:2:43)

In Robert Denham's essay "Northrop Frye's 'Kook Books' and the Esoteric Tradition," Denham explores Frye's notebooks to discover the speculative interests of Northrop Frye. Denham writes that "[t]he kook books themselves include a group of highly speculative, somewhat zany, and often amusingly eccentric books that Frye was attracted to" (333), and while none of these "kook books" are Blake's books, Frye writes that "I wanted to read every kooky book in the world as a background for Blake" (qtd. in Denham 331). Denham notes that "[p]erhaps a more likely source of Frye's interest is numerology" (338), and he then tracks numerological speculations through Frye's notebooks (338-40) with multiple "Blake sightings," as Jason Whittaker would put it (*Zoamorphosis: The Blake 2.0 Blog*). Neither Frye, in the quotations of his texts that Denham gives us, nor Denham himself, in his commentaries on said quotations, muse on Blake and numerology together so much as reveal that it is, indeed, there.

Sheila Spector, in her essay "A Numerological Analysis of *Jerusalem*," writes that "[t]he fact that Blake...apparently considered number at least as significant as the more

conventional formal considerations associated with content suggests that in his last prophecy [*Jerusalem*], Blake was guided to some degree, at any rate, by some form of *gematria*” (327-8). She defines for us *gematria* as “the generic term for a complex system of number-based hermeneutics [based on principles by which letters are used to signify numbers]” (328). In a further explanation of *gematria*, and its cultural and literary connections, Spector writes,

Not restricted to Jewish exegetes, *gematria* was also exploited by Christians who used numerical formulæ to demonstrate the Divinity of Christ. In the fifteenth century, Pico della Mirandola used *gematria* simultaneously to validate both Christianity as a religion and Kabbalism as an exegetical tool. The techniques were also secularized, most notably by Dante whose *Divine Comedy* is structured according to a pattern developed around the number 3, numerologically, the Trinity, the earthly perfection embodied by Christ. In addition to *terza rima*, the three-line stanza form, there are three books, each containing thirty-three cantos, which together make ninety-nine, and with the extra one (unity of God) in the *Inferno*, the total is one hundred (ten squared). (328)

From Blake’s illustrations of Dante’s *Inferno*, we know that he was familiar with Dante’s work (which, as Spector shows, has a numerological structure). Please note that for the sake of pragmatism in this chapter, I will refer to the relationship of numbers and letters with the umbrella term *numerology*¹ rather than with the simultaneously sub- and sibling categories *arithmancy*² and *gematria*³.

Historically, though, it is difficult to dictate definitively quite when Blake would have studied Dante. Morris Eaves, Robert N. Essick, and Joseph Viscomi, on their

¹ *Numerology* is “the occult and metaphysical science of numbers[;] the path to understanding” (Oken 9).

² *Arithmancy* is “[d]ivination by numbers” (*OED*).

³ The *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* defines *gematria* slightly differently from Spector, and defines it as the “[u]se and study of hidden meanings through numbers, especially the numerical equivalence of letters.”

website *The William Blake Archive*, note that “Blake *probably* [emphasis mine] began work on the drawings [for *Inferno*] by the fall of 1824,” but that there are some of “Blake’s verbal criticisms of Dante found in his c. 1800 annotations to Henry Boyd’s translation of *The Inferno*.” Spector’s case, then, for Blake’s numerological orientation in his *Jerusalem* (1804 – c. 1820) is precisely sound (that is, his having been, speculatively, influenced by Dante), yet how far back, temporally, are we logically able to push numerological influences on Blake? Eaves et al. note on the *Archive* that the “[d]ates are the probable dates of composition,” so, aligned with Blake’s critical annotations of Dante *circa* 1800 (not 1800 itself), we may soundly conjecture that numerological ideas potentially guided Blake in his pre-1800 – and pre-Dante (as we can definitively discern) – days of production. Indeed, Spector, in her two-volume work on Blake and Kabbalism⁴ (*“Glorious Incomprehensible”: The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Language* and *“Wonders Divine”: The Development of Blake’s Kabbalistic Myth*) explores “the deeper, more fundamental question of how a knowledge of Kabbalism might help reveal Blake’s creative consciousness as it evolved from his earliest experiments with illuminated printing through the final prophecy, *Jerusalem*” (*Myth* 11).

Writing on the historical development of Kabbalism toward its status in Blake’s time, Spector tracks that “[i]n its earliest manifestations, Christian Kabbalism revolved around the attempts of thirteenth-century Jewish converts, like Abner of Burgos and Paul de Heredia, to exploit techniques of *Gematria*, kabbalistic numerology, to buttress their

⁴ Spector describes *Kabbalism* as “a unique combination of three distinct elements: esotericism, mysticism, and theosophy,” and she further notes that “Kabbalism has historically been the special domain of an intellectual elite” (*Myth* 11).

choice to become Christian” (*Myth* 29). She further records that “[t]hese explanations proved so successful that by the fifteen century, Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) felt confident in declaring Kabbalism a primary method for demonstrating the divinity of Christ” (ibid), and then, “[d]uring [the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century], Christian centers of kabbalistic activity relocated northward from Italy and France to Germany and England” (ibid 30). Spector finally notes, allowing for Kabbalistic influences on Blake, that “[t]his [relocationary] trend extended well into the eighteenth century” (ibid). Since Kabbalists “use *gematria*” (Spector, *Language* 30) and believe that the letters of the alphabet correspond with their numerical equivalents so that “numbers and letters become interchangeable, and words with the same numerological values can be substituted for each other” (ibid 31), and since there were centres of Kabbalistic activity already firmly established in England by Blake’s time, this culture of Kabbalism and Numerology was, indeed, in the air Blake breathed, but the climate of both it and other esoteric traditions, as Kathleen Raine notes in her book *Blake and the New Age*, was “not accepted by the dominant culture as knowledge at all” (15). Blake, as Frye tells us in his *Words with Power*, “was generally assumed to be mad in his day [i.e. *not accepted by the dominant culture*],” (59); however, Spector notes that “[b]y the time Blake worked on *Jerusalem*, his use of language had become virtually Kabbalistic” (*Language* 32). She is suggesting that, regardless of the texts he was illustrating, he was, personally and intimately, developing his own esoteric awareness throughout his life.

Spector writes that “Blake’s myth gradually evolved from a conventional structure, predicated on the Miltonic myth of *Paradise Lost*, into a fully conceived kabbalistic format,” (*Myth* 35) and that “[the] comments, being articulated as they are, in the last of Blake’s major prophecies, reflect not a consistent attitude Blake retained throughout his lifetime, but the culmination of a forty-year intellectual process begun in the mid 1780s, and continuing until his death in 1827” (*ibid*). This suggests, at least, and rather strongly at that, too, that the blueprints were, indeed, there in his mind in 1793 when he was working on his *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Specifically in reference to *Visions* – which Spector dubs a “pre-mythic” work in Blake’s entire mythology (*ibid* 58 – emphasis original) – she also writes that Blake’s “linguistic experimentation” (*Language* 79) dominates *Visions* in which “[he] directly confronts the connection between language and the mind” (*ibid* 80). Whittaker believes “that Blake did not have any interest whatsoever in any form of occult system *qua* system” (“Zoamorphosis”), and Spector explicitly writes that “there is almost no evidence at this point [i.e. in 2001 when she is writing on Blake and Kabbalah] to indicate that Blake deliberately intended to introduce Kabbalism into his work” (*Myth* 58). Furthermore, in her analyses of Blake and Kabbalism, she does not explore specific numerological exegeses. Yet, if “[t]he digits on which our system of numbers is based, [*sic*] are symbols of man’s unfolding consciousness” (Taylor, *Numerology Made Plain* 32), and if “[Blake] aimed at awakening us to a true and direct knowledge of ourselves” (Middleton Murray, “A Note on William Blake’s *Visions* 15), then applying an interpenetrative scaffolding of numerology

(sublimated through Kabbalism) to his text is a warranted stricture through which to [en]vision his *Visions*. In this chapter, I am (quite literally) taking a page from Frye's book in attempting to understand Blake through "kook books" and eclectic sources, and, in doing so, I will discuss the nominal numerology of Blake's central characters in his *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (Oothoon, Bromion, and Theotormon) to show the roots of Blake's perfection in his mythopoeia.

Alan Oken, in his book *Numerology: Demystified*, notes that "[n]umerology is to traditional mathematics what psychology is to anatomy" (9). He further explains that "[m]athematics, like anatomy, speaks about our physical universe, its nature, structure, dimensions, and purpose," (ibid) and that "[n]umerology and psychology address the less tangible aspects of existence" (ibid). Considering this dichotomy, and analogously applying it to identificatory monikers, names have both a physical existence – i.e. the linguistic/lettered compositions (the skeleton, muscle, and flesh to names in the visible realm) – as well as a less tangible existence – i.e. the numerological compositions (the metaphysical "genetics" to names in the invisible realm). Oken states that "numerology speaks about the hidden world contained within the simplest of numbers" (ibid), and Spector writes that the purpose of linguistic manipulations such as numerological formulæ "is to remove the outer husk or shell in order to reveal the divine essence of language" (*Language* 30). In this manner, then, the numerological elements to names reveal a glimpse into the soul of the named. Pulling this notion into a new reading of

Blake's *Visions*, we can glimpse into his characters' souls and peel back a further layer of their nominal identities to understand further their nominal constructions.

In analysing names using numbers, Ariel Yvon Taylor, in his book *Numerology Made Plain: The Science of Names and Numbers and the Law of Vibration*, directs one, in employing the numerical alphabet table (Figure 1), to "attach the number value of each letter [in the name]" (40), and then reduce "[a]ll double numbers...to single numbers by the addition of their digits" (41). In "[a]ttaching numbers to the [twenty-six] letters of the alphabet in the order of sequence, we find that eventually each one comes under the influence of one of the nine digits" (38). Although Taylor does discuss in detail the "divine essence" (as Spector would call it) of each of the nine digits, I will only discuss in this chapter those three numerals that are the numerological sublimations of the numerical spellings of "Oothoon," "Bromion," and "Theotormon" (Figures 2, 3, and 4, respectively). As this numerological rendering reveals, the digit with which Oothoon's character resonates is the number three, the digit with which Bromion's character resonates is the number five, and the digit with which Theotormon's character resonates is the number eight.

Taylor, in his book on Numerology, writes that the number three (Oothoon's number) represents "the Earth" (32). Eaves et al., in their Introduction to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, note that "the emphasis is on the classical elements – earth, air, fire, and water," (234) and that "[t]he contentions among the characters suggest elemental conflicts since both the text and the designs associate Bromion with air and fire,

Theotormon with air and water, and Oothoon with all four elements” (ibid). As Oothoon represents all four elements, she does not represent the Earth as a metaphor – i.e. the element of Earth – but Earth as a ‘pataphor⁵ – i.e. the *collection* of the elements that make the idea of Earth as a whole. Oothoon is, indeed, the Earth, and even though Theotormon physically binds her, she is, as S. Foster Damon notes in his *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, “the ideal of physical freedom,” just in a more ‘pataphysical sense (308).

In a further exploration of the number three, Taylor writes that three is “a child of nature [who] knows how to promote [its] own personal ambitions” (54). As “a child of nature,” Oothoon gives birth to herself (in *Visions*) out of the natural elements of Leutha’s vale and the bright Marygold therein (4:5) as she plucks the flower of Leutha’s vale (3:5; 4:11) and “put thee here to glow between my breasts” (4:12), thus completing her “whole soul” (4:13). And she does “promote [her] own personal ambitions,” too, as she declares that she is “Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears / If in the morning sun I find it; there my eyes are fix’d / In happy copulation” (9:22-10:1). Some other aspects to the number three’s “essence” are sensuality, importance, and egotism (Taylor 54).

Oothoon’s sensuality is evident all throughout the poem, but particularly sensual snippets are her “trembl[ings] in [her] virgin fears” (3:3), the “incessant writhing[s of] her soft snowy limbs” (5:12), and her musings on “The self enjoyings of self denial” (10:9); her

⁵ Christian Bök, in his book *Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science*, notes that “[p]ataphysics represents a supplement to metaphysics, accenting it, then replacing it, in order to create a philosophic alternative to rationalism” (3). Whereas a *metaphor* (from metaphysics) describes one level of separation from reality, a *pataphor* (from ‘pataphysics) would describe two levels of separation from reality (essentially, a metaphor of the metaphysical, or a hyperinflated metaphor).

declaration, “I loved Theotormon / And I was not ashamed” (3:1-2) as well as her apostrophe to Urizen beginning on Plate 8 invoke her importance; and she hints at her egotism in her multiple affirmations (rather than defenses) of her purity (5:28; 6:15, 20) and discovers it full on in her overall dominance of the poem.

Oken, then, in his book on Numerology, writes of the number three as being “involved in the development of an active intelligence, use of information, and creation of [one’s] communication skills” (18). This idea here of developing intelligence and creating communication skills is quite interesting and apt in regards to Oothoon because, after the rape, “Oothoon weeps not. she cannot weep! her tears are locked up; / But she can howl” (5:11-2), and though she “[persuades Theotormon] in vain” (5:22), she is, throughout the poem, developing her persuasive panache as she moves from the gruesome gambit of having Theotormon’s Eagles rend her “defiled bosom” (5:15) to conceiving to “catch for [him] girls of mild silver, or of furious gold” (10:24) and “lie beside him on a bank & view their wanton play / In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon” (10:25-6). From initially losing her voice, she struggles with its re-attainment post-howling to achieve her “active intelligence” in conjunction with Theotormon (who will not allow her any such privilege – see discussion below of the number eight).

Oken also notes that “[Number Threes] like to move their ideas out into the world,” and this is present with every attempt Oothoon makes at reconciliation with Theotormon (18). Spector even writes that “[w]ere [Oothoon] able to arouse Theotormon’s dormant visionary faculty, then he might be persuaded to unbind the others

and the three might be freed of their mental chains” (*Myth* 55). She further notes that “[a]s with Milton, all depends on the ‘elect,’ the one chosen from before birth to reveal the truth” (ibid). Alternatively, as Taylor words it regarding number threes, “[they always stand] for the Trinity reflected in creation” (33).

The number five, then, Bromion’s number, “is given the freedom of will to observe, experience and subdue the earth, yet [it] must be continually alert if [it] wishes to maintain [its] dominion and not reverse [its] powers” (Taylor 33). Since Oothoon (by way of the number three) *is* the Earth, Bromion is granted licence to “observe, experience and subdue [Oothoon]” – he even announces that Oothoon’s soft plains are his (4:20), and he catches Oothoon’s “virgin joy, / And brand[s] it with the name of whore [to] sell it in the night” (9:11-12). Dennis Welch, in his article “Essence, Gender, Race: William Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*,” notes that “Bromion is a slave trader, an explorer and exploiter, who acknowledges no essential or intrinsic value in anything – except that which he can see, taste, touch, buy or sell” (115). In this manner, then, Bromion’s numerological digit/character fits the description generally as well as in direct relation to Oothoon.

However, he does not remain “continually alert.” He distracts himself with his grandiose proclamation/verbal masturbation that “Stampt with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun; / They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge: / Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent” (4:21-3). As Taylor notes that fives must remain “continually alert if [they] are to maintain [their] dominion,” this speech does not

herald the *success* of Bromion's tyranny but a *lapse* of it: in his self-enjoyings of self-stroking, he loses focus as he loses control. The storms, then (perhaps ejaculated from Bromion's speech itself), "rent Theotormons limbs" (5:3), and he binds Oothoon and Bromion "back to back in Bromions caves" (5:5). Theotormon effectively reverses Bromion's powers in his inconstant vigilance, and Bromion loses his dominion over Oothoon by becoming an equal to her in chains rather than a chainless oppressor above her.

Five also represents a man who is "conscious of all his creative powers and yet who in his urge to use them, often burns his [five] fingers" (Taylor 33). The extent of these "creative powers," the *urging* for their use, and the finger-burning ensuing from their misuse is extremely relevant to Bromion's character through his (arguable) Greek naming and Blake's in-poem derivative of their effects. Picking up on Nelson Hilton before them, Eaves et al. write that "Bromion means 'roarer' or 'thunderer' in Greek" (Introduction 230), and Georgia Dimitrakapoulou, in her paper "Thel and Oothoon: Beauty and Self-Destruction," says that "*broma*, in Greek, means 'dirt,' meaning that Bromion is a *dirty* person," and she continues to say that "Oothoon is raped, and the dirt [from Bromion] enters her body."⁶ As Bromion roars that Oothoon must "protect the

⁶ From these nominal elements of Bromion's name (from Hilton, Eaves et al., and Dimitrakapoulou) that suggest at "roarer," "thunderer," and "dirt," I arrive at the lettered half of my female-Bromion character's name – i.e. "Aquabolt." Taking these notions of noise, storms, and uncleanness, I spliced with Latin word for water (*aqua*) with the suffix *-bolt* from *lightningbolt* (akin to the *thunder*) to create the moniker *Aquabolt*. In my visual book, I foreshadow this through Raymond's musing while completing the blood donation questionnaire as he recalls that "for a five year stretch in his preteen years he had a love affair with pool jets [i.e. *bolts* of *water* that are at once (quasi)phallic and (quasi)vaginal]" (15). Initially in naming my female-Bromion, I had wanted to pair the Greek for *water* with *-bolt* (as scholars look toward the Grecian roots in discerning Bromion's nominal characteristics), yet the prefix *hyrdo-* (from the Greek *hudor*), when joined with *-bolt* (forming the name *Hydrobolt*), I found to be too strongly masculine as name. The Latin

child / Of Bromions rage, that Oothoon shall put forth in nine moons time,” the dirt entering Oothoon not only sullies *her* body but, effectively, makes the baby, him- or herself, filth (5:1-2). Drawing back to Bromion’s position as slaveholder (or his dominion over Earth/Oothoon), Welch writes that “when Bromion declares that he has impregnated Oothoon, he suggests that her increased market value is a main focus of his claim on her” (116). Five, even more so now, is “subdu[ing] the [E/e]arth.” What is particularly interesting, though, about this particular passage of *Visions* is that it is Bromion, the father, who announces Oothoon’s pregnancy immediately following his rape of her (not Oothoon, the mother, herself). Either he has unshakeable faith in his semen, or he is, in fact, “conscious of *all* his creative powers.” Yet these powers are unavoidably components of the powers that Theotormon reverses in binding Bromion to Oothoon in Bromion’s haste to employ them. Burned indeed.

In a further exploration of the number five, Taylor writes that five “is strongly sexed,” and that, furthermore, it is “[d]ominated by sex, here today and gone tomorrow, always looking for greener pastures, absolutely unreliable, the destroyer of homes, peace and pleasure for selfish gratification” (56). This is clearly Bromion *without* any textual extrapolation, yet the poetical and critical discourses amplify these factors even more. Bromion himself speaks of “[gratifying] senses unknown” (7:15) and of

trees beasts and birds unknown:
 Unknown, not unperceived, spread in the infinite microscope,
 In places yet unvisited by the voyager. and in worlds
 Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown. (6:15-18)

for water is more feminine than the Greek.

Damon notes that “[t]he microscope has revealed other worlds, and [Bromion] begins to wonder about possibilities of life other than those we try to live by” (60), and Oken writes that “Five is an adventurer *in search of other lands*” (22-3 – emphasis added). Speaking directly to the notion of gratification, Spector writes that “[Bromion] responds *only* to physical needs that, *once gratified*, require *no more thought*,” and that “[a]s far as he is concerned, *things exist solely to provide him pleasure*” (*Myth* 54 – emphases added). Harking back to Taylor’s quotation – and, indeed, to Welch’s two, too – what Bromion precisely does is destroy Oothoon and Theotormon’s home, peace, and pleasure all for his own selfish ends.

Theotormon, of course, is the number eight. Eight is an “[u]nlucky, apparent victim of circumstance, [who is] unsuccessful in business, investments, or social ventures” (Taylor 58). Theotormon, very obviously so, is an unlucky victim of circumstance just as in an externality⁷. And just as, as Damon notes, “[Theotormon’s] name might be a combination of *theo* (god) and *torah* (law), signifying the divine in man under the law” (401), or, more strongly, as Eaves et al. note on that very quotation of Damon’s, “[g]iven the man’s repressed and tormented character, Theotormon is an all too appropriate pun on ‘tormented of god’ ... or ‘tormented of law,’” Theotormon has disaster

⁷ Milton Friedman, Nobel Prize-winning economist, defines *externality* as “the effect of a transaction between two individuals on a third party who has not consented to, or played any role in, the carrying out of that transaction” (*The Corporation*).

built into his identity linguistically and numerologically⁸ (Introduction 230).⁹ He recognizes this in himself, too, as he refers to himself as “one o’erflowed with woe” (6:22), and Damon further notes that “Theotormon’s woes have revealed to him[self] the woes of all sufferers” (402) as he “sits wearing the threshold hard / With secret tears” (Blake, *Visions* 5:6-7). Taylor continues exploring the essence of Eight noting that “[a]n 8 has reached [a level] where [it] must think of others as well as [it]self. Until [it] acts constructively for the good of all [it] will continue to meet with adversity” (58). In direct relation to *Visions*, the “all” would be himself, Oothoon, and Bromion, and as he has locked them all into a triple-lose situation, he will, most definitely, “continue to meet with adversity.” Spector writes that “[w]hile presumably at one time [Theotormon] had been capable of visions, his intellectual faculties have grown so restricted that he reduces all concepts to their most basic level of empirical thought” (*Myth* 55). Ultimately, she notes, “Theotormon remains as doomed as the other two” (ibid).

In a slightly darker light, Taylor reveals the more-negative sides to Eight as Eight is “[o]ne who uses [its] social position, power or money for selfish purposes, a merciless driver, money-mad, supercritical, unappreciated, unaccommodating, unfeeling, inviting

⁸ It is also built into his character visually in the frontispiece to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* with the shape of Theotormon’s spine in the rounded shape that depicts pain (from the word *tort* meaning “physical injury or pain,” and, etymologically, from the Latin *tortus* (meaning twisted, wrung) from the past participle of *torquēre* (meaning to twist, wring) (*OED*). From this prefix, we get our words *tort*, *tortellini*, *tortilla*, *tortoise*, and *torture* that all have the same shape as Theotormon’s spine. Furthermore, it quasi-linguistically complements his name.

⁹ From these nominal elements of Theotormon’s name (from Damon’s notion of “combination” and from Eaves et al.’s notion of the “all too appropriate pun”), I arrive at the lettered half of my homo-Theotormon character’s name – i.e. “Zucchicarro.” *Zucchicarro* is a combination of elements of *zucchini* and *carrot*, making it an appropriate pun of a (quasi)double-phallus. And just as Raymond’s recollection of “bizarre [sexual] activities” foreshadowed the linguistic naming of my female-Bromion, so, too, do they foreshadow that of my homo-Theotormon as Raymond remembers “his phallic vegetable [i.e. zucchinis and carrots] evening when he was sixteen” (15).

[its] own pain and disaster” (58). “Theotormon smiles severely” (which has psychopathic connotations, lending itself nicely to Taylor’s notions of “selfish” and “unfeeling”) when his eagles prey on Oothoon’s flesh (5:17), and Oothoon chastises Theotormon for being hypocritical and charges him as “This knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, trembling hypocrite” (9:16). Further emphasizing this psychopathic hypocrisy of Theotormon’s, Welch notes that “[i]n response to Bromion’s assault on Oothoon, Theotormon shows no sympathy for her but instead self-concernment, self-righteousness, and possessiveness” (118). Blake even annotates John Caspar Lavater’s line “If you see one cold and vehement at the same time, set him down for a fanatic” (from his *Aphorisms on Man* – qtd. in Erdman 590) with “i.e hypocrite” – which is precisely Theotormon (Erdman 590). Theotormon is, too, a merciless driver, supercritical, and inviting his own pain and disaster as “every morning wails Oothoon. but Theotormon sits / Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire” (11:11-2).

Palæographically, Taylor also discusses the number eight. He shows that “[i]n making the figure 8 the first stroke is the letter S, the serpent or the symbol of wisdom, the shape of the spinal column [further recalling the notions of *tort*], through which the vital forces flow,” (34) and that “it has been observed, however, that those who make the figure 8 in a reverse way (handwriting is a graph of the subconscious mind) have the sex problem to master” (ibid). As we have seen Theotormon’s name hold elements of law and god, the symbol of wisdom being intrinsically endowed to his nominal number is quite fitting. The notion of the “sex problem to master” is even more fitting as he does

reach his (would be) sexual partner in a *backward* manner – i.e. not having been her first “lover,” and Damon notes that Theotormon “is Desire; when repressed, he becomes Jealousy” (401). Furthermore, “Eight is the symbol of both death and regeneration and calls for mental alertness to direct and balance the situation” (Taylor 35). There is, indeed, a subtle sense of death in *Visions* as Oothoon cries that “Theotormon hears me not!” (5:37) and that “none but Bromion can hear my lamentations” (6:1), yet there is also a subtle sense of regeneration, too, as “[t]here is always the possibility that at some point, Theotormon will respond to Oothoon” (Spector, *Language* 76).

The “divine essences” of the numbers in numerology tend to reflect a cumulative process of growth from one digital stage to the next, yet Oothoon, Bromion, and Theotormon are individual characters. Interestingly, Nancy Moore Goslee, in her article “Slavery and Sexual Character: Questioning the Master Trope in Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*,” suggests that “[e]ven to call them characters may be to assume too much” (105). Oken, then, writes that “[e]ach number is one facet of a universal whole of which each of us is a part,” and Oothoon, Bromion, and Theotormon are each one facet of the universal whole that is Blake’s *Visions* (12). Moreover, Eaves et al. note that “[t]he cave as metaphor for mind is traditional” (Introduction 236), and that “[t]he cultural references and implications of *Visions* are wide-ranging, but the work is principally a psychological study, even an updated version of the medieval *psychomachia* in which separate characters are contending aspects of a single personality” (ibid 232). In this way, the growth from one digit to the next, and one character to the next, conceives the growth

toward human realization. Spector even writes that “[j]ust as Oothoon reflects [Theotormon’s] image, so, in fact, does everyone else in the poem, for the name Theotormon contains within it roots from most of the other names” (*Language* 74). As such, the letters in *Oothoon* and in *Bromion* (with the exception of the letter *e*) make up the spelling of *Theotormon* (not anagrammatically, of course), and three plus five equals eight ($3+5=8$, just as *Oothoon* + *Bromion* = *Theotormon*, then). In fact, those digits (3, 5, 8) are Fibonacci numbers, corresponding immaculately (in order of their nominal appearances in *Visions*) to the Fibonacci Sequence.

Matthew Gray Gubler, as the celeactor¹⁰ Dr. Spencer Reid on television’s crime drama *Criminal Minds*, remarks that “‘One, one, two, three, five’ is a Fibonacci series: each number added to the number before it” (“Masterpiece”). Continuing this serial pattern, we find *eight*, *thirteen*, *twenty-one*, and *thirty-four* following; the sequence thus runs (numerically): 0; 1; 1; 2; 3; 5; 8; 13; 21; 34; etc. Hidden within that series, we find Oothoon’s, Bromion’s, and Theotormon’s numbers sequentially present.¹¹ Stan Grist, in

¹⁰ Chris Rojek, in his book *Celebrity*, defines his term *celeactor* as “a fictional character who is either momentarily ubiquitous or becomes an institutionalized feature of popular culture” (23). He discusses British actor Sacha Baron Cohen’s creation of Ali G as an example; however, television personalities (such as Drs. Gregory House and Spencer Reid – from the dramas *House* and *Criminal Minds*, respectively) who gain credibility for their genius also belong in this category. This celeactorial authority, then, is kookily credible in my methodology of conglomerating eclectic sources in receiving and interpreting Blake, for I am (quite literally) pulling a page from Frye’s book.

¹¹ Oothoon’s, Bromion’s, and Theotormon’s numbers sequentially run 3, 5, and 8; continuing the series, as I have shown, we immediately get (following Theotormon’s number) 13, 21, and 34. In a further splicing/combination of nominal properties in my visual book, I respectively conjoined the extended Fibonacci numbers of the sequence rising out of Oothoon to Bromion to Theotormon with each of my twenty-first century versions of them so that, as I am extending them into the twenty-first century, the idea of their soulful reflections extends, too. Thus, I christened them, appropriately, *Oathe13*, *Aquabolt21*, and *Zucchicarro34*. In adding the numbers, these whole names, then, take on computer and Internet username and password-like qualities (in combining letters and numbers for unique identities online) that further promote and add to the Science-Fiction elements of my visual book and, indeed, the Avatarian/Tronian connections with the simultaneous other worlds and the main character’s (respective) navigations of them

an article on his website titled “The Hidden Structure and Fibonacci Mathematics,” discusses the Fibonacci Sequence as,

Nature’s numbering system. [The Fibonacci numbers] appear everywhere in nature, from the leaf arrangement in plants, to the pattern of the florets of a flower, the bracts of a pinecone, or the scales of a pineapple. The Fibonacci numbers are therefore applicable to the growth of every living thing, including a single cell, a grain of wheat, a hive of bees, and even all of mankind.

The Fibonacci Sequence is part of mathematical culture, but under its parallel name of the Golden Ratio, it finds a home in visual art culture, too: the two are an oppositional binary that operates “more lucidly together than apart” (Mayberry 91).

The Golden Ratio is “[a]n irrational number known as *phi*¹² based on the ratio of line segments to each other and to the whole¹³” (Reid, “Masterpiece”). (For an illustrative example of this in direct reference to the characters in *Visions*, please see Figure 5.) Dr. Reid reveals that “[t]he whole concept [of the Golden Ratio] is represented by...the Logarithmic Spiral [see Figure 6] created [geometrically] by using the Fibonacci Sequence” (“Masterpiece”). Dr. Reid further explains that “[Leonardo] da Vinci used [the Golden Ratio] in a lot of his paintings. As a matter of fact, *The Last Supper* is a perfect example of it” (“Masterpiece”). While using Dr. Spencer Reid (fictional psychologist from CBS’s *Criminal Minds*) allows me to pay homage to Frye in reading Blake via eclectic works, Dr. Joan Coutu (veritable Art Historian at the University of Waterloo)

via a “user.”

¹² Just as with the irrational number π (pi), which is 3.141..., Φ (phi) is 1.618... (roughly the value of dividing any two Fibonacci Numbers into each other – e.g. $34/21=1.6190476$).

¹³ world-mysteries.com notes that “[i]n mathematics and the arts, two quantities are the golden ratio if the ratio between the sum of those quantities and the larger one is the same as the ratio between the larger one and the smaller.”

says that da Vinci's fascination with the Golden Segment appears in a large majority of his works (particularly in his paintings of human faces but also in his paintings' overall compositions), and she cites his *La Gioconda* as an illustrative example. Moreover, Whittaker, in an e-mail, wrote, "I think Blake must have seen engravings of Leonardo's work, but – a short letter between the artists Richard Cosway and George Cumberland aside from 1795 – there is no direct evidence of his knowledge regarding Leonardo until he was taken by John Linnell to see a rendition of the Last Supper in 1818."

Unfortunately, as Whittaker says, "there is no direct evidence" to suggest that Blake saw *any* da Vinci (especially not *The Last Supper*) before 1818, and *Visions* is, of course, from 1793. This Golden Ratio theory, historically again, would fit beautifully with Spector's analysis of Blake's *Jerusalem* (he having seen *The Last Supper* while working on it), yet for the sake of my arguments here, it is, nonetheless, conjecturally sound (see, for example, my mapping – with near perfection – of the Logarithmic Spiral onto the frontispiece of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* starting with its centre on Oothoon's forehead and radiating outward from there – Figure 7.)

[D]a Vinci aside, though, what *did* Blake see? Robert Essick, in his entry on Blake in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, writes that "[i]n 1788 the great print-publishers John and Josiah Boydell hired Blake to execute his largest copy engraving, *Beggar's Opera*, after a painting by William Hogarth." This Hogarth sighting is juicily interesting for a handful of relevant reasons. Joseph Strutt, author of *A Biographical*

*Dictionary...*¹⁴, writes, “it is evident...that exact lines of any kind, even if they be drawn in the serpentine form [i.e., the S-curve of Hogarth’s ‘line of beauty’] cannot give the perfect expression of beauty and elegance” (qtd. in Eaves, *Theory* 17). Applying this to Blake, the “exact line” in his *Visions* (the Golden Ratio) is not *drawn* so much as implicitly explicit. Furthermore, Tristanne Connolly, in an e-mail, wrote that Hogarth’s “line of beauty is another manifestation [of the Golden Ratio]¹⁵,” and Morris Eaves, in his book *William Blake’s Theory of Art*, writes on Strutt’s quotation above that “[l]ines – ‘exact lines of any kind’ – cannot express natural beauty because nature, the standard of beauty, has no outline” (17 – emphasis original). Yet, the Golden Ratio *is* nature’s outline. In this light, it *can* “give the perfect expression of beauty and elegance,” and Blake *did* see Hogarth’s work early enough in his career (definitely, at least, five years prior to engraving *Visions*) to have been influenced by it in creating *Visions*.

Digging back further into Blake artistic roots, Essick writes that “[w]hile still a youth, [Blake] began sketching and attending auctions to acquire old and then unfashionable prints after artists such as Raphael, Michelangelo, and Dürer” (“Blake”). Jill Britton, instructor of Mathematics at Camosun College (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada), illustrates on her website that Michelangelo’s *Holy Family* (c. 1506) and Raphael’s *Crucifixion* (c. 1502) have the Golden Ratio in their compositions (in the Golden Star, recalling the Vitruvian Man (1487) and Agrippa’s man in a pentagram from

¹⁴ The full title of Strutt’s book is *A Biographical Dictionary Containing an Historical Account of All the Engravers from the Earliest Period of the Art of Engraving to the Present Time* (1785).

¹⁵ It is also another manifestation of *tort*.

his *De occulta philosophia libri tres*¹⁶). Janet Warner, in her book *Blake and the Language of Art*, notes that “[c]opying was...for [Blake] and others the grammar of the language of art” in training to become artists (9). As Blake was copying Michelangelo and Raphael (who both use the Golden Ratio) *before* enrolling in the Royal Academy of Arts (and as he most likely did encounter the concept in his studies *at* the Royal Academy, too), these pre-*Visions* flirtations with it are early enough to have affected his whole career.

What Blake saw aside, then, in affecting his whole career, what did Blake *read*? Raine writes that “[a]s to literacy in the ordinary sense, Blake was certainly self-educated” (14), and she lists that “Blake had, of course, read Spencer and Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Dryden, Gray, Young, [and] Chapman’s Homer” (ibid) as well as a slew of other texts including (to record but a few of Raine’s rather large compilation) Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bacon, Newton, Locke, Voltaire, and his contemporaries – i.e. Payne, Godwin, Cowper, Wordsworth and Byron – “with no less attention” (ibid). She continues,

But all of these any educated person of the time would have known. The most interesting aspect of Blake’s reading lay in the depth and thoroughness with which he explored the excluded knowledge of his time, the esoteric tradition. He himself names three of his teachers – Swedenborg, Paracelsus, and Jacob Boehme. From interior evidence, it is likely that he had also read *Cornelius Agrippa*, Thomas Vaughan (brother of the poet Henry Vaughan)

¹⁶ Chris Miles, in his essay “Occult Retraction: Cornelius Agrippa and the Paradox of Magical Language,” notes that “[Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535)] is perhaps the most influential of all Western occult theoreticians” (436), and that “the second book [of Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (1533)] is founded on the knowledge and use of occult virtues to be found in numbers, signs, and images” (437). Not only, then, does Agrippa have ties to the potential genesis of the Golden Ratio but also to that of Numerology. In fact, Miles continues to write that it is Agrippa who “introduces the idea that words themselves are at the mercy of human interpretation and that for different audiences they signify different things” (441).

and other alchemists. He had read Robert Fludd, from whom he learned something of *Christian Cabbala* [sic]. (15 – emphases added).

Furthermore, Raine writes that “all of the works of the esoteric tradition read by Blake would have furnished John M. Watkins’s famous theosophical bookshop where, a century later, Yeats and others since have found their University Library of lost knowledge” (ibid). While Raine does not discuss *when* Blake would have read these texts in his career (texts that include Agrippa and Kabbalah), we cannot, again, know for certain if he would have stumbled across these concepts before starting *Visions*. Yet, as Raine writes that Blake was “certainly self-educated,” his thirst for these things esoteric would certainly have affected his whole career.

Regardless of dates, though, there is something remarkable about Oothoon’s, Bromion’s, and Theotormon’s respective nominal numerological sublimations not only horoscopically defining their respective characters but also summarizing the core narrative of Blake’s poem *and* falling perfectly into the Fibonacci Sequence with the Golden Ratio shortly behind it all. W. Wynn Westcott, in his book *Numbers: Their Occult Power and Mystic Virtues*, notes that “[w]hen the sum of the numbers of the letters composing a word was the same as the sum of the letters of another word, however different, [Kabbalists] perceived an analogy between them, and considered them to have *a necessary connection*” (25 – emphasis added). While he is discussing numbers and words in relation to other numbers and words, his rhetoric of the “necessary connection” quite aptly applies to what is occurring with numbers and words in *Visions*. Oken says that “[n]umerologists also see the events of human life unfolding in cycles” (66), and

Jason Alexander, as Professor Rothchild in the same episode of *Criminal Minds*, beautifully states that “[t]he Golden Ratio is a subconscious identifier of perfect humanness” (“Masterpiece”). The key word in that maxim – next to its declaration of “perfect humanness” – being *subconscious*. In fact, as Warner writes, recalling Joseph Burke’s conclusion before her, “Blake’s [later] borrowings could seldom have been deliberate but were rather the unconscious product of his eidetic imagination” (9). Given his early copyings of Michelangelo and Raphael, the potential for more Renaissance Art History at the Royal Academy, his exhaustive, self-imposed reading list, and his eidetic imagination, the pieces *were* there in his mind whether he consciously conceived of them or not.

In discussing the applicability, and even credibility, of (arguably) literary theoretical tools such as numerology, Spector writes,

While many Kabbalistic techniques can be found in deconstructive literary theories, there remains one significant difference between the two. Although post-modernists justify their manipulations in terms of the arbitrary nature of their texts, the Kabbalist believes just the opposite, that his is a truly motivated external manifestation of the Divine Thought; therefore, any kind of linguistic use devised by man has potential significance, quite likely far beyond his own comprehension. (*Language* 31)

While my “kooky” approach to tackling *Visions* is deconstructive (via rendering apart Blake’s nominal constructions and explicating the shreds), it is neither motivated by the potential “arbitrary nature” of Blake’s oeuvres nor by the potential “external manifestation of the Divine Thought,” but guided, instead, by *Visions*’s opening maxim

that “The Eye sees more than the Heart knows.” If eyes truly are the window to the soul¹⁷, then, following the Bible, this poem’s inherent fascination with the soul announces itself at the outset (the motto) and follows it through to the penultimate stanza (where the light in Theotormon is dark as he “sits / Upon the margind ocean conversing with *shadows* dire (11:11-2 – emphasis added)). And “how terribly dark” it is!

Eaves notes that “all who read Blake recognize that his idea of line is a key artistic principle” (*Theory* 11), and that “[a]t the center of the associations animated by Blake’s linearism is the metaphor *line* = *human being* (the ‘True Man’ of imagination)” (40 – emphasis original). Furthermore, he notes that “making a line expresses identity, and the result is identical form, activating the image with *inward* life” (44 – emphasis added). He says,

For Blake metaphors tend to become identities for which order is insignificant: as line is the true self, so true self is line. The infiltration of this theoretical metaphor into Blake’s artistic practice doubles the object of any search for lines in Blake’s paintings: lines appear not only as geometric entities but also as the true self of the artist, the presence of the one invoking the presence of the other. (40)

The Fibonacci [Line] and the Golden Segment together appear as both in *Visions*; furthermore, they appear as “the true self” of the *character(s)*. Thus, we can amplify Eaves’s suggestion as we are now delving into the souls (or the “true selves”) of Blake’s characters, too.

¹⁷ “The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are no good, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you is dark, how terribly dark it will be!” (Matt. 6.22-3).

Welch writes that “[t]he assumptions behind references to the soul by Ramsay¹⁸, Beattie¹⁹, and several others was that the essential properties of humanity and of individual persons resides therein. Size, skin color, sensory capacities, gender, and so forth are, strictly speaking, accidentals” (110). Blake notes in his annotations (1788 – the same year as copying Hogarth, thus five years prior to *Visions* as well) to Lavater that “the substance gives tincture to the accident & makes it physiognomic” (Erdman 597), and Welch states on this annotation that “[i]n other words, it is the inner substance [i.e. the soul] that defines accidents...and not the accidents themselves that define a substance [i.e. soul]” (112). For over two hundred years, scholars have been analyzing *Visions* (and, indeed, all of Blake) as characteristically defined by the accidents *not* the substances, yet Blake decidedly writes in his illuminated book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (circa 1790-3 – immediately before, if not partially overlapping with, his production of *Visions*) that “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul / for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discern’d / by the five Senses” (4:13-5)²⁰. As Eaves writes that “[l]ine is the fundamental dynamic principle in Blake’s artistic theory,” (*Theory* 43) and that “[c]ontaining lines

¹⁸ James Ramsey, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves on the British Sugar Colonies* (1784).

¹⁹ James Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science* (1790-3).

²⁰ This interconnection here between *Visions* and *Marriage* with regard to the body and soul in relation to one another is also interesting concerning the interconnections between *Visions* and *Marriage* in general. *Marriage* ends with its ultimate line reading, “For every thing that lives is Holy” (27:21) which is, almost textually verbatim, Oothoon’s final spoken line in *Visions* and the preantepenultimate line of *Visions* altogether as Oothoon declares, “Arise and drink your bliss. for every thing that lives is holy!” (11:10). Furthermore, Marvin Lansverk, in his book *The Wisdom of Many, The Vision of One: The Proverbs of William Blake*, notes that “[r]eading the two together [*Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*] makes for an interesting comparison, for *Visions* is actually a continuation of Blake’s Bible of Hell” (117). To bring this into my visual book, Raymond considers the Band-Aid around his finger – the initial drop of blood lost from the first word on my book onward – as “a marriage of Heaven and Hell” (13).

define images,” what are we to do with *continuous* (versus “containing”) lines – i.e. the Fibonacci Sequence – in Blake (ibid)? If “containing lines define images,” then continuous lines define souls. I am not, however, suggesting a discarding of previous scholarship, for “[w]hile Blake appears at times to value the spiritual, essential, and universal more than the bodily, accidental, and particular, his incarnational vision of identity – the imaginative body – embraces and values *all* of these” (Welch 124 – emphasis added). Therefore, I am suggesting that, much like Blake’s relationship with his brother Robert (especially in the otherworldly origins of Blake’s invention of relief etching), this kook-booky, numerological soul-searching approach is traditional scholarship’s overshadowed little brother.

Scholars have become very comfortable with political discourse in Romantic scholarship, but have shied away from the spiritual/mystical/creative elements of eighteenth century literature because we have not figured out how to do this in an “academic” way. Yet, Blake *is* doing this, and we should be conscious of it. His is a poetry of lost souls, so how do we locate and recognize these souls? Our “progress” in scholarship has brought us to a place where we no longer recognize them, for, coming out of the Enlightenment, the Cartesian split of the mind/body begs the question, “What of the soul?” And Blake, in *Visions*, is deliberately asking, “What about the soul in relation to the body?” Michel Foucault, in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, writes,

The world is covered with signs that must be deciphered, and those signs, which reveal resemblances and affinities, are themselves no more than forms

of similitude. To know must therefore be to interpret: to find a way from the visible mark to that which is being said by it and which, without that mark, would lie unspoken speech, dormant within things. (32)

This numerological skeleton to Blake's 1793 illuminated book *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, then, is awakening that something dormant in scholarship. After all, "[y]ou are what your name *signifies*" (Taylor 71 – emphasis added). ²¹

²¹ What about Oothoon, though, and the nominal elements of her name? While scholars' discussions of from where Blake took the name *Oothoon* do not helpfully relate to my Numerological arguments in this chapter, they do, very much, influence my naming of my male-Oothoon in my visual book. Eaves et al. note in their Introduction that "Blake and others of his time still believed that James Macpherson's prose renditions of the poems of Ossian, suspected by many to be more forgery than translation, were Celtic verses with an antiquity and an artistic value equivalent to the poetry of Homer" (229) and that "[f]rom one such Ossianic poem, *Oithona*, first published in *Fingal* (1762), Blake took the name of his central character [Oothoon]" (ibid). Maintaining the integrity of the diphthongs and the *th* sounds in either name (*oith-* and *ooth-*, respectively), I used a fellow appropriate diphthong-plus-*th* sound to create *oath-*. I added an *e* onto it to create a name "at once both very new and very old" (as Eaves et al. note was Blake's mission in *Visions*) and to morph it slightly away from the noun *oath* while still allowing for that interpretative influence. Furthermore, looking again at number-influenced patterns in this series of names, the trisyllabic *Oithona* from Macpherson becomes the bisyllabic *Oothoon* in Blake that I, then, further sift into the monosyllabic *Oathe*. Combined with the Fibonacci number immediately following Theotormon's 8 in the sequence (13), my male-Oothoon becomes *Oathe13*.

Visions²⁰¹¹:
[Re]solving the Rebus of William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*
Chapter 2

The Dark Twins and Shimmer of Sex:
Schizosexuality and Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*

"[O]ne day, perhaps, in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest of confessions from a shadow."

– Michel Foucault (*The History of Sexuality: An Introduction – Vol. 1* 159)

"Oothoon's suffering as a female slave and the way she negotiates it help manifest and enhance her identity and set a worthy example for the oppressed everywhere. This badly abused and broken-hearted woman suffers but does not submit."

– Dennis M. Welch ("Essence, Gender, Race: William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*" 124)

In her essay, Bethan Stevens writes that "[r]ecent interpretations of *Visions* correct a former blindness to all but straight sexualities" (140). As Blake's poem is, indeed, anchored on the titular word *vision*, aligning our societal disability to that of sight is an appropriate adianoeta for rhetorical effect, yet it is inappropriate in terms of accuracy. These "all but straight sexualities" have always existed (namelessly), and while we can understand that we have not *seen* them as such, our lack of immediate sight is immediately due to our lack of vocabulary. Our inability to recognize these "peripheral sexualities" (as Foucault puts it in his *The History of Sexuality* (41)) is not "a former blindness" *per se* but a former *muteness* as our disability lies with our mouths and minds rather than with our eyes and minds.

Thomas Kuhn, in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), illustrates this notion in his discussion of oxygen. Oxygen has always existed, but the discovery of it fundamentally changed our understanding of the world, for its discovery was not the creation of something new but a paradigmatic shift in our thinking: we had not *seen* oxygen before because we did not have the words to allow us to discuss it. “Clearly,” Kuhn writes, “we need a new vocabulary and concepts for analyzing events like the discovery of oxygen” (55). Clearly, also, we need(ed) a new vocabulary and concepts for discussing subjects such as sexuality.

“On the subject of sex,” then, Foucault writes, “*silence* became the rule” (*Sexuality* 3 – emphasis added). Yet, on the subject of silence in relation to sex, Foucault does not remain textually quiet. He further writes that “[t]here is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (ibid 27), and that “around and apropos of sex, one sees a veritable discursive explosion” (ibid 17). Essentially, he writes, “sex – be it refined or rustic – had to be put into words” (ibid 32). “[P]ut into words” not “put into sight” – i.e. correcting a former muteness not blindness.

This is precisely what happens in 1870 with the birth of the word *homosexual* in Carl Westphal’s article on “contrary sexual sensations” (qtd. in Foucault, *Sexuality* 43) as “the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized” (Foucault, *Sexuality* 43). Foucault writes:

“Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from

the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a[n] hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (ibid). It is through the evolution of discourse with our adoption of the word *homosexual* (our decided dis-mute-ation) that the “temporary aberration” of the sodomite (which we *did* see, just refused to recognize; therefore, we were not blind to it) became “a species” (something we continue to see, but which we now recognize because we are no longer mute to it).

Furthermore, the “veritable discursive explosion” to which Foucault refers, in strictest relation to his terminology of “peripheral sexualities,” encompasses such “minor perverts whom nineteenth-century psychiatrists entomologized by giving them strange baptismal names [such as] mixoscopophiles [and] presbyophiles” (ibid). Twentieth-century psychiatrists, philosophers, and culturalists have since entomologized names such as *lesbian*, *transgender*, and a slew of prefixed sexualities (bi-, trans-, pan-/omni-, etc.) *ad delirium*²². While a quick Google search of the terms *mixoscopophilia* and *presbyophilia* does, indeed, yield accurate results (somewhat obscure definitions in Google Books’ hits involving studies in the psychology of sex and erotic symbolisms), some terms survive well, others just survive, and some others die, yet they each have always been there before our eyes; without the vocabulary to discuss them aptly, though, we would have remained mute to them.²³ In Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*,

²² According to the *OED*, the term *bisexual* dates back to 1914 (in *American Medicine*), the term *lesbian* to 1925 (appearing in Aldous Huxley’s letters), and the term *transsexual* to 1957 (in *The American Journal of Psychology*).

²³ My theory of sexuality departs somewhat from Foucault’s in that Foucault, primarily, suggests that sexuality is in discourse with the proliferation of sexual terminology *creating* sexuality whereas I am

something is occurring sexually for which Blake did not have the appropriate rhetoric to discuss and to which we remain mute in our analogous discussions of it via existing sexual vocabulary. Oothoon does, indeed, have a sexuality, but she is neither gay, straight, bi, nor lesbian; neither has she a transgendered life: her sexuality falls under the category that I am going to dub, and add to the “discursive explosion [of terms],” *schizosexuality*²⁴. Through her identity as a schizosexual, we can read *Visions* in a new manner that wholly frees Oothoon while leaving instead Theotormon as the victim.

Damon writes that “[t]he Marygold (marigold) symbolizes the first experiment with sex [as t]he plucking of a flower is an ancient symbol for sexual experience” (265), and Northrop Frye, in his *Fearful Symmetry*, notes that “Oothoon has ‘pluck’d the flower’ of imaginative experience and has entered the state of innocence” (238). Moreover, Leopold Damrosch Jr., in his *Symbol and Truth in Blake’s Myth*, writes that, in *Visions*, “Leutha’s vale had been the place of sexual initiation” (217). Inarguably, Oothoon is embracing her sexuality from the fifth line of The Argument plate onward (“I plucked

positing that sexuality is in the body (rather than in language), and that, therefore, we cannot create sexuality, for it already exists. My theory relies on the discursive elements of Foucault’s, though, in that, for me, language necessarily unlocks sexuality.

²⁴ From the Greek *σχίζειν* representing to split (*OED*), the prefix “schizo-” engenders notions of a multiple-in-one construct in the formation of compound words (i.e. *schizogenetic* and *schizophrenic*). *Schizosexuality*, then, is a splitting of sexualities within an individual, a dichotomy of sexualities rendering bisexuality (from the Latin *bi-* meaning “twice, doubly, having two” (*OED*)) its aberrant twin. Whereas bisexuality holds both hetero- and homosexuality in tandem, schizosexuality disallows this identification in exchange for one over the other *through* the other – i.e. moving from one sexuality into another in a complete flip-of-the-coin. [Bi-/hetero-/homo-]sexuality operates on an *and/or* axis: you are heterosexual *or* you are homosexual *or* you are bisexual (heterosexual *and* homosexual). Schizosexuality operates on a *either/or* axis: you are *either* heterosexual *or* you are homosexual *with* the one you leave behind you. Schizosexuality replaces the Venn diagram of hetero- and homosexuality with bisexuality in their overlay for monogamous relationships, for you cannot perform bisexually in a monogamous relationship. Therefore, bisexuality can only exist outside monogamy – i.e. in polygamous relationships. Schizosexuality, thus, in the monogamous sibling to bisexuality.

Leutha's flower"), yet it remains arguable just precisely what said sexuality is. Caroline Jackson-Houlston, in her chapter "'The lineaments of...desire': Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and Romantic Literary Treatments of Rape," writes that "female sexuality, whether autoerotic or lesbian, is represented positively in this earlier work [...] though Oothoon's primary sexual orientation is and continues to be heterosexual" (153). Interestingly, though, Jackson-Houlston later writes that "Oothoon is *basically* heterosexual" (155 – emphasis added). We assume, based on Oothoon's gender as female and Theotormon's as male, through her proclamation in the first line of the poem that "I loved Theotormon," that Oothoon is, indeed, heterosexual, yet Oothoon embraces the seeds of her schizosexuality in this fifth line of The Argument plate, for there is a division – a *split*, if you will – over the botanical identity of the marigold flower that Oothoon plucks.

In her paper "'In What Gardens Do Joys Grow?': Queer Botanizing in Blake's *Visions*, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*, and Darwin's *Botanic Garden*," Elizabeth Bernath Walker says that "[b]otany was a radical and sexualized discourse in the 1790s." She further notes that "Blake was one of the engravers who worked on [Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*]," and that "[t]he influence of Darwin's personification [of plants and plant 'sex'] is evident in the opening prosopopoeia of *Visions* where Oothoon wanders in the vales of Leutha and comes upon a talking flower, an anthropomorphized marigold symbolizing the spirit of female sexuality." She explains that there are "two discrete genera" for the common floral name *marigold* (the *Caltha palustris* – the marsh marigold – and the

Calendula officinalis – the pot marigold) and that both are in Darwin’s text. Noting that “critical opinion is divided as to which genus Blake was referencing,” Bernath Walker explores the evidence on either camp revealing that David Worrall advocates for the pot marigold “based on the beams of light that Leutha’s marigold emits” (as Darwin references *Calendula officinalis* as emitting sparks²⁵) while Anne K. Mellor and Richard Matlak annotate the marigold in *Visions* as “*caltha palustris*, commonly called mayflower, a symbol of fertility in May Day festivals” (294). Bernath Walker ultimately suggests – although, in her paper, she primarily considers it the pot marigold – that it is “likely that both *Calendula* and *Caltha* contribute meaning to Blake’s text.”²⁶

These fertile and feminine connections and connotations are vitally interesting, for they all centre on the inherent femininity of Oothoon’s act. Spector writes that “the action initiated by Oothoon’s choice to pluck Leutha’s flower encompasses the full range of *female* archetypes from virgin and mother to whore” (*Language* 72 – emphasis added). Furthermore, “Oothoon’s plucking of the flower strongly suggests the similar fatal act of Persephone” (Damon 265), and “[b]oth stories [Oothoon’s and Persephone’s] suggest at least a metonymic connection between the acts of literal and metaphoric ‘deflowering’” (Eaves et al., Introduction 230). Literality and metaphoricity aside, though, the act(o)r(ess) of Oothoon’s deflowering is herself, and Jackson-Houlston writes:

²⁵ In their Introduction to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Morris Eaves et al. note that “[o]ne thin line of radiance etched on the plate extends from the right-most marigold, but the other three shafts of light make it clear that they are all part of a sunrise” (237).

²⁶ For the marigold in my visual book, I merged the two possible genera into one überflower to encompass the cultural connotations of both possibilities. I dubbed it, appropriately, *Calthalendula* (a linguistic splicing of the two). My *Calthalendula* still emits light (recalling its half-namesake *Calendula officinalis*), yet it also retains the fertile connections to *Caltha palustris*.

The picking of a flower has become a culturally archetypal metaphor for the initiation of sexual experience. What is less often emphasized is the gender imbalance in the use of this metaphor, the term ‘deflower’ carrying connotations of boastful male violence. Where the woman initiates the action (plucking rather than being passively plucked) the sense is much more positive (even if the results of her sexual exploration are unhappy) because she moves from object to subject, and asserts her right to initiate sexual encounters. Thus, in this encounter, Oothoon is figured as active sexual agent, but without the negative connotations applied to masculine agency because of the Marygold’s active invitation. (154)

Even before she plucks the flower, Oothoon is splitting her sexual agency, for, as Jackson-Houlston notes, “[Oothoon] moves from object to subject.” A further split occurs here, too, in Oothoon’s gender, as she shifts from the female space into that of the male to perform the plucking (on herself).

When Jackson-Houlston writes that “Oothoon’s primary sexual orientation is and continues to be heterosexual,” this cannot be true even in the chronicle order of the lines in *Visions* – i.e. the proclamation of love for Theotormon *preceding* the plucking of the flower – as the personation of The Argument plate is first-person (thus we cannot definitely determine from the initial line “I loved Theotormon” if it is a hetero- or homoerotic announcement), and as we do not discover Oothoon’s gender until the third-person *her* in the fourth line of the poem proper (“seeking flowers to comfort her”). If we are looking for a primary sexuality for Oothoon (assuming that we do, in fact, need to determine who she is sexually before the events of the poem begin), it *has* to be schizosexual. If it is not schizosexual to begin with, it certainly becomes so, for in plucking a flower with a visually and textually schizophrenic identity, Oothoon is embracing a sexuality that is inherently fractured. I do realize, as Bernath Walker

suggests that it is “likely that both *Calendula* and *Caltha* contribute meaning to Blake’s text,” that this would suggest at more of a bi- than schizo- identificatory make-up; however, the marigold cannot be both *Calendula* and *Caltha* at the same time, yet it can (for literary significance) move from one into the other to allow symbolically for attributes that either lends to the text. In this manner, as we cannot know for certain which marigold Oothoon’s nymph actually is, we can only accept it as *pieces* of both (not as both *simultaneously*), and thus understand it as a *schizogeneric* flower rather than as a *bigeneric* one when Oothoon plucks it. Furthermore, Oothoon goes on to “put thee here to glow between my breasts / And thus I turn my face to where my *whole soul* seeks” (4:12-3 – emphasis added). Her “whole soul,” thus, is a split soul, and it is the root of her sexual being.²⁷

Almost without exception in readings of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, the crux of Oothoon’s plight at the end and the dilemma against which Theotormon refuses to acknowledge her is Oothoon’s newly-acquired state as less-than pure – i.e. her loss of her virginity. Eaves et al. write that “[t]he only response to Oothoon’s words is the auditory equivalent of a shadow, the echoing sighs of the Daughters of Albion” (Introduction 228),

²⁷ The root of Raymond’s sexual being, too, is split, for his innocent, though embarrassing, sexual transgressions pre-sexual intercourse – i.e. flirting both with the pool jets and with the phallic vegetables – mimic Oothoon’s in her plucking of the marigold. As I have shown via my discussion of Aquabolt21’s and Zucchicarro34’s names in my previous chapter, both of these (auto)sexual initiations are fractured (*aquabolt* being (quasi)phallic and (quasi)vaginal; *zucchicarro* being a (quasi)double-phallus). Furthermore, looking specifically at which occurred first, Raymond’s “vegetable evening” happened when he was sixteen while his pool jet days were “in his *preteen* years” (emphasis added). Therefore, the phallic/vaginal split is the primary (if you will) sexual orientation for Raymond Daniels, and it *is* schizosexual (just as Oothoon’s is). The chronological order of his initiations, then (pool jet – penis and vagina – to phallic vegetables – penis and penis), foreshadows his actual sexual activities (hetero- before homosex).

and Welch writes that “[d]espite the offer and various complaints and appeals, Oothoon does not move or change Theotormon at all” (128). Regardless of rape or consent, Oothoon is no longer a virgin, is no longer pure, and can no longer be with Theotormon. I want to argue that Oothoon is still pure and, therefore, that Theotormon can still be with her because I am arguing that, at the end of the poem, Oothoon *is* a born-again virgin while still “every morning wails Oothoon. but Theotormon sits / Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire” and not with her (11:11-2). The crux of Oothoon’s plight at the end of this poem is Theotormon’s ignorance and not her innocence because her schizosexuality allows her to regain her innocence while Theotormon remains ignorant of her transformation.

We speak of engaging in sexual intercourse for the first time as “losing” one’s virginity, but, by that rhetoric, we can find it, too; the loss of something suggests its potential recoverability. The notion that we all have one virginity to lose died with the 1870 dawn of “the homosexual [as] a species,” for when multiple sexualities exist (as they do in our post-1870 culture), multiple virginities exist. Yet it is our culture, not Blake’s, that is post-1870; however, the historicity of virginity as an idea becomes accentuated when paired with the discourse in Blake’s pre-1870 (via 1793) culture. Bruder shows that, discursively, “some of the signs Blake was compelled to employ [such as virgin and whore] compromise the progressive aspects of [his] text” (84). To me, Bruder here seems to be suggesting that Theotormon is *not*, in fact, condemning Oothoon, but that the language of the poem (the only linguistic operations available to Blake) *is*.

Yet, as I have shown (via Kuhn's discussion of oxygen), we need the vocabulary only to speak about the ideas, *not* to make them real. Therefore, as I said, the *notion* that we all have one virginity to lose died *not* the fact that we all have multiple virginities at our disposals. To be clear, I am here proposing a reorientation of the traditional concept of virginity – i.e. the first sexual experience²⁸. For the sake of the gender binary in relation to sexuality, we each have *two* physical virginities to lose, not one²⁹: a man would have to have penetrated and have been penetrated to have lost both his virginities, while a woman would have to have been penetrated and have engaged in *vagina à vagina frottage*³⁰ to have lost both her virginities. Furthermore, *only* schizosexual individuals are able to lose their second virginities because of the necessary category shifts.

A heterosexual (wo)man can never lose her/his second virginity and remain heterosexual, yet (s)he does not become a homosexual (wo)man in losing that second virginity because (s)he has already lost the first virginity that made her/him, in essence,

²⁸ *Virginity* is not an easily definable term. The *OED* states that virginity is “[t]he condition of being or remaining in a state of chastity; abstinence from or avoidance of *all* sexual relations” (emphasis added). By including *all* in its definition, the *OED* allows for *any* sexual activities outside of coitus (which we traditionally understand as involving one penis entering one vagina) that includes fellatio, cunnilingus, anilingus, or any genital stimulation (including masturbation) to result in the loss of one's virginity. (Funnily, by this definition, Oothoon would not have been a virgin for Bromion either!) However, we culturally comprehend a loss of virginity to occur with the first act of sexual intercourse, which the *OED* defines as “intimate sexual contact between two individuals involving penetration.” This definition remains unsatisfactory, though, for it includes male homosexual couples at the exclusion of female homosexual couples who cannot penetrate. In relation to my arguments here in this chapter, I am proposing that a loss of virginity occurs with the first sexual act to involve more than one set of genitals interacting by means outside of masturbation.

²⁹ There are a plethora of other virginities at our disposals as well that are more psychological than physical – i.e. a sadomasochistic virginity, a vanilla virginity, a group sex virginity, etc. – yet these are more periphery virginities (to borrow and mutate Foucault's words) than core virginities, and I am not dealing with them here.

³⁰ *Vagina à vagina frottage* is my term for the sexual act between lesbian women that I am using because I could not find a term (other than mutual masturbation, which I feel neither gives appropriate credit nor is appropriately sensitive) to discuss this intimate act.

heterosexual³¹. (S)he becomes a schizosexual in the loss of her/his second virginity because (s)he maintains the integrity of the first loss while embracing the integrity of the second loss. In this manner, (s)he is neither heterosexual, nor homosexual, nor bisexual, for (s)he has moved from one sexuality and into the other (rather than straddling them both as bisexuality would claim) and is, therefore, schizosexual. Bisexuality fits into this in the realm outside of monogamous relations, recall, as the notion of bisexuality necessarily involves at least three simultaneous partners to exist appropriately as it so declares. Schizosexuality rests on the ground that we are not born with a sexuality but achieve one in experiencing sex; if someone has never experienced sexual intercourse, that person cannot subscribe to a moniker, for that person has no affiliations to any sexual category: the first sexual experience prescribes the primary sexual orientation. Yes, a person may *believe* him/herself (bi-/hetero-/homo-)sexual based on his/her *believed* sexual preferences, but until said person actually experiences sex, those beliefs cannot become reality. When they become reality, a sexuality is prescribed. In essence, when you pluck the flower of your imagined sexuality, you earn the appropriate brand.

What does this have to do with Oothoon and *Visions*? When Oothoon embraces her sexuality in plucking the schizogeneric Marygold, she allows for herself the brand of schizosexual over heterosexual because her immediate sexual experience is a split between male (heterosexual) and female (homosexual). Again, not a bi- experience because it was not so much a merging of the two as an intermittent borrowing of the

³¹ The same applies with the other sexuality: a homosexual (wo)man can never lose her/his second virginity and remain homosexual, yet (s)he does not become a heterosexual (wo)man in losing that second virginity because (s)he has already lost the first virginity that made her/him, in essence, homosexual.

qualities of either. Therefore, when Bromion rapes Oothoon, steals her first virginity, and violently initiates her into the realm of heterosexuality, she still has a virginity left to lose. Jackson-Houlston writes that “Blake sees the current repression of sensual potential as socially constructed, and therefore reversible” (154), and that “[v]irginity, not as an irreversible singularity maintained by repression, but as a cornucopia of ever-fresh delight in life and its possibilities, is a positive term for him” (ibid). We cannot deny that something horrible is happening with Bromion and Oothoon, but we become Theotormons to the Oothoon that is Blake’s *Visions* when we allow ourselves only to see the irreversible and irresolvable qualities of this poem. As I have shown through my footnotes on the ambiguities of our terms *virginity* and *sexual intercourse*, there do not exist any authoritative, concrete definitions. Just “socially constructed” ones.³² In reorienting these social constructions – even if only for ourselves, as Blake does for himself with his understanding of virginity as “a positive term” – we can see that, when Oothoon “hovers by [Theotormon’s] side, perswading him in vain,” the vanity is not primarily her own but his (5:22). The fault actually rests on Theotormon, not on Oothoon, which is why Theotormon is sitting and “wearing the threshold hard” (5:6).

Moore-Goslee writes that “[Oothoon] has to pass through the experience of suffering to discover, invent, or claim the hypothesis of innocence” (122). The “suffering” here, no doubt, is the brutal rape she receives at the body of Bromion, the gruelling torment she receives at the beak of Theotormon’s eagles, as well as the

³² *Socially constructed definitions* would be cultural understandings outside of clinical authority whereas *concrete definitions* would be the metacultural understandings instituted inside the clinical authority.

punishing continued mistreatment she receives by Theotormon following them both, yet the “discover[y], invent[ion], [and/]or claim” of innocence comes out of her sexuality, too. And it would most definitely be a painful negotiation. In her essay “‘Fear not / To unfold your dark visions of torment’: Blake and Emin’s Bad Sex Aesthetic,” Tristanne Connolly (looking at *Milton* not *Visions*, mind you, yet her rhetoric still applies) writes, “God knows it’s hard to be a sadist who wants love” (126). The irony here, of course, goes much deeper than a wonderful paradox, for how do you even begin to reconcile any type of splitting of yourself *without* suffering? The sadism/love dichotomy immediately fits with notions of pain and suffering, but, in *Visions*, we can see how the split of sexualities inherently involves both pain and suffering as well: Bromion viciously rapes Oothoon as he “*rent* her with his thunders on his stormy bed” (4:16 – emphasis added) and then, in wanting Theotormon to have what Bromion had in an attempt at reconciliation, “The Eagles at [Oothoon’s] call descend & *rend* their bleeding prey” (5:17 – emphasis added) while the Eagle in the image of Plate 6 penetrates Oothoon’s body as Bromion before did. As the Eagles are the phallic property of Theotormon³³, he rends her body with his birds’ beaks just as Bromion did with his penis, but as Bromion took that first virginity from her, it was a hollow (yet excruciating, for Oothoon) gesture on Theotormon’s part. In this second moment of first experiences, Oothoon and Theotormon together have not found and met her renewed virginity, for, as Moore-Goslee writes, “[Oothoon’s] renewal comes from an expansion beyond the conventional physical limits of the five senses” (113). “Like that wonderful Crashaw poem in which St. Theresa

³³ “Theotormon[’]s Eagles” (5:13).

announces, ‘I’m off for the Moors and martyrdom,’” Moore-Goslee writes, “Oothoon’s possible liberation risks needing martyrdom. The ecstatic masochism of the partial drawing in which eagles attack Oothoon even resembles Bernini’s sculpture of St. Theresa” (115). There is a martyrdom in regaining your virginity because you painfully split yourself into two separate yet equal sexual identities that cannot operate at the same time – essentially, one part dies so that the other can live: you forfeit something in which you believe, or once had held as a belief, in exchange for the greater something that rests just beyond it.

In discussing the Eagles, it is important to note that the eagles rending Oothoon’s flesh is *not* a rape in itself as they descend consentfully “*at her call*” (5:17 – emphasis added), yet, “the illustration of her arching body about to be penetrated by the eagle’s beak, of course, *alludes* to her rape” (Stevens 148 – emphasis added). This particular allusion is quite a powerful trope in *Visions*, and Stevens continues that “[m]oreover, Blake’s allusion to the Prometheus myth here means that although the body being penetrated is female, we cannot look without remembering the phallic beak pecking at Prometheus, who was perhaps art history’s best known male victim of violent, sexualized penetration” (ibid). In this allusive recollection, then, we get a schizogendered Oothoon again as we move further away from the Marygold and closer to Theotormon. Stevens, however, takes this allusion of male victimization through violent, sexualized penetration further and applies it to Theotormon. She reads the line “Then storms rent Theotormons limbs” (5:3) as “suggest[ing] violence to the body” (Stevens 148), that there is a second

physical rape in the poem (that of Theotormon by Bromion), and that “[w]hile [Oothoon’s] rape is – horrifically – socially acceptable, the sexual abuse of Theotormon is of necessity veiled” (ibid)³⁴. “Hence,” Stevens writes, “[Theotormon’s] ‘secret tears’ that follow close on, and all his subsequent silence, depression and humiliation” (ibid). Taking it further still in her wonderful reading of this line, Stevens writes:

Additionally, supposing Theotormon’s rape to have involved his first experience of anal penetration, Bromion’s delight in ‘places yet unvisited by the voyager’ conceives Theotormon’s body in terms of an exotic, sexual geography, just like Oothoon’s was: a repetition through which Blake transforms the conventional image of imperialism from a tired trope of heterosexual conquest, to a queer and challenging vision of omnisexual abuse. (150)³⁵

Yes, we can conceive of Bromion in these terms as an “omnisexual abuse[r],” as a rapist who knows no, nor cares for no, gender, yet assuming that his rape of Oothoon was his first experience of sexual intercourse altogether, the second rape of Theotormon would make Bromion a schizosexual rapist *not* an omnisexual one. Furthermore, Bromion’s rape of Theotormon, then, too, would initiate the seeds of schizosexuality within Theotormon as well as he (assuming he, too, was a virgin before) has lost one virginity yet holds onto his second still to lose.

³⁴ Of course, in reading the line “Then storms rent Theotormons limbs” as involving Bromion’s second physical rape in the poem, we need not consider it a first rape of a new individual (but a second rape of the same individual), for the line immediately following this one gives us the words “adulterate pair” (5:4). Moore-Goslee writes that “[t]he word ‘adulterate’ suggests that Theotormon is a wronged husband,” (108) and, in this sense of the possessive, Oothoon’s limbs would belong to Theotormon and be “Theotormon’s limbs.” We can read Bromion here, then, as having a second run at Oothoon before Theotormon intervenes and “rolld his waves around” them (5:3). However, I prefer Stevens’ reading of the line.

³⁵ Also looking at this notion of a “second rape” in *Visions*, Rajan offers a different reading of the poem as she reads it as “continu[ing] the rape [of Oothoon past line 17 where it occurs] by dramatizing the rendering apart of Oothoon’s psyche” (234). Yet, if Oothoon’s psychology were, indeed, splitting (as I am arguing it is through her identity as a schizosexual being), a reconfiguration of it would save her. And this is with what she’s struggling for the rest of the poem: a reconfiguration of her shattered soul.

Welch writes that “[Oothoon] sees much although she does not now understand enough” (121). This rhetoric, however, fits Theotormon much better than it does Oothoon, for Oothoon does, indeed, understand enough as she realizes that her penetrative experience with Theotormon (via his bird’s beak) does not suffice in handing him her virginity, so she proposes to “catch for [Theotormon] girls of mild silver, or of furious gold” (10:24). She understands that she has lost the one virginity that she can give to Theotormon; however, she realizes that he, too, has lost a virginity and that, together, they can lose their second virginities with one another. Oothoon has lost her heterosexual virginity just as Theotormon has lost his homosexual virginity, so neither one of them is wholly a virgin. The only manner in which they can perfectly be together is to lose their second virginities simultaneously with each other – i.e. Oothoon to have homosex while having heterosex with Theotormon at the same time. And this is *exactly* what Oothoon proposes to Theotormon as she wants to “catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold; / [And] lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play / In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon” (10:24-6). These lines are fantastically ambiguous, for while the voyeurism here is unmistakable, the identity of said voyeur(s) is not. Oothoon says she will “view [the girls’] wanton play...with Theotormon,” but Blake’s equivocal syntax blurs a clear interpretation. Does he mean that Oothoon, with Theotormon, will view their (the girls’) orgy, or that Oothoon, by herself, will view their (the girls and Theotormon’s) orgy?³⁶ As I am arguing that Oothoon is here proposing a losing of both

³⁶ Either interpretation suggests lesbian activity, yet the former removes any indication of a phallus, and thus more powerfully becomes an instance of female homosexuality – i.e. the girls copulating *without* Theotormon. However, there is a third possible reading coming out of the ambiguity of these lines: that

hers and Theotormon's second virginities (recall: her homosexual virginity and his heterosexual virginity), the reading of her actively contributing to the orgy as a participant rather than passively observing it as a voyeur is stronger.³⁷

The ambiguity of these three lines does not stop here, though, as the line immediately preceding them further complicates the entire scenario. The four lines as a unit, then, are:

But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,
And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold;
I'll lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play
In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon (10:23-6)

Damrosch writes that "[t]he negative connotation of the 'nets' and 'traps' [in Oothoon's proposal] have gone virtually unnoticed here," and while the negativity is perhaps from her knowledge gained from her first penetrative experiences that she is emulating here for Theotormon, it remains, nonetheless, a stunningly beautiful proposal (197). These "nets and traps" are not leather-clad bondage accessories from stagshop.com, but are "*silken*

being Oothoon and Theotormon having sex while watching the girls having sex. The three possible readings of these three lines, then, are: (1) Oothoon proposes to catch the girls for Theotormon and lie beside him on a bank watching the girls' wanton play in lovely copulation with the "bliss on bliss" being Oothoon and Theotormon's joint voyeuristic enjoyment at the girls' orgiastic enjoyment; (2) Oothoon proposes to catch the girls for Theotormon and lie beside him on a bank watching the girls and Theotormon's wanton play in lovely copulation with the "bliss on bliss" being her solo voyeuristic enjoyment at Theotormon and the girls' orgiastic enjoyment; (3) Oothoon proposes to catch the girls for Theotormon and lie beside him in lovely copulation watching the girls' wanton play with the "bliss on bliss" being Oothoon and Theotormon's sexual enjoyment occurring simultaneously with the girls'.

³⁷ This orgiastic proposal does not come to fruition in *Visions*, yet if it had, it would have been the one area in which bisexuality would have eclipsed schizosexuality, for Oothoon would have been engaging in heterosex with Theotormon while engaging in homosex with the "girls of mild silver, or of furious gold." However, she would not remain a bisexual individual, for her proposition (I am arguing) entailed experiencing a loss of virginity with Theotormon that Bromion had (before) taken away from them. Theotormon *can* experience Oothoon losing her virginity, but it would require a dip into bisexuality before a plunge back into schizosexuality as Oothoon would have moved from heterosex (with Bromion) to homosex (with the girls) and back to heterosex (with Theotormon): three flips of the schizosexual coin.

nets and traps.” Upon a first reading of that line, the word *net* (negatively connotated) may outweigh the beauty and softness of their silken identity, but the ambiguous syntax of the final five words of plate 10, line 23 is much more easy to miss: *adamant* seems syntactically to belong with Oothoon as an adjective – i.e. Adamant Oothoon will spread these silken nets and traps – or with *will* as an adverb in modifying the future tense verb in which Oothoon will spread the nets and traps – i.e. Oothoon will adamantly spread these silken nets and traps. However, *adamant*, as a noun³⁸, through the preposition *of*, syntactically belongs with *traps*; thus, while the nets are “silken” (or, *of silk*), the traps are “of adamant” (or *adamanten*). The nets and traps are *not* negative, as Damrosch points out, because they are of silk and of diamond and magnificently complement the girls who are “of mild silver” and “of furious gold.” The catching, then, problematizes this reading, for it does complement the extended metaphor of hunting prey with nets and traps. However, if we consider catching as analogous to plucking, Oothoon does pluck/catch “[t]he *Golden nymph*” from “her *golden shrine*” who is “the *bright* [i.e. *furious*] *Marygold* of Leutha’s vale” (4:8; 4:10; 4:5 – emphases added). Perhaps the “girls of mild silver[and] of furious gold,” then, are analogous to Oothoon’s flower nymph, and as “Leutha’s vale [is] the place of sexual initiation,” it only makes sense that Oothoon would propose to look there to sexually initiate both herself and Theotormon into their newfound relationship (Damrosch 217).

³⁸ *Adamant*, as a noun, is the “[n]ame of an alleged rock or mineral, as to which vague, contradictory, and fabulous notions long prevailed” (*OED*). From the seventeenth-century onward, the *OED* notes, *adamant* was used “as a synonym of diamond.”

Furthermore, the ambiguity of the word *lie* in this speech beautifully encapsulates the entire scenario as she is proposing both to assume the position and to tell an untruth. Even though Oothoon is proposing to engage in bisexual intercourse for the sake of giving Theotormon her second virginity, she is not proposing to become either a homosexual or a bisexual, for that is the lie she is wanting to tell. She cannot give him her heterosexual virginity because Bromion stole it; she can, however, give him her homosexual virginity, but only through bisexual intercourse. Afterward, as I footnoted before (see footnote 11), with Theotormon having experienced the loss of Oothoon's second virginity while experiencing the loss of his second, too, Oothoon can split back into her heterosexuality and be with Theotormon³⁹. And I wish I could end here and have resolved William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, but, sadly, this does not happen, for "Oothoon's heart and soul [do] not yet clearly [comprehend] what her eyes see, [and] she mistakenly chooses a counterpart *unworthy* of her passions" (Welch 120 – emphasis added). Ultimately, as Eaves et al. write, "Oothoon's acute understanding of her situation may have liberated her vision, but not her world" (228).

³⁹ It is not easy to understand how Oothoon proposes to lose her second virginity with Theotormon because it is a creative response to the plight Bromion set for them. Ironically, my creative response to Blake's poem in dealing with said plight is less creative than Blake's because, through my shifting of the genders in the narrative – i.e. gendering the "rapist" opposite the lover – it is very clear which the second virginity is and how Oathe13 can lose it: he has had heterosex with his "rapist" to lose his heterosexual virginity and can now have homosex with his lover to lose his homosexual virginity; Oothoon cannot so easily have sex with Theotormon to lose her second virginity as traditional sex with him would be heterosex that she has already had (unwillingly) with Bromion. A further dilemma that this raises, of course, is dealing with the call for the Eagles to rend the flesh and the proposition to catch the orgy: as I inverted the genders, I had to invert the order of those appeals, for the orgy is Oothoon's manner of second-sex while the penetration is Oathe13's. Thus, in my visual book, the orgiastic proposition necessarily has to precede the rending of flesh by beak in order for the second loss of virginity to appropriately occur (unlike in *Visions* where it could never have worked).

In discussing Oothoon in the wider context of Blake mythopoeia (via his illuminated book *Milton a Poem*), John Middleton Murray (in his Note on Blake's *Visions*) writes:

Oothoon is Jerusalem, Leutha is Babylon: together they are the Shadowy Female. But the point to be noted is that if the Shadowy Female, who thus combines the two potentialities of Woman, takes Human Form, it will be the form of Babylon. The Female Form, as in times of old, is not a form which ever woman wore on earth; it is part of the Eternal Man, prior to the division which in Blake's view befell him when he was driven from eternity into existence. Then, as in the Bible story, Male and Female were one; so it shall be again in the Kingdom of Heaven where we are as the angels who are neither married nor given in marriage. (21)

He continues to write that "[t]hat, rather than the freedom of Oothoon, is Blake's final answer to the riddle of sex. Sex is a condition of our mundane and phantom experience wherein we are as appearances [...] No doubt, that is not a very satisfying answer for those of us who would like some sort of finality upon earth" (ibid). The "finality upon earth," though, exists (un)satisfyingly in our conceptions of marriage in which Husband and Wife (Male and Female, respectively) symbolically become one body. Yet, they will always remain physically *two* bodies. Foucault's words, then, of homosexuality engendering an "interior androgyny" and "a[n] hermaphrodisism of the soul" seem to counter the *impossibility* of achieving a physical "Male and Female [as] one" identity, for, as Tony Rosso, in his paper "The Last Strumpet: Harlotry and Hermaphrodisism in Blake's Rahab," notes, "Hermaphrodisism isn't necessarily a merging of genitalia so much as a monstrous merging in general; Blake interprets hermaphrodisism as merging the male

and female as required to achieve the perfect form.” “[A]n hermaphrodism of the soul,” then, to Blake, would have been “the perfect [soul].”

Yet, my arguments here in this chapter are for *schizosexuality* not *homosexuality* in Blake’s *Visions*, and while Foucault’s words work well for homosexuality, in hyperinflating and unpacking those same words a little more, they work even better for schizosexuality. The hermaphroditic soul of the homosexual holds *sex* and *gender* in tandem with the gender operating against the sex of the individual – i.e. the sex is male while the gender is female (and vice versa). Yet this soul, in its hermaphrodism, is *imperfect* (in terms of Blake’s perfect form) because it does not allow for the sex and gender of the individual to align. In schizosexuality, they can (and do), for the splitting of sexualities joins the two sexualities within one individual so that they operate separately yet together in said individual’s consciousness. In his chapter “The Metaphor of Consciousness,” Jeffery Donaldson asks, “What does it mean to be conscious?”(401), and, following Jerome Feldman, Donaldson writes that “our brains are constituted by a ‘massive parallelism,’ such that many different parts of the brain can be computing at the same time” (390). This notion of “massive parallelism” is uncanny in relation to “interior androgyny,” and *androgyny* and *hermaphrodism* are both instances of parallelisms in our thinking that force us to think metaphorically.

Donaldson has a line about metaphoric thinking in his discussion of James Merrill’s sonnet “ProceSSIONal” when he (Donaldson) writes of “the transformative potential of metaphoric thinking [in] how we can make verbal ‘GOLD’ *out of* verbal

‘LEAD’” via word golf (391 – emphasis original)⁴⁰. And yet, as Donaldson writes, “[t]here is no depth” (ibid). Or, borrowing an hermaphroditism of Merrill’s and Jeffery’s words, there is “a ‘depthless dazzle’ available to us in the surfaces of things” (Donaldson 391, ft. 2). Donaldson continues to write that “existential metaphor [is] where one is no longer just pushing around external objects (or rather symbols that stand for them), but identifying a part of oneself with one or the other of those elements or their product,” and that “[t]he metaphor you make, at this extreme level of identification, becomes in a special sense ‘embodied,’” as “[y]our relation to it is no longer indifferent or mercenary, but personal. Something of, and in, yourself is at stake,” for “[t]he two become one” (410).

Applying this directly to Oothoon, who is “Blake’s first fully developed strong female character” (Ankarsjö 5) and “one of the most remarkable female characters of the eighteenth century” (Eaves et al., Introduction 233), she operates with the spirit of a homosexual through the guise of a heterosexual having moved from heterosexuality to (proposed) homosexuality and (expectantly) back to heterosexuality. As Donaldson would suggest, something of Oothoon is at stake, for the two are becoming one. Furthermore, Eaves et al. note that Oothoon “[refuses] to accept conventional gender roles and the split between mind and body” (Introduction 233). This rhetoric here, of course, fits Oothoon perfectly, for conventional gender roles and the mind/body divide disallow for the combination of genders to create the perfect form – i.e. the Eternal Man.

⁴⁰ Furthermore, Donaldson writes that “[w]e could scarcely have discerned a relationship between LEAD and GOLD before the link was established via a sequence of intervening patterns,” and these “intervening patterns” through word golf are, essentially, the splitting elements of schizosexuality (ibid).

And, as Middleton Murray writes, Oothoon *is* the Eternal Man (25 – emphasis added). *This*, then, is the “final answer to the riddle of sex,” and it, indeed, is not the physical freedom of Oothoon that comes in unbinding her to be with Theotormon but the psychological freedom to be both Male and Female within herself – i.e. schizosexually. “The weight of that significance,” Middleton Murray writes, “is more than the actual figure of Oothoon can carry[, and] Blake never made her carry it again” (25).

Even though Oothoon is the Eternal Man, Theotormon cannot see and understand that development within her. He is, as Spector writes, “the most problematic character of the poem, not just because of his harsh treatment of Oothoon, but because the punishment he imposes actually does harm him as much as it hurts the others” (*Language* 74). Until he can see and understand both his and Oothoon’s situations (respectively and jointly), there can be no happy resolution to the poem. Bruder, furthermore, suggests that “[a]fter reading *Visions* we might well ask, is there *no* hope in store?” (83 – emphasis added). She goes on to write that “a more apt way to end the discussion, than conjuring false signs of optimism, is to look in detail at precisely why Oothoon fails” (ibid). But Oothoon does not fail; Theotormon does: we need not examine her actions. Yet as the Daughters continue to echo Oothoon’s sighs every day, “[t]here is always the possibility that at some point, Theotormon will respond to Oothoon” (Spector, *Language* 76). In fact, Welch writes that “[i]f Oothoon’s future in Blake’s canon indicates any further progress for her, it is worth noting that she does not remain enslaved” (130). Furthermore, it is worth noting that she does not even remain enslaved within the very plates of *Visions* itself.

The final image for *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (Plate 11) shows Oothoon soaring *over* the Daughters and directly *under* the words “The End” *without* cuffs or chains on her hands as they were on her wrists and ankles in the image of Plate 7 where she is soaring over a sulking Theotormon. While her facial expression in the final plate does not suggest at a positive liberation, her outstretched arms proudly showing the release of the chains does. Moreover, while the text of *Visions* culminates without Oothoon’s release from bondage, the imagery of it ends differently. And as Oothoon is free from chains in subsequent books of Blake’s mythology, something happened between the final lines and final image of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The schizotextual/-visual final plate suggests a resolution either the text proper or the imagery proper could never have achieved in isolation and could only have achieved in a splitting of the two. Just as our introduction to Oothoon in The Argument plate was schizotextual/-visual, so, too, is the final Plate with which Blake leaves us, fully encompassing Oothoon’s fractured identity.⁴¹

⁴¹ From this image on the final plate, I took licence to re-solve Blake’s poem (rather than to resolve it) in my visual book because he actually resolved it for us without showing the work toward that resolution. My version of Blake’s narrative is not such a far stretch when the last thing we *see* is Oothoon flying free.

"I think [this] book is extraordinary, both the text and the photographs. The whole thing is really accomplished."
-Philippa Simpson

"A fine, skillful, and exciting piece!"
-Tristanne Connolly

*Visions*²⁰¹¹

*Kings and Queens of
the Sounding Air*

Tom[my] Mayberry

*Visions*²⁰¹¹

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

Master of Arts Thesis

McMaster University
Department of English and Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Jeffery Donaldson, PhD

September 2010 - August 2011

Tom[my] Mayberry



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Great Aunt Mary,
this one's for you.

Mary's "Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air"

Adrian

... "sacred link." So Orbic13 is advised towards the beginning of
... the narrative. The elaboration, itself, is led after the
... another time and place, speaks as efficiently as any feat words
... Mary's interwoven themes: a journey; a longing for connection,
... a journey—real or imagined—that abate beyond any world we
... ourselves in.

... likely hero of the romance quest Raymond Daniels, you are a
... middle-class father of one, whose relations with those around him
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... Jungian terms, one's best redemptive promise. If you were
... a subconsciously generated ultra-ego in Lyuba, the "Land

Introduction

Passing Out:

Tom[my] Mayberry's "Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air"

by Jeffery Donaldson

"Find your eternal link." So Oathe13 is advised towards the beginning of Tom[my] Mayberry's novelette. The exhortation, itself styled after the imperatives of another time and place, speaks as efficiently as any four words might of Mayberry's interwoven themes: a journey, a longed-for connection, and the latent potentials—real or imagined—that abide beyond any world we happen to find ourselves in.

If, like our unlikely hero of the romance quest Raymond Daniels, you are a middle-aged, middle-class father of one, whose relations with those around him remains a puzzle, that journey to completion might involve an opening up of one's life to certain mythic dream spaces, uprisings from an Unconscious that remains, in classical Jungian terms, one's best redemptive promise. If you were Oathe13—Raymond's subconsciously generated alter-ego in Leutha, the "Land

of Visions”—that journey to completion might involve finding a deeper, even spiritual self, in an ego-surrendering, loin-shuddering, ecstatic union with one’s promised other, either her or him as accident or desire should determine. If you are a writer like Tom Mayberry, that journey to completion might be the cultivating of another sort of “eternal link” in the kinds of responses writers often make to their literary mentors, the voices and visions in them that cry out for an answer. If you are a reader of Mayberry’s admirable revisioning of William Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, that journey to completion is all three of these in one. And it is more, in this accomplished work where connections—familial, sexual, psychological, mythopoeic—with other selves, other bodies, other voices help us to that portion of ourselves that seems often to elude us.

What Mayberry precisely revises here is Blake’s myth of “Oothoon,” the “soft soul of America” journeying to a consummation of her own. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is at heart the lamentation of a woman whose seduction at the hands of the thunderous Bromion deprives her of a promised fulfillment in the arms of her lover, Theotormon, who, himself tormented by the despoiling of his intended, abandons her to a future of anguish and solitude. Near the beginning of her journey, Oothoon is assured by a mysterious “Golden Nymph” that no death, no loss, no defeat is ever left unredeemed: “Pluck thou my flower Oothoon the mild / Another flower shall spring, for the soul of sweet delight / Can never pass away.” But how are we to think of this? A bitter irony? The coy delusionments of a trickster spirit? What happens to the “sweet delight” that Oothoon had understood as her birthright? The poem concludes: “The Daughters of Albion hear her woes & eccho back her sighs.” Ironical indeed. In one sense, Blake’s early poem anticipates later battles in his work between the “soul of sweet delight” on the one hand and, on the other,

the life and losses of the body that in Blake's mythology we must not let triumph. In another sense—certainly from our perspective—the poem can be seen to step beyond itself, look towards a fulfillment of its own that would lie in another time and in another place, in the hands of a writer who would come to understand, honour, and complicate its unique imperatives.

Mayberry invokes a subtle and singular typology: an intertextual reaching-forward and reaching-back, where the latent potential written into an original type anticipates its fulfillment or realization in a later anti-type. How better to capture the initiative and stylistic flavour of Blake's mythos than to have it reappear as the dream-space of an unsuspecting contemporary everyman that keeps *coming real* whenever he passes out. To be sure, the soul of sweet delight may never "pass away," but if a person gives too much blood, our narrator reminds us, it may certainly "pass out." Raymond Daniels' "blood relations" are in every sense open to question here. The story of his once-alienated relations with his parents—who know him *by another name*—serves as that metaphoric compass we look for at the opening of a romance narrative, where a questing hero's identity is typically set in doubt. As we often discover in the course of our best romances, the gaining of one identity often comes at the cost of sacrificing another. As Raymond reacts anaemically to a blood donation he had given earlier in the day, he passes in and out of a dream-space in which his identity undergoes a transition (so deftly embodied in Mayberry's story with subtle shifts in narrative voice) into a kind of Blakean subconscious, the sort that we might say inhabits the story itself. That dream-space is the story-within-a-story of Oathe13, where Raymond's imaginative other transforms the anaemia he suffers from (in every sense of the word) into a rich phantasmagoria of sensual delights, trials and triumphs.

What Mayberry adds to the corruption and lamentation of Blake's female

protagonist is a tacit but unmistakable homo-erotic ambiance, where our male Oothoon-surrogate, Oathe13, is overpowered, this time by a female seductress, Aquabolt21, to the disappointment of Zucchicarro34, the male lover for whom Oathe13 was originally intended. The inversion makes for a revealing inquiry into the potential resonances the poem might have for other marginalized communities than the ones Blake was writing about.

The other “addition” to Blake’s original speaks to the whole question of redemption and fulfillment itself, the kind of second-chancing that Blake’s very poem discovers in Mayberry’s narrative. Not to let slip any spoilers here, the conclusion speaks with almost dizzying complexity to the question entertained throughout this work of how redemption in every sense might be finally achieved, where deaths and rebirths become indistinguishable, where what must end comes alive in worlds you had never dreamed of, and where the life within you can rise expiringly from its own ashes. So Blake rises. So Mayberry’s story comes alive.

As if this were not inviting enough, Mayberry adds a further reinvention, one where the dreamscape of Raymond’s unconscious conjurings are recreated in a sequence of photographs. They pay revealing homage to Blake’s pictorial art and become the revisioning fulfillment of what lies latent in the story’s narrative original. Just so, we participate in a further typology, where what is written “passes out” into a further picturing, at once expanded there, transformed, and preserved. For Mayberry is as good as his word: the soul of sweet delight can never pass away.

*Visions*²⁰¹¹

*Kings and Queens of the
Sounding Air*

Every Harlot was a Virgin once

-William Blake ("For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise," 1793)

Imagines Personæ:

Oathe13 - Tommy Mayberry

Aquabolt21 - Niamh Richmond

Zucchicarro34 - Daniel Pagett

Image Credits:

Conceptual Artist - Tommy Mayberry

Photographic Artist - Tina Weltz, MPA, LPPO

Hair and Make-up Artist - Jessica Barber

Digital Image

Calla Studio



Blood.

A bead of it swelled slowly on the pad of his right index finger.

"You're all set," a bullish nurse said to him, breaking his self-hypnosis at the steady pulse of his own bleeding. "Let me get that for you." She pressed a small cotton ball into his wound, and cleaved a Band-Aid around the two. A marriage of Heaven and Hell, he thought to himself. He smirked in his head. It must have translated to his face because the nurse cocked an eyebrow at him.

"Here you go, Mr. Daniels." She passed him his forms and directed him to the isolation tables, as they appeared, just beyond them to his right.

Whew. He exhaled forcefully as he dropped himself into the folding chair behind its sibling table. *Please answer all questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge*, their cursory disclaimer echoed in his head. He clicked the pen.

Clicked it again.

Again.

Then once more.

He pulled the papers closer to his body, and leaned it over them as though in some bizarre final exam.

Part A, he read. *For all blood donors.*

Do you feel well today? No, he thought, as he circled "yes." He was thirty-six years old, and he had sincerely meant to donate blood every year since he had met that blood-donating enthusiast in his second year at the University of Elmira. He had just never been able to mount the courage. This was the furthest he had yet come, and he heartily intended to complete the course that time.

No to skin piercing treatments – his tattoos and body piercings were relics of a well-spent youth.

No to Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease – he had no inkling what that even was.

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

Yes to having travelled outside of Canada.

No to having lived outside of Canada.

No, as well, to an exotic birth and to exotic sexcapades.

Moving on, then, he thought. Making great progress.

Serious illness? Yes. He had a bad bout of Swine Flu back in 2010.

Quarantined and everything. Did that armed robbery count as a “serious accident,” though? His son was shot, not him. He circled “yes,” and continued.

No to operations.

Yes to medications. Didn’t everyone take some form?

Yes to pregnancy. Wait, he thought. He scratched it out. They meant had his body carried the pregnancy not had he gotten a body pregnant. ...or did they? He circled “no.”

No.

No.

No.

Yes.

No.

Yes. He was a father after all.

...Yes? He was born with a ventricular septal defect. Did that count?

“Defect” was right there in its title, but it was laymanly known as a *functional* heart murmur.

No to the rest, then, and *Part B[ii]* did not concern him.

Wow, he thought as he read the disclaimer for *Part C*. It was like partners older than a year no longer existed.

No.

No. Times five.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Nope.

Nope.

No!

Nooooo.

No.

No.

No.

All no's – a perfect golf card of blood donation.

That wasn't as bad as people had made it out to be, he thought as he sat there reviewing his answers and tapping the end of the pen on the tabletop. They only dug into sexual hindsight for five years: anything prior to 2031, then, was still a dirty little secret. Not that his answers would have changed much if the history scope had been wider. Post-2022, his sexual activities had become much less repressed and much more traditional.

Had the questions been more invasive, he thought, he would have had to admit to some quite bizarre activities. Like, he didn't have to tell them about his phallic vegetable evening when he was sixteen. Good thing, too, or he'd've had to divulge how quickly learning to bake saved his goings-on from being discovered. He also didn't have to share that for a five year stretch in his pre-teen years he had had a love affair with pool jets. Nope, in the eyes of the nurse, he'd appear a normal, happily-married, man. He was... save the *normal* part.

"How'd it go, hun?" She leaned in and kissed him as he walked into their home.

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"Good, I guess."

"Did you get enough to eat and drink?"

"More than enough." He laughed. "I'll be up before morning to pee at least twice!" He kissed his wife again. "You should come with me next time."

"Oh," she said. "I dunno."

"What? Why?"

"It's... I dunno, Raymond... kinda creepy."

"Saving lives' creepy?" He raised his eyebrows at her, and then smiled coyly.

"Just the thought of my blood in someone else doesn't sit right with me."

"Oh. I see, Kitty. You're one o' thoose."

"Don't go there with me, Mis-ter Daniels."

"Oh, I went there, Mis-sus Daniels."

"Guys?"

They stopped mocking each other and turned around to their son standing at the bottom of the stairs with his arms folded across his chest and a screwed up face on his face.

"What's *wrong* with you two?" he said. "I'm ten, and I don't even act like that."

"What's wrong with *us*?" Raymond said. "What's wrong with *you*? Shouldn't you be in bed, little man?"

"I *was*. But it's hard to sleep when your parents make you barf."

"Uh-oh, honey," Kitty said. "We're making Dylan sick. Maybe we shouldn't tell him that we're about to kiss... again!"

"Gross!" Dylan charged back up the stairs, laughing.

"I'll be up in a sec. to tuck you back in, buddy."

"Kay, Dad," he called through the floor. "Night, Mom!"

"G'night, sweetie. Ray, you better hurry: he needs to get to sleep because

we're up early tomorrow."

"Right. Road trip to the grandparents' in Elmira." He kissed her on the forehead, and tore away up the stairs.

"Hey, buddy," he said softly, walking into Dylan's room at the end of the hall past their bedroom and the bathroom.

"Hi, Dad."

"Feelin' better?" He smirked.

"Yah." He mirrored the grin.

"Good."

"Why do we have to get up so early tomorrow?"

"Cause Grandma and Grandpa live pretty far from us."

"Why do we live so far away from them?"

"Well," he said. Then stopped.

"It's okay, Ray," Kitty said from behind him, walking into the room. "You can tell him."

"Tell me what? Is it something bad?"

"No, no, no, Dylan: it's nothing bad. Don't get so excited." Kitty set her right hand on Raymond's left shoulder.

"When I was younger," Raymond said. "About twice as old as you are now, kiddo, I ran away from home."

"Why?"

Raymond took a deep breath, and then said, "Well, I was confused." He paused. "And scared."

"Really?"

"Really. So I left Elmira, and came to Wamsley."

"Cooooool."

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"Sure, buddy."

"Why did you stay here? Is it not as scary?"

"Well, I met your mom, and she helped me to not be afraid anymore."

"What about Grandma and Grandpa?"

"It took some time, but I fixed things with them. *We* fixed things with them. Me, Mom, and you."

"Me?"

"Yes, sir. Seven years ago, I got a letter in the mail from your Grandmother. I remember exactly what she'd written: *Hello, Raymond. Please write to me, if you can find it in your heart to. Yours most sincerely, Elizabeth Germann.*"

"That's it?"

"That was it. When I left home, I didn't tell her anything. I just left."

"Then how'd she find you?"

Kitty squeezed Raymond's shoulder slightly.

"Remember that day in the store with Dad when that man robbed it?"

"No," he said, laughing a little. "I was three, remember? But I like this story!"

"You are a weird dude, Dylan," Raymond said. "But then again, not every ten year old can say that he got shot as a baby. Born into trauma, weren'tcha?"

"I don't like that, Raymond."

"I do!" Dylan said.

"Anyway," he said. "The police scanned our fingers, they went online in their database, and the police who were working my missing person's case back home got their hit. They found me."

"Cool!"

"Very. Grandma then wrote to me here, asking me to write back if I was ready."

"And you did, right?"

"He did. And they got back in touch. Which is why we've got the long drive ahead of us tomorrow. So go to sleep now."

"Aww," he groaned. "C'mon, guys."

"Love you, Dylan," they said together. They closed his door behind them as he curled himself into his comforter.

"Hun? You okay?" Kitty said, sitting up in bed as Raymond stumbled his way out of it.

"I'm fine," he said. "Told you I'd be up to pee before morning."

"You're staggering. You sure you okay?"

"Just tired, honey. Sorry I woke you."

He tottered around the corner into the bathroom, and gripped the windowsill beside the toilet for support. Whew, he thought. He couldn't do this standing. He clenched the sink on the other side of the toilet, and turned himself around to sit down. His head was swimming. He pulled the garbage can over to him, and placed it in front of him between his bare feet. He took a deep breath. With his cool hands on his warm face, he closed his eyes.

I open my eyes, and, for a moment, I don't think that I have. It's still dark. And I'm wet. Yet, I feel myself physically blink, so I know my eyes're working. But they're not. I move my hands up toward them, and it's as though I'm flying. Swimming, rather, as there's more a current than a breeze around me. It's lovely, and I don't want to leave it. I know that I have to, though. I do. I can't stay in here forever.

Treading my arms around my body, they meet a spongy resistance just elbow distance from my chest. I test the wall a little harder, and it recedes with my touch only to return without it. I caress it with the slightest score of my

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

middle finger, and it shivers briefly, sending a calming tremor through my amnios and into my body. Another stroke; another shudder: more vibrations filling me up until I close my eyes again to see no difference. Tougher touches, more turbulent trembles. Finally, a quiver to end them all as I am flushed from my ecstasy.

The moon is high in the afternoon sky, and His orange glow pulses warmth across my dewy, naked body. I wince at His embrace. Behind me, I see my cell. It looks pathetic from the outside: a flaccid shell of a home bleeding from its collapsed walls. It's the only one that's spent. The others are elliptical punctuations, row upon row. They haven't awakened yet.

I don't know who I'm waiting for. I feel that I shouldn't stray, not that I know where I would go, but I'm bored of waiting before I've even begun to wait.

I'm still damp.

I'm still trembling.

I'm still bored and still waiting.

I believe that all four will cease when I meet the one I'm waiting for.

The moon blazes onward through His course, and I watch Him dance further away from me. I wish to join Him, but I'm not waiting for Him.

Now I'm dry.

Now I'm still.

Now I'm not bored, but I continue waiting.

...

Now I'm woe.

I rise on my legs and wander from my site. My steps are unhurried and calculated; I graze the ground with my toes before committing my foot to each print. Each pace loses me more in the maze of this place. My heart booms

quicker. A fear is settling there that I didn't invite. That I didn't desire. That I had never kissed before. I turn myself to trek back to a common ground, but I cannot find its puddle amongst the pointed landscape.

Discomfort.

I want my comfort.

I seek a flower to comfort me.

I sit down.

I look back to the sky, but He's gone now.

I'm alone.

I cry.

A new puddle forms around me as I stain the plain clear. My sobs are the first noises that I've heard since the shallow splashes upon my release. They haunt me after they've stopped. From them, words form. They pose a question to me, asking why I cry. And I don't have an answer for them. I lean and look into my tears as the soil swallows them up and spits out a seed. I reach to touch it with my finger, but it bursts before I make contact, and a stunning blossom opens in its wake.

"Is it really you?" the blossom says to me.

"Yes," I say. "It is really me. I was waiting and wandering for you."

"Do you know who you are?"

"No," I say. "But *cogito*..."

"...ergo es," it replies. "And you *are* Oathe13."

"Are you a flower?"

It giggles.

"Are you a dryad?"

It snorts

"Can you be both?"

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"I am perfect. I am both."

"What shall I call you?"

"I am called Calthalendula. I was designed to guide you on your journey."

"My journey?"

"To Completion. You are Incomplete, Oathe13. That is why you are here."

"And where is *here*?"

"We are in Leutha. In the Land of Visions."

I nod.

"Have you no memories?" it asks.

"I only remember the sensations of my cell," I say.

"That is very well, Oathe13," Calthalendula says to me. "It makes Completion all the easier."

I nod again, and ask, "What must I do?"

"Find your Eternal Link. Only one's Eternal Link can foster one's Completion. Your E-Link is Zucchicarro34. He resides in the East. Go to him. He will Complete you."

I look at Calthalendula for a long moment without blinking.

"But how do I get there?"

"You must fly."

"Fly?"

"I will help you, Oathe13. Release me from this bed."

"I wouldn't dare, Calthalendula," I say, shocked. "What would happen to you if I did?"

"That which will happen to you. Fear not, Oathe13: the soul of sweet delight can never pass away."

I slowly reach out my right hand and sweep my fingertips along Calthalendula's golden petals. As I pull my hand back in toward me, it follows

its motion and rises from the mud on its powerful stem. It grows nearer to my face, and I cup its head in my right hand and grasp its stalk with my left. With both of my hands embracing it, subtle shoots emerge from the ground and wind themselves softly up my body.

We are becoming one, Calthalendula and I. Its roots hug me tighter, and when I feel that I could no longer pull away had I wanted to, the centre of Calthalendula's blossom opens. A hot glow radiates from it onto me, resting on my face, shoulders, and between my breasts. The intensity of its light consumes me until I can no longer see again nor feel anything but its fire. A comfortable cool settles on my skin, and I open my eyes to see that Calthalendula has left me. I am now clothed, but alone again.

You are not, Calthalendula's voice whispers to me from within. *Find Zuccicarro*³⁴. I close my eyes and see him.

He's waiting for me.

Calling my name.

My name.

Name.

He heard it still, and felt a subtle shoving on his shoulder.

"Raymond?"

Another pulse of pushes.

"...Ray? Honey, you okay?"

"I'm fine," he said. His face was chilled, and his head was throbbing. "What happened?"

"I think you fainted," Kitty said softly. "I heard a crash and ran into the bathroom. Don't stand up! You're on the floor."

"Mom? Dad? What's going on?"

"Nothing, Dylan: go back to bed, sweetie."



"Is Dad okay?"

"I'll be fine, kiddo." He lifted his head enough to smile weakly at his son, glancing past the small dolphin tattoo on his wife's ankle.

"Your eye."

"It's nothing. Get some sleep, now: we'll be hitting the road soon enough."

"It's time to wake up again."

Raymond groaned as he grudgingly opened his eyes.

"Don't give me that look," Kitty said. "We're not going to let you slip into a coma."

"Fine, fine, fine," he said. "I'm up. Happy?"

"Very." She smirked.

"Where are we?" He blinked twice heavily, and rubbed at his eyes fiercely.

"On Highway 17 now," Kitty said. "We passed through Sault St. Marie about an hour ago. About halfway there now, I think. And we'll be stopping by a —"

An echoey, muffled rendition of Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" broke her speech.

"Hold that thought, Kitty," he grinned, leaning forward in his seat to pluck his iBerry from its place on the dashboard.

"I hope it's the BSC. It'd be about time they got to us."

"Hello?" Raymond said after scoring his thumb down the centre of his handcomp and holding it in his palm.

"Mr. Daniels?" the smooth face on the screen spoke. "This is Dr. Khorna from Blood Services Canada contacting."

"Hello, Dr. Khorna," Raymond said. His chest tightened with his grip on his iBerry. "How is everything?"

“Unfortunately, I do not have a wholly pleasant update for you.”

Kitty sharply inhaled, and Dr. Khorna’s eyes widened impressively as Raymond glanced to his left in the car.

“It is not devastating news,” she continued, “but perhaps you should pull over, Mrs. Daniels.” With a subtle rosin to her cheeks, Kitty flicked on the right turning signal, and pulled onto the shoulder of the highway.

“We examined your blood this morning, Mr. Daniels, after your wife contacted us about your reaction, and we discovered that your blood is unusually thin for someone not diagnosed with a form of haemophilia. In your interview answers, you noted that you were born with a ventricular septal defect, yes?”

“I did,” Raymond said.

“Well, Mr. Daniels, we believe that, given your heart’s condition and the condition of your blood, in donating your blood, your heart was not physically able to redistribute it sufficiently to your body afterward, and your body syncopated.”

Raymond opened his mouth, but Kitty beat him to his words.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t understand,” she said.

“Because your husband’s heart does not beat as it should but rather murmurs instead, absent blood in a greater amount than, say, from a nick in shaving or a small cut with a kitchen knife, his heart could not keep up with the demands his body was making on it to carry the remaining blood throughout. As a result, it, quite literally, exhausted itself in pumping overtime. Your brain, Mr. Daniels, without receiving enough oxygen from your blood to function, shut itself off. You fainted as a result.”

“Will I be okay?”

“The fainting was the worst of it. The final act of your body in trying to

rescue itself. You will, now, slowly recover as your body makes new blood to replace what you donated. You should get lots of rest this weekend, drink plenty of fluids, don't operate any heavy machinery, and, most importantly, don't overexert yourself."

"Oh, he'll be doing none of that," Kitty said. "But he'll be okay?"

"With proper care and some good, ol' ar and ar, he'll be good as new. Better, actually, as he knows about this now."

"Thank you, Dr. Khorna." He laughed.

"You should, please, also let your family doctor know of this. It isn't anything severe, but it would be good to have in your records in case of an accident or trauma. And, regrettably, you should not donate blood in the future as your body will again react in this way, but there are other ways in which you can still be involved as we are always looking for volunteers and donation coordinators and—"

"Thank you," he said. "I understand."

"Of course, Mr. Daniels." She nodded at him on the screen.

"Good day, Dr. Khorna."

"Good day to you, too. And Mr. Daniels? Do keep ice on that eye as well."

The screen went white, and Raymond ran his thumb across it again and replaced his handcomp in its holder on the dashboard.

"Well, that's not so bad, honey," Kitty said, rubbing his arm.

He laughed again.

"What's funny?"

"I spent my whole life afraid of donating blood only to buck up the courage to finally do it, and what do I get for it? A clear sign that I should never have done it in the first place."

"At least you did it, though. That's something."

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"Mind if I drive the rest of the way?" He smirked.

"Nice try there, Ray," she said, restarting the car. "You won't be driving this weekend."

She pulled the car back onto the highway, merged with the traffic, and continued down the seventeen.

"What happened to your face?" Elizabeth Germann gasped as she pulled out of a hug and clamped her hand on his cheeks. "That just looks terrible!"

"It's nothing, Mom," Raymond said. "I fainted last night and hit my head."

"What? Why?" She released his face but continued staring into it.

"And what on?" A stronger hand now grasped his chin and pushed it to the right for a clearer look at it.

"It's actually a funny story, Dad," Kitty said, giggled slightly at the man.

"It's not funny at all," Raymond said, laughing. "I donated blood two days ago in Wamsley."

"Seriously, son? You always said you'd never be able to."

"Well, I really wanted to do it once in my life, so when I saw the sign advertising a blood drive at our community centre, I made a point to just go and do it."

"Good for you."

"Not really." He laughed. "I didn't react so well to it."

"What happened?" Elizabeth said. Worry drenched her face.

"I fainted in the middle of the night when I got up to go to the bathroom. Banged my head on the tub on my way down." He pointed to his eye.

"I heard the crash and found him lying on the floor," Kitty said.

The worry slightly shifted to a coy smile on Elizabeth's face, and she choked back a giggle.

"Were you —" she started.

"Yes, yes, yes, Mom," Raymond said. "I couldn't stand to pee because I felt nauseous, so I sat, and then fainted from on the toilet."

"Oh my." She let free the giggle.

"Yup," Kitty said, joining in the growing laughter. "Pants down and sprawled out for the world to see."

"Did you contact the Clinic to let them know?" his father said. The giggling stopped.

"Kitty did right away."

"And?"

"And they said fainting can happen, but doesn't all that often, and that they'd run his blood right away to see if they could tell anything from it."

"One of their doctors reached us on the road with their results, and apparently because of my weird heart and thin blood, my body can't handle giving blood."

"Are you going to be alright?"

"I will. Just have to take it easy over the next couple of days to fully recharge myself."

"And isn't that what you're here for anyway, son?" His father patted him on the back. "Let's get you unpacked and settled, then."

"Trunk first," Raymond said. "Cooler stuff in there." He took a step toward the back of the car, but his father didn't move.

"Look at him sleeping."

"Yeah, he's a good kid."

They stood outside the open car door, arms crossed across their chests, looking on Dylan in an absent nostalgia as Kitty and Elizabeth walked away from them chatting.

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"I know what you're thinking, son," his father said, turning his head to look into his face. Raymond met his eyes and held them softly. "Don't."

Raymond looked back at his sleeping son and said, "I just never thought we could all be together like this."

"I said, 'don't.'"

"Like a family."

"We *are* a family."

"Dad," Raymond said, pulling his arms tighter around himself and shifting his weight awkwardly from foot to foot. "I don't know what I'd do if Dylan ever did to Kitty and I what I did to you and Mom."

His father put a strong hand on his shoulder and squeezed tenderly.

"He won't."

"But if he does."

"Then you'll work through it, son. We did."

"Dad," Raymond said after a small pause during which Dylan turned over in the seat. "I'm so—"

"I know, son. I know."

They looked on Dylan together again before Raymond leaned into the car.

"Dyl? Dylan?" He shook his shoulder slightly. "Hey hey, buddy, we're here. Have a good sleep?"

"Hi, Dad," he said, rubbing his eyes. He yawned.

"Join us when you're ready, kay kiddo?" Raymond said.

"Yeah, Dad." He scrambled to unclasp his seatstrap, and climbed out of the car. "Grandma, can you take me swimming now?"

"You're not even awake yet, buddy," Raymond said, sliding the car door shut behind him.

"But the water'll wake me up."

"So will helping your mother and I unpack."

"Oh, Tyler," Elizabeth said. "Let me take him to the lake."

A dead silence broke the gathering. Everyone's eyes flicked from each other's to one another's and back.

"Who's Tyler?" Dylan said.

Elizabeth's face paled terribly.

"Oh... um... ah..." she said.

"That was my name," Raymond said, patting his son on the shoulder. "Before."

"Cooooool," Dylan said, looking into his dad's face, grinning impressively.

"Sure, buddy."

"You told him?" Elizabeth said to Kitty from the corner of her mouth.

"We started to, Mom," Kitty said, taking a duffle bag from the backseat and tossing the strap over her shoulder. "He asked why we lived so far away from here."

Elizabeth took the remaining bag and followed her onto the porch.

"I guess he had to find out one day. I just don't like thinking about it."

"He's here again, though, Mom." She took her free hand in her own.

"I know, Kitty." She squeezed her hand before releasing it and opening the door for her. "Thanks for bringing him back to me, to us, all those years ago."

"So..." Dylan said, interrupting. "Can we go?"

Raymond and Kitty looked at each other.

"As soon as you unpack your things and find your bathing suit," Kitty said. "Sure."

"Alright!" He grabbed his bag from Kitty's arm and tore up the stairs.

"Hey, hey, hey!" Raymond called from the front yard. "Get back here and properly greet your grandparents, young man!"

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"Oops." Dylan dropped his bag at the top of the staircase and skittered back down it. "Forgot."

"That's better."

"Hi, Grandma." He kissed her cheek and hugged her. "Hi, Grandpa." He shook his hand and hugged him. "Thanks for having us down for the weekend." He looked at Raymond expectantly.

"Oh, alright." Raymond smiled. "Go!"

"Yes!" He charged back up the stairs.

"Kids," Kitty said, turning toward Raymond. "You okay, Ray?"

"You look pale, son," his dad said. "You should sit down."

"I'm fine, I'm fine." He rubbed viciously at his eyes. "Just a little light-headed's all."

"Yourri, I'll help you with the cooler," Elizabeth said. "Sit." She guided Raymond to an Adirondack chair on the deck.

"Mom, I'm fine," he said, falling quickly into the chair. "Really."

"Your face tells otherwise."

"I'll get you a glass of water, hun, then I'll help Mom and Dad unpack."

"I can help." He held his head in his right hand heavily.

"I'm sure you can," she called. "But you won't. Here."

He reluctantly took the cup and sipped on it, biting the rim.

Over the bitten rim, he watched, between weighty eye flutters, as they unpacked the car, fighting to keep them reopening. He set the half-empty cup on the table beside him, and, with both hands, held his heavy head. To the point of near pain, he surrendered to them without noticing, and I look East in hearing my name called. I push my feet firmly into the ground and release them to soar. Watching below me, I see the moist puddle shrink into a spot before disappearing. I hear my name again; a calling for me. I hear another voice with

the same words on its different tongue. Closer. Nearer. Softer, yet harsher. *Watch out, Oathe13!* Calthalemdula shouts from inside me. Raymond jerked open his eyes to Kitty's.

"Did you fall asleep, Ray?" she said. "Or pass out?"

"I don't know."

"You weren't gone that long, so you might have just nodded off. You okay?"

"Fine." He attempted a smile. "Sorry for scaring you."

She kissed his forehead.

"Let's go inside. Ericka and Brandon'll be here tomorrow, so tonight's the only night we've got your parents to ourselves."

Elizabeth clicked off the screen and turned around. The room behind her was empty, and it plunged into a shallow darkness when she turned down the lamp. Picking up the tray of graham-and-chocolate crackerettes and marshmallow discs from the countertop, she stepped outside and walked toward the weakly-glowing light of the fire near the shore of the lake. The sun was low over it in the East.

"What's up with Uncle Brandon, Grandma?" Dylan said, shooting flecks of hotdog into the air. "Sorry, Aunt E." He wiped some off her sweater and offered her the final bite.

"No thanks, Dylan," she said, laughing. "If I'd'd better reflexes, I'd've had my snack!"

"Brandon's car's in the shop again," Elizabeth said, not hiding the annoyance in her voice. "I swear, that man pays more in bills for that machine than he'd pay to just get a new twenty thirty-six one. The new Toyota G-Section seems nice."

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"Mom, he's never going to get rid of his car," Raymond said. "It's a classic."

"Yeah, Lizzy, it's a vintage 2011 Chevrolet Camaro SS. Not to mention it was his grandfather's car before his."

"Regardless," Elizabeth said. "Because of that car and its...issues, he can't make it up anymore."

"What? Nooo." Dylan said. He chuckled the butt of his hotdog into the flames.

"Dylan, don't waste food."

"Can't someone go pick him up?" Kitty said. "He just lives across Elmira in Eldale. From Grand Lake, it's not that far."

"Are any of you in shape to drive tonight?"

Ericka hiccupped, and Kitty sniggered.

"Well," Elizabeth said, smiling only slightly. "I don't have my licence anymore, so he'll just have to wait 'til morning. After black coffees all around." She swept her index around the fire at everyone.

"I'll go, Mom," Raymond said, getting up out of his lawn chair. "I've only had water all day."

"Ray, no," Kitty said. "You can't."

"Look at me, look at me, look at me," he said, pointing to his face, grinning. "Do I look like I can't?"

"No."

"And have I fainted or fallen since yesterday morning?"

"No."

"I'm fine, then. See?"

"I dunno."

"I agree with Kitty, Raymond," Elizabeth said.

"Guys, it's a short drive, it's still light out, and you know what? I'll let

Brandon drive back. Deal?”

“Son.” His father pulled his keyring from his jeans’ pocket and tossed them to Raymond.

“Thanks, Dad.”

“But be careful,” he said. “Pull over if you have to and contact us, you hear?”

“I hear.”

“I wanna come, too, Dad!” Dylan said, leaping up from beside Ericka.

“Sure thing, buddy. Let’s go.”

“Ray,” Kitty said, slowly standing. “Be safe, kay?”

“I will, honey.” He kissed her. “Be back in a bit. Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

“I’ll let Brandon know you’re on your way,” Elizabeth said. “Drive safely. Goodbye.”

Raymond pulled his father’s car into his old driveway on Aspen Crescent and turned the key backward before pulling it out of the ignition.

“You used to live here, Dad?” Dylan said, gawking up at the small old house.

“Yup,” Raymond said. “Before I went to our home, I called this house home.”

“Cooool. And why does Uncle Brandon live here and not Grandma and Grandpa?”

“It’s kinda a neat story actually, Dylan.” Raymond said. “I’ll tell you later.”

“Aww, c’mon: tell me now.”

Raymond looked on Dylan a moment before starting.

“Grand Lake used to be called Grand River, and Grandma and Grandpa

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

owned a summer home on its bank. In 2016, after a very cold winter with the most snow Elmira had seen in a long, long time, the river flooded and there was so much water everywhere that it had nowhere to go. So it stayed. It drowned a lot of land, and destroyed the cottages and everything along the bank.

"When it was safe again, after the township dammed the water to control its current from doing more harm, those people who owned property that was lost, Grandma and Grandpa among them, built new homes on what was then the new lake. With the dams in place to control the water, that area wasn't at risk for flooding anymore. About eight years ago, then, your grandparents retired and moved there permanently. Uncle Brandon bought this house from them, and Aunt Ericka moved out into her own place."

"Major cool. So you had *two* homes growing up? This one here and another one on Grand Lake?"

"Grand River, then, but yeah."

"Can we go inside this one, Dad?"

"Sure," Raymond said, undoing his seatstrap. "Uncle Brandon's late as usual anyway."

Raymond opened the gate to the backyard of the house and held it for Dylan. He knocked on the door before jiggling the handle. It wasn't locked, so he turned it and walked into his old house.

"I haven't been here in years, Dylan."

"It's messy in here, Dad."

"Shh, buddy." Raymond laughed. "Uncle Brandon'll hear you."

"Hey, big brother!" Brandon called from somewhere in the house. "Be right up!"

"Hi, Uncle Brandon!"

"Hey-hey, little man! How you doing?" He bolted up the stairs from the

basement holding his handcomp in front of him. "One sec., there," he said into it. "My favourite nephew's here."

"Good to see you, Bran," Raymond said, pulling him into a hug after Brandon released Dylan from his.

"You, too, Tyger," he said, holding him longer than he held Dylan. "You, too. Take my bag? I'm almost done here." He pointed at his iBerry.

"Sure thing."

"Tyger?" Dylan whispered to his dad.

"Nickname growing up," he whispered. "My name was Tyler Germann, remember?"

"Oh yeah."

Raymond carried Brandon's duffle to the car as Brandon locked up behind, still chatting to his screen.

"Uncle Brandon," Dylan said. "You gotta drive."

"Your old man can, Dyl. I'm almost done here."

"Bran, I told Mom and Kitty that —"

"It was just a little blood, Ray." He made a puppy face. "And you're fine. But give me a sec. here if you must." He held out his free hand to catch the keys.

"Never mind," Raymond said, returning the face and climbing into the driver's seat. "I made it here fine. Strap up, guys." He put the key in the ignition and turned it forward.

He backed out of his old driveway, and turned off Aspen Crescent onto Barnswallow Street.

"These neighbourhoods used to all be cornfields, Dylan," Raymond said, pointing out both windows.

"Okay, Dad." Dylan laughed.

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"He's not kiddin', Dyl," Brandon said, turning away from the handcomp screen. "We grew up with this one being houses, but we used to play hide and seek in that one in the summers."

"For real?"

"For real."

"Cool."

Raymond flicked on the right-turning signal, and merged onto Highway 86. With the speedometer count climbing to eighty-five-point-three kilometres an hour and resting there, Raymond steered on toward Grand Lake.

"Sorry about that," Brandon said. He put his iBerry in his inner jacket pocket.

"No problem, Hollywood," Raymond said.

Dylan laughed.

"You think that's funny, Dylan?" Brandon said. "Huh? Huh? That was an important call, I'll have you know."

"More important than me?"

"Nah, but I couldn't let him know that. He'dn't've understood like you, little man."

Dylan smiled.

"So how's school? And how many girlfriends do you have?"

Raymond smiled as Dylan and Brandon chatted back and forth with their soft conversation penetrating him like a soothing lullaby. He rubbed at his left eye with his left hand and blinked rapidly to refocus them on the road. He fought against them, but his eyes won. And closed. With them still closed, in my fear to reopen them, I crash violently to the firm earth below me. Calthalendula murmurs to me that I am okay, but my body wails out against its calming tone. I lift my face from the ground, and grains of sand trickle down

my cheeks and leap off my chin.

I hear thundering footfalls behind me. They draw booming closer. I slowly spin on my knees to face the direction of their sound, and as if waking from the sand below them, my gaze meets two powerful, slender bare legs. I feel I should trust in their beauty, but somewhere inside of me something powerful rebels.

"Is she –" I start.

No.

"Are you –" I try.

No.

"Oathe13," she says.

No!

She extends her left hand to me, just inches from my nose. I reach mine up to place it in hers, but draw it back into myself when I see the markings on her skin.

Yes...

They're marine strikes fulminating up her flexor ulnares.

"Oathe13," she says again. She pulls her own hand back into herself as I stand.

"Who are you?"

"I am your E-Link, Oathe13."

She lies!

"You are?"

Be careful, Oathe13. Be very, very careful!

"I am."

"What is your name?"

...Aquabolt21...

"I am Aquabolt21, Oathe13. I am the one to Complete you."



“No.”

No.

I step away from Aquabolt21.

Yes!

“Oathe13?”

Run.

“Oathe13!”

Run!

I’m faster than she is, but only because my toes torch the ground beneath me as hers slosh at its soils. I glance across my shoulder and witness in horror as the flames from my footsteps amplify the stream of hers as she fits every track with increased energy and bounds ever closer. She’s devouring my footprints, and my only means of escape is the very thing that feeds her so.

She bursts toward me, and I summon the little strength that I have left in myself to spark forward. It isn’t enough. I feel the clammy coolness of her hands on my calves as they slip further down below my knees and embrace my ankles, pulling them out from under me as I stumble. In a flash of black and crack of gold, she’s caught all of me and thrust it onto the ground again. The dew from her body has moistened it, and the static from her body pummels me. I writhe in her stormy bed.

I look hard into her eyes and see nothing but my own fear reflected back to me in her phthalo irises. She refuses to break her focus, and I can’t remember how to blink. With all eyes still wide and watching, I taste the cool emptiness of her mouth as her lips caress mine before her strong tongue breaks into and through them. I still cannot blink. Nothing of me can react. Then, everything reacts.

I watch powerlessly. My body detaches itself from me. It’s as though I’ve

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

entered into a fever dream from which I can't escape. The only part of me left under my control is my eyes.

I see the swelling, but don't feel it.

I see the pumping, hear the murmuring, but don't feel it.

I see the squirming, smell the breathing, taste the seeping, but don't feel it.

I see everything.

I feel nothing.

...

I finally blink.

My eyes burn behind their lids. I see the fire, and he heard the screaming. A younger voice than his and he didn't know how to get to it. He called his name, but heard no answer. He freed himself from his seatstrap and fell down from his seat where he was hanging in the car. Liquids from his forehead rushed into his eyes, tearing them up, and he felt wet everywhere, and hot from the flames. His crawling slowed to a nothing, and he collapsed in the pooling of his own blood and sweaty tears.

And my tears aren't freeing me because she grows wetter as she continues. What is my body doing? It's a grotesque marionette with an erect handlebar in my flaccid grasps and someone foreign jerking the strings. The controller isn't mine. This isn't my fault! It's so hot. It's so dirty. I'm so exhausted. I fear I may faint, but if I do, I fear I may drown. And I have to watch my body. I need to see it. To witness it. To understand it. But I won't. I can't. *You may*, Calthalendula whispers to me.

She closes her eyes at last, and I watch her shut eyelids flutter garishly. As she opens them, she drenches me more than I would've thought possible in this already sodden plot. Her fresh moisture reaches my belly and rests there, causing an uncanny spasm to shudder deep within in my pelvis. I try desperately

to stifle it, but I lose to my body once again. An horrendous betrayal of my soul.

“Behold,” Aquabolt21 speaks. “You are Complete.”

She’s standing over me in her conquest. I didn’t see her get up, but I haven’t the power left to join her. I wriggle in the mud in my feeble attempt to regain autonomy.

“Complete?” I whisper. I can’t get up.

“Complete.” She smiles, and there’s a certain softness to it. It isn’t vicious. I, slowly, crawl out of the puddle.

“I don’t feel right,” I say.

Oathe13...

“You’re gestative.”

...there’s someone else in here...

I move my hand to touch my stomach, but an onyx tear that isn’t from either of us drops into my palm and soaks into my skin. Aquabolt21 grabs my wrist, and in her retouch of me, the sky breaks open into a sob of umber rain. The droplets float around her and me before engulfing us in a faultless ebony wave. She emits a sound that I can’t tell is either of pain or of pleasure, and I try to cower between my knees and beneath my arms, but her clutch on my wrist is unshakeable.

The current shatters into a siege of winged shadows, and they soar into the surrounding sky leaving a sparkling silver shackle binding Aquabolt21 and me *dos-à-dos* in her cave. A silence falls around us, and I can only hear the shallow breathing of her lungs not mine. I place my hand on my heart to ensure its murmuring, and the coolness of the chain caresses the bare skin of my chest.

I hear the soft subtlety of feet landing at the entrance to the cave, and their sound circulates through my body, through the cave, and reverberates back to

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

the entrance and out into the sky. I look up into his earthly eyes and immediately drop my gaze again. Calthalendula doesn't have to tell me who he is, nor do I have to ask. I know. I hang my head even lower. I see in the shadow he casts onto me that he does the same before crouching to sit at the entrance wearing the threshold hard.

He sits too far for my fingertips to reach him. Stretch as they may, my chained wrist allows them no more push. But I feel he feels the energy behind them as the skin just above his shoulder twitches the moment before I finally drop my hand.

"Zucchicarro34," I whisper. I know not the words to follow. He doesn't have any either. So, I try again. And again. Again and again but to no avail.

I pause.

"It isn't —"

I pause.

"I wouldn't —"

I pause.

"She didn't —"

I pause.

"You can't —"

I pause.

"...Zucchicarro34?"

I am but persuading him in vain.

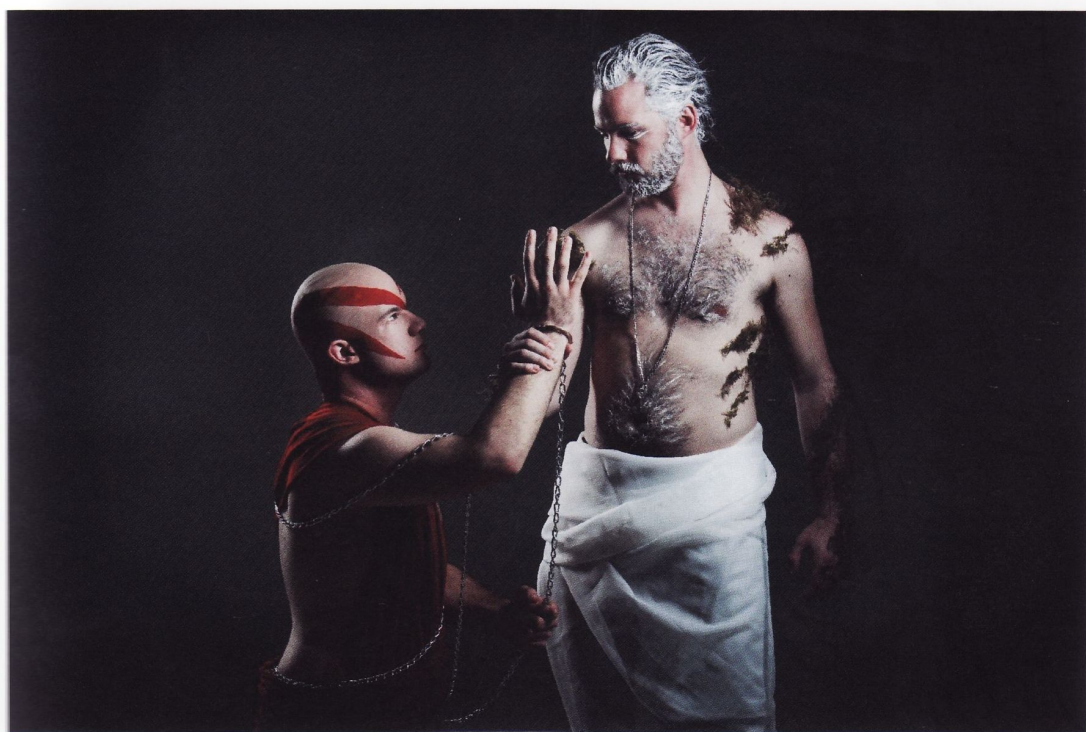
Zucchicarro34 hears me not!

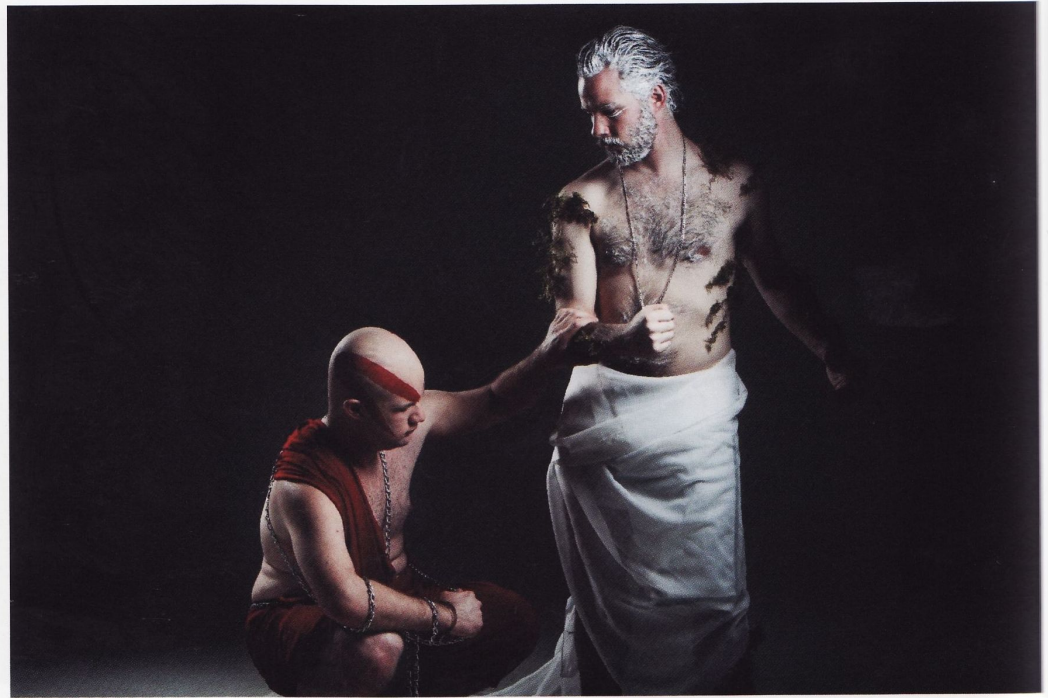
And none but Aquabolt21 can hear my lamentations.

...

I glare back at her without seeing her and think, "For what?"

"Zucchicarro34," I say. Softly, with no alarm. "Zucchicarro34."











Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

“Zucchicarro34,” I say again. “What will it take for you to talk to me? I can’t explain what happened, but if I am too unclean next to your purity, meet me in my state so we can be one as we are to be. I will catch for you the men of Mild Silver, or of Furious Gold, and lie beside you watching their Completion with you as you watched Aquabolt21 Complete me. You may take delight in it, Zucchicarro34: I promise you I will not be jealous. We will be even to be equal once more.”

Then Zucchicarro34 breaks his silence and answers. Aquabolt21 shakes the cavern with her lamentations, and I wait silent all the day and all the night. When the morn arises, I renew my lamentations.

“Oh, Mother Monster! Creatress of us! Mistaken Demon of our world! How can one joy absorb another? Are not different joys holy, eternal, infinite? And each joy is a love? Mother of Conception, why have you taught my Zucchicarro34 this accursed thing?

“Zucchicarro34, I want to be with you. You are my true E-Link, and even in a Completion, I remain Incomplete without you. You are not like Aquabolt21, so there is still a Completion left for us to find together. But I don’t know how to reorient myself.

“Zucchicarro34, how can I meet you in your purity?”

Ask for Shadoire, Oathe13: ask.

“Z-Zucchicarro34,” I say. “I would like to speak with Sh-Shadoire.”

More firmly.

“Zucchicarro34,” I say. “I want to see Shadoire.”

Demand it!

“Shadoire! Show yourself!”

A subtle light glows from Zucchicarro34’s contorted spine, and the brilliant beams of it fill the cave.



King and Queen of the Underworld

"Zuercheren!" I say again. "What will it take for you to talk to me? I can't explain what happened, but if I am the wicked one in your party, you must win."



"Shadrach, Mene, Abednego!"

A white light glows from Zuercheren's extended wings, and the brilliant beams of it fill the cave.









From within Zucchicarro34, a snowy craneling emerges just as my breast glows warmly again and releases Calthalendula. We sit in separate still silences, Zucchicarro34 and I, as they approach each other. They stop just shy of touching one another and gaze deep into each other's eyes. There are no words. I experience their conversation with orchestral sensitivity. It moves allegro, yet I am able to feel beats of "ancient rite" and catch chords of "deep magic." Still, I don't nod severely as Zucchicarro34 does.

"Does no one wish to speak with Dulfina?"

The music stops, and Aquabolt21's ears begin to shine with the light from them haloing her head. From the glow breaks a teal merewolf. It crouches just in front of Aquabolt21 with its gaze downcast in avoidance of Calthalendula's and Shadoire's eyes. Nothing moves, and the cave air holds itself eerily tense until Calthalendula gestures for Dulfina to join it and Shadoire.

The conversation symphonically begins again *allegro*, but the only bar I grasp is, "part of yet not." The rest is a beautiful whirring until the three of them return themselves to us and the cave redarkens in their absences.

Do you still trust me, Oathe13?

"Yes," I say. Zucchicarro34 stands.

Then, call on the Gruiformæ to restore you.

"I will."

Zucchicarro34 approaches me. Taking the key from his neck, he unbinds me for my exploit.

"Kings and Queens of the sounding air!" I call with holy voice. "Rend away my defiled flesh so that I may once again reflect the image of my Zucchicarro34 on my transparent breast!"

At my call, the Gruiformæ descend and rend their bleeding prey. I writhe as they tear away at me. Beginning with my stomach, shredding it piece from

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

piece, spilling what is inside out so I am splashing in a puddle of myself. And of my progeny.

With it all drooling in the air around me, I reach and grasp one Gruiforma. *It is an anchor of semblance while the rest of its siege pulls the remaining flesh* from my bones leaving me a scarred skeleton with a vacuous hole in my loins. From that hole, a tiny smouldering sparks and almost immediately bursts into a blaze that engulfs what's left of my cadaver. I shriek out as the flames climb to my skull and fill my orbital cavities, shielding from sight everything but their crimson glory.

Then it all stops.

I am seeing without eyes.

I am breathing without lungs.

I am without a body.

Then Zucchicarro³⁴ speaks to me.

"You can rise again from these ashes," he says. "From the good you've failed to do. You can rise again from these ashes to create yourself anew. If your entire world is ashes, then must your life be true. An offering of ashes. An offering to do."

"I offer you my failures," I reply instinctively. "I offer you my attempts. These gifts not fully given and these dreams not fully dreamt. Give my stumblings direction, and give my vision wider view. An offering of ashes. An offering to you."

"Then rise again from these ashes," he says. "Let healing come to pain. Though Spring has turned to Winter, and sunshine's turned to rain, this rain we'll use for growing to create our world anew. From this offering of ashes comes my offering to you."

A new warmth washes over me as my body regrows itself. With new eyes, I











Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

watch as the pool of Gruiformæ dive into my surrounding blood puddle and as that new *mélange de trois* fills the hole inside of me.

Zucchicarro34 smiles tenderly, and my soul reflects the smile.

“Arise,” he says to me. “And drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy.”

He embraces me strongly and passionately, and I close my eyes.

When I opened them again, I saw that they were still closed. I looked into my own face as if I was looking into a mirror that reflects the opposite of what is. I blinked my eyes hard and long. I didn’t want to see them; I wanted to see from them. But it didn’t work. I took a deep breath, and I watched my body’s chest rise as I’d never seen it do before.

My wife (I could tell by the rings on her hands) was sitting beside my body on the stark white bed. On my left. My best friend (I could just make out the tattoo of the albatross on the inside of his bicep) was across from her on my body’s other side. On my right. They both were holding onto me: one to my shoulder; the other to my arm. I felt their impressions there on me as I heard the shallow beeping of the machine displaying my heart rate.

I stood there with them just watching. Not one of us spoke: I, because I couldn’t; they, because I was sure they’d said everything that they’d wanted. That they could. I wished that they’d say something, though, because I’d be able to hear them. But Kitty just moved her thumb gently on my skin, and I felt it. Dylan tightened his grip on me slightly, and I felt it, too. I hadn’t felt his touch in such a long time, and I’d never felt it quite like that before. I wondered for how long he’d been here with my body.

Seeing Dylan made me aware that my Dylan wasn’t in this room. The beeping from the monitor sped up. And neither was Brandon. Faster still. I squeezed back where they both were squeezing and I wished one of them

would say something. Anything! I turned toward the door, but it was closed. I paced the area in front of my body's bed and waited for something – anything – to happen. A coolness hugged my skin, and I looked down before looking up to see Kitty crying quietly. Silent tears slid from her cheeks to my skin.

The door behind me opened with a strong click, and a nurse with a clipboard entered the room. She approached the bed and tufted the pillow under my head. She smiled weakly at Kitty, but they didn't speak. The nurse didn't close the door, and I continued looking at Kitty and Dylan and my body as I backed out of it into the hospital hallway. I needed to find my Dylan, my baby, and Brandon. What had I done to them?

The hallway outside was mostly empty. A man in a suit walked past me, and an orderly in scrubs walking beside a woman wearing an IV necklace moved by me, too. They were talking casually about her nephew studying at the University of RIM. As they turned the corner away from me, the hallway fell into silence, and I heard my mother's soft voice. I followed it to a room three down from where I was standing. My mother's back was to the opened door, and she was sitting in a chair beside a bed with small, bare feet at the foot that I recognized.

I stepped into the room and slowly walked up beside my mother. She was holding Dylan's left hand in both of her own. And she was talking to him. He was a younger version of me in that bed. His eyes were closed like mine, and his heart monitor was beeping at the very same pulse that mine was.

"How is he?"

My mother and I both turned around to see my father and Ericka walking into Dylan's room.

"He's just sleeping now," Mom said. "But he keeps asking about Raymond."

Dad exhaled brokenly. Ericka sat down on the other side of Dylan's bed.

"I'll stay with him," she said to our parents. "Go."

Kings and Queens of the Sounding Air

"C'mon, Lizzie." Dad reached out his hand for Mom's.

"We'll just be down the hall, Sweethearts." She stood and kissed Dylan's forehead, and squeezed Ericka's hand before taking Dad's. I watched them leave the room, and I waited with my sister and my son, hoping that he'd open his eyes. He didn't, and when Ericka touched his cheek and he smiled in his sleep, I left them alone to rest.

Mom and Dad had closed the door to my room, so I peered in the small window at the five of us in there. With my body's ears, I could hear them speaking.

"Do you think he'll ever wake up?"

"Of course he will, Kitty."

"...Brandon didn't."

"But Dylan did."

"Maybe Ty will, too."

"Maybe."

"But maybe he won't."

"Lizzie, don't say that."

"The doctors said there've been no improvements."

"But he hasn't gotten any worse either, Mrs. Germann."

"But he hasn't gotten better! Why hasn't he gotten better?"

"He will. I know he will. He's strong."

"He lost a lot of blood."

"Maybe it was too much. You know he can't handle that."

"Raymond, honey. Can you hear me? Come back to us, please."

"Yeah, buddy: c'mon, Ty. We're all here."

"Please?"

"Son, stay with us."

Tom[my] Mayberry

“Baby, don’t go.”

“I love you.”

...

“I love you, too.”

I pressed my hand to the glass of the door.

“I’m sorry,” I said. “For everything.”

I closed my eyes, and I open them.

I can see again.





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Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Nathury

Other Models: Marsh Richmond and Daniel Pagan

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Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

Photographic Artist: Tina Weltz, MPA, LPPO

Hair and Make-up Artist: Jessica Barber

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Back Cover

Oathe13 and the Gruiformæ[vii], 2011 (detail)

Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

Photographic Artist: Tina Weltz, MPA, LPPO

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Page 11

In the Cave of Visions[2], 2011

Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

Other Models: Niamh Richmond and Daniel Pagett

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Page 24

Oatbe13 Embracing Calthalendula, 2011

Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

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Page 40

Aquabolt21[i], 2011

Conceptual Artist: Tommy Mayberry

Model: Niamh Richmond

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Page 45

Oatbe13 Bound by Zucchicarro34[i], 2011

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Page 46
Oatbe13 Bound by Zucchicarro34[ii], 2011
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Page 47
Oatbe13 Bound by Zucchicarro34[iii], 2011
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Page 48
Oatbe13 Bound to Aquabolt21[i], 2011
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Page 49
Oathe13 Bound to Aquabolt21[ii], 2011
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Page 51
Zucchicarro34[i], 2011
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Model: Daniel Pagett
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Page 52
Zucchicarro34[ii], 2011
Conceptual Artist: Tommy Mayberry
Model: Daniel Pagett
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Page 53

Aquabolt21[ii], 2011

Conceptual Artist: Tommy Mayberry

Model: Niamh Richmond

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Page 54

Aquabolt21[iii], 2011

Conceptual Artist: Tommy Mayberry

Model: Niamh Richmond

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Page 55

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Page 56

Oathe13[ii], 2011

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Page 59

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Page 60

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Page 61

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Page 62

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Page 63

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Page 68

Aftermath of Visions[i], 2011

Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

Other Models: Niamh Richmond and Daniel Pagett
Photographic Artist: Tina Weltz, MPA, LPPO
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Page 69

Aftermath of Visions[iii], 2011

Conceptual Artist/Model: Tommy Mayberry

Other Models: Niamh Richmond and Daniel Pagett

Photographic Artist: Tina Weltz, MPA, LPPO

Hair and Make-up Artist: Jessica Barber

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Other Models: Nianh Richardson and Daniel Pagett
Photographic Artist: Tina Wells, MPA, LPPO
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Page 69

Abstract #1 (March), 2011

Choreographer/Artist/Musical: Tommy Mayberry

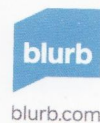
Other Models: Nianh Richardson and Daniel Pagett

Photographic Artist: Tina Wells, MPA, LPPO

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Calla Studio



"Find your eternal link." So Oathe13 is advised towards the beginning of Tom[my] Mayberry's revisioning of William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, his story of "Oothoon," the "soft soul of America" journeying to a foredoomed consummation. Blake's poem is at heart the lamentation of a woman whose seduction at the hands of the thunderous Bromion deprives her of a promised fulfillment in the arms of her lover, Theotormon, who, himself tormented by the despoiling of his intended, abandons her to a future of anguish and solitude.

As Raymond Daniels reacts anaemically to a blood donation he had given earlier in the day, he passes in and out of a dream-space in which his identity undergoes a transition into a kind of Blakean subconscious. That dream-space is the story-within-a-story of Oathe13 himself, where Raymond's imaginative other transforms the anaemia he suffers from (in every sense of the word) into a rich phantasmagoria of sensual delights, trials and triumphs.

"A striking and original re-imagining of a portion of the Blake mythos with a twenty-first-century framing tale. The vivid photographs demand that the reader slow down and re-assess the story in their light...[I] kept on thinking about [this book], mulling it over all the next day after reading, too, always a good sign."
-K.V. Johansen, author of *Blackdog*

"[This book] gives the Blake enthusiast the delight of recognizing minute particulars reborn in new forms, in an independent parallel dimension that arises from creative response to Blake's *Visions*. As its multi-level narrative weaves between visual and verbal, real and mythological, the book creates a world like ours but projected beyond it in time and in perception. Mayberry explores the shadows of an ordinary life, where enticingly bizarre alter-egos and transformative destinies stand ready to the imagination."
-Tristanne Connolly, St. Jerome's University

"In this evocative re-imagining of Blake's myth, Mayberry constructs a compelling series of elisions between personal and universal experience, aesthetic and narrative forms, familiar and unfamiliar worlds. The text shifts from lyrical story-telling to syncopated poetic rhythm, prompting the reader to move between sympathetic and synaesthetic reactions. Following in the spirit of Blake, distinctions between image and text, poetry and prose, and observer and reader, are collapsed in order to produce an experience that is at once unsettling and deeply engrossing...I do think [this] work is terrific."
-Philippa Simpson, Tate Britain (Assistant Curator)

Figures

Figure 1

<u>Numerical Alphabet Table</u>								
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	

Figure 2

Oothoon						
O	O	T	H	O	O	N
15	15	20	8	15	15	14
(1+5=6)	(1+5=6)	(2+0=2)	(ø)	(1+5=6)	(1+5=6)	(1+4=5)
6	)	2	8	)	6	5
	6			6		
(6+6+2+8+6+6+5=39)						
39						
(3+9=12)						
12						
(1+2=3)						
3						
3						

Figure 3

Bromion						
B	R	O	M	I	O	N
2	18	15	13	9	15	14
(\emptyset)	($1+8=9$)	($1+5=6$)	($1+3=4$)	(\emptyset)	($1+5=6$)	($1+4=5$)
2	)	6	4	9	6	5
	9					
(2+9+6+4+9+6+5=41)						
41						
(4+1=5)						
5						
5						

Figure 4

Theotormon									
T	H	E	O	T	O	R	M	O	N
20	8	5	15	20	15	18	13	15	14
($2+0=2$)	(\emptyset)	(\emptyset)	($1+5=6$)	($2+0=2$)	($1+5+6$)	($1+8+9$)	($1+3=4$)	($1+5=6$)	($1+4=5$)
2	8	5	)	2	)	9	)	6	5
			6		6		4		
(2+8+5+6+2+6+9+4+6+5=53)									
53									
(5+3=8)									
8									
8									

Figure 5

$$\frac{(a+b)}{A} = \frac{a}{B} = \phi$$

Theotormon: $a+b \rightarrow 8$

Bromion: $a \rightarrow 5$

Oothoon: $b \rightarrow 3$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{8}{5} &= \frac{5}{3} = \phi \\ 1.6 &= 1.666666... = 1.618... \end{aligned}$$

Figure 6 (source: world-mysteries.com)

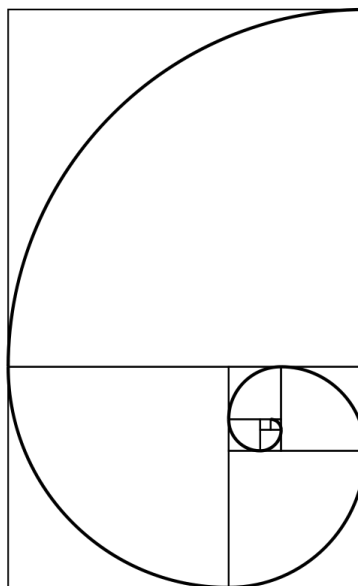
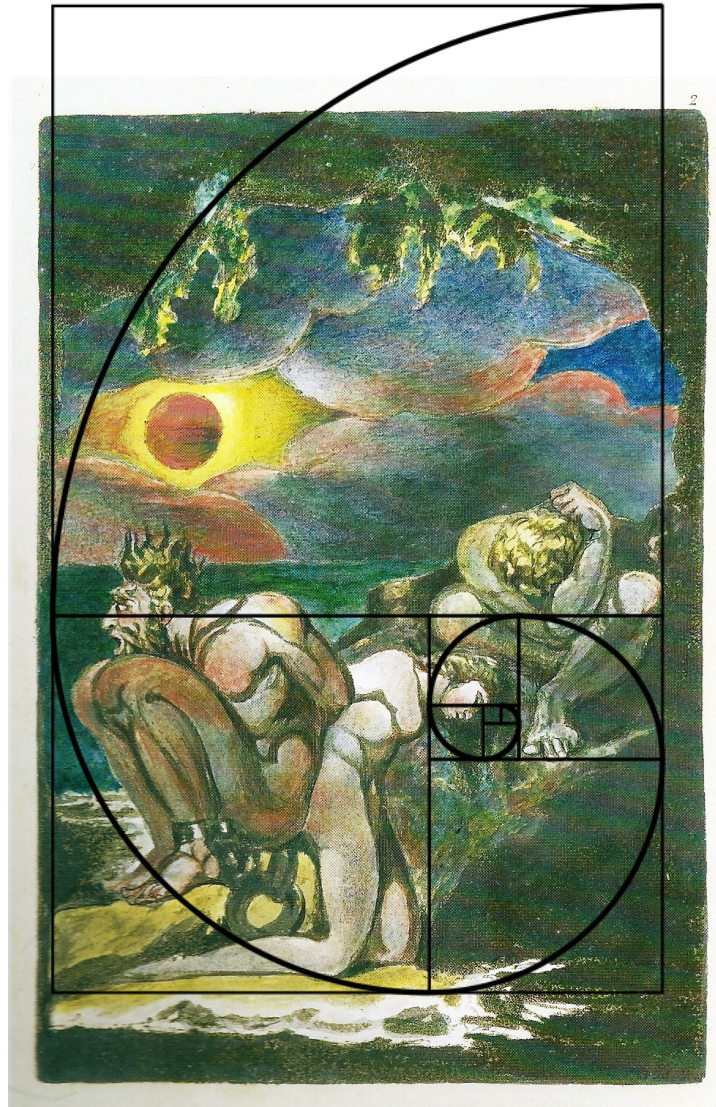


Figure 7 (source: Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 245)



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