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WILLIAM BLAKE'S SELFHOOD AND THE ATOMISTIC MATERIALISM
OF LUCRETIUS' *DE RERUM NATURA*

by

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Abstract

William Blake's Selfhood and the Atomistic Materialism of Lucretius' **De Rerum Natura**

By Joshua Schouten de Jel

This thesis demonstrates for the first time the way in which William Blake aligned his idiosyncratic concept of the Selfhood – the lens through which the despiritualised subject beholds the material world – with the atomistic materialism of the Epicurean school as it was transmitted through the first-century BC Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. Not only will I argue that Blake was aware of classical atomistic cosmogony and sense-based epistemology, but that he systematically mapped postlapsarian existence onto the philosophical framework of Epicurean cosmogony. As a result, when the subject succumbs to the Selfhood and once the Selfhood manipulates the subject's ability to observe the external world, a psycho-topography is created which adheres to the fundamental principles of atomistic entropy. Blake calls this the cycle of Eternal Death.

By addressing Blake's philosophical debt to Epicureanism as the principal epistemological system for his characters in a postlapsarian world, I am setting out a threefold re-evaluation of Blake's work. The first is to clarify the classical stream of Blake's philosophical heritage through Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*: its rediscovery in early fifteenth-century Europe, its dissemination in sixteenth-century Italy and France, and its translation into English during the seventeenth century. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, Epicurus and Lucretius were being openly adopted in treatises on atheism. This, then, feeds into the second objective, which is to return Blake to his historical moment: a thirty-year period from about 1790 to 1820 which has been described as the second Lucretian moment in England. By the end of the eighteenth century, Blake was able to draw upon an almost three-hundred-year-old European tradition of associating Epicureanism with atheism. As such, this thesis rewrites the stereotype of Blake as a vitriolic recluse, the inventor of an entirely unique personal mythology and, instead, puts forward the argument that Blake's critical habits were typical of a thriving anti-Epicurean polemic during the revolutionary years. Finally, by reassessing the philosophical permutation and historical context of Blake's poetry, I am adopting a new exegetical model for understanding the phenomenological parameters and epistemological frameworks of Blake's postlapsarian schematisation.

Whilst I am tracing the Epicurean influence on Blake through the dissemination of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* in early-modern Europe, this thesis specifically deals with Blake's adoption of this atomistic legacy as part of the Selfhood. As such, the poetic works upon which I principally focus are those which evidence a formative articulation of the Selfhood in conjunction with the epistemology of the Epicurean school. These, then, provide the philosophical grounding for Blake's denunciation of Bacon as a follower of 'Epicurus and Lucretius' in annotations to *Essays Moral, Economical and Political by Francis Bacon* (1798).

Contents

Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that William Blake (1757-1827) was familiar with and incorporated across his mythopoeia the atomistic materialism of the Epicurean school as it was principally transmitted through the first-century BC Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius' treatise *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*, c.99-55 BC) in ways, and to an extent, which has hitherto been unacknowledged. The consequences of this new exegetical practice allows for a significant reappraisal of the cosmological structure of Blake's physical universe as well as the psychological state of characters who occupy this phenomenological space. In particular, this philosophical framework will be read as informing Blake's idiosyncratic understanding of the ontological degeneration of the subject as characters become circumscribed by the epistemological parameters of the Selfhood: the death-like, pathological state which acts as the materialistic lens through which an unreal psycho-topography maps itself as the external world.[1] This psycho-topography – a psychological projection which takes on the physical attributes of postlapsarian existence – consequently becomes the terrain upon which Blake's characters walk, through which they travel, where they meet and converse and struggle against each other as well as against autonomous epiphenomenal fragments which in the Prophetic Books come to be called Spectres and Emanations.[2] Self-annihilation

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[1] W. J. T. Mitchell refers to Blake's works as 'a cosmic psychomachy' where 'time and space are not independent realities but modifications' (1982, 129). Josephine McQuail, during an analysis of *Milton* (1804-20), writes that '[w]hat is depicted here is psychomachy, or an inner war' (2000, 131). More broadly, Roy Porter notes that '[s]criptural Protestantism envisaged the drama of salvation as a literal psychomachy' (1990, 65). David Bindman, in a general introduction to Blake's poems, considers the narratives to resemble 'psychodramas […] taking place notionally within the mind of a single person' (2009, 11). Robert N. Essick also opts for the term psychodrama whilst describing the fluidity in *Jerusalem* (1804-20) between 'the real and the imaginary, between objective reality and its verbal or pictorial representations, and between thinking and being' (2003, 256-7). John Beer has also read 'A Poison Tree' from *Songs of Experience* (1794) as 'a little psychodrama' (2005, 60) whilst Robert Rix reads Blake's incorporation of Swedenborgianism in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-3) 'as an inner psychodrama' (2007, 50). Jennifer Jesse comes to a similar conclusion: 'the voices in his poems [can be read] as internal characters, the ego-states or "people" in our heads playing out complex personal psychodramas' (2013, 32). It is Laura Quinney in *William Blake on Self and Soul* (2009) who adopts the term 'psychotopography,' predominantly within a Stoic tradition overlapping with Gnosticism and Neoplatonism: '[t]he transformation of the self necessitates a mapping of the self… anatomizing the self… usually in the form of schema or maps – the technical term is *psychotopography*' (24-5).

[2] 'Perceiving the physical universe as an ideological conspiracy authorizes the production of alternative ways of projecting mind into a world' (Essick 2003, 257).

is the purification process which cleanses the subject from the Selfhood and its empirical rationalisations:

> I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
>
> To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour
>
> To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
>
> To cast off Bacon, Locke & Newton from Albions covering…

> (*M* 603-4 ii.41.2-5).[3]

Once the Selfhood has been removed, the psycho-topographical 'non-entity' of the subject's material reality is similarly destroyed as we begin to see the spirituality of the world and the spirituality in others with the Prophetic Character. This thesis primarily concentrates on the subject's degeneration into, and acceptance of, the Selfhood, as it is through the Selfhood that Blake believes that the atomistic materialism of the Epicurean school is able to operate.

This introduction will briefly sketch Blake's familiarity with Epicureanism and its eighteenth-century dissemination, before considering Blake's adoption of certain Epicurean and Lucretian images, symbols, and theories as an initial marker for Blake's engagement with this poetic and philosophical tradition. By assessing the hitherto limited critical attention which has been paid to the presence of Epicureanism in Blake's work, I will conclude this introduction by demonstrating the exegetical models and inferences which will be drawn by applying the atomistic materialism of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* to Blake's conception of the Selfhood and the physical universe. Indeed, because whilst Blake rejected the non-teleological cosmogony of the Epicurean school, I will argue that he systematically projected the phenomenological 'non-entity' of atomistic materialism onto the vegetative nature of corporeality as a way of critiquing its reintroduction and incorporation into Enlightenment discourses.[4] In particular, Blake came to associate Epicureanism and its vocalisation through

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[3] In 'Book the Second' of *Milton*, Blake repeats the maxim that 'All that can be annihilated must be annihilated' (603 ii.30). Blake then explains that 'There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary / The Negation must be destroyed to redeem the Contraries / The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power in Man / This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off & annihilated alway' (32-6).

[4] It was less than fifty years after Poggio Bracciolini's unearthing of a manuscript in 1417 that copies of *De Rerum Natura* were being commissioned by English scholars such as John Tiptoft, the first Earl of Worcester. Although it took another two centuries for a full-English translation to appear, passages and even whole books from *DRN* had been available in English since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Cf. Butterfield (2016, 51).

Lucretius with Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who he calls 'Epicurus and Lucretius' (*K* 397).[5] Additionally, Blake often associated Bacon with Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and John Locke (1632-1704) as part of 'a trinity of Epicurean thinkers' (Glausser 1991, 77). In fact, Blake's grouping of natural philosophers points to a wider condemnation of the Enlightenment's adoption of atomistic models by such thinkers as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655),[6] René Descartes (1596-1650), Robert Boyle (1627-91), David Hartley (1705-57), David Hume (1711-76), and Denis Diderot (1713-84).

The translator of the 1805 edition of *De Rerum Natura*, John Mason Good notes that after 'yielding to the *novum organon* of the immortal Bacon,'

> the Epicurism of Gassendi was embraced by the most eminent modern
> philosophers, and at last appears to have obtained an eternal triumph, from its
> application, by Newton and Huygens, to the department of natural philosophy,
> and, by Locke and Condillac, to that of metaphysics.

> (cxxix-cxx).

Blake may have had access to Good's translation of Lucretius through his acquaintance with fellow Dissenter Gilbert Wakefield, who had translated passages from *De Rerum Natura* in *Poetical Translations from the Ancients* (1795) and produced a Latin edition in 1797-9.[7] Establishing the nature of Blake's influences, in a material sense, is important for understanding the dissemination of Epicurean ideas in the philosophical milieu to which Blake had attached himself; and, even if evidence is never certain, plausible cases for transmission can be constructed. It is probable, for instance, that Blake would have come into contact with various radicals through Joseph Johnson (a radical London bookseller for whom he worked as an engraver in the 1790s). As Samuel Palmer recalls in a letter dated

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[5] Bacon was one of the first English philosophers to undertake a thorough assessment of Lucretian atomism in *Cogitationes De Natura Rerum* ([1604/5]1624). Blake's condemnation of Bacon is perpetuated in annotations to Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* (written c.1808): 'Bacon's Philosophy has Ruin'd England. Bacon is only Epicurus over again' (*K* 456).

[6] Gassendi's *De vita et moribus Epicuri* (*Eight Books on the Life and Morals of Epicurus*, 1647) and *Philosophiae Epicuri syntagma* (*Compendium of Epicurus' Philosophy*, affixed to his 1649 commentary on Diogenes Laertius) propagated and publicised Epicureanism across Europe.

[7] Cf. Schorer (1946, 161). It is also noteworthy that William Upcott, who Blake visited in 1826, compiled *The Miscellaneous Writings of John Evelyn* (1825), as Upcott was the illegitimate son of Ozias Humphry, with whom Blake had been acquainted since the 1770s.

23rd August 1855, Blake was '[t]hrown early among the authors who resorted to Johnson, the bookseller' (qt. Bentley 1975, 34). It has also been noted in a recent study that 'a number of Unitarian translators and editors' of Lucretius were either known to, or working for, Johnson at this time, including William Hamilton Drummond, John Mason Good, and Gilbert Wakefield (Priestman 2016, 14). It is of particular interest that John Mason Good began his translation of Lucretius in the same year that Wakefield published his Latin edition, with Wakefield going on to act as a commentator on Good's work and making the recommendation to include the original Latin text alongside the English.[8]

Although Good's 1805 edition was published too late to inform Blake's Lambeth output (as well as his annotations to Bacon's *Essays* which were written about 1798), it could have provided the philosophical framework for both *Milton* (1804-10) and *Jerusalem* (1804-20). It remains problematic, however, to pinpoint exactly which edition of *De Rerum Natura* Blake may have had access to prior to the Prophetic Books. As Mary Lynn Johnson admits, 'Blake does not say where he got his information about classical atomism' (1994, 109).[9] It is unlikely that Blake would have read Gilbert Wakefield's Latin edition first-hand, as he had learnt to read Latin under William Hayley's patronage three years after its publication.[10] The most popular and frequently reprinted English translation of *DRN* throughout the eighteenth century remained Thomas Creech's 1682 edition – whilst an anonymous translation had also appeared in 1743. There are no records that Blake owned these copies and it is far more likely that Blake would have learnt about Lucretius, popular passages from *DRN* – such as the invocation to Venus (i.1-145), the sweet-tasting honeycup (i.934-50),[11] and the spectator of a shipwreck (ii.1-25) – and its atomistic principles from conversing with Wakefield and other antiquarians within the Joseph Johnson group. Equally, Blake would

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[8] H. A. J. Munro's 1886 edition would go on to belittle Wakefield's literary endeavours (vii; 17-20), but Good is laudatory in the extreme; in fact, upon considering which Latin edition to base his translation, Good concludes that '[i]n the choice of an edition, I found no difficulty: the intrinsic excellence, and pre-eminence of Mr. Wakefield's own, precluding all hesitation upon the subject' (1805, xiii-iv).

[9] As Matthew Green observes in his *Visionary Materialism in the Early Works of William Blake* (2005) – a text which, although it omits any discussion of Epicurus or Lucretius, still usefully positions Blake at 'the conjunction between the spiritual and the material' (3) – it should not surprise us that Blake inherited ideas and symbols from various traditions 'given that as a poet, visual artist and commercial engraver he was positioned at a particularly complex ideological juncture' (6).

[10] In a letter to his brother, James, dated 30th January 1803, Blake writes 'I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin; am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy' (*K* 821).

[11] This *topos* was employed by William Cowper and included in William Hayley's *Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper, Esq.* ([1803-4]1803, 241).

have gained an understanding of these *topoi* and doctrines by reading Epicurean and Lucretian passages in contemporaneous works such as John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667),[12] James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1731-5), and Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-5).[13]

It is notable, for instance, as part of a prefatory survey, that there are several examples in Blake's work where Lucretius appears to loom large. Briefly, the account of mankind's poetic development in 'Introduction' from *Songs of Innocence* (1789) echoes anthropological passages in Book Six of *De Rerum Natura* (vi.1381-8).[14] 'The Voice of the Devil' from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-3) discusses the same ontological precepts as *DRN* iii.323-49 whilst Plates 11 and 16 bear a striking resemblance to v.1169–82. Blake draws on the hedonistic caricature of Epicureanism throughout *An Island in the Moon* (1784-5) and in the prefatory pages to *Europe* (1794, *E* iii.13-8).[15] As I will demonstrate in more detail throughout Chapters 3 and 4, the chaos of Creation in *The Book of Urizen* (1794, 10.1-13.59) captures the swirling assembly of atoms in Books One and Two of *DRN* and the apocalyptic imagery of Books Five and Six (v.1227-57; vi.535-607). The scene in *Jerusalem* where the Daughters of Albion pass amongst themselves the 'Knife of Flint' (*J* 65.56-66.56) is

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[12] The same psychological tensions lead to the Fall in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) as in *Paradise Lost* (ix.322-6). It has been noted that 'Milton's decision to confront' Lucretius 'testif[ies] to an anxious preoccupation with the *De rerum natura*. It was an anxiety that dated back to *Naturam non pati senium*, and suggests just how much of a challenge the Lucretian atomic universe of chance and entropy posed for his Christian belief' (Quint 2004, 870). As Barbara Lewalski also attests, 'Milton directs us to Lucretius by the terms of Adam's near-presumptuous query to Raphael broaching the creation topic' (1985, 132-3).

[13] It is significant that both Blake and Wakefield voiced their support for the republican Thomas Paine at the same time and in the face of the same criticism from the same author – the Bishop of Llandaff, Richard Watson – during the pamphlet wars of the Revolution controversy (1789-95). Joseph Johnson had published Wakefield's *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop Llandaff's Address to the People of Great Britain* (1798). That same year, Blake annotated Watson's *An Apology for the Bible* which was originally written in 1796 in response to Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Wakefield, moreover, had written his own reply to Paine's work in 1794, entitled *Examinations of The Age of Reason; or an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology, by Thomas Paine*. After the treason trials of 1794, both Johnson and Wakefield would be imprisoned for the publication of *A Reply*. It is perhaps possible that Blake is referring to Johnson and Wakefield when he writes that 'I have been commanded from Hell not to print this [annotations to Watson's *Apology*], as it is what our Enemies wish' (*K* 383). It is also poignant that both Blake and Wakefield should voice their support for the Deistic Paine rather than the Anglican Watson, with Blake even going so far as to call Watson the defender of 'Antichrist' (383) and his *Apology* 'a most wicked & blasphemous book' (384). The term 'Antichrist' was used again that same year by Blake in his annotations to Francis Bacon's *Essays*, though this time as a way of associating Bacon with the philosophy of Lucretius. Even up until the last year of his life, Blake was still associating the idea of Anti-Christ with the classics. In his 1827 annotations to Dr Thornton's *New Translation of the Lord's Prayer*, he writes that 'The Greek & Roman Classics is the Antichrist. I say Is & not Are as most expressive & correct too' (*K* 786).

[14] Lucretius' '*cava calamorum*' may have inspired Blake's 'hollow reed' (*SI* 104 16).

[15] In *An Island in the Moon*, '"Voltaire's a fool," says the Epicurean' (*K* 45). The Epicurean rejection of Voltaire is strange considering that Blake associates Voltaire with the Democritean tradition in the notebook poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' (c.1800-6).

reminiscent of Iphianassa's sacrifice (i.80-101). There's even a peculiar concentration on, and repetition of, prefixed words in Lucretian poetry such as 'con-' and 'ex-' and 'in-' which is similarly replicated in Blake's poetry in the form of archaic constructions which rely on 'in' as a prefix; for example, 'inchained,' 'inwrap,' and 'involvd').[16] Perhaps the most obvious indication that Blake was familiar with *De Rerum Natura* is the use of such Lucretian terms as 'fortuitous concourse' (*FZ* 306 ii.27.12; *J* 690 ii.29[33].8), 'seeds of life' (*FZ* 475 ix.139.2) and 'seeds of all things' (*M* 573 i.27.53).[17]

It remains an anomaly within Blakean criticism, therefore, that the presence of Lucretius and, more generally, Epicurean philosophy has not been adequately addressed. In Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* ([1947]1990) it was observed that Los' 'oblique' fall in *The Book of Los* (1795) could 'possibly [be] a reference to the *clinamen* or swerve which starts the creation in Lucretius' (257). Frye also suggested that Blake's poetic model is more likely to have been derived from Ovid and Lucretius than Homer and Virgil (110-1). Then, in Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* ([1973]1997), Blake's atomistic tradition is an adjunct to a discussion on poetic tradition/misprision framed by the Epicurean concept of *clinamen* (the swerve), with Bloom incorporating Frye's reading of the Fall (42). In the *Cambridge Companion to William Blake* (2003), there is only one reference to Lucretius and this again repeats Frye's initial assessment: 'the "oblique" change in Los's "downward-borne fall" is like the swerve of the falling atoms in Lucretius which allows productive change to occur' (Lincoln, 216). Indeed, Frye's reading has simply been repeated and finally incorporated as a critical commonplace in compendiums of Blake's works such as Alicia Ostriker's *The Complete Poems* (2004, 920).

Other critical remarks on the association between Blake and Lucretius are scattered at best. S. Foster Damon includes Lucretius' praise for Epicurus (*DRN* i.67-79) as an epigraph to 'The Ultimate City' in *William Blake His Philosophy and Symbols* (1924, 183). However, the epigraph appears to function as a positive model for Blake's visionary experiences even

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[16] See Martindale (2005, 197) for a discussion of Lucretian grammar.

[17] Epicurus was also one of the 27 illustrations Blake produced (c.1821) for the third edition of Robert John Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil* (printed in 1830): 'A Grecian Philosopher, Flourished 264 years before Christ, His philosophy was transfused into Latin, by the great Roman Poet Lucretius, who flourished 105 years before Christ, and wrote his "De Rerum Natura" on the Nature of Things' (Object 13 (Bentley 504.27)).

though Blake's spirituality was clearly antithetical to Lucretius' atomistic materialism.[18] There is a brief entry on Democritus (accompanied by the relevant lines from the note-book poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau') in Damon's subsequent work, *A Blake Dictionary* ([1965]1988, 102). There is also a much longer entry on Epicurus, which is noteworthy for its nuanced reading of Epicureanism (127). There is no entry for Lucretius and no mention of *De Rerum Natura*.

in *Visionary Physics: Blake's Response to Newton* (1974), Donald Ault mentions Lucretius in passing when charting Blake's identification of scientific Error through 'Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, and Newton' (54). There is, perhaps, also an echo of Damon's epigraphic use of *DRN* in the hypothesis 'that there is an inverse homology between the structure of Newton's mathematical physics and the structure of Blake's "human imagination" or "divine body"' (1). Whilst Ault considers the phenomenological concepts of void and vortex as chiefly transmitted through a Newtonian or Cartesian channel, Charles D. Minahen's *Vortex/t: The Poetics of Turbulence* (1992) provides a wider, non-specialist introduction to atomistic principles. In Chapter 4 in particular, Minahen charts the evolution of the vortex as part of Lucretian cosmography. Blake, however, is not the subject of study until Chapter 7.

Wayne Glausser employs Lucretian *simulacra* 'as a resource for the interpretation of Blake' (1991, 74) and, though he makes a strong case for the presence of atomism in Blake's thought and writing, concludes that far from owing a special debt to *De Rerum Natura* it is more likely that Blake would have known the common eighteenth-century translation of *simulacra* as 'spectre' (79). As Nelson Hilton more convincingly explained, however, whilst Blake would have read about Gothic spectres,

> [t]he close connection of "spectre" and imagination arises in part from the Latin
> term having been used to translate an aspect of the physical theories of
> perception and memory taught by Democritus and Epicurus.

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[18] Epicurean *gnosis* provides individuals with a god-like perspective of nature to observe its laws. When Epicurus passes beyond the walls of the world, he passes beyond the sight of men and attains that calm (*ataraxia*) with which the spectator watches the turmoil of the world at the beginning of Book Two (*DRN* ii.1-15). A similar metaphorical flight takes place at the beginning of Book Three, where Lucretius passes over the Pierides (iv.1-7). In contradistinction, Samuel Palmer recalled how Blake, '[b]eing irritated by the exclusively scientific talk at a friend's house, which talk had turned on the vastness of space, he cried out, "It is false. I walked the other evening to the end of the earth, and touched the sky with my finger"' (qt. Bentley 1975, 264). For Blake, the spiritual is real.

(1983, 148).[19]

In fact, there is an increase in the use of 'spectre' during the 1640s when Pierre Gassendi's brand of Epicureanism was being rearticulated through the works of Walter Charelton.[20] There is also a second spike in the years following the 1743 translation of *De Rerum Natura* which coincides with the first significant spike in the usage of '*simulacra*,' pointing towards a philosophical overlap.[21]

Mary Lynn Johnson's article 'Blake, Democritus, and the "Fluxions of the Atom": Some Contexts for Materialist Critiques' constitutes a concentrated effort to situate Blake within an atomistic tradition, though Johnson draws heavily on Ault's *Visionary Physics* and comes to similar conclusions as Glausser. Thus, in the same way that Ault reflected that the ancient philosophers were 'asking the same questions' as their Enlightenment descendants 'and that their solutions [were] merely historically conditioned recurrences of the same "Satanic" doctrines' (1974, 54), Johnson adds that 'Democritus, Lucretius and Newton [...] along with Bacon, Locke and Voltaire, were not only asking the same questions but getting the same answer' (1994, 106).

More recently, there have been a few analyses which have posited specific Lucretian passages as inspiration for Blake's poetics.[22] Howard Jacobson (2002, 454-5), for instance, opines that Blake's maxim 'If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite' (*MHH* 188 14.15-6) is informed by *DRN* iii.360. Martin Priestman has similarly located Lucretian influences in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-3), observing that 'Blake's own wildly unorthodox accounts of the creation of "all

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[19] Hilton adds that '[t]he semi-material existence of the spectre was intensified by the elevation of the kindred word "spectrum" [...] into the center stage of Newtonian optics' (*ibid*).

[20]

https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=spectre&year_start=1600&year_end=1900&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cspectre%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2Cspectre%3B%2Cc0 – accessed 17.6.20.

[21] The first noticeable increase in the use of '*simulacra*' occurs after the publication of Thomas Creech's translation of *DRN* (1682).

https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=simulacra&year_start=1600&year_end=1900&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Csimulacra%3B%2Cc0#t1%3B%2Csimulacra%3B%2Cc0 – accessed 17.6.20.

[22] Cf. Priestman (2010, 295).

Deities" from the imaginations of "the human breast" are not too far removed from *DRN* 5's derivation of them from dreams' (2010, 295).[23]

In *Imagining Nature: Blake's Environmental Poetics* (2002), Kevin Hutchings applies an atomistic context during his ecological survey of satanic self-interest in relation to Darwinian biosocial cooperation and Newtonian physical science. Hutchings even glosses the term 'atomistic "Selfhood"' (2002, 28) in relation to Newtonian atomism in Chapter 3, '"The Nature of Infinity": *Milton's* Environment Poetics' (114-52). Matthew Green's *Visionary Materialism in the Early Works of William Blake* (2005) adopts a more consistent empirical framework for understanding Blake's work in relation to Enlightenment (often Lockean) epistemology and eighteenth-century radical Protestantism, though it omits any discussion of Epicureanism.[24] Within the last decade, Jennifer Jesse has similarly considered *Milton* as part of a Newtonian atomistic context in *William Blake's Religious Vision* (2013, 77-8), whilst Andrew M. Cooper has posited the importance of various Newtonians like David Hartley and Joseph Priestley to Blake's 'anthropomorphic visionary purposes' (2016, 253). Whilst these analyses set out important philosophical channels (almost exclusively Newtonian) through which classical atomism may have been transmitted to Blake, there is a lack of engagement with the classical atomists themselves.

This thesis, therefore, aims to address the speculative and sporadic attention critics have paid to Blake's engagement with Epicureanism and its transmission through Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. Often, if Blake is situated within an atomistic tradition, it is limited to such

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[23] Joseph Fletcher has similarly noted various Lucretian influences in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, including the conflation of Swedenborgian ontology with the deadness of Epicurean cosmogony (2016, 187). He also puts forward the argument that Blake's advocacy of sensual pleasure is indebted to Epicureanism (107-8; 209). However, this interpretation rests upon the stereotypical understanding of *ataraxia* as a form of pleasure-seeking.

[24] Green, who self-avowedly follows Edward Larrissy in considering Blake a *bricoleur* of various (often seemingly contradictory) traditions, proposes that Blake's syncretic understanding of philosophy and mythology points towards a nuanced appreciation of 'certain systemic or doctrinal affinities, however well-concealed by a rhetoric of mutual opposition' (2). This supposition builds on Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* which is similarly framed by Blake as a proto-Lévi-Straussian *bricoleur* (1992, 1-13), an exegetical framework which has informed various other forays into Blake's fluid and often fragmentary model of reading, such as a Deleuzean reappraisal in Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the impossible history of the 1790s* (2007) and the theorisation of a meta-bricoleur of fellow radical discourses in Jennifer Jesse's *William Blake's Religious Vision: There's a Methodism in His Madness* (2013, 117-8). It can thus be argued that by grafting diverse traditions and their associated symbols onto each other, Blake sees through canonical heterogeneity to a human homogeneity. Green acknowledges his critical debt to John Beer's description of Blake as a 'visionary-realist,' Michael Ferber's 'social materialism,' and Tristanne J. Connolly's 'mystical-empiricism,' though none of these terms were used by Blake himself.

oft-quoted poems as 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' or such explicit references as in his letter to George Cumberland, dated 12th April 1827:

> I know too well that a great majority of Englishmen are fond of The Indefinite which they Measure by Newton's Doctrine of the Fluxions of an Atom, A Thing that does not Exist. These are Politicians & think that Republican Art is Inimical to their Atom.

> (*K* 878).

It is a significant omission in Blakean criticism that, whilst Blake's engagement with social, political, philosophical, religious, and scientific events and texts has been the focus of frequent study, his interaction with Lucretius and the Lucretian legacy in Enlightenment philosophy – at a time when *De Rerum Natura* 'was quoted constantly by Enlightenment thinkers' (Delon 2013, 468) – has been so consistently overlooked.[25] Indeed, Eric Baker points out that '[v]irtually every major figure of the period was in some way influenced by Lucretius' and that late-eighteenth-century commentators often incorporated and responded 'to Lucretius whether pro or con' (2010, 274; 287). Blake clearly engages with the ideas of contemporaneous natural philosophers and political theorists in his marginalia and mythopoeia and, since these thinkers variously engaged with Lucretius, Blake should also be considered as part of the polemical discourses which surrounded *De Rerum Natura* during his lifetime.

This thesis begins with Blake's annotations to the 1798 edition of *Essays Moral, Economical and Political by Francis Bacon* – which, although not the first reference to Epicurus or Epicureanism, dated to at least *An Island in the Moon* (1784-5) almost fifteen years prior – is the first explicit reference to Lucretius by name. By considering Blake's condemnation of Bacon's Epicureanism within the polemical context of the dissemination of Lucretius' *De*

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[25] The beginning of Book 2 of *DRN* would reappear in Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political* (1597-1625), Book 3 was incorporated by Voltaire in *Entre Lucrèce et Posidonius* (1756), whilst Book 5 was the basis for Pierre Bayle's *Various Thoughts on the Comet of 1680* (1682), the anthropological origin for Bernard de Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1705-14) and Denis Diderot's *Letter on the Blind* (1749), and also provided the model for Richard Payne Knight's *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796).

Rerum Natura throughout early-modern Europe and, specifically, seventeenth and eighteenth-century English translations, I set the ideological arena in which Blake conflated Epicurean cosmogony with the machinations of the Selfhood. This, in turn, will inform the scope of the subsequent chapters, as I track Blake's adoption of Epicurean epistemology through *The Book of Thel* (1789) and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) and marry this with Epicurean cosmology in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), drawing on selected passages from the other Continental Books as well as *Milton* (1804-10) and *Jerusalem* (1804-20).

In Chapter 1, 'Blake, Bacon, and the Lucretian Slur,' I will concentrate primarily on the seventeenth-century English translations of *De Rerum Natura* compiled by John Evelyn, Lucy Hutchinson, and Thomas Creech – as well as the anonymous 1743 edition – in order to demonstrate that the transmission of Lucretius into England was met with hostility even by proponents of the aesthetic and literary merits of the text itself. I will then reassess the nature of Alexander Gilchrist's critical remarks on Blake's annotations to *Essays Moral, Economical and Political by Francis Bacon*, putting forward the argument that Blake's characterisation as a 'singular annotator' and his marginalia as a 'singular dialogue' ([1863]2005, 286-7) fails to reflect the well-established tradition in Europe since at least the beginning of the sixteenth century of associating Epicureanism with atheism. This will inform the philosophical foundation of my discussion on Bacon's *Essays* such as 'Of Atheism,' of which Blake is especially disparaging: 'Bacon supposes that the dragon Beast & Harlot are worthy of a Place in the New Jerusalem. Excellent Traveler, Go on & be damned!' (*K* 404). As I will evidence, the association of Baconian science with atheism works alongside the implicit understanding that atheistic science is a product of Epicureanism.

To continue to assess the legitimacy of Blake's annotations, I will turn to *De Sapientia Veterum* (*The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 1609) to analyse the way in which Bacon adopts a Lucretian exegetical model to uncover the atomistic origins of ancient myths. By focusing on three specific entries, I will demonstrate how Bacon derives an asexual cosmogonic theory by interpreting the genealogy of 'Pan; or Nature,' then applies this philosophical foundation to narratives of castration in 'Cœlum; or the Origin of Things,' before concluding in 'Cupid; or the Atom' that since Cupid, or Love, was the most ancient of things, it presupposes that 'the *natural motion of the atom*' generated life (1860, 122). Although Bacon attempted to

Christianise his atomistic hypotheses in *De Principis Atque Originibus* (*On Principles and Origins*, c.1612), his adoption of classical models were fundamentally underpinned by readings of Democritean and Epicurean atomism and therefore constituted for Blake a recycling of old errors and falsehoods.[26]

Chapter 2 '*Simulacra* and the Selfhood' will concentrate on two principal and highly significant aberrations which can occur during Epicurean sense perception and which, contiguously, also provide an important epistemological schema for understanding the Blakean Selfhood. The first, which Epicurus addresses in his letter to Herodotus, allows that preconceptions (*prolepsis*) may ignore the atomistic stream of *eidola* (Lucretian *simulacra*) emanating from material objects and instead project themselves as mental images (*phantasia*) onto the individual's field of vision.[27] The second complication is primarily addressed in Book Four of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* where unfiltered *simulacra* enter the mind of the slumbering subject and create visual distortions which, often upon awakening, continue to be observed as waking fancies (iv.722-822; 907-1036).[28] I will relate these perceptual fallacies to Blake's own abstracted visions which impeded, rather than stimulated, his poetic output as well as certain Selfhood-induced scenes in his mythopoeia.[29] Specifically, I will attempt the first Epicurean readings of *The Book of Thel* (1789) and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) where Thel's dialogic partners will be treated as epiphenomenal distortions produced by her subjection to the Selfhood, whilst Theotormon's regression into 'a sick mans dream' (*VDA* 204 6.19) is a manifestation of the monstrous phantasms which populate the night-time visions of the Lucretian dreamer.[30]

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[26] In *De Sapientia Veterum* Bacon had admitted that '[i]t may be that my reverence for the primitive time carries me too far' (1860, 76). As Reid Barbour notes, Bacon 'never got Epicureanism off his mind' (1992, 79).

[27] Cyril Bailey (1948) splendiferously translates *simulacra* as the 'idol of things.'

[28] The apparition of the absent 'object of your love' (iv.1060) evokes the Aristotelian tradition of *phantasia* which emphasises visualisation. Cf. *De Anima* 3.3. As José M. González writes, *phantasia* are 'connected not only with sense perception but also with the mental faculties of memory and hope' (2006, 106).

[29] Blake's move to Felpham in 1800 to work under the patronage of William Hayley ushered in a period of self-doubt and depression. At this time, Blake was also writing (and ultimately abandoned) *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804) which, as he informs Thomas Butts, was being written 'without Premeditation & even against my Will' (*K* 823). The notion that Blake was composing poetry 'against my Will' is indicative of wider psychological conflicts (852).

[30] I maintain that Blake was incorporating the ideological parameters of the Selfhood as early as *The Book of Thel* (1789) and therefore at least fifteen years prior to its naming in *Milton* (1804-11). Harold Pagliaro (1987) suggests that the Selfhood first appears in *Songs of Innocence* (1789). Laura Quinney (2009, 133) and John Jones (2010, 97-134) argue that the Selfhood first appears in *The Book of Urizen* (1794).

By mapping these visual anomalies onto Thel's epiphenomenal self-identification by the river of Adona (*BT* 78 1.6-11), I will contend that the phenomenological distortions which inform her lamentations and her dialogic encounters with the Lilly, Cloud, and Clod of Clay can be read as the psychic projections of her sickly mental state.[31] Whilst *The Book of Thel* is not necessarily a dreamscape, the way in which *simulacra* disturb the slumbering mind in *DRN* is comparable to the ontological confusion which affects Thel. Indeed, the confusion of the dreamer who is unable to distinguish between sleep and waking reality provides a theoretical framework for reading the liminality of Thel's space (vales of Har) and state (Selfhood) where Thel's own characterisation as well as the narrative itself straddles the States of Innocence and Experience.[32] The progression of Lucretius' discourse from dreams to erotic dreams and then onto the nature of desire – which suggests that both are 'a kind of illusion' and that 'love, like dreams, visions, and other illusionary experiences, is based upon a misleading mental response to raw perceptual data' (Brown 1987, 85) – provides a natural culmination to the chapter as I evidence how Theotormon's subjection to the Selfhood opens up a void between the physical reality of Oothoon's body and the mental images (*phantasia*) populating his psyche.

Chapter 3 'Urizenic *Phantasia*' will demonstrate the way Blake adopted the cosmological principles of Lucretian atomism as the phenomenological basis of postlapsarian existence through Urizen's psychological degeneration as he separates from the Eternals at the beginning of *The Book of Urizen* (1794). Thus, the psycho-topography upon which Urizen establishes his mechanical laws, his ideological principles, and his theological precepts is a manifestation of his Selfhood. As such, Chapter 3 is a thematic continuation of the philosophical principles which underpinned the epiphenomenal nature of *The Book of Thel* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Importantly, because Urizen is the first fallen being to establish an alternative reality to Eternity, his psycho-topography becomes the underlying framework which maintains all postlapsarian life: Urizen's sons and daughters

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[31] There is an eerie morphological echo of the fallibility of *prolepsis* 'which intelligence reflects like a mirror, whether one perceives them in a dream [...] can never resemble the objects that one calls real and true' (*LP* 442).

[32] E. D. Hirsch's assessment that Thel 'remain[s] in the twilight zone of the trimmer, neither damned nor redeemed' (1964, 192) is rearticulated in the analyses of Levinson (1980, 290), Linkin (1987, 70), and Norvig (2013, 150). Robert Waxler writes that '[i]n terms of Blake's complete work, Thel's problem can be defined as a problem of "selfhood"' (1982, 46-7). Cf. Carr (1987, 86-7); Marsh (2012, 184-5).

(including Thel and Theotormon) are born into a world regulated by atomistic laws and are therefore trapped within the same ratiocinative space as their father.

After setting out the cosmological model from Book One of *De Rerum Natura* (i.146-634; 921-1117), I will map this cosmogony onto Blake's mythopoeia to reveal how the Urizenic universe is dependent upon the twin Lucretian principles of the plasticity of the void and the fluxion of atoms. I will maintain that the Lucretian void is indivisible from Urizen and that the movement of atoms in this psycho-somatic space constitute Urizen's traumatic thoughts, which means that the images which populate Urizen's field of vision are *phantasia* 'Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (*BU* 243 3.15). Crucially, because the space into which Urizen falls is a 'soul-shudd'ring vacuum' (242 5), there are no Epicurean *eidola* or Lucretian *simulacra* to emit and create *phantasia* within the percipient mind. Thus, the *phantasia* which Urizen projects through the Selfhood onto his psycho-topographical reality are a by-product of *prolepses* formed in Eternity, which means that postlapsarian phenomenality is a purely psychological manifestation of the memory.

I will also consider Urizen's ontogeny as a body 'Dark revolving in silent activity' (*BU* 243 3.18) in relation to the erratic revolution of Lucretian first-beginnings as Urizen's 'unseen conflictions with shapes' (243 3.14) replicates the chaotic process of atomistic Creation (*DRN* i.146-1117; ii.62-729; 1023-1174). This, in turn, acts as an analogy for Urizen's psychological trauma as his psycho-topographical reality becomes populated with epiphenomenal fragments of the self. By contextualising Blake's philosophical framework within the Epicurean tradition as it was transmitted through Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) – a critical habit perpetuated since Thomas Creech's 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura* in which he claimed that Hobbes' philosophy was 'but Lucretius enlarged' ([no pagination]) – I will consider how Hobbes' aligns the imagination with the memory in *Leviathan* (1651) and how in *De Corpore* (1655) this is developed so that sense becomes the product of our fancy. Ultimately, the arbitrary and inconsistent nature of Hobbesian epistemology evokes the visual anomalies of Epicurean sense perception detailed in Chapter 2 as well the ontological origins of Urizenic Creation as a product of misremembered *phantasia* in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 'The Cosmic Chains of the *Machina Mundi*' will continue to develop the thematic principles from Chapters 2 and 3 that the physical universe is a psycho-topography of Urizenic *phantasia* with the additional premise that all postlapsarian structures are

fabricated upon the same phantasmagorical basis. Working with the Lucretian understanding of the universe as a '*machina mundi*' (v.96) – a world machine which is self-existent, self-sufficient, self-regulatory and thus independent of any godhead or teleological purpose – I will argue that Blake conceived of postlapsarian existence as a series of independent cogs within a cosmic wheel: the cycle of Eternal Death.[33] This means that the invisible chains which regulate the celestial satellites of 'this Vegetable Universe' as well as the somatic fibres which structure 'Vegetable Mortal Bodies' are woven by similar postlapsarian strands (*J* 797 iv.77.12-5). Blake may, indeed, have directly imbibed this formulation from the 1743 English edition of *De Rerum Natura*:

> [t]he Epicureans believed an Animal to be as it were a Web in the Loom, that the Body is as the Chain, and the Soul the Woof, so that the Intermixture of each with the other composes the whole Work…

> (227).

I will maintain that Urizen's initial separation from Los' side (*BU* 6.2-7.9), Los' role in the construction of Urizen's body (8.1-12), and Los' pursuit of Enitharmon as she, in turn, separates from him (14.48-19.16) brings about a collective fall into Urizenic space. Thus, the god of Reason as well as the Eternal Prophet become part of postlapsarian existence. Indeed, the organisation of Urizen's body (8.1-13.19) is concomitant with the schematisation of mechanical laws according to which the passage of time is mapped and linked (10.7-18). The 'rivets of iron & brass' (247 8.11) with which Los binds Urizen's body are the same as the 'chains new & new' (248 10.17) which measure time.

As such, Blake associates Urizen with the clockwork God of Enlightenment discourses. In particular, although Isaac Newton (1642-1727) did not invent the notion of a clockwork God nor specifically applied it to his own mechanical philosophy – he rejected the world systems of René Descartes (1596-1650) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) – it became common practice to identify the Newtonian God with a clockwork God.[34] I will decipher the

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[33] In *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), Richard Payne Knight describes the societal order as fitted together like cogs 'in [a] mechanism' where 'springs of steel, / Or weights of lead, alike can turn the wheel' (84 iv.233-8).
[34] Leibniz himself attacked Newton and his supporters for imagining a clockwork universe which was so imperfect that it required the regular maintenance of its God 'to clean it now and then by extraordinary concourse' ([1751]1956, 11-2). This theoretical reproof was not, in itself, unprecedented, for over a century earlier the

iconography of 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece to *Europe* (1794) by tracing a scientific and symbolic tradition in eighteenth-century anthropological and cosmological poems before expanding this semasiological contextualisation by focusing on its manifestation in Enlightenment discourses, especially the eighteenth-century French materialist Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *L'homme Machine* (*Man a Machine*, 1747).

It is likely that Blake would also have known about, and may have seen, Adam Walker's Eidouranion (a large-scale orrery) which was built in the 1780s after the recent discoveries of astronomers such as William Herschel (1738-1822).[35] It was used by Walker himself to deliver lectures on astronomy at the Royal Theatre and London Lyceum. One of the key aspects of the Eidouranion was that its machinery was invisible, and Blake can be seen to tap into this theatrical-astronomical context whilst describing the movement of Urizen and his sons and daughters in space:

> Travelling in silent majesty along their orderd ways
>
> In right lined paths outmeasurd by the proportions of number weight
>
> And measure. mathematic motion wondrous. along the deep…
>
>
> (*FZ* 314 ii.33.22-4).

By considering Blake's writing alongside Enlightenment discourses and didactic poetry which drew on the mechanical semantics of the *machina mundi*, I will demonstrate that the depiction of Urizen as 'The Ancient of Days' harks back to an Epicurean tradition which was being adopted, revised, and rearticulated in the eighteenth century.

Blackloist Kenelm Digby had in *Two Treatises* (1644) warned his readers not to 'irreuerently ingage the Almighty Architect his immediate handy worke' since this would 'argue him of want of skill and prouidence, in the first laying of the foundations of his designed machine' (227).

[35] In a letter written to William Hayley dated 27th January 1804 Blake writes that he has 'been to Mr Walker's who is not in town being at Birmingham where he will remain 6 weeks or 2 Months. I took my Portrait of Romney as you desired to shew him: his son was likewise not at home: but I will again call on Mr walker Junr' (*K* 834). Less than a month later, Blake called once more but was 'so unfortunate as not to find [Mr Walker] at home' (836). In a letter dated 4th May, Blake had been more successful: 'I have seen the elder Mr. Walker. He knew and admired without any preface my print of Romney, and when his daughter came in he gave the print into her hand without a word, and she immediately said, "Ah! Romney! younger than I knew him, *but very like indeed*"' (843). Blake adds that he was shown a painting by Romney 'of Mr. Walker and family… Mr. W., three sons, and, I believe, two daughters, with maps, instruments, &c.' Blake had seen 'Mr Walker' at least once more by 28th May (845).

Chapter 4 therefore reveals how the lack of critical attention paid to Blake's engagement with Lucretius has resulted in the subsequent oversight of Blake's adoption of the philosophical, poetic, and scientific language of the *machina mundi* and its particular eighteenth-century manifestation as a clockwork universe. This is all the more surprising since the clockwork metaphor 'is to be found in the writings of virtually every major thinker, and a host of minor ones' (Macey 2010, 79). By focusing on 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece as the pictorial epitome of Blake's involvement in this scientific tradition, I will maintain that Blake not only responded to contemporary discourses on a clockwork universe and a clockwork God, but that he also explicitly linked this deification of natural philosophy to its Lucretian context in *De Rerum Natura* where the *machina mundi* was initially envisaged as an independent, non-teleological, self-managed world system. As such, Chapter 4 will conclude my Epicurean exegesis of Blake's mythopoeia by evidencing how the empiricism of a Urizenic universe epitomises the ontological degeneration of the subject who has succumbed to the epistemological parameters Selfhood, as the world and the subject become part of the cosmic mechanism of the *machina mundi*.

Whilst showing that the critical neglect towards Blake's engagement with *De Rerum Natura* has not, necessarily, produced misreadings of his mythopoeia – for, by a second-hand conduit at least, there have been numerous studies of an ethereal Epicurean influence on Blake through his engagement with Enlightenment philosophers who clearly engage with classical atomism such as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, David Hartley, and Joseph Priestley – this thesis aims to demonstrate the centrality of Lucretius and his rearticulation of Epicurean principles in Blake's understanding of the physical universe and the subject's postlapsarian engagement with material phenomenality. In part, this thesis clarifies the source of Blake's influence(s), but more than this it also resituates Blake more closely with – or, rather, returns Blake to – the eighteenth-century polemics in which natural philosophers, theologians, poets, and his fellow radicals all engaged. As such, Blake's poetry – its cosmological schema as well as the individual narratives of psychological conflict – will be read as a reaction against the materialism of the Epicurean school: an ideological position which allows Blake to simultaneously reject the atomistic origins of materiality whilst also safeguarding the spirituality of Eternity.

Chapter 1

Blake, Bacon, and the Lucretian Slur

Every Body Knows that this is Epicurus and Lucretius & Yet Every Body says that
it is Christian Philosophy; how is this Possible?

      Annotations to Francis Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political*
      (1798) (*K* 397).

The Artifice of the Epicurean Philosophers is to Call all other Opinions Unsolid &
Unsubstantial than those which are derived from Earth

      Annotations to Joshua Reynold's *Discourses* ([1793]1808) (*K* 474).

I. Introduction

This chapter focuses on William Blake's annotations to Francis Bacon's *Essays Moral,
Economical and Political* (1798); specifically, the claim that Bacon was rearticulating a form
of atomistic materialism derivate of the Epicurean school. It begins in Section II, by analysing
the reception of Lucretius in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and
considers the legitimacy of comments made by Blake's early biographer Alexander Gilchrist
that the annotations were 'indignant' and a form of 'execration' and 'violence' ([1863]2005,

286).[36] By using Gilchrist as a marker and, thus, as way of framing an investigation into the coherence and consistency of Blake's critical evaluations, I will not only maintain that the chastisement of 'the scornful Blake' (287) was unjustified but further demonstrate that the tone of Blake's annotations – in which Bacon is denounced as 'a Contemplative Atheist. Evidently an Epicurean' (*K* 403) – reflect contemporary attitudes towards the perceived threat posed by Epicureanism. I will argue that Blake was, in fact, occupying the role of a typical anti-Epicurean commentator as part of a well-established European tradition dating from sixteenth-century France and Italy and which continued to be expressed in seventeenth and eighteenth-century English diatribes against *De Rerum Natura*.

In part, the long-held belief in the singularity of Blake's poetics – of which Gilchrist, to a certain extent, was already a proponent or, at the very least, an apologist – has obfuscated the affinity between Blake's thought and contemporary Epicurean polemics. This also offers a possible explanation why critics for nearly two centuries have continually overlooked Blake's indebtedness to *De Rerum Natura*. Indeed, Gilchrist's misprinting of a crucial connection between Bacon and Lucretius highlights this problem: for, whereas in the original marginalia Blake condemns Bacon's *Essays* as a rearticulation of 'Epicurus and Lucretius' (*K* 397), Gilchrist copied this as 'epicurism and libertinism' (286). The careless reprinting and wilful rewriting of Blake's works after his death was one of the major problems facing early nineteenth-century critics. Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats' *The Works of William Blake* (1893) provided the first, systematic attempt to present and interpret Blake's symbolic system, whilst John Sampson's 1905 edition of Blake's works was the first, reliable reproduction – shortly followed by the more extensive, three-volume edition by Geoffrey Keynes in 1925.[37] Of course, Gilchrist's editorial slip may simply have been a careless reading informed by the common conflation of Epicureanism with the hedonism of the Stuart court; however, it also reveals in microcosm the way in which the Lucretian element of Blake's poetry has been continuously omitted, if not simply ignored.

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[36] Gilchrist echoes the opinion of the mid-seventeenth-century Christian theologian Isaac Barrow (1630-77): 'of all the sects and factions which divide the world, that of Epicurean scorners and mockers is become the most formidable; with disdainful pride insulting and vapouring over the professors of Religion, persecuting all soberness of mind and stanchness of manners with a fierce rage and a kind of satanic zeal' (1859, 232).

[37] The irregularity of Blake's punctuation, modified by Keynes in his 1925, 1927, and 1957 editions, was restored by David V. Erdman in his 1965 edition of Blake's works.

Section III will continue to map the transmission of Epicureanism from Italy and France into England, demonstrating how its appropriation in Enlightenment discourses was part of a theological conduit which had attempted to Christianise *De Rerum Natura* since at least the sixteenth century. As I will demonstrate by the end of this chapter, Blake believed that Francis Bacon had attempted to make the same apologies for Epicureanism. This section examines Bacon's *Essays* in some detail in relation to the use of myth in *De Sapientia Veterum* (*The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 1609), where the Lucretian method of rereading myths in order to reveal scientific truths is adopted. Section IV then evaluates the legitimacy of Blake's claims that Bacon was an Epicurean atheist by concentrating on three entries – 'Pan; or Nature,' 'Cœlum; or the Origin of Things,' and 'Cupid; or the Atom' – which provide Bacon with a hermeneutical provenance to explain the atomistic origins of the universe.

II. English Translations of Lucretius

Europe's reconnection with Lucretius can be dated to the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini's unearthing of a manuscript in 1417 which 'sent ripples throughout the intellectual circles of Italy' (Butterfield 2016, 50).[38] The *edition princeps* was subsequently printed c. 1473 with a further 54 transcriptions of the original manuscript produced in Italy during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Seven codices reached Britain and books were thereafter commissioned by scholars and noblemen such as John Tiptoft, the first Earl of Worcester, who brought back the first copy in 1461.[39] The 1515-6 Venetian edition was, however, the last published in Italy for almost 150 years until the Florence edition of 1647, as Epicureanism was suppressed during the Reformation.[40] Although *DRN* was not listed in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (a list of books banned by the Catholic Church c.1515), '[a]s

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[38] See also Kraye (1988, 64).

[39] Cf. Butterfield (2016, 51).

[40] Raphael Francus' *Paraphrasis in Lucretium* (1504), for example, which was an exposition on the first three books of *De Rerum Natura*, also included an appendix countering Lucretius' views on the soul. There had also been an early attempt to Christianise atomism by the fifteenth-century Catholic priest Lorenzo Valla: a pattern which was sustained over the course of the sixteenth century in the works of Erasmus, Bacon, and Michel de Montaigne. In the final decades of the eighteenth century, however, Matthew Turner invoked the Democritean and Epicurean tradition in Britain's first published declaration of atheism in an *Answer to Dr Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever* (1782).

censorship grew stricter over time, precautions intensified' (Prosperi 2010, 215) which meant that 'Lucretius' doctrines […] proved to be too potent and provocative for publication' (Butterfield 2016, 55). In 1521, for example, Francois I of France ordered all religious texts to be authorised by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, and fourteen years later went so far as to ban the printing of all books on pain of death by hanging. Admittedly, the 'prohibition proved impossible to enforce' (Jones 2001, 847), but Dionysius Lambinus' 1563-4 Paris edition echoed Francus' *Paraphrasis in Lucretium* by including a lengthy preface to Charles IX in which he denied that the heathen philosophy of Epicurus and Lucretius could corrupt the sensibilities of its Christian readership.[41]

In England, whilst William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser draw upon the scientific principles and the poetic aesthetics of *De Rerum Natura*,[42] the period commonly given for the more sustained reception of Lucretian ideas (and Epicurean ideas more generally) is the middle of the seventeenth century.[43] In fact, there's a steady poetic tradition dating from the mid-sixteenth century onwards of the imitation and translation of passages from *DRN*, starting with a piece in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), Richard James' 'A Translation of Lucretius or Ritterhusius in his Notes Upon Isidore Pelusiota' (1605), John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667),[44] John Dryden's *Sylvae* (1685),[45] Charles Gildon's *Complete Art of Poetry* (1718), Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* (1734),[46] Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1744),[47] James Beattie's *Poems* (1760),[48] William Wordsworth's *Descriptive*

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[41] Cf. Butterfield (2016, 57). Hubert van Giffen published another edition which included a biography in 1566, but it was Lambinus' text which became the standard edition across Europe for more than a century. As the nineteenth-century English lexicographer William Smith notes, '[t]he text of Lambinus […] underwent few changes until it assumed its present form in the hands of the celebrated Gilbert Wakefield' ([1844]1846, 830).

[42] Cf. Harrison (1930, 14-5), Martin (1984, 178), and Rzepka (2012, 115-6; 124-7; 130-1).

[43] H. Jones (1989, 156) and Richard Kroll (1991, 3) settle for the 1640s, whilst T. F. Mayo sees no evidence for an engagement with Epicurus and his followers until at least the 1650s (1934, xi; see also Adam Rzepka 2012, 114). Reid Barbour adds 'that early Stuart culture is diacritically obsessed with the Stoics and Epicureans' (1998, 2). It has been suggested, however, that the General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* was inspired by Book 1 of *De Rerum Natura* (Gillespie 2010, 245). This would move the date back to the fourteenth century.

[44] David Hopkins refers to *Paradise Lost* as one of '[t]he most impressive direct responses to the *DRN*' (2010, 268). Philip Hardie similarly observes that 'Lucretius is the main classical representative of the genre of scientific and philosophical didactic poetry, and thereby an obvious model for Milton' (1995, 13).

[45] Gillespie refers to Dryden as 'Lucretius' greatest English translator' (2010, 249). Cf. Mayo (1934, 76-9), Long (1986, 242-3), and Linker (2013, 5-9).

[46] See Hopkin (2010, 270) whose work builds on that of Miriam Leranbaum (1977) and Bernard Fabian (1979).

[47] Mark Akenside appropriated the Lucretian image of 'the seeds / Of being' (27 i.517-8) and alludes to *DRN* (ii.374-6) in Book i.454-6.

[48] Beattie translates the beginning of the First Book (1-45). The translation was printed in the first edition but omitted thereafter.

Sketches (1793),[49] and P. B. Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813),[50] with a more general influence also palpable in the works of John Donne, Thomas Gray, Robert Blair, Edward Young, and James Thomson.[51]

John Evelyn began translating *De Rerum Natura* in the 1650s and the First Book was published in 1656.[52] Whilst the prefatory dedication strikes a far more triumphant tone than the text's continental translators, with Evelyn's father-in-law Richard Brown celebrating the accomplishment of '*Lucretius* Englished,' Evelyn himself refrained from publishing the other books.[53] Indeed, in the explanatory notes, Evelyn follows in the footsteps of Francus and Lambinus by distancing himself (as well as attempting to exonerate Epicurus and Lucretius) from the accusations of atheism:

> [t]he very truth is, *Leucippus* (not our Philosopher) was the first broacher of this irreligious stuff: for he impudently denied, not onely [*sic*] the providence and power of *God*, but likewise the immortality of the *Soul* as for *Epicurus* his opinion, take it in short thus, He held *God* to be, perfectly happy in himself; as for other matters, that they were all effected by certain natural weights and motions; nay with much reverence, that men were to adore and worship this *God*, for his Omnipotency, Excellency, Beauty, Immortality…
>
> (106-7).[54]

Evelyn condemns Leucippus (the mentor of Democritus) and praises Epicurus instead for delivering mankind from superstitious irrationality. Like his fellow enthusiast Walter Charleton, Evelyn excuses 'this *work* [as] an excellent *specifique,* and rare ingredient for unstayed and *Bird-witted men*' and, in response to those who 'declaim against our *Author,* as altogether *Irreligious* and *Prophane*,' Evelyn retorts 'why those nicer and peevish spirits

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[49] In the 'Preface' to *Poems* (1805), Wordsworth numbers Lucretius as the foremost exponent of didactic poetry. Cf. Priestman (2010, 293-5) and Gillespie (2011, 152).

[50] At the beginning of the twentieth century, John Warner Taylor hesitated to ascribe 'more than a general influence on "Queen Mab' (1906, 345). He nonetheless assented that '[a]mong the more important of the minor religious influences, that of Lucretius should be noted' (344). Over a century later, 'Shelley's own immersion in Lucretius' has been considerably addressed and is now 'well established' (Priestman 2010, 297).

[51] Cf. Gillespie (2010, 243, 245-7); Hopkins (2010, 266-7); Rzepka (2012, 116).

[52] Evelyn owned six Latin editions of Lucretius (Chambers and Galbraith 2014, 689).

[53] For Evelyn's outrage at the way in which his text was edited and published, see Butterfield (2016, 61).

[54] Evelyn also challenges the notion that Epicureanism espoused carnality and sensuality (108-9).

should at all approve, or in the least make use of any other *Heathen Writer* whatsoever?' Lucretius' Christian readers may come across 'exorbitant *Chymaera's*' and 'prodigious bestialities,' but they are 'as capable to derive from them benefits, as incontaminate & innocent, we may easily imagine and conceiv'd; whilst we finde S. *Paul* that great *Apostle* himself, citing *Parmenides*.'

Whilst Evelyn admits that Lucretius 'prevaricates on *Providence* [and] the *Immortality of the Soul*' – which similarly offended the sensibilities of Francus and Lambinus – he insists that there is '*good* even in the midst of *Evil*' because for every passage that is 'obnoxious […Lucretius] hath a thousand more, where […] he perswades to a life the most exact and *Moral*.' Indeed, Evelyn maintains that Epicurus and Lucretius were prescient in their rejection of Greek and Roman polytheistic models which had 'grosly [mistook] the life and essence of the Infinite *Deity*, imagining him of some Humane form, nature and imbecility.' Evelyn goes so far as to uphold Lucretius' scientific principles and to question the faith of his fellow Englishmen who live 'as if they denyed it [Providence] in their Actions' (108).

The 'frequent objection against our Poet,' which Evelyn uses as justification for his defence, nevertheless begin to surface in his own eulogy of Epicurus; for, whilst Epicurus 'derided the most superstitious of his Countrey,' it also 'seemed [that he was] not affaid to violate the Sanctuaries of Nature, and even Heaven it self' (110). Epicurus strides through *De Rerum Natura* 'like a Conqueror boldly triumphing over the whole Empire of *Nature*' whilst Lucretius, 'like a wary *Atheist*, to sortifie his assertion, pretending as if he meant nothing les then the debauching of his friend *Memmius* into any rudiments of Impiety' (111).[55] Evelyn admires the scientific advancements made by Epicurus and his school, but he is suspicious of the theological conclusions imbibed from those discoveries (173-4).

Following Evelyn's work, the 1650s also heralded the first nearly complete translation of Lucretius by Lucy Hutchinson (1620-81) (though it remained in manuscript form for over three hundred years).[56] Hutchinson was a prolific poet, political polemicist, critic of the

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[55] Evelyn's description of Epicurus is evocative of Oliver Cromwell. The allusion may have been deliberate: 'the legitimisation of Lucretius in England proved contentious, not just because theologians and Cambridge Platonists feared its effect on orthodox convictions, but also because his arrival coincided with the most turbulent twenty years in English history' (Barbour 2010, 158).
[56] There is evidence to suggest that Hutchinson's manuscripts were read during her lifetime (Looser 2000, 32).

Restoration regime, and religious Independent.[57] Her interest, therefore, in *De Rerum Natura* was largely poetic rather than philosophical and the translation may be considered an incongruous undertaking when she appeared to be, and herself admitted to being, ill-disposed towards Epicureanism.

In the prefatory dedication to Arthur Annesley, Hutchinson disparages her own literary talents (which might be expected in terms of an obsequious 'female' address) but also denigrates the intellectual merits of the text itself. She calls the work an 'unworthy translation to your lordship,' 'so unworthy a piece,' and laments the fact that she did not have 'the good fortune of choosing a subject, worthy of being presented [to] your lordship' ([p.1806]1906, 452). Hutchinson then continues by 'beseech[ing] your lordship' to remember her own rejection of the text, which she leaves 'in your book, as an antidote against the poison of it' (455):

> wherever your lordship shall dispose this book, [preserve] this record with it,
> that I abhor the atheisms and impieties in it, and translated it only out of
> youthful curiosity to understand things I heard so much discourse of at second
> hand, but without the least inclination to propagate any of the wicked
> pernicious doctrines in it.[58]
>
> (452).

For Hutchinson, Lucretius's 'vain philosophy' can be understood without critical application. As anecdotal proof, Hutchinson explains that she completed the translation 'in a room where my children practised […] with their tutors.' Indeed, *DRN* was so riddled with aesthetic faults, philosophical errors, and scientific blunders that 'I thought this book not worthy either of review or correction, the whole work being one fault.'

Hutchinson maintains her attack throughout the dedicatory prefix, referring to Lucretius as 'this lunatic, who not able to dive into the true original and cause of beings and accidents

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[57] Cf. Scott-Baumann (2010, 176-7).
[58] Hutchinson's sentiments reappear in the remarks prefixed to Nahum Tate's 1697 edition of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century poet Sir John Davies' *Nosce Teipsum* (1599): 'it would be of great benefit to the beaus of our age to carry this glass in their pocket… It would be of use also to the wits and vortuosoes to carry this antidote against the poison they have sucked in from Lucretius or Hobbes' (1876, 120).

[…] devised this casual, irrational dance of atoms' (453). At one point Hutchinson briefly relents – at least with regards to those classical philosophers who 'acknowledge Providence, a divine original and regiment of all things' – and admits that since Ancient Greece and the Roman Republic were 'wanting a revelation and guide to lead them into a true and distinct knowledge of the nature of God' they are not to be too severely criticised for their impiety. Of course, this leniency does not extend towards those seventeenth-century philosophers who 'in these days of the Gospel' continued to preach 'this pagan mud.' Like Evelyn, Hutchinson's initial enthusiasm for Lucretius was followed by an increasing unease with the text's atheistic doctrines and its incompatibility with the morals of a Christian age (and her own Puritanism).[59]

The next full-length translation completed by Thomas Creech in 1682 similarly set out to correct the Epicurean 'Buffoonery,' 'Ignorance,' and 'Errors' of *De Rerum Natura*:

> I have heard that the best Method to overthrow the Epicurean Hypothesis (I mean as it stands opposite to Religion) is to expose a full system of it to publick view… It was the advice of a Philosopher, and practice of the Spartans to bring Drunkards into publick to make the Vice contemptible, and every Man knows the sobriety of that Common-wealth; And why the same Method to expose the principles of irreligion may not be as effectual I cannot imagine.
>
> (b2verso).

Creech follows the exegeses set out by John Evelyn and Lucy Hutchinson by attacking the school as 'superficial Observers, who are just Philosophers enough, *(as my Lord Bacon delivers,) to be irreligious,' as well as its philosophical practices – for 'Ease is the study of the

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[59] Hutchinson echoes Evelyn's attempt to call out the 'pretending age of ours': '[b]ut when I have thrown all the contempt that is due upon my author, who yet wants not admirers among those whose religion little exceeds his, I must say I am not much better satisfied with the other fardle of philosophers who in some pulpits are quoted with divine epithets.' Jonathan Goldberg does not believe, however, that Hutchinson's later repudiation of Lucretius should be mapped onto her initial enthusiasm, but rather that her edition remained a 'faithful, responsive' reproduction of the original text (2006, 280). David Hopkins similarly notes that 'by the 1670s Lucretian Epicureanism had become associated with the (to Hutchinson, repellent) libertinism of the Restoration court, and it seems likely that Hutchinson's remarkable pioneering engagement with Lucretius, the product of learned Puritan humanism, had originally been more open-minded than her later remarks suggest' (2010, 255).

Atheist' – and the principles of *De Rerum Natura* for rendering the 'understanding as blind as it self: and altogether unable to look abroad to the world.'[60]

Nevertheless, Creech's edition was immediately successful and went through two further editions in the following two years, was frequently reprinted, and became *the* standard eighteenth-century text.[61] Such was its success, in fact, that there was a lull for over half a century until an anonymous edition was published 1743. In this new edition, the author continues to assure his readers 'that I translate *Lucretius* only as a Classick Writer of the first Rank, and one of the Venerable Fathers of *Latin* Poetry' before distancing himself like Evelyn, Hutchinson, and Creech from its philosophical doctrines,

> without thinking myself accountable for his Principles, or justifying his System;
> and whoever apprehends the Design of this Work, in any other View, is a Person
> of narrow and stinted Conceptions; he is a precise *Fanatick* in the Republick of
> Letters, and a secret and ignorant Enemy to Human Learning

> (vi-vii).

Significantly, the author presents himself as faultless for the transmission of impieties found in *DRN* not, as his seventeenth-century counterparts argued, simply because he himself rejected the Epicurean school but, crucially, because those who read Lucretius for his impieties were not correctly apprehending 'the Design of this Work' as intended by the translator. This, for the anonymous author, is an important distinction. The author, for example, takes Creech's edition to task for the way in which it 'contracts and curtails his Author' – alluding to the heroic couplets employed – and also for frequent omissions, 'tho' his Numbers flow sweetly as he goes, and charm you irresistibly' (vi). Lucretius, it is maintained, 'is not to be confined and shackled by the Rules of Rhyme' but must be 'disencumber'd from the Fetters of Poetry,' echoing John Milton's prefatory verse to *Paradise Lost* (1667): 'rhyme [is] no necessary adjunct or true ornament of [a] poem or good verse, in longer works especially' (2008, 2).

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[60] Creech had sent Evelyn a copy of his translation of Lucretius and Evelyn contributed a commendatory poem to the second edition of 1683. Cf. *The Letterbooks of John Evelyn* (2014, 689).
[61] A year after Creech's edition, Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* appeared in English for the first time.

Indeed, the overall tone of the 1743 edition of *De Rerum Natura* is much more combative and self-assured like Lambinus' sixteenth-century editions. The author turns to the defects of the English language as a safeguard against the transmission of 'all the Folly and Impiety of the Heathen Mythology' since that which is treated in the book 'cannot be turned into our Language in such a manner as by a bare Translation only to make them intelligible to a Reader merely *English*.' In truth, it is only 'Persons of vulgar Abilities, and of low Learning' who will fail to appreciate the aesthetic merits of Lucretius and bemoan his views on the soul, the afterlife, and God.

In a final flourish, the author echoes John Evelyn's preface to the 1656 edition by reasoning that if, owing to Lucretius' non-teleological philosophy, we should abandon all study of *De Rerum Natura*,

> for the same Reason we ought to banish from our Studies the most celebrated Authors of Antiquity, since their Writings are in many Places profane, impious, fabulous, false and ridiculous; so that all our Poets, Orators, Historians, and Philosophers must be avoided and thrownaway as Debauchers of Youth, and Corrupters of Manners, if their Writings were once to be tried by the Standard of Faith, and the Doctrines of Christianity
>
> (viii).[62]

To bring the current, brief survey of the composition and dissemination of seventeenth and eighteenth-century English translations of *De Rerum Natura* to a close, it is clear that neither Evelyn, Hutchinson, Creech, nor the anonymous translator attempted to conceal Lucretius' atheistic philosophy.[63] Whilst Hutchinson, in particular, derided the philosophical merits of *DRN*, Lucretius was systematically portrayed as irreligious and irreverent (though the anonymous translator attempted to redirect the blame towards an unscrupulous readership).

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[62] The author adds that 'not even the most piercing Wit of *Lucretius* has been able to advance any Thing solid against the Power of the Infinite God whom he adores' (x). Dirk F. Paßmann and Hermann J. Real agree that '[o]n the one hand, Lucretius the man remained what he had always been, an atheistical monster and the "Secretary of Hell," on the other, he was hailed as a "profound oracle of wit and sense"' (2018, 100).

[63] In his annotations upon *Religio Medici* (1642), the polymath Thomas Browne similarly sets out to oppose the anti-providentialism of 'the Sectators of Epicurus' (1904, xxv).

Principally, early translators of Lucretius justified their undertaking upon similar ideological grounds to those set out by the anti-Epicurean poet Richard Blackmore in *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* (1712), who believed that *DRN* should be treated like a 'noxious plant' or a 'savage animal' which becomes useful if 'we repel with reason, not evade / The bold objections by Lucretius made' (1806, 120). Lucy Hutchinson described Lucretius as 'this crabbed poet' and 'this dog' whose 'discoveries […] are so silly, foolish, and false, that nothing but his lunacy can extenuate the crime of his arrogant ignorance' ([p.1806]1904, 38). She further excused herself from having undertaken the translation – and from 'the atheisms and impieties in it' – by acknowledging that she 'translated it only out of youthful curiosity to understand things I heard so much discourse of at second hand.'[64] John Evelyn similarly referred to his translation of the First Book (1656) as 'this bold attempt' and a form of 'temerity' which has 'exposed my reputation to […] censure' (A5recto).

The mass of apologias which were subsequently published during the seventeenth century highlight the ideological antinomy between the dissemination of *De Rerum Natura* and the prohibition of the text's perceived atheistic doctrines. Thus, in the first English defence of Epicurean moral philosophy, Thomas Browne asserts that the 'doctrine of *Epicurus*, that denied the Providence of God, was no Atheism, but a magnificent and high strained conceit of his Majesty' ([1646]]1904, 33).[65] Similar attempts at expunging the radicalism of *DRN* were made by Walter Charleton in *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletonia* (1654), *Epicurus' Morals* (1656), and *Immortality of the Human Soul* (1657),[66] Thomas Stanley in *History of Philosophy* (1660), and Abraham Cowley in an essay titled 'The Gardens' (1662-7) which – as well as dedicated to Lucretius' translator, John Evelyn – attempts to address the misconception of Epicurean pleasure as a form of hedonism by asserting '[t]hat Pleasure

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[64] Cf. Lucy Hutchinson's dedicatory letter to the Earl of Anglesey.

[65] Cf. Harrison (1934, 12).

[66] Charleton was clearly indebted to the earlier adoption of Epicureanism in France where attempts had been made by Lambinus, Michel de Montaigne, and Gassendi (and eventually Voltaire) to reconcile Christian teleology with the godlessness of atomistic materialism. See Booth (2005, 57). For Voltaire's ambiguous relationship with *De Rerum Natura*, see Barbour (2010, 161-2). Lisa Sarasohn writes that by the start of the 1630s, Gassendi's 'apology for Epicurus had expanded into a full-scale rehabilitation of Epicureanism, which in the course of several versions, he [Charleton] gradually transformed into his own philosophy' (1985, 366). During the 1650s-60s '[t]he works of Charleton and Stanley embody a considerable part of Lucretius done into English prose' (Harrison 1934, 23). Cf. Butterfield (2016, 61).

was the chiefest Good, / (And was perhaps i'th' right, if rightly understood)' (1923, 65 vi.2-3).[67]

A significant hermeneutical heterogeneity between the translation of Lucretius and the adoption of classical atomism in scientific discourses thus developed in Enlightenment Europe: that, whilst translators should be at pains to stress the paganism of *De Rerum Natura*, natural philosophers attempted to Christianise Epicureanism by apotheosising the First Cause as God. As I will now demonstrate through an analysis of Francis Bacon's *De Sapientia Veterum* (*The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 1609), *De Principis Atque Originibus* (*On Principles and Origins*, c.1612), and *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (*Partitions of the Sciences*, 1623), the recycling of classical atomism during the Enlightenment was, in part, an attempt at a Christianised exegesis of atomistic causes and a theological justification of the philosophical integrity of Epicureanism. For Blake, this meant that Bacon's treatises were proof of the continued acceptance of Epicurean error: 'If what Bacon says Is True, what Christ says Is False' (*K* 396-7). As such, Blake's annotations to Bacon's *Essays* become part of an early-modern philosophical context which saw a battleground open up between the integration and refutation of Epicurean principles, symbols, and models.

III. Bacon's Atomistic Tradition

The previous section demonstrated that Blake was able to draw on a long and consistent tradition from fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe (underpinned by the Reformation as well as the Spanish Inquisition) of associating Epicureanism with atheism. His annotations of Blake's *Essays* takes part in, draws upon, and reflects this tradition. In fact, it is notable that Bacon appears in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (alongside other adopters of atomism like René Descartes, Michel de Montaigne, and Denis Diderot) and that in its report of 1668 the Holy Office pronounced Bacon a heretic, a dissimulator, and a cunning rhetorician.[68] The Spanish Inquisition also prohibited Bacon from 'its *Indices* from 1632, 1640 and 1707' (Hill

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[67] The date of composition of Cowley's essay is suggested by Arthur Nethercot (1930, 115). A similar horticultural theme is also present in William Temple's apologia *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* (1685).
[68] Cf. Fattori (2016, 115-6).

2000, 3). The seventeenth-century English translations of *De Rerum Natura* should similarly be read against this historical backdrop as it frames the reception of Lucretius at the time when Blake was accusing Bacon of following this Epicurean tradition:

> Every Body Knows that this [the entire body of essays] is Epicurus and Lucretius & Yet Every Body says that it is Christian Philosophy; how is this Possible? Every Body must be a Liar & deceiver. But Every Body does not do this, But The Hirelings of Kings & Courts who make themselves Every Body & Knowingly propagate Falshood

(*K* 397).[69]

Amongst the cacophony of name-calling, Blake denounces Bacon for 'Contemptible Knavery & Folly' (397), for 'Trifling Nonsense' and for espousing 'Folly Itself' (399; 410), for 'Politic Foolery & most contemptible Villainy & Murder!' (400), for being a 'Contemptible & Abject Slave!' (401) and 'Contemptible Knave!' (403), and 'a Usurer' (409). He also accuses Bacon of 'Blasphemy!' (401), of being 'An Atheist' (404), that '[he] put an End to Faith' (398), and that he provided 'Good Advice for the Devil' (402). Moreover, Blake provides a pictorial representation of his rage by drawing on page 55 ('Of a King') '*A representation of hinder parts, labelled:* The devil's arse, *and depending from it a chain of excrement ending in:* A King' (400).

Blake's specific allegation of atheism does not reflect any obvious anti-teleological principles in the *Essays*; in many places, Bacon is simply suggesting that superstition reduces the mind to a state of fear which corrupts scientific progress.[70] However, Bacon does go so far as to declare that '[i]t were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him' (55), but this is a prescription for reform and not repudiation of faith.[71]

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[69] If Bacon is an Epicurean and Epicureanism is a form of falsehood, then (following the logic employed by Lucy Hutchinson) he has no access to the truth which can only be obtained through spiritual enlightenment.

[70] Aphra Behn comes to a similar conclusion in her poem *To Mr Creech*: 'The mystic terms of rough philosophy, / …pierces, conquers, and compels, / Beyond poor feeble faith's dull oracles. / Faith, the despairing soul's content, / Faith, the last shift of routed argument' (2009, 240-1 45-58).

[71] John Locke comes to a similar conclusion in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695): 'the works of nature, in every part of them, sufficiently evidence a deity; yet the world made so little use of their reason, that they saw him not… Sense and lust blinded their minds in some, and a careless inadvertency in others, and fearful apprehensions in most… In this state of darkness and ignorance of the true God, vice and superstition held the world' (1824, 135).

The attack on superstition also reflects one of the central aims of *De Rerum Natura* as Lucretius continually addresses Memmius to impart knowledge about the first-beginnings, the laws of heaven and the gods, and the cycle of nature to fortify him against the irrational fear of the gods (1948, 28 i.50-61).[72] Bacon's adoption of this argument, however, leaves him susceptible to criticism. One can imagine Blake's furrowed brow reading a passage where it is declared that '[a]theism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue.' Moreover, Blake considers the distinction between atheism and superstition to be false; for, whilst Bacon initially writes that 'atheism is in all respects hateful' because 'it depriveth human nature of the means to exalt itself above human frailty,' he then adds that 'superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: *therefore atheism* did *never perturb* states.' Blake remarks that 'Atheism is thus the best of all. Bacon fools us' (*K* 404).

Indeed, Blake was not wholly unjustified in his remarks. Especially in his early works, Bacon tended to not only incorporate but celebrate atomism when working with natural philosophers and poets who were indebted to Epicureanism. In *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), Bacon declares that '[a]s to the opinions of the ancient philosophers,' among whom he names Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Democritus, 'which men usually pass slightly over; it is proper to cast a modest eye upon them' (1815, 99-102). In *De Principis Atque Originibus* (c.1612) Bacon had been much bolder in his mission statement, affirming that 'to me the philosophy of Democritus seems worthy to be rescued from neglect' (1858, 466).[73] In *De Sapientia Veterum* (1609), Bacon had similarly declared his enthusiasm for the classics:

> [i]t may be that my reverence for the primitive time carries me too far, but the truth is that in some of these fables, as well in the very frame and textures of the story as in the propriety of the names by which the persons that figure in it are distinguished, I find a conformity and connexion with the thing signified, so close

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[72] See also Lewalski (1985, 40).
[73] At the very beginning of *Cogitationes de Natura Rerum* (*Thoughts on the Nature of Things*, [1604] 1653), which, as the title suggests, is indebted to *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) (cf. Bernardino Telesio's *De Rerum Natura Iuxta Propria Principia*, *On the Nature of Things according to their Own Principles*, 1563-5), Bacon states that 'the doctrine of Democritus concerning atoms is either true or useful for demonstration' (1858, 419).

and so evident, that one cannot help believing such a signification to have been designed and meditated from the first…

(1860, 76-7).

Bacon casts himself as the only commentator able to study myths for their true meaning and, whether mythmakers happened upon the truth by scientific investigation or luck, 'if there be any help in them, I shall think well bestowed either way: I shall be throwing light either upon antiquity or upon nature itself' (80). The distinction, therefore, between 'great' or 'lucky' classical authors, between 'natural philosophy,' 'civil affairs,' 'fables,' 'parable[s],' 'imitation[s] of history,' and 'fiction' (78), is secondary to Bacon's primary concern: his own rational exegesis.

Thus, Bacon adopts the Lucretian method of 'using myth as a symbol of reality' (Alpers 1979, 153) to prompt his readers 'to consider whether an atomism ultimately stripped of myth might help explain physical phenomena and liberate natural philosophy from theology and logic' (Barbour 2005, 32).[74] This practice is consonant with Bacon's 'grand vision of the "cosmic hide-and-seek,"' where he believes that the mystery in which Creation is shrouded is part of 'its Creator's invitation to Man to play a game with Him, the goal of the game being to identify the rules according to which the game is played' (Paßmann and Real 2018, 101-2).

By adopting the same methodological style as Lucretius and by attempting to systematise myths according to scientific principles, Bacon was criticised by Blake for repeating the same errors as his classical predecessors. As Blake declares in *Milton*, 'We do not want either Greek or Roman Models' (*M* 513 i.1.21). The endorsement of myth as an exegetical tool may also explain why Blake insisted in his annotations to Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* (c.1808) that 'Bacon is only Epicurus over again' (*K* 456).[75] Of course, it is specifically Lucretius' method that Bacon was adopting rather than Epicurus himself; however, the distinction between the two classical philosophers was often blurred during the Enlightenment and Bacon himself, at times, failed to differentiate between Democritean and Epicurean

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[74] Lucretius uses the myth of Phaethon, for instance, to argue against the immortality of the earth (v.379-410).
[75] Matthew Green refers to Blake's annotations to Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* as 'his most overt declarations against the epistemology that he associates with Locke, Newton and Bacon' (2005, 10).

atomism and frequently attributed the atomistic principles of Democritus to Lucretius or *vice versa*.[76] Indeed, in the 1688 report by the Holy Office into *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, the author 'noticed several times when he [Bacon] falls into error, sometimes concerning customs, sometimes concerning the sincerity of history, and sometimes in the solidity of doctrine' (qt. Fattori 2016, 116).

In truth, Bacon was not the only Enlightenment thinker to muddle his atomistic philosophers, which suggests that he likely derived his scientific groundwork from *De Rerum Natura* (a common habit amongst the English, post-Reformation philosophers and poets).[77] As Adam Rzepka points out, the sixteenth century tended not to distinguish between Epicurean and Lucretian principles 'because Epicureanism in general is most visible as the object of sweeping, virulent accusations of intellectual lassitude, sensual decadence, and outrageous heresy' (2012, 121). Since both atheism and materialism were heretical threats to Christianity, '[t]he "sins" of both were regularly conflated by critics of the period; thus philosophers such as Hobbes, Epicurus and Lucretius (and even Seneca) were grouped together as atheists' (Hermanson , 131). Indeed, in the preface to Thomas Creech's 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura*, the philosophical principles of Hobbes are simply described as 'Lucretius enlarg'd.' Thus, Epicureanism and atheism became two sides of the same coin: '[i]ts materialism seemed to be re-emerging in the thought of Thomas Hobbes, who was perhaps even more threatening than Epicurus himself' (Sarasohn 1996, 172).

At the beginning of Chapter VI of *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, Bacon muddies the water when he writes that 'the school of Democritus and Epicurus boasted that their founders had overthrown the walls of the world' (1858, 114). Bacon derives this image from *De Rerum Natura* (i.71-4; 1102-3; ii.1043-5; 1143-5; iii.16-7; v.370-3; v.452-5; 1212-6; vi.132-4). However, the laudatory sense in which Bacon exploits it relates only to Epicurus (*DRM* i.71-4), the father figure of Lucretius' poem. On the three occasions that Lucretius does mention Democritus by name, one is as a source of opposition (iii.371-5), the next to stress Democritus' inferiority to Epicurus (iii.1039-45), and only in Book Five as a way of corroborating his own principles (v.621-5). It is probable that the image suited Bacon's

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[76] At other times, Bacon conflates Democritus with Epicurus such as in *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis* (*A Description of the Intellectual Globe*, [1612]1858, 514).

[77] Cf. Gillespie and Hardie (2010, 14); Holmes and Shearin (2012, 20).

needs in addressing the ancient atomists as a collective, for Bacon readily forgets about Epicurus and concentrates on Democritus instead. Significantly, the terminology which Bacon then employs whilst discussing Democritean *atomoi* as 'seeds' is a Lucretian idiosyncrasy, which points to Bacon's continued reliance upon *De Rerum Natura*.[78]

A similar philosophical slippage occur later in the same chapter as Bacon expounds the three different forms of vacuum: 'a vacuum absolutely,' 'a collective vacuum,' and the more likely 'vacuum interspersed' (1858, 519). Bacon refers to Leucippus and Democritus as 'the founders of the opinion concerning the vacuum' before explaining that 'in the opinion of Democritus vacuity is bounded and circumscribed, so that beyond certain limits distraction or divulsion of bodies is no more possible than compulsion or compaction' (520). This 'opinion' is derived from 'those works of Democritus which have come down to us,' but Bacon admits that such an opinion 'is never expressly declared' (nor from which works he derives this meaning). Thus, we are led (and meant) to rely upon Bacon's exegetical model as well as his philosophical source(s). Although it is not explicit (and there are many such appropriations of images, symbols, and metaphors without acknowledgement),[79] the likely source is *De Rerum Natura* (i.983-7).[80] Once more, however, the allusion is not unproblematic.

In Book One of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius does indeed state that '*before our eyes* one thing is seen to bound another' (italics added). However, Lucretius is arguing that the sensible world (constrained by the human frame) bears no analogy to the laws which govern the cosmos. In fact, in 'the universe in truth there is nothing to limit outside' (1948, 59 i.985). Space, Lucretius argues, is infinite; but, rather than concurring with Democritus that 'matter and space being equally infinite, vacuity is necessarily confined within certain bounds' (1858, 520), Lucretius concludes that the vacuum also remains infinite:

> if all the space in the whole universe were shut in on all sides, and were created with borders determined, and had been bounded, then the store of matter would have flowed together with solid weight from all sides to the bottom [...and] lie idle piled together by sinking down from limitless time...

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[78] Cf. Pollock (2017, 124).
[79] See my discussion of Lucretius' morphological metaphor in Chapter 3.
[80] Cf. Farrington (1964, 84; 116) and Schuler (1992, 34).

(*DRN* 59-60 i.987-95).

Bacon's reference, upon fuller investigation, does not acknowledge the distinction between the Democritean and Lucretian atomistic models and neglects to attend to the variations within the atomistic tradition as it passed from Leucippus to Democritus, from Democritus to Epicurus, and from Epicurus to Lucretius. As I have already noted, it would be unjust to exclusively blame Bacon for such inconsistencies, especially since his pioneering research into the Pre-Socratics would influence Enlightenment philosophers and their eighteenth and nineteenth-century advocates.[81]

Upon reflection, what is important to stress for my argument on Blake is this: whether Bacon's atomistic principles ultimately derived from Democritus or Epicurus, it seems that he channelled this tradition through Lucretius and considered Lucretius as the mouthpiece for classical atomism.[82] The years 1605-12 in particular, when Bacon wrote *De Sapientia Veterum*, *De Principis Atque Originibus*, and *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, act as a soundboard for his inclination towards, incorporation of, and improvement on the classical schools of atomism.

Now, in Section IV, I will now concentrate on Bacon's exegetical model which was extrapolated from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* before concluding this chapter by returning to, and finding validation for, Blake's personal assessment of Bacon's *Essays* as a rearticulation of certain Epicurean tenets. Specifically, I will consider Bacon's adoption of myth in *De Sapientia Veterum* (*The Wisdom of the Ancients*, 1609) in relation to the entries on 'Pan; or Nature,' 'Cœlum; or the Origin of Things,' and finally 'Cupid; or the Atom.' As I will demonstrate, Bacon utilises these myths for a twofold purpose: the first, to reveal the atomistic origins of the universe; and the second, to prove that the ancients held a similar understanding of the atomistic origins of the universe (though buried under allegory and fable).

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[81] Cf. Farrington (1964, 48). In a subsequent note, Farrington adds that 'Bacon was a pioneer of research into the Presocratics, but his knowledge must not be supposed to be accurate' (111).
[82] As Robert Schuler notes, the connection between Democritus and Lucretius forms 'a habit of mind' as Bacon 'merely relies on the Roman poet […] as conveying unproblematically Democritus' scientific ideas' (1992, 35-39).

Bacon begins the entry on 'Pan; or Nature' by discussing the obscurity surrounding Pan's parentage: first, by rejecting the notion that Pan is the offspring of Penelope and her many suitors, but thereafter giving some credence to Pan being either the offspring of Mercury or Jupiter and Hybris. Although this may seem tangential to a scientific debate, Bacon is of course interested in origins whether aetiological or etymological. The description of Pan also draws upon cross-semasiological imagery: there is a strong physiological element – 'horns,' 'body shaggy and hairy,' and 'beard especially long' – anthropological elements – 'biform; human in the upper parts, the other half brute' and 'the feet of a goat' – as well as theological elements – 'the tops of the horns reaching heaven' (92; cf. 95). Bacon then returns to the etymology of Pan and his genealogy:

> Pan, as the very word declares, represents the universal frame of things, or
> Nature. About his origin there are and can be but two opinions; for Nature is
> either the offspring of Mercury – that is of the Divine Word (an opinion which
> the Scriptures establish beyond question, and which was entertained by all the
> more divine philosophers); or else of the seeds of things mixed and confused
> together.

(94).[83]

Bacon focuses on the second derivation of Pan's origin as 'the seeds of things' (the building blocks of material constructs) with its terminological distinctiveness pointing to its Lucretian source as well as its transmission (even paraphrasing) through Virgil:

> How through the void of space the seeds of things
> Came first together; seeds of the sea, land, air,
> And the clear fire; how from these elements
> All embryos grew, and the great world itself

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[83] Blake would have been aware of the significance of letters from both biblical and Kabbalistic sources where the shape and sound of letters indicated divine lessons. There is an Orthodox tradition where the word of God is not simply spoken through prophets, but permeates the commandments which the Israelites were meant to follow. The word of God, therefore, was a way of living and being. Cf. Matthew (4.4; 24.35); John (2) (1.1; 1.14).

Swelled by degrees and gathered in its globe.

(1860, 94; *Works* vi).[84]

Bacon and Virgil both rely on Book One of *De Rerum Natura*, where Lucretius talks about 'reveal[ing] the first-beginnings of things […] and to name them the seeds of things' (28-9).[85] In fact, this imagery recurs throughout *DRN* (in Book One there are further references at lines 150-79, 208-37, 480-511, and 600-31). Bacon incorporates this *topos* and (re)imagines Pan as the product of swirling, self-sufficient atoms 'subject to death and corruption' (95).

Bacon then attempts to appropriate the 'seed' imagery as a metaphor for 'the births and durations and deaths of all things' alongside the Virgilian 'embryos' and 'their fallings and risings, their labours and felicities.'[86] In fact, Bacon interprets the self-fertilising Virgilian 'embryos' through his discussion of Pan to whom 'no amours are attributed […] except his marriage with Echo. For the world enjoys itself and in itself all things that are' (101). This leads Bacon to hypothesise a world that is biologically productive yet sexually passive:

> That the world has no issue, is another allusion to the sufficiency and perfection
> of it in itself. Generation goes on among the parts of the world, but how can the
> whole generate, when no body exists out of itself?

In his entry on 'Cœlum; or the Origin of Things,' Bacon continues to stress the self-generating origins of the universe by focusing on narratives of cosmogonic castration. He explains that Cœlum had 'his parts of generation [genitals]' cut off by Saturn, his son, and that Saturn thereafter produced many sons but devoured them as soon as they were born (1860, 113). Jupiter escaped this fate and eventually grew too powerful, cutting off his father's genitals and casting him into Tartarus. Bacon then attempts to rationalise the fable where Cœlum represents 'the concave or circumference which encloses all matter' and

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[84] Virgil's praise of science in the *Georgics* is often read as a tribute to Lucretius (ii.490-3). Erasmus Darwin echoes Virgil in *The Temple of Nature*: 'Blest is the Sage, who learn'd in Nature's laws / With nice distinction marks effect and cause; / Who views the insatiate Grave with eye sedate, / Nor fears thy voice, inexorable Fate!' (1804, 153-4 iv.7-10). James Thomson employs similar language in his praise of Newton, that '[a]ll-piercing sage!': 'Nature herself / Stood all subdu'd by him, and open laid / Her every latent glory to his view' (1734, 52 23; 53 36-7). Cf. Abraham Cowley's 'Ode Upon Dr Harvey,' especially lines ii.9-14.

[85] Virgil's *Eclogues* 4 and 6, as well as the *Georgics*, are heavily indebted to Lucretius. See Berg (1974, 183-4).

[86] The seventeenth-century polymath Thomas Browne noted that there is 'consent between two learned Poets, *Lucretius* and *Virgil*, that [the world] begins in *Spring*' (1904, xxix).

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Saturn represents 'matter itself.' Accordingly, 'the sum total of matter remains always the same and the absolute quantum of nature suffers neither increase nor diminution' (114).

Bacon's search for a First Cause leads him to simultaneously reflect upon periodical cycles of atomistic destruction. He notes, for instance, that Democritus feared that the world might relapse into its elementary stage of discord, a reversal Lucretius prayed might never happen (115; *DRN* 189 v.108-11).[87] Lucretius, though he hopes that the ruin of the world will be perpetually postponed, does acknowledge that the seas and the lands and the sky 'one single day shall hurl to ruin' and that 'the massive form and fabric of the world, held up for many years, shall fall headlong' (189 93-6).[88] Virgil follows in this tradition, basing his natural revolutions upon processes which are fundamentally unstable: destruction and dissolution are integral moments within the atomistic cycle. Bacon acquiesces, writing that 'after the world was established [...] it did not from the first remain in quiet' (1860, 116) and that it was only after the 'convulsions in the lower regions' and after 'inundations, tempests, winds, [and] earthquakes' had ceased, that 'things settled at last into a more durable state of consent and harmonious operation.[89]

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the French philosopher Denis Diderot echoes the tumultuous origin of the world but extends this process *ad infinitum*:

> [h]ow many faulty and incomplete worlds have been dispersed and perhaps
> form again, and are dispersed at every instant in remote regions of space [...]
> where motion continues and will continue to combine masses of matter, until
> they have found some arrangement in which they may finally persevere?... all of
> which show a continual tendency to destruction: a rapid succession of beings
> that appear one by one, flourish and disappear; a merely transitory symmetry
> and momentary appearance of order?

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[87] The atomists may have been influenced by Heraclitus who believed 'that the whole world is in its turn again consumed by fire at certain periods, and that all this happens according to fate' (*LP* 379).

[88] Gerard Passannante describes *De Rerum Natura* as 'a poem in so many ways about disaster management' (2012, 89).

[89] The passage Bacon appropriates from *De Rerum Natura* was attacked for its anti-teleological implications by Henry More in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660, 41-2) and John Ray in *Three Physico-Theological Discourses* (1693, 264-5).

([1749]1916, 113-4).

Thirty years later, David Hume in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) offers an even more alarming vision of the material world which, not merely subject to natural catastrophes, may in fact be a catastrophic misjudgement itself:

> [t]his world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance: it is the work only of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first impulse and active force which it received from him.

> (111-2).[90]

Blake seems to appropriate such apocalyptic imagery and recast it in terms of psychological vexation in the 'Preludium' of *America* (1794):

> The stern Bard ceas'd, asham'd of his own song; enrag'd he swung
>
> His harp aloft sounding, then dash'd its shining frame against
>
> A ruin'd pillar in glittring fragments; silent he turn'd away,
>
> And wander'd down the vales of Kent in sick & drear lamentings.

> (*A* 210 2.18-21).

Disgusted with his creative endeavours, Blake rejects the poem and his role as a prophet.[91] Blake hereby begins to establish the premise which, as I will demonstrate in more detail in

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[90] The dialogue takes place between Philo (whose views most closely resemble that of Hume) and Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher who was the pupil of Zeno. Cleanthes, in his essay on atoms, expounded the Stoic belief that there are two general principles which govern the universe: the active (reason) and the passive (matter). The active exists in the passive as God exists throughout all matter (*LP* 308). Philo is repudiating a follower of Cleanthes who believes that the universe was created by design.

[91] Curiously, the lines spoken by the Bard were erased in all but a handful of copies. Self-censorship may have contributed to this omission as *America* was written during the Reign of Terror, with plates referencing 'the King' and 'George' never printed. However, whilst there is also a brief reference to the Americas in the 'Preludium' (2.10-4), the prefatory piece is primarily concerned with Orc's captivity, his release, and the subsequent rape of the shadowy daughter of Urthona. If self-censorship was a factor, then this seems to be primarily a reaction against the narrative of the 'Preludium' rather than a political stance. Cf. Keynes and Wolf (1953, 43), Youngquist

Chapters 3 and 4 through an analysis of Los' creative endeavours, that moments of poetic self-doubt and psychological uncertainty can be mapped onto the non-teleological foundations of atomistic materialism.[92] This move, as will be explained in Chapter 2, frames Thel's psycho-topographical environment and in Chapters 3 and 4 I will reveal how this reduces Urizenic creation to the same postlapsarian reality of time and space.

There is a further correlation between Bacon's adoption of Lucretian imagery and its re-emergence in Blake's poetic works: specifically, the way in which the tactility of materiality is often expressed as a 'fabric.' In *De Sapientia Veterum*, Bacon employs the term whilst discussing 'the agitations and motions of matter' which produce the 'structures of things' and eventually settle into 'a fabric […] which could keep its form' (114-5). It is significant that Bacon should employ this metaphor whilst referring to *De Rerum Natura* as it suggests an awareness of the semantic weight with which he was imbuing his work. In fact, the subtitle 'the Origin of Things' can be read as a nod to *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*).

In Book Four of *DRN*, for example, on the cause of thought and the movement of *simulacra*, Lucretius suggests that unfiltered *simulacra* make us think of monstrous forms 'because of their subtle nature and fine fabric ['*tenvia texta*]' (168 iv.743-4). In Book Five, Lucretius employs similar semantics to describe the '*tria talia texta*' of the sea, land, and sky (v.94). I will return to these interrelated threads which weave together the fabric of the world as a cosmic machine in Chapter 4 to demonstrate the way in which Urizenic creation provides the phenomenological blueprint of all postlapsarian existence. It is also significant that Blake develops this textile imagery as part of Cathedron's looms to combine the atomistic language of Lucretius with the industrialisation of eighteenth-century London. Enitharmon, for instance, erects the looms of Cathedron in Luban's Gate and 'wove the Spectres / Bodies of Vegetation' (*FZ* 410 viii.3-4). By providing fallen existence with a corporeal husk, Enitharmon is taking part in the natural processes which Lucretius describes in *DRN* at both a cosmic and terrestrial level (iii.330-48; v.782-867). Indeed, Blake replicates Lucretius'

(1989, 68), and Whittaker (1999, 70). William Wordsworth focuses on a similar eschatological context in 'Book V' of *The Prelude* (1799-1805; 1850). In 'Mont Blanc' (1816), P. B. Shelley poses the fatalistic fallout of Wordsworth's logic within the context of a pre-apocalyptic world that is devoid of the mind's actualising presence (v.139-44).

[92] Cf. *BL* 269 4.18-22.

anthropological model where life sprouts from Earth's womb (i.1035-6; v.807-8) when the Spectres are brought to the looms of Cathedron by 'The Daughters of Enitharmon [who] weave the ovarium & the integuments / In soft silk drawn from their own bowels in lascivious delight' (*FZ* 417 viii.113[i].8-12). Blake combines mercantile and ovarian imagery within the context of atomistic materialism to portray fallen existence as dependent on the industrialisation of the female body. Indeed, Blake concentrates on the *female* body because the *male* body – or, rather, the *male seed* – is absent.

Blake's condemnation of such atomistic anthropology becomes much clearer in *Jerusalem* (1804-20), where he decries the deadness of Epicurean existence:

> Calling the Rocks Atomic Origins of Existence; denying Eternity
> By the Atheistical Epicurean Philosophy of Albions Tree
> Such are the Feminine & Masculine when separated from Man
> They call the Rocks Parents of Men, & adore the frowning Chaos
> Dancing around in howling pain clothed in the bloody Veil.
>
> (*J* 774-5 iii.67.12-6).

The paradoxical conceptualisation of a reproductive process that does not require the act of conception, which is asexual and therefore self-fertilising, eerily captures Bacon's exegesis of Pan as well as the way in which 'the seeds of things' from Virgil's *Eclogues* form into 'embryos.'

Also, in a curious cross-pollination, there is a distorted echo of the Christian tradition of the Logos espoused in the Gospel of St John. Bacon's contemporary, the poet John Davies, remarks in *Nosce Teipsum* (1599) that God is the '*Light* which mak'st the Light, which makes the Day' (10), providing the spiritual sustenance with which mankind is able to comprehend the soul. During the Romantic period, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was writing about similar theological matters in Chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria* (1817) as well as in his *Philosophical Lectures* (1818-9), especially Lecture XI which begins with the poem 'After

Giordano Bruno.'[93] John Keats was also incorporating similar imagery in his unfinished epic poem *Hyperion* (1818-9):

> From chaos and parental darkness came
>
> Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
>
> That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
>
> Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
>
> And with it light, and light, engendering
>
> Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
>
> The whole enormous matter into life.
>
> (1905, 219 ii.191-7).

While the verse and imagery of *Hyperion* is indebted to *Paradise Lost* (1667), the production of 'Light' from 'intestine broil' (cf. *PL* ii.1001) harkens to similar asexual productivity which categorised cosmological creation in Bacon's *De Sapientia Veterum*. From this semantic melting pot Blake derives the symbolism which saturates somatic formation in his mythopoeia, as the empirical logic of natural philosophers reduces life to the cycle of Eternal Death which conjoins the twin concepts of phenomenal generation and vegetative consumption into a macabre loop of degenerative materialism.

In the prefatory plate to *Europe*, the 'Five windows [which] light the cavern'd Man' (225 iii.1) are redolent of the senses in Davies' *Nosce Teipsum* which are like 'the windows, through the which she viewes / The *light of knowledge*' (1599, 42). Then, in a powerful evocation of the theological tradition in which Keats would follow, the divine light as 'its own producer' is parodied by Blake as the act of biological reproduction/self-fertilisation in *The Book of Urizen*:

> Eternity shudder'd when they saw,
>
> Man begetting his likeness,
>
> On his own divided image.

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[93] Cf. Guite (2010, 168-9).

(*BU* 253 19.14-6).[94]

Thus, as each writer employs a variant of the asexual cosmogony which Lucretius derived from Epicurus (and which, in turn, can be traced to Democritus and Leucippus), we can see how Blake and Keats follow in the scientific tradition of Bacon who, in turn, had couched his understanding of the 'seeds of things' in the classical (ovarium) language of Virgil.[95]

Finally, to briefly return to Bacon's reading of the Pan myth, the exposition on asexual creation highlights that Pan was often excluded from the amorous affairs of the other gods (including his marriage to Echo, which is read as fundamentally nonsexual):

> [it] echoes most faithfully the voice of the world itself, and is written as it were from the world's own dictation; being indeed nothing else than the image and reflection of it, which it only repeats and echoes, but adds nothing of its own…
>
> (1860, 101).

Then, in his entry on 'Cupid,' Bacon goes on to revise this image of generation within an explicitly atomistic context, arguing that since Cupid, or Love, and Chaos are the most ancient of all things (though Chaos was never distinguished as a deity), 'Love is introduced without any parent at all […and] out of Chaos begot all things' (122). Bacon interprets this fable as 'the appetite or instinct of primal matter' and '*the natural motion of the atom*' which he goes on to describe as 'the original and unique force that constitutes and fashions all things out of matter.'

It is at this point that the science of *De Sapientia Veterum* diverges from Democritus – who had posited autonomous atoms, though lacking agency – with Bacon animating his atoms and stimulating life within them in a biblical parallel of God breathing life into Adamic clay. The distinction is significant because Bacon had to tread carefully in the footsteps of 'the ancient atomists [who] had incorporated an atheistic doctrine into their natural philosophy' (Sargent 1999, xiv). Bacon had to be careful because when he set about revising *De Sapientia Veterum* in *De Principis Atque Originibus* (c. 1612) – the full title of which reads *On*

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[94] There is a further Miltonic echo of Adam's claim that Eve is the '[b]est image of my self' (*PL* 118 v.95).
[95] Stoics such as Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, Archedemus, and Posidonius adopted a similar form of self-seeding (*LP* 308-9).

Principles and Origins, according to the fables of Cupid and Cœlum, or the philosophy of Parmenides and Telesio and especially that of Democritus as it is treated of in the fable of Cupid – he was clearly still preoccupied with Cupid as a primordial force:

> [t]his fable […] seems to set forth in the small compass of a parable a doctrine concerning the principles of things and the origins of the world, not differing in much from the philosophy which Democritus held…

> (1858, 461).

Bacon had, nevertheless, taken a step towards emphasising a Christian teleology in *De Principis Atque Originibus* by rebuffing Democritus for not maintaining an ethical enquiry:

> …there can be no cause in nature (for we always except God), for nothing was before it […] seeing that next to God it is the cause of causes, itself only without cause […] there is a true and certain limit of causes in nature… hence Cupid is represented by the ancient sages in the parable as without a parent, that is to say, without a cause,– an observation of no small significance; nay, I know not whether it be not the greatest thing of all.

> (462). [96]

The scientific principles of the physical universe are to be 'found in nature'; anything beyond these principles, anything beyond experience, is either beyond our human comprehension – in which case we should not attempt to understand it – or false. Thus, whilst Democritus made considerable scientific progress to which Bacon is indebted and 'excellently affirmed that atoms or seeds, and the virtue thereof, were unlike anything that could fall under the senses' (464), and whilst Bacon gives Democritus more credit than other Pre-Socratics, he does find fault in 'a narrow theory' which fails to understand that it cannot integrate the

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[96] In *Mirum in Modum, a Glimpse of God's Glory and the Soul's Shape* (1602), John Davies of Hereford similarly berates those 'selfe-confounding *Soules*' who 'will not see, / How all the *Orbes* of *Heau'n* in order roules / VVhich cannot moue; vnlesse they moued bee: / By some first mouer, sith vnmou'd is hee?' ([no pagination]). Davies concludes by asking, 'What moues yee then, yee *Monsters* in *Mens* shapes, / To moue such questions which assoile yee can.'

single principle of movement with 'either the motion of the heavenly bodies in circle, or the phenomena of contraction and expansion' (1860, 124).

In part, Bacon struggles to disentangle himself from the classical school of atomism because he both venerates and challenges the philosophy of Democritus.[97] His revisions from *De Sapientia Veterum* to *De Principis Atque Originibus* are a microcosm of Bacon's continued engagement with, and reconsideration of, the godlessness of atomistic materialism.[98] The exegetical model of *De Sapientia Veterum* similarly reveals that Bacon not only adopted the Lucretian method of schematising myths, but that he specifically adopted this method to uncover the atomistic foundations of these myths. Such an exegesis offers an asexual model of creation: that is, Bacon primarily adheres to the classical hypothesising of atomism as activated by a natural (rather than divine) force which propels atoms.

Whilst Bacon attempted to Christianise his hypotheses, his adoption of classical models constituted for Blake a recycling of old errors and falsehoods. This is why Blake claims that 'Bacon is only Epicurus over again' (*K* 456). Perhaps, therefore, the pertinent question is not whether Bacon considered himself an Epicurean, but whether Blake felt justified in his accusations. Upon such consideration, the adoption of an exegetical model from *De Rerum Natura*, the scientific analysis of myths to uncover their atomistic origins in *De Sapientia Veterum*, the adoption of the main principles (bodies and void) of classical atomism, Bacon's equivocation in such essays as 'On Superstition,' and the attempt to re-establish the importance of Democritus in *De Principis Atque Originibus* provided Blake with sufficient intertextual proof of Epicurean proclivities. When we also consider that Bacon's treatises were banned during the Reformation in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* and the Spanish Inquisition's *Indices*, that the early translators of Lucretius attempted to denounce the Roman poet's impieties, that the transmission of Epicureanism into England coincided with the hedonism and libertinism of the Restoration period with which it became associated,

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[97] Whilst 'Bacon's works are filled with admiration for Democritus' (Barbour 2017, 29), it is also true that 'Epicureanism represented to Bacon a provocative model of everything that was at once productive and dangerous about his own program of reform' (1992, 79). Cf. 2017, 20. Barbour adds that Bacon had to 'reckon with an obvious trajectory in the legacy of ancient atomism: that as the physical theory passes from Democritus to Epicurus and then onward again to Lucretius and the Epicureans, its ethical, theological, and political accretions loom increasingly large as the very purpose of that physics' (*ibid*, 37).

[98] 'Bacon tried and failed to secure theological legitimacy for atoms… In his last years, Bacon struggled to separate a genuine natural philosophy from superstition by means of mediating between atoms and pneuma in an intellectual milieu that very often fused the terms' (Barbour 2005, 41-2).

and that the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists and eighteenth-century Church figures censured the atheistic doctrines of *De Rerum Natura*, then Blake felt not only justified in accusing Bacon of being 'Epicurus and Lucretius' (397) but also that 'Bacon was a Contemplative Atheist. Evidently an Epicurean' (403). As such, Bacon is guilty by association and by appropriation: 'Here is nothing of Thy own Original Genius, but only Imitation' (400).

In truth, the label of Epicureanism provided Blake with a ready-made, catchall term to condemn Bacon's philosophy. At times, it is likely that Blake felt goaded into furious repudiations when, for example, Bacon testifies in 'On Atheism' that 'even that school which is most accused of atheism doth most demonstrate religion: that is the school of Leucippus, and Democritus, and Epicurus' (1840, 23). As Blake howls in response, Bacon was 'An Atheist pretending to talk against Atheism!' (*K* 404).

Thus, upon reflection, Alexander Gilchrist's assessment of the annotations to Bacon's *Essays* as 'unreasonable' and 'indignant' offers a rather severe chastisement which is not deserved. Moreover, Gilchrist is unjustified when he declares that '[w]hatever Bacon may say, his singular annotator refuses to be pleased' ([1863]2005, 286), since Blake was reading Bacon's *Essays* against a backdrop of almost three centuries' worth of critical exegeses which had associated Epicureanism with atheism (a tradition which stretches back to classical times). Blake's marginalia was therefore not a 'singular dialogue' (287) but part of a well-rehearsed canon of anti-Epicurean polemics.

Chapter 2

Simulacra and the Selfhood

She stood in silence. listning to the voices of the ground…

The Book of Thel ([1789] 83 6.8).

Theotormon sits

Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire.

Visions of the Daughters of Albion ([1793] 207 8.11-2).

I. Introduction

Blake's theosophical framework (the Poetic or Prophetic Character, which is spiritual sight, in contradistinction to the Selfhood, which is a materialistic mindset) privileges visions as a form of divine revelation which are often manifested as linguistic phenomena. In the tradition of the Logos from the Gospel of St. John (968 1.1),[99] Blake believes that words are

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[99] At the beginning of *The Four Zoas*, Blake references the First Epistle General of John: 'And the Word was made Flesh, *and dwelt among us*' (1.14). Then in *Jerusalem*, Los 'took the sighs & tears, & bitter groans: / I lifted them into my Furnaces; to form the spiritual sword' (*J* 649 i.9.17-8). Los utilises the sonic quality of human misery and transforms it into a figurative sword with which the Bard in *Milton* is able to perform his poetic task: 'I will not cease from Mental Fight, / Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand: / Till we have built Jerusalem, / In Englands green & pleasant Land' (*M* 514 1.13-6). Cf. *Poetical Sketches* (*K* 31 64-65). The transformation of 'sighs' and 'groans' into 'the spiritual sword' suggests that Blake was equating words with swords: 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Eph. 1076 6.17). The Book of Revelations reveals that words like the sword have the power to vanquish the enemy: 'And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations' (Rev. 1143 19.15). This was a common trope in eighteenth-century Dissenting discourses. Cf. Ormsby-Lennon (1991, 84). The early-Romantic poet Christopher Smart echoes this tradition in *Jubilate Agno*, 'the word

active principles and a representation of the subject's state of mind.[100] Words become the linguistic marker which identify not only the speaker and the utterance but also the object of the utterance as the '[w]ord merges with the thing, the action, and the supernatural speaker(s), all at once' (Esterhammer 2006, 63). Thus, when the individual is speaking through the Prophetic Character, '[t]he word becomes more than the mark of an idea; it becomes an eternal living form with its own personality, family, and destiny' (Hilton 1983, 3). Accordingly, the phenomenological framework of the external world is a product of the way in which our mind is regulated to understand phenomenality. As I will begin by explaining in Section II, in Blake's work this epistemological process proves problematic for a postlapsarian world: for, whilst words have the potential to manifest spiritual realities, words envisaged by the Selfhood undermine the subject's ontological security. As a result, in certain visionary episodes – particularly during a three-year patronage under William Hayley in Felpham – the influence of the Selfhood impeded Blake's creative output as he began to wander through 'a Land of Abstraction' (*K* 809). The phenomenological slippage between the Prophetic Character and the Selfhood is indicative of the visual anomalies which Blake incorporated from his understanding of Epicurean sense perception.

Section III of this chapter will outline the way in which Epicurean epistemology – as it was transmitted through the letters in Diogenes Laërtius' *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (third century AD) and assimilated into Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (first century BC) – understood atomistic materiality as part of a reflexive cognitive process which becomes unstable when complicated by subjective reactions; for, although Epicurus believed that sense perception originates with preconceptions (*prolepsis*) which are verified by the emitted image of an object (*eidola*) from which a mental image is produced (*phantasia*), our *prolepses* have the potential to predominate so that we project them onto our external world.[101] It is the human component of sense perception – the opinion of the subject 'as a motion that comes from within the individual rather than from the presentation' – that complicates the mechanical transmission and reception of *eidola*

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of God is a sword on my side' (1980, 15 B20). In *Milton*, Blake similarly associates war with words (*M* 571 i.27.8-9) and goes on to elevate poetic strife upon a cosmological scale (580-1 ii.30.15-20).

[100] In *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), Northrop Frye observed that '"Body" in Blake means the whole man as an object of perception' and that '[i]f man perceived is a form or image, man perceiving is a former or imaginer' (1990, 18-9). Cf. Hilton (1983, 237); Essick (2003, 257).

[101] 'Epicurus describes knowledge as a completely physiological process' (Spruit 1994, 50).

because the mind of the perceiver 'provides features that are different from what is contained in the presentation' (Hammer 2014, 101). Lucretius, who principally adheres to this cognitive process in *De Rerum Natura*,[102] notes a related sensory aberration whilst discussing atomistic (in)filtration during sleep. In this instance, without the regulating power of the reason or memory (iv.907-1035), the dreamer maintains the illusion of his dream as a waking fancy (722-822). From this perceptual distortion Lucretius rearticulates *prolepsis* as a way for 'the mind to seize upon *simulacra* at will' (Holmes 2005, 550).

By linking the potentially capricious nature of Lucretian *simulacra* to the machinations of the Blakean Selfhood, I will argue in Section IV that Thel's metaphorical language in *The Book of Thel* (1789) brings about a mirror-like identification with those natural phenomena she views in the river of Adona.[103] As a consequence, she foregoes agency and is manoeuvred around her psycho-topographic environment by the anthropomorphised projections of the Selfhood as her dialogic encounters fail to fortify her against the realities of the State of Experience.[104] It becomes apparent that whilst the Lilly, Cloud, worm, and Clod of Clay materialise in order to dialogically progress the narrative, they do little more than echo Thel's own thoughts which 'she projects […] into them, listening to them as to an "other," and so hearing what it is she knows' (Levinson 1980, 293).[105] The Selfhood becomes a prism through/prison into which the mind degenerates, providing the ontological basis and epistemological parameters for Thel's cogitation as well as the overarching framework for the plot according to which Thel's rejection of the State of Experience can be read as a carefully staged encounter – a non-choice – as she flees back to the vales of Har.

I will then consolidate this argument further in Section V by comparing Thel's plight to Theotomorn's rejection of Oothoon and his spiral into a solipsistic existence which is likened to a 'sick mans dream' (*VDA* 204 6.19) in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In particular, the ideological association in *De Rerum Natura* of dreams (iv.907-1036) with

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[102] Lucretius believed that 'all things are covered either by a hide, or else by shells, or by a hard skin, or by bark' (*DRN* 175 iv.936-7).

[103] Thel's use of simile is the 'the language of the doubting selfhood' (Heppner 1977, 87).

[104] Thel's ideological arena is the State of Innocence and her dialogic partners 'speak in the voices of innocence' (Pyle 2015, 106).

[105] Robert P. Waxler concurs: '[i]t is the Urizenic bias of her belief that causes her to hear what she hears. She is trapped by her own imaginings' (1982, 47). Nelson Hilton adds that 'she hears only her own voice: her lot joins that of Echo and Narcissus' (1983, 31)

erotic dreams (1037-57) and then to an attack on the passion of love (1058-1287) provides an analogous framework for the progression of my own argument from *The Book of Thel* to *Visions* as the phantasms of the dreamer are manifested as the illusion of the absent object of desire to the pining lover. By forcing the mental image (*phantasia*) of objects to appear in our field of vision as well as altering these images (1152-7) so that they no longer faithfully represent the original object (*eidola/simulacra*), an unreal landscape is created. The reality of Oothoon's sexual body ultimately disgusts Theotormon, as his retrenchment into '[t]he self enjoyings of self denial' (*VDA* 205 7.9) replicates the 'secret stings which spur them [lovers] to hurt even the very thing, be it what it may, whence arise those germs of madness' (*DRN* 179 iv.1081-3).[106]

II. Blake's Visions

Ever since his move to Hercules Building in 1790, Blake had been a notoriously slow worker. He finished the plates for *The Antiquities of Athens* three months later than requested,[107] failed to produce the plates for C. G. Salzmann's *Elements of Morality* in time for publication, and also delayed the publication of Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*.[108] Blake continued to excuse his lateness departing for Felpham and his 'want of dexterity' (*K* 808) accomplishing William Hayley's tasks in letters from 16th September 1800 to 10th May 1801. It was during his stay in Felpham that Blake wrote a letter to Thomas Butts in which he again asked his patron to 'excuse my want of steady perseverance' (*K* 808), specifically blaming his flights of fancy for derailing the work:

> [t]ime flies faster (as seems to me) here than in London. I labour incessantly & accomplish not one half of what I intend, because my Abstract folly hurries me often away while I am at work, carrying me over Mountains & Valleys, which are not Real, in a Land of Abstraction where Spectres of the Dead wander. This I endeavour to prevent & with my whole might chain my feet to the world of Duty

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[106] Robert Carr writes that Thel 'has supplanted mutual love with self-love' (1987, 87).
[107] Blake had promised to complete the engravings by January 1792 (*K* 790).
[108] Cf. Ackroyd (1997, 138).

& Reality; but in vain! the faster I bind, the better is the Ballast, for I, so far from

being bound down, take the world with me in my flights, & often it seems lighter

than a ball of wool rolled by the wind. Bacon & Newton would prescribe ways of

making the world heavier to me…

(*K* 809).

The 'Abstract folly' which encourages the vision places it within the machinations of the

Selfhood rather than the imaginative sphere of the Prophetic Character, with Blake

condemning the apparition of 'Mountains & Valleys' upon an unreal psycho-topographic

terrain as 'a Land of Abstraction.' In fact, Blake actively challenges and confronts these

visionary episodes which he 'endeavour[s] to prevent.'

His alternative existence within the land of 'Duty & Reality,' however, constitutes the

materialist world of 'Bacon & Newton.'[109] Blake, therefore, during his ill-fated patronage, is

trapped between two forms of unreality and is in danger of losing himself in non-entity like

Thel who, in a parallel of those 'Mountains & Valleys […] where Spectres of the Dead

wander,' finds this spectral world threatening:

The eternal gates terrific porter lifted the northern bar:

Thel enter'd in & saw the secrets of the land unknown;

She saw the couches of the dead…

She wanderd in the land of clouds thro' valleys dark, listning…

(*BT* 83 6.1-6).

Characters under the dominion of the Selfhood fail to distinguish between spirituality and

corporeality until life itself becomes a spectral phenomenon. Even Blake himself, at times,

suffered with similar self-doubt.

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[109] As a point of comparison, Blake celebrates the spiritual dimension of existence in in a letter to Dr Trusler on 23rd August 1799: 'I know that This World Is a World of imagination & Vision' (*K* 793). Similarly, in a letter written to William Hayley on 6th May 1800 after the death of Hayley's illegitimate son, Thomas Alphonso Hayley, Blake recalls the loss of his own brother and reflects that 'our deceased friends are more really with us than when they were apparent to our mortal part. Thirteen years ago I lost a brother & with his spirit I converse daily & hourly in the Spirit & See him in my remembrance in the regions of my Imagination' (*K* 797).

Reflecting upon 'the last passed twenty years of my life' in a letter to William Hayley on 23rd October 1804, Blake remarks how he has finally 'reduced that spectrous Fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours':

> Nebuchadnezzar had seven times passed over him; I have had twenty; thank
> God I was not altogether a beast as he was; but I was a slave bound in a mill
> among beasts and devils; these beasts and devils are now, together with myself,
> become children of light and liberty, and my feet and my wife's feet are free
> from fetters.

> (K 851-2).[110]

Clearly, Blake's claim in his earlier letter to Thomas Butts that he had attempted 'with my whole might [to] chain my feet to the world of Duty & Reality' was disingenuous, for it is only when his 'feet are free from fetters' that he becomes a child of light. The 'beasts and devils' of his depression, the 'Hell of terrors & horrors' through which he has fought 'in a Divided Existence' have been overcome, 'now no longer Divided nor at war with myself I shall travel on in the strength of the Lord God as Poor Pilgrim says' (935).

Strife and division through painful psychological experiences (the dialectical progression of self-annihilation which purifies the mind from the stain of the Selfhood) galvanises the subject and contributes towards spiritual awakening. It is in this sense that Blake writes that 'Man is born a Spectre or Satan & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary' (*J* 737 52.10-3).[111] As his letters evidence, there are also periods in our life (even as long as twenty years) in which we struggle against the ontological self-doubt of the Selfhood.

Blake's poetic compositions suffered from such conflict. In a letter to Thomas Butts, 25th April 1803, Blake acknowledges that 'I have written this Poem [*The Four Zoas*] from

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[110] Blake had been working on a colour engraving of Nebuchadnezzar from about 1795 until 1805 in which he depicts the Babylonian king on all fours, the sinews of his legs almost hirsute, nails overgrown, and with a bestial expression. Alexander Gilchrist notes in his biography of Blake that 'Mr Palmer tells me that he has old German translations of Cicero and Petrarch, in which, among some wild and original designs, almost the very same figure occurs' (2005, 98). The fact that Blake compares his state of depression to Nebuchadnezzar's madness evidences the psychological strain which the Selfhood imposes upon the subject.

[111] Blake continues that 'Greek Philosophy (which is a remnant of Druidism) teaches that Man is Righteous in his Vegetated Spectre' (*J* 737 iii.52.13-6).

immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation & even against my Will' (*K* 823). Blake repeats similar sentiments in a subsequent letter to Butts on 6th July 1803 (825). *The Book of Urizen* (2.6-7), *Milton* (*M* i.2.1) and *Jerusalem* (i.3.42) are also a form of angelic dictation. Blake's admission to Butts that he occasionally writes 'against my Will' suggests that this process is, at times, unmediated, unfiltered, and uncooperative as Blake either lacks control or the agency to refuse dictation and becomes more of an amanuensis than a prophet.

The Scottish poet Allan Cunningham notes in *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1829) the effect the lack of commercial success had on Blake's mind:

> [h]e became more seriously thoughtful, avoided the company of men, and lived
> in the manner of a hermit, in that vast wilderness, London… He was thus
> compelled more than ever to retire to worlds of his own creating, and seek
> solace in visions of paradise for the joys which the earth denied him.
>
> (qt. Bentley 1975, 177-8).

Cunningham adds that '[b]y frequent indulgence in these imaginings, he [Blake] gradually began to believe in the reality of what dreaming fancy painted' and that 'the pictured forms which swarmed before his eyes assumed, in his apprehension, the stability of positive revelations' (178). As I will go on to demonstrate, such a diagnosis can be read as beginning to frame perceptual distortions in terms of the epiphenomenal phantasms which arise from the repeated exposure to unregulated *simulacra* and the subsequent creation of mental images (*phantasia*) in *De Rerum Natura* (iv.764-1067).

Indeed, Frederick Tatham who was part of the artistic group known as the Ancients (a set of Blake enthusiasts) claimed that Blake 'always asserted that he had the power of bringing his imagination before his minds Eye,' but that '[t]hese visions of Blake seem to have been more like peopled imaginations, & personified thoughts' (qt. Bentley 1975, 217). The ability to call upon *phantasia* and to project them onto our external reality echoes Lucretius' rearticulation of Epicurean *prolepsis* (*DRN* ii.744) where the mind has the ability to anticipate its own sense perceptions. In Book Five of *DRN*, Lucretius sardonically compares

the epistemological irregularities of *prolepses* to divine creation, asking 'how was there first implanted in the gods a pattern for the begetting of things' such as 'the concept of man, so that they might know and see in their mind what they wished to do[?]' (192 v.181-4). For Lucretius, nature herself provided the model because the world was made by the chance collision of atoms (187-96) – which means that if there were gods capable of creating worlds, these worlds would already exist. It is a 'recurrent tactic of Lucretius,' writes Philip Hardie, 'to conjure up a world of supernatural presence and enchantment, only to reduce it to an epiphenomenal illusion superimposed on the interactions of atoms' (2018, 7).

As I will return to shortly, Lucretius clarifies at the end of Book Five that early man was visited by beautiful images which they conceived to be gods (v.1168-71), hence arose the institution of religion. Cicero, however, objects to such concept-formation in *De Natura Deorum* (45 BC), where his Academic spokesman rails against the syllogism that the 'images' of gods prove their existence: '[s]uch mental pictures are called by all other philosophers mere empty imaginations' (1967, 103 xxxviii). As an example, the Academic claims to visualise Tiberius Gracchus in the Capitol but remarks that this image does not guarantee Tiberius Gracchus being at the Capitol any more than the existence of gods 'whose appearance repeatedly impinges on men's minds.' It is inconceivable, maintains Cicero, that the images of Homer or Pythagoras or Plato 'should impinge on me at all' for, as he continues by asking, '[w]hat of the fact that I can call up an image instantaneously, the very moment that I choose to do so?' (105).

Cicero then addresses Gaius Velleius, the representative of the Epicurean school, to denounce the entire epistemological basis of Epicurean sense perception:

> Velleius, the whole affair is humbug. Yet you stamp these images not only on our eyes but also on our minds—so irresponsibly do you babble… how do all your pictures of objects arise out of the atoms? even if the atoms existed, which they do not […] they could not create form, shape, colour, life. You fail entirely therefore to prove divine immortality.
>
> (105-7 xxxix-xl).

Cunningham equally disparages Blake's visions as 'laughable fancies' (qt. Bentley 1975, 191) and describes the catalogue to the 1809 exhibition as 'a wild performance, overflowing with oddities and dreams of the author… utterly wild and mad' (9; 184). An anonymous critic in the *Library of the Fine Arts* (1832) similarly labelled Blake the 'dupe of visionary fancies' (225) whilst the anonymous author of 'The last of the supernaturalists' (1830), sums up the most prevalent opinion regarding Blake during his lifetime:

> [w]hat shall we say, then, in Blake's extenuation? Simply this, that by severe
> abstraction, Blake's brain became fevered: he mistook the dreams of fancy for
> reality. Poor, unfortunate, ill-fated son of genius!

> (210).

The assessment that Blake's 'abstraction' conflated 'dreams' with 'reality' echoes the phenomenological slippage in Blake's own letter to Thomas Butts where he wandered 'in a Land of Abstraction' (*K* 809). The same semantics permeate 'The Land of Dreams' from the *Pickering Manuscript* (a collection of poems completed in Felpham, c.1801-3), where Blake asks 'O what Land is the Land of Dreams / What are its Mountains & what are its Streams' (*PM* 502 5-6). Perhaps as an indication of his struggles with 'that spectrous Fiend' (*K* 851), Blake expresses a preference for dreams over material reality:

> Father O Father what do we here
> In this Land of unbelief & fear
> The Land of Dreams is better far
> Above the light of the Morning Star

> (503 17-20).

Dreams can be comforting, especially when juxtaposed with the experiences and demands of the Baconian and Newtonian 'world of Duty & Reality' (*K* 809). Whilst Blake may lament the fact that he is unable to accomplish 'one half of what I intend,' there is an overriding sense that he would prefer to 'take the world with me in my flights.'

I will now turn the focus of this chapter towards the way in which the mismanagement of *prolepsis* creates Epicurean 'phantoms' and Lucretian 'shades' which trouble the otherwise

mechanical nature of sensory perception, in order to show its epistemological applicability to Blake's Selfhood-induced dreams. Before going on to read this epiphenomenal irregularity as part of *The Book of Thel* and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* in Sections IV and V, I will also briefly address Robert Southey's satirical reading of Lucretian *simulacra* in *The Doctor, &c* (1834-47) to ground Blake's philosophical framework in the common exegeses of his fellow Romantic.

III. Epicurean Epistemology

According to Epicurus, material objects shed images of themselves through the emission of particles which he calls *eidola*. After recording countless images over the course of our lives, these *eidola* begin to pre-exist in the mind as preconceptions (*prolepsis*).[112] Thus, when we are told to look at a tree or at a horse or at a river, we form a mental image in our minds so that we know what to look for, what to recognise, and what to reject in the world. As the *eidola* form a representation of the material object as a mental image (*phantasia*), our preconceptions are either confirmed or rebuffed. These mental images constitute 'a sort of comprehension [*katalepsis*] [...] or right opinion, or notion [*ennoian*], or general idea [*katholiken noesin*] which exists in us' (*LP* 435). We attach to these *prolepses* names, for we 'could not give names to things, if we had not a preliminary notion of what the things were' (436), so that the word 'horse' produces a mental image of a horse with which we scan the world for a horse-like object.[113] This means that once the subject has formulated a preconception, 'the first notion which each word awakens in us is a correct one'; otherwise, if our preconceptions were incorrect, we would never be able to locate the object. The mental images stored in the mind hereby 'furnish us with certainty' and become our barometer of reality.

Prolepsis is the act of projection, of anticipation and recognition, and it forms part of a twofold process which also requires the return of the object as *eidolon* and the readmission,

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[112] Cf. Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 435-6.
[113] Brook Holmes writes that p*rolepsis* 'serves as the primary mechanism relating words to reality... Language is treated as the designation of what exists, that is, regularly recurring atomic composites' (2005, 548). See also Scott (1995, 167).

the corroboration and substantiation, of the mental image as *phantasia*. When this process is successful, it is mechanically reflexive and the subject becomes the passive recipient of automatic operations.[114] As I will demonstrate in Section IV, one of the existential crises which Thel faces in *The Book of Thel* is her passivity in relation to the objects in her world. One of the other crises which Thel faces is her inability to authenticate – or to trust in her ability to authenticate – the scenes she encounters as she enters the Clod of Clay's house. Prior to this, I would argue that Thel has also been unable to distinguish between mental images (*phantasia*) and material objects (*eidola*/*simulacra*) whilst discoursing with her pastoral visitants.

Remaining with Epicurus for now, I wish to elaborate on the epistemological reflexivity of sense perception by concentrating on the production of images in space ('surfaces without depth') which Epicurus terms 'representations' (*phantasia*):

> [o]ne must not forget that the production of images is simultaneous with the thought; for from the surface of the bodies images of this kind are continually flowing off in an insensible manner indeed, because they are immediately replaced.

> (*LP* 440-1).

Prolepsis occurs as soon as the individual cogitates upon an object, but this is concomitant with the ancillary emission of *eidola*: a continuous stream of atomistic silhouettes which fly through the ether like the ghostly apparitions of the deceased – an image Lucretius uses in

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[114] 'Epicurus maintains that primary presentations, which include also *prolepsis*, are infallible, because they are caused mechanically or "by direct contact." Sense perception is the non-mental, merely physical event of the reception of stimulations, simply witnessing the reality of things… Falsehood and error always depend on intruding opinion, which manipulates and evaluates presentations' (Spruit 1994, 52-3). For an Enlightenment appropriation, see Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), Chapter 1 (1909, 11-2). Dominic Scott also writes that 'Epicurus thought that inferences involve a risk of error, unlike the passive reception of sensations' (1995, 193). For Lucretius, *simulacra* are also automatically registered by the mind. At the first point of contact, the mind is the passive receptacle of these atomistic effusions. Indeed, in Book Four of *DRN*, Lucretius highlights the fact that there are times when the eyes (and therefore the mind) are unable to perceive an object, but the body remains influenced; for example, when 'things breathe out a pungent savour from their body, panacea, sickly wormwood, and strongly-smelling abrotanum, and bitter centaury' leave a lingering smell upon the fingers, 'though never will you see anything at all' (147 iv.122-7). This hints at 'how fine is the nature of the first-beginnings, whereof scent is formed' as well as 'that many idols of things [*simulacra*] wander abroad in many ways with no powers, unable to be perceived' (123-6). Cf. iv.672-8; vi.931-5.

DRN (iv.774-7). Accordingly, the subject becomes the passive recipient of these *eidola* as they 'produce in us sight and the knowledge of forms' (*LP* 442).[115]

As *eidola* pass into us and imprint themselves on the mind causing sensory recognition, the subject becomes aware of his surroundings. The external world is hereby made apparent to the subject in consequence of a natural process. However, whilst *eidola* are causally responsible for representations (*phantasia*), these representations are the mental visualisations of the *eidola* themselves and only indirectly a consequence of the material object.[116] In other words, what we picture in our minds is a representation of *eidola*: the particles of objects and not the objects themselves *per se*.[117] Perhaps the most obvious example of this is refraction where an oar dipped in water bends at an irregular angle (*DRN* iv.438-43). Thus, whilst Epicurus sets out to establish an epistemological process which is purely reflexive, sense perception is inherently subjective and demonstrably unstable. In fact, Lucretius seems to be aware of this when he makes an amendment so that we see the whole object as an object rather than as individual *eidola*/*simulacra* (iv.255-8).[118]

This process is also susceptible to mismanagement when the subject, presuming that the *prolepses* formed in the mind are correct, refuses to accept the *eidola*-generated *phantasia*. As Epicurus states in his address to Herodotus: '[e]rror and false judgments always depend upon the supposition that a preconceived idea will be confirmed, or at all events will not be overturned, by evidence' (*LP* 442). Potentially, therefore, when we formulate a preconceived idea but find no evidence in the external world to validate it, we impose this image upon the external world. Our heads, consequently, become populated with a host of unreal images.

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[115] For Epicurus, *prolepses* are simultaneously true and false until they are either validated or repudiated by *eidola*. Lucretius, similarly, relies on the senses as the surest means for understanding the world (iv.479-84).

[116] Cf. Spruit (1994, 50).

[117] Sir John Davies notes this phenomena in *Nosce Teipsum* (1599): '[t]his power in parts made fit, fit obiects takes, / Yet not the things, but Formes of things receiues; / As when a Seale in Waxe impression makes, / The print therein, but not it selfe, it leaues.' (41).

[118] Lucretius writes that 'from certain things scents stream off unceasingly; even as cold streams from rivers, heat from the sun, spray from the waves of the sea' (266 vi.923-5). This follows on from his earlier assessment in Book Three, where he stated that the object cannot be split and divided into its component parts; so that, in other words, the object's scent is integral to the unity of the object itself. The union of the soul and the body is likened to the impossibility of 'tear[ing] out the scent from lumps of frankincense, but that its nature too passes away' (116-7 iii.326-8).

This is also one of the common critiques of Blake. Although his detractors were not operating within an Epicurean context, their language has points of similarity which stress epistemological commonalities. Allan Cunningham's assessment that Blake 'retire[d] to worlds of his own creating' (qt. Bentley 1975, 177-8) echoes that of other critical. J. J. G. Wilkinson, editor of Emanuel Swedenborg's works, described Blake's relationship with the world as a form of 'fearful Reality' (*ibid* 58-9) in which he believed he 'could chop and change the Universe […] to suit [his] own creative fancies' (59). Even Blake's patron at Felpham, William Hayley, referred to the artist's creativity as 'the perilous powers of an Imagination utterly unfit to take due Care of itself' (100). Indeed, Frederick Tatham's claim that Blake could bring 'his imagination before his minds Eye' (217) echoes the Epicurean epistemological error which occurs when *prolepses* refuse to accept the emission of *eidola/simulacra* and instead superimpose *phantasia* onto the subject's field of vision.

In *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius is also concerned about *prolepsis*. After describing the somnambulistic ability 'to pass to new sky, new sea, new streams, and mountains […] which would fain spoil our trust in the senses' (158 iv.458-64), Lucretius concludes that 'nothing is harder than to distinguish things manifest from things uncertain, which the mind straightaway adds to itself' (159 iv.466-8). Lucretius offers several examples of the unreliability of sight: jaundiced people infect *simulacra* with a yellow tint (332-6), square towers appear round at a distance (354-61), shadows appear to follow us (365-71), and all the while 'we do not grant that in this the eyes are a whit deceived' (156 iv.380-1). When we succumb to such perceptual fallacies, we are like 'children [who] have ceased turning round themselves' yet it 'appear[s] to them that the halls are turning about, and the pillars racing round,' and that the roof is 'threatening to fall in upon them' (iv.398-402).

In another example, Lucretius suggests that the false inferences of the mind find a natural analogue in the way a pool of water appears to show the *simulacra* of starlight (iv.208-16). Later in Book Four, Lucretius return to this image once more:

> [a]nd yet a pool of water not deeper than a single finger-breadth, which lies between the stones on the paved street, affords us a view beneath the earth to a depth as vast as the high gaping mouth of heaven stretches above the earth; so that you seem to descry the clouds and the heaven and bodies wise hidden beneath the earth—yet in a magic sky ['*abdita caelo*'].

(157 iv.413-21).

The eyes are tricked and the mind is deceived into believing that the entire firmament can be contained in a pool of water.[119] The 'magic sky' thus becomes 'an object-lesson in *prolepsis* (natural primary concepts): anyone, potentially, can grasp the concept of void through native intuition' (Porter 2010, 169).[120]

Prolepses can therefore reimagine *phantasia* so that abstract qualities are made comprehensible in material terms via psychological formulations (though these material terms are distortions of *simulacra* in a visual bubble).[121] It is a peculiar feature of *prolepsis* that it 'frequently concerns the recognition or imagination not of objects but of seemingly abstract entities' (Holmes 2005, 549). Whilst it may lead certain individuals to grasp the concept of the void and the movement of atoms,[122] it also has the potential to mislead others into erroneous notions of the universe. The origin of our belief in the gods (*DRN* v.1160-8), for example, began with the impression of beautiful images ('*egregias animo*') on the minds of men – whilst awake but especially when asleep – so that they 'used to perceive

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[119] *Prolepsis* can also work by analogy. So, when we see motes in a sunbeam jostling against one another, 'you may guess from this what it means that the first-beginnings of things are for ever tossing in the great void. So far as may be, a little thing can give a picture of great things and afford traces of a concept' (69 ii.120-3).

[120] Lucretius adds further examples which can be grouped according to perspective, refraction, and dreams: the way in which the image of a horse appears to be animated by the flow of a river (iv.420-6); the sun appears to rise and set into the waves (431-5); oars appear to be broken beneath the surface of the water (435-43); and we perceive ourselves to be awake even when we are dreaming (453-62). In *The Divine Comedy* (c.1308-20), Dante adopts a form of Lucretian *prolepsis* as a way of connecting with the spiritual world: 'There is a light up there which makes visible / The creator himself…. / Reflected from the top of the Primum Mobile, / Which takes from it its life and potency. // And as a hillside mirrors itself in / The water at its foot, as if to admire itself / When it is at its best with green and flowers, // So, standing above the light and all around, / I saw reflections from more than a thousand tiers / Of those of us who had got back there' (Par. 484-5 xxx.100-14).

[121] Lucretius 'sets up *prolepsis* as a means of engaging with objects in their absence via some kind of accessible form of them' (Holmes 2005, 550). James Thomson evokes a similar process in his dedicatory poem to Isaac Newton: 'All intellectual eye, our *solar Round* / First gazing thro', he by the blended power / Of *Gravitation* and *Projection* saw / The whole in silent harmony revolve' (1734 53 39-42). Indeed, Thomson appears to echo the title of Lucretius' treatise ('on the nature of things') when he praises Newton for inferring '[f]rom a few causes such a scheme of things' (55 70). Ralph Cohen, commenting on the adoption of Newtonian physics and Boyle's elemental philosophy, notes that Thomson 'blend[ed] the God-given features of the world so that, although man could discern only parts, these had a beauty and a sufficiency, albeit limited' (1969, 1181).

[122] In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke utilises a similar thought experiment when he suggests that our ability to comprehend eternity stems from the same process we derive our understanding of time (1836, 118). By applying this *ad infinitum*, Locke calculates that we can take the annual motion of the sun as well as the notion of an hour, day, or year and from this derive the duration of things antecedent. Thus, Locke is able to comprehend eternity '[b]y observing what passes in our minds, how our ideas there in train constantly some vanish, and others begin to appear.' Cf. David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779, 36-40) and Section IV from *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40).

the glorious shapes of the gods' (225 v.1168-74). Man gave these visitations immortal life 'because their images came in constant stream and the form remained unchanged' (1175-6).[123]

In sleep especially, the dreamer saw the gods 'accomplish many marvels' (1181) and started to associate the workings of the natural world with their might:

> they [man] beheld the workings of the sky in due order, and the diverse seasons
> of the year come round, nor could they learn by what causes that was brought
> about. And so they made it their refuge to lay all to the charge of the gods, and
> to suppose that all was guided by their will.

> (1182-5).

Echoing Epicurus' appraisal that superstitious people are troubled by the notion 'that the stars are beings imperishable and perfectly happy' (*LP* 453), Lucretius considers the institution of religion as a form of ignorance. The first error is misattributing the phantasmagorical effusion of *simulacra* to the *egregias animo*. The second error is pronouncing the *egregias animo* superior to the percipient soul. The third error is giving the gods control of natural phenomenon. To compound this situation further, mankind renounces any attempt to understand the nature of things. This degrading situation – where individuals can 'be seen often with veiled head turning towards a stone' or 'to lie prostrate on the ground with outstretched palms' (226 v.1198-200) – then becomes a hereditary affliction (1196-7).[124] Whilst Lucretius does allow that natural catastrophes like droughts (v.1218) and earthquakes (v.1236-41) and the wonders of the heavens may inspire a belief in the gods (v.1204-11), the root cause of superstition is not the senses but the mind which attempts to reason with sensory knowledge.

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[123] In a letter to Menæceus, Epicurus tells his addressee to 'believe that God is a being incorruptible and happy […] and attach to your idea of him nothing which is inconsistent with incorruptibility or with happiness' (*LP* 468). The notion of attaching ideas to abstract entities is part of Cicero's critique of Epicurean anthropomorphism in *De Natura Deorum* (69 xxv-xxvi).

[124] Epicurus declares that 'blindness which govern[s] [the superstitious] in every thing, to such a degree that […] they are just as much troubled as if they had really faith in these vain phantoms' (*LP* 454). Ethereal 'phantoms' subsequently become materialised phenomena when the individual's mental state degenerates under the pathological sickness of superstitious fear. A similar discussion takes place in *DRN* (iii.1049-50; iv.1014).

It thus remains a persistent issue in discourses on Epicurean epistemology that the subject's ability to read natural phenomena can become distorted as our preconceptions (*prolepsis*) either ignore the emission of atomistic surfaces (*eidola*) and skip straight to the realisation of those representations (*phantasia*) or as *prolepses* infer a possible understanding of *phantasia* which is not supported by physical evidence. As a short survey of dreams will further highlight, the random acts of atomistic penetration and perverse visualisations complicates Epicurean epistemology further by often undermining the will of the subject as well as the reality of sight.

In Book Four of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius begins by revealing that he has 'traverse[d] the distant haunts of the Pierides, never trodden before by foot of man' (143 iv.1-2). His visionary power, he claims, derives from a twofold source: the '[f]irst because I teach about great things' (6-7), so that his knowledge has the capacity to free the mind from irrational fears.[125] The second, because he conveys knowledge in a delightfully poetic manner (9-10). This scene precedes his exposition on *simulacra* and acts as an intriguing benchmark against which he sets the pursuit of *gnosis*, since the superstitious mind is equally prone to flights of fancy and misunderstandings. This discrepancy becomes even more pronounced when we consider that Lucretius apotheosises Epicurus as a god (iii.1-18; v.6-45; vi.4-19) yet also ridicules mankind for their belief in divine intervention.

Nevertheless, Lucretius proceeds by noting how *simulacra* 'of their own accord […] fly on, spurred by everlasting motion' (144 iv.27-8). *Simulacra* act in a similar manner to atomistic first-beginnings: they are both stimulated by a natural propulsion which engenders a mechanical motion and they both act as the building blocks for larger structures or ideas. The semi-autonomous nature of *simulacra* complicates the transmission of images from the object to the mind of the perceiver for they can, at times, cause perceptual inconsistencies:

> like films stripped from the outermost body of things, [*simulacra*] fly forward
> and backward through the air; and they too when they meet us in waking hours
> affright our minds, yea, and in sleep to, when we often gaze on wondrous
> shapes…

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[125] Cf. Epicurus' letter to Menæceus (*LP* 472).

(iv.34-9).

Lucretian 'films' (*membranae*) correspond with those Epicurean 'surfaces': the thin, ethereal forms emitted as *eidola* from the object. Crucially in *De Rerum Natura*, the conscious subject is not necessarily formulating *prolepses* when *simulacra* 'affright our minds,' and certainly not whilst asleep – Lucretius had earlier referred to these '*miras simulacraque*' as 'dream-visions' ('*somnia*') (141 iii.1049).[126] Indeed, the dreamer is unable to sift through images with his reason or memory which are temporarily suspended as *simulacra* wander through the air and become variously interlinked 'like spider's web' before they 'pierce through the pores of the body and awake the fine nature of the mind within, and arouse its sensations' (168 iv.728-32). It is this spontaneous and unpredictable atomistic penetration that produces hybrid forms, monstrous shapes, and implausible *phantasia* so that 'we see Centaurs and the limbs of Scylla, and the dog-faces of Cerberus' (732-4).

During dreams, for instance, 'we seem surely to behold even one who has quitted life' (169 iv.759-60).[127] The grammatical emphasis on sight ('*videamur*') reinforces the way perceptual phantasms cause epistemological inconsistencies and pathological disturbances.[128] In a note on the problems of thought and dreams, Cyril Bailey adds that 'if we bear in mind always the Lucretian conception of thought as "visualization"' then we can begin to conceive of the mind as capable of 'think[ing] of whatever it will, because there are at all times present to it "idols" of every sort' which allows the mind to 'turn its attention to any one of these it likes by a "projection"' (1948, 297).[129]

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[126] Significantly, the verb '*contiumur*' ('to gaze') implies the illusionary quality of 'the dreamer's (seemingly) active perception of these images' (Scioli 2015, 102). When we are startled by the sudden appearance of *simulacra*, we are roused from sleep 'lest by chance we should think that souls escape from Acheron' (iv.41-2). Once more, Lucretius draws on Epicurus who in his letter to Herodotus had cautioned against 'faith in these vain phantoms' (*LP* 454). Lucretius similarly warns against accepting the reality of 'shades' ('*umbras*').

[127] During sleep the senses are less receptive and the soul has been dispersed throughout the limbs (iv.916-23). According to Lucretius, the soul helps the body feel and sense (iv.925-31). Cf. ii.865-900, most of Book Three (specifically lines 94-416, 425-58, and 548-829), as well as iv.217-822.

[128] Certain individuals will see long-deceased family members (774-7), whilst others will be preoccupied with activities completed during the day (iv.962-85). Lucretius describes this dream-state as a 'delusion' (973) and provides the further example of athletes participating in games who, whilst asleep, are likely to see 'the same sights pass before their eyes' (979-80). In a poetic fragment on Ecclesiastes 1.3, the mid-seventeenth century poet John Hall exploits and purposefully brings to the fore the same delusionary nature of dreams: 'Another whose concepts onely dreame / Monsters of fame, / The vain applause of other Mad-men buyes / With his owne sighes… / So a weake Eye in twilight thinkes it sees / New species, / While it sees nought; so men in dreames conceive, / Of Sceptets, till that waking undeceive' (1646, 99).

[129] In Book Two of *DRN*, Lucretius had already hypothesised that the mind is able to 'project itself' into bodies of matter, such as when the mind imbues colourless atoms with colour (90 ii.740-4; cf. ii.122-3). As Cyril Bailey

By turning to a few, key examples in Blake's work, we can see how the epistemological eccentricity of 'visualisation' became a way of deriding the validity of Blake's visions. In the epistolary correspondence with Reverend Dr John Trusler, who considered Blake a superstitious fanatic, it becomes clear that the semantic idiosyncrasies of Blake's theosophy differed significantly from Orthodox exegeses. In particular, Blake bristles at the derision of his 'Visions of Eternity' since 'This World Is a World of imagination & Vision':

> As a man is, So he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers. You certainly Mistake, when you say that the Visions of Fancy are not to be found in This World. To Me This World is all One continued Vision of Fancy or Imagination…

> (*K* 793).

For Blake, Trusler does not view the world through the Prophetic Character – Blake calls the clergyman's eye 'perverted' – and therefore cannot see the spiritual dimensions of life. For Trusler, on the other hand, Blake's visions are nothing more than perceptual fallacies arising from a pathology which has detached itself from the (what Blake would consider material) world.

Admittedly, Blake's correspondence with Dr Trusler captures an extreme antipathy between two antithetical men, but even Frederick Tatham who was an admirer of Blake's artistic talents referred to his visions as 'more like peopled imaginations, & personified thoughts' (qt. Bentley 1975, 217). This assessment finds a degree of validation in *Jerusalem* (1804-20) where London declares 'My Streets ae my, Ideas of Imagination… / My Houses are Thoughts: my Inhabitants: Affections, / The children of my thoughts' (*J* 700 ii.34[38].31-4). Blake himself then adds, 'I write in South Molton Street, what I both see and hear / In regions of Humanity, in Londons opening streets' (42-3). If London's streets are the spiritual pathways of the Imagination, then Blake walks upon a visionary track towards the New Jerusalem; if London's houses are physicalised thoughts, then Blake works within a visionary medium and from the dictate of angelic visitants.

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notes, 'these general concepts were formed, in the case of perceptible objects, by the storing up on the mind of a series of single impressions, which formed a sort of "composite photograph." But in the case of imperceptible things, such as the atoms, he [Lucretius] probably conceived of their being formed by a combination of existing concepts by a "projection of the mind' (1948, 289).

Indeed, Blake was quite possibly incorporating similar sentiments to those he expressed in his letter to Dr Trusler; for, as he had previously asserted, 'That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care' (*K* 793), he later writes that 'The Idiot Reasoner laughs at the Man of Imagination' (*M* 584 ii.32.6). Blake similarly adds that 'The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself / Affection or Love become a State, when divided from Imagination' (586 32-3). If the Imagination is Human Existence, if it is the Brotherhood of Christ on Earth, then the streets of Imagination in *Jerusalem* are the expressions of creative individuals walking in the ways of spiritual enlightenment. London itself becomes an eighteenth-century realisation of the city of Golgonooza built by Los. The Imagination, therefore, is creativity, spirituality, and humanity. As Blake rather sardonically reflects in his letter to Dr Trusler, 'I really am sorry that you are fall'n out with the Spiritual World, Especially if I should have to answer for it' (*ibid*).

Whilst Tatham somewhat sympathetically concluded that Blake built his world upon 'unsubstantial scene[s]' (qt. Bentley 1975, 217), other commentators were less kind. In *The Philosophy of Sleep* (1834) for instance, Robert Macnish quotes Alan Cunningham's (at times uncharitable) remarks before concluding that Blake's 'wild imagination [...] totally overmastered his judgment, and made him mistake the chimeras of an excited brain for realities' (*ibid* 231).[130] Passages from Cunningham had similarly been included in an article in the *New Jerusalem Magazine* (1832) where the author contrasts Blake unfavourably with Flaxman: Blake being a man of 'unregulated enthusiasm' and 'wild phantasy' (223). Josiah Holbrook's *A Familiar Treatise on the Fine Arts, Painting, Sculpture, and Music* (1833) also refers to Cunningham's *Lives* and describes Blake as 'a man whose fancy over-mastered his reason' (229). And Richard Henry Horne rather scornfully added in the *British and Foreign Review* (1838) that '[i]f he [Blake] saw no faults in his works, it has been a pleasant occupation for others to discover them for him' (235). Thus, contemporary critics of Blake often understood his 'visions' as fancies which had taken on a physical aspect: a way for the deranged mind to rearrange and reinterpret reality until, as Cunningham alleges, '[b]y frequent indulgence in these imaginings, he [Blake] gradually began to believe in the reality of what dreaming fancy painted' (178).

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[130] At the turn of the twentieth century, Basil de Selincourt similarly opined that Blake's 'power of visualisation was so abnormal that he became unconsciously its slave' ([1909]1971, 96).

Returning to an Epicurean context, the visualisation of preconceived ideas (*prolepsis*) as mental images (*phantasia*) which Lucretius addresses in Book Four of *DRN* can be found rearticulated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period which concomitantly saw the dissemination of Epicureanism throughout early-modern Europe. Perhaps in its clearest evocation, the sixteenth-century French poet Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas describes the Cave of Sleep in *La Sepmaine* (1578) and *La Seconde Semaine* (1584-1603) – translated into English as *The Divine Weeks and Works* by Joshua Sylvester between 1592-1608 – as a site of monster-formation:

> Confusedly about the silent Bed
>
> Fantastick swarms of Dreams there hovered,
>
> Green, red and yellow, tawny, black, and blew:
>
> Som sacred, som profane; som false, som true;
>
> Som short, som long; som diuelish, som divine;
>
> Som sad, som glad; but monstrous all (in fine):
>
> They make no noyse, but right resemble may
>
> Th' vnnumbred Moats which in the Sun do play.

> (396).

'Fantastick swarms' hover like wayward *simulacra*, an unreal (both 'false' and 'true') vision of 'monstrous' life. The chaos of these night-time visions, in turn, act as an analogy for the ills of life which 'mortals [meet] everywhere, coming to being and flying abroad in diverse forms' (*DRN* 236 vi.29-30). More broadly, they also act as a microcosmic similitude of atomistic collisions where Du Bartas' 'vnnumbred Moats' move in a comparable manner to cosmic first-beginnings (i.146-482; ii.1023-1174).[131]

As Du Bartas continues to highlight, the uncertainty of dream-formation is due to the suspension of our reason which allows fears to manifest themselves as apparitions of real-life phenomena:

> Opinion's Porter, and the Gate she bars

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[131] John Lepage similarly reads the 'Moats' as 'an allusion to atomism and the concept of infinite worlds' (2012, 167).

Gainst Couetize, cold Age, and sullen Cares,

Except they leaue-off and lay-down before

Their troublous load of Reason at the doore;

But opens wide, to let-in Bashful-Boldnes,

Dumb-speaking Signes, Chill-Heat, and Kindled-Coldnes…

Soft Idlenes, and ground-les, bound-les Ioyes,

Sweet Pleasure plunged ouer head and eares

In sugred Nectar, immateriall Fears,

Hoarse Waaks, late Walks, Pain-pleasing kindly cruell,

Aspiring Hope (Desire's immortall fuell)

Licentious Loosnesse, Prodigall Expence

Inchanting Songs, deep Sighs, and sweet Laments.

(1611, 569).

As the mind's sluice-gates allow in unfiltered emotions, the subject is filled with antithetical 'Pain-pleasing kindly cruell' sensations which underpin our divided existence. In fact, the employment of romantic *topoi* coupled with the apparition of 'immateriall Fears' is redolent of the pining lover in *De Rerum Natura* who begins to visualise the absent object of his desire (iv.1060-2). As John Lepage emphasises, these images become 'vivid expressions of the nightmare of reality' as '[i]mmaterial fears invariably assume material proportions, and hoarse wakes (whatever they may be) are material consequences of such fears' (2012, 166). Thus, phantasmagorical illusions become the foundation (and give rise to the impression) of a corrupted truth from which the dreamer struggles to awake as the reason (which has been left 'at the doore') is unable to prevent the flood of monstrous thoughts and feelings overwhelming the unguarded mind.[132]

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[132] Similar scenes of melancholia permeate Thomas Nash's *The Terrors of the Night; or, A Discourse on Apparitions* (1594). Cf. William Alexander's *Aurora* ([1604]1870, 58) and *The Tragedy of Crœsus* (1604, 250); John Milton's *L'Allegro* ([1631/1645]1900, 1 1-4). The correspondent of *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1786-7) notes that John Milton's description of dreams in *Il Penseroso* and *Paradise Lost* (1667) are indebted to Du Bartas (1809, 317-9). Especially in *Il Penseroso*, 'vain deluding Joys… / Dwell in some idle brain' (1900, 7 1-5) like the slumbering consciousnesses in Du Bartas and Lucretius, with Milton populating this liminal space with similar 'fancies fond' and 'gaudy shapes' (6). As a telling indication of Milton's classical source, these fanciful shapes swarm 'As the gay motes that people the sun-breams, / Or likest hovering dreams' (8-9) in a replication of the movement of atoms in *DRN* (ii.114-21). Robert Burton (pseudonym 'Democritus Junior') traces the atomistic

Moving on to consider the Romantic relationship to this epistemological tradition, it is the concept of these ethereal '*simulacrum et imago*' which Robert Southey addresses in *The Doctor &c* (1834-47).[133] In the chapter on 'Something Concerning the Philosophy of Dreams and the Author's Experience in Aerial Horsemanship' – which follows a discourse on the imagination and sleep and the apparition of 'spectral faces in a fit of the vapours' (1831, 7) – Southey explains that according to the ancients, unembodied spirits entered dreams by divine permission in order to warn us of forthcoming disasters.[134] These spirits are translated by Southey as 'spectres' from the Latin '*effluvia*' and '*simulacra*' (Greek *eidola*).[135] Southey then provides a comical reinterpretation of the wandering *simulacra* from *De*

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[133] *The Doctor &c* is a miscellaneous text of philosophical speculations, humorous anecdotes, fairy-tale extracts, and children's stories. Southey likely derived the story of the horse Nobs from Samuel Taylor Coleridge who was reciting it to friends in 1799, with Coleridge coming across it in Christopher Smart's *The Midwife* (1752). Cf. Chandler (2009, 605-19); Wild (2013, 27-44). Although Smart makes no explicit mention of Epicureanism – though he does quote and translate the *Anti-Lucretius* (93-5) – the references to 'skins' and 'ghosts' (1753, 51-2) finds a parallel in Southey's account of 'spectres' (1834, 11). Whilst it is beyond the scope of the chapter to enumerate upon Southey's appropriation of this story, the Romantic connection is important as it sets Blake amongst his peers who were similarly aware of the perceptual inconsistences of the Epicurean school. Southey had read Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1769-78), attended the 1809 Exhibition, read *A Descriptive Catalogue*, and two years later was shown a manuscript of *Jerusalem* (1804-20) at a party hosted by Charles Lamb. Southey's view of Blake is perhaps best summarised by Crabb Robinson in a diary entry of 24th July 1811: 'Southey had been with Blake & admired both his designs & his poetic talents; At the same time that he held him for a decided madman' (qt. Bentley 1975, 69). In *The Doctor &c*. Volume 6, Southey would go on to refer to Blake as '[t]hat painter of great but insane genius' (1847, 116).

[134] Southey cites Ben Jonson's *The Vision of Delight* (c.1616/7) as an epigraph: 'If a dream should come in now to make you afear'd, / With a windmill on his head and bells at his beard, / Would you straight wear your spectacles here at your toes, / And your boots on your brows and your spurs on your toes?' (qt. 10). Kept 'awake with Phantoms' (25), Night calls on Fancy to break 'from thy cave of cloud' (27) and create 'airy forms' (31) as part of 'a waking dream' (33). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-6), Theseus claims that the poet 'gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name' (2005, 419 v.i.16-7). Blake may have had both Shakespeare and Jonson in mind when the Sons of Los create 'form & beauty… Giving to airy nothing a name and a habitation' (*M* 574 28.2-3). Blake would have come across similar imagery in John Mason Good's 1805 edition of *De Rerum Natura* during a transcription of the vision of Eliphaz from the Book of Job: ''Twas midnight deep; the world was hush'd to rest, / And airy visions every brain possess'd… / It stood—the spectre stood—to sight display'd; / Yet trac'd I not the image I survey'd' (39). See also *DRN* (iv.1017-8).

[135] Thomas Browne was writing about 'effluviums' in in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646). Influenced by *De Rerum Natura*, Robert Boyle had also been writing about different forms of effluvia during the 1670s. Cf. Wilson (2008, 72-6). In the eighteenth century, David Hartley's concept of 'vibratiuncles' forms part of this tradition. The Hippocratic development of effluvia can be found in Blake's *The Book of Ahania* (1795) where 'Urizen's slumbers of abstraction' are filled with 'Effluvia [which] vapor'd above / In noxious clouds; these hover'd thick / Over the disorganiz'd Immortal' (*BA* 263 4.11-9).

Rerum Natura which, whilst continuing to roam freely through the ether as spectral silhouettes, become the ghostly profiles of sleeping bodies:

> [t]he old atomists supposed that the likeness or spectres of corporeal things […] which are constantly emitted from all bodies, *Omne genus quoniam passim simulacra feruntur*, assail the soul when she ought to be at rest; according to which theory all the lathered faces that are created every morning in the looking-glass, and all the smiling ones that my Lord Simper and Mr. Smallwit contemplate there with so much satisfaction during the day, must at this moment be floating up and down the world.

> (1831, 11).[136]

In the same way that Lucretian *simulacra* are capricious images which 'are born everywhere, some which are created of their own accord even in the air' (168 iv. 737-8), Southey envisages 'spectres' as the ghostly, shadowy phantoms of real-life objects which – though they derive their likeness from real-life objects – are independent whilst 'floating up and down the world.'

The dubious nature of dreams can become an existential concern for individuals who fail to distinguish between a dreamscape and material reality. Southey derides those for whom 'dreams are realities, and […] sleep sets the soul free like a bird from a cage' (11); for, as well as setting the soul free, the mind's eye is able to pursue other spectres (Southey recounts the cat of John Henderson pursuing a visionary mouse) and travel across distances unencumbered by the physical restraints of the sleeping body – perhaps with Lucretius' flight over the Pierides in mind.[137]

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[136] The lifted passage is from Book Four of *De Rerum Natura* (iv.735) concerning the apparition of strange and wondrous hybrid forms during sleep.

[137] Southey adds that 'the soul of Hans Engelbrecht,' an early-seventeenth-century visionary, 'not only went to hell, but brought back from it a stench which proved to all the bystanders that it had been there.—Faugh!' (12). There is a similar account (with the same anecdote) of Hans Engelbrecht in *The Athenaeum* under the heading 'Oneirological' (1829, 255). The derisory nature of these reflections should be mitigated by the fact that many of Engelbrecht's writings were published during his lifetime and that further editions and translations appeared posthumously. In fact, a collected works appeared in several languages from 1686 onwards (Beyer 2017, 159-60). Significantly, an edition entitled *The Divine Vision* appeared in English in 1780, which contains a chapter entitled 'The Vision of Heaven and Hell' where Engelbrecht gives an account of the Holy Ghost transporting his soul to Hell and then to Heaven. Although Blake does not mention Engelbrecht in *The Marriage of Heaven and*

As Southey turns to his own night-time vision, he recounts how 'the spectrum of [a] Horse floated into my chamber' which, because he sleeps with his mouth shut, may have 'found its way out at the nose' (12). Although Southey is being playful, such a hypothesis of spirits travelling through the nose is reminiscent of a similar episode in John Davies' *Nosce Teipsum* (1599) where Epicureans are berated for believing that '[o]ur *Soule* is but a smoake, or ayrie blast; / Which, during life, doth in our nostrils play' (1876, 82). Southey adds that he is unsure whether the horse is a spirit, spectrum, 'or some benevolent genius or dæmon [which] assumed the well-known and welcome form,' before reflecting that the dream was possibly 'merely a dream.' The uncertain nature of the night-time vision is indicative of Lucretius' belief that dreamers see images which they believe to be real, such as recently deceased loved ones (iv.774-7) or, indeed, their own demise (1017-23). Similar phenomena ushered in the belief of the gods (1168-76), with Epicurus specifically warning that the apotheosis of *eidola* brings about a mental state in which the individual is 'just as much troubled as if they had really faith in these vain phantoms' (*LP* 454).

Thus, to bring the current discussion on dreams to a close, Lucretius' exposition in Book Four of *De Rerum Natura* and Robert Southey's satirical evaluation of *simulacra* in *The Doctor &c* – which can be traced to an epistemological tradition from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in the works of William Shakespeare, John Davies, Thomas Nash, and Ben Jonson – provides a philosophical framework which I will apply in Sections IV and V for analysing visual anomalies and perceptual fallacies which occur during visions influenced by the Blakean Selfhood. As I progress this argument further, the epistemological breakdown between *prolepses* and *phantasiae* will be mapped onto the psychological projections which populate Thel's pastoral world in *The Book of Thel* as well as the dream-like quality of Theotormon's troubled mind in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. In particular, I will now argue that the dialogic partners which populate Thel's pastoral world are spectral epiphenomena which have been projected onto the material world by the Selfhood; for, in the same way that the mind can misread *simulacra* during night-time

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Hell, the title as well as the tone of the poem signals an affiliation with the subject matter of *The Divine Vision* – not least the fact that 'A Memorable Fancy' (Plate 5) begins with Blake walking in Hell.

visions and waking fancies, Thel's psycho-topography becomes populated with *phantasia* which are a product of the psychic formulations of the Selfhood.[138]

IV. *The Book of Thel*

The Book of Thel (1789) has long generated a plethora of readings, even though it appears to be a 'rather simple poem' (Heppner 1977, 79) and 'completely accessible' (Nurmi 1975, 69).[139] One of the reasons for this critical inconsistency is implicated in the poem's textuality where liminality is dramatized by the female protagonist who 'in her want-to-be shuttles endlessly between her role as desire personified and her role as a desiring subject' (Norvig 2013, 150).[140] Marjorie Levinson adds that 'Thel has no being apart from her motivation; she *is* her function' (1980, 290).[141] But what *are* Thel's motivations? The opening of the poem addresses Thel's wish 'To fade away like morning beauty from her mortal day' (*BT* 78 1.3), which points towards a form of melancholia evoking Thomas Nash, Robert Burton, and John Milton as I have just demonstrated in Section III.

Although it is Thel who seeks 'the secret air' (2) which should imply agency, she does so 'in paleness' and with the desire 'To fade away.'[142] Her melancholia makes 'Thel's departure […] a turning away' (Carr 1987, 78) and the 'animation of a living death' (Youngquist 1989,

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[138] Blake was clearly preoccupied with this notion, as the frontispiece to *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804) originally carried the title *Vala, or The Death and Judgement of the [Eternal] Ancient Man, a Dream of Nine Nights*.

[139] The anonymous author of 'The Inventions of William Blake, painter and poet,' *London University Magazine*, vol. II, March 1830, referred to *The Book of Thel* as a 'little work' (qt. Bentley 1975, 205).

[140] The etymological inquisition which has sprung up around Thel's name is a microcosm of the wider struggle for control over her character. See Gerda Norvig for a summary of the common readings (2013, 153). Cf. Fisher (1961, 205), Howard (1984, 50-1), Eaves et al. (1993, 79), and McCollister (1996/7, 91) for a similar etymology. John Howard suggests Thel stems from the Hebrew *tela* meaning 'to hang in doubt, delay' (1984, 51). G. M. Harper (1961, 254) and Kathleen Raine (114) suggest that Thel is an anagram of Lethe, the Greek river of forgetfulness. In the *Aeneid*, 'the souls to whom Fate owes a second body […] come to the waves of the river Lethe and drink the waters of serenity and draughts of long oblivion' (Virgil 2003, 134-5 vi.705-23). Thel may also be based on the decaying Hel of Norse mythology.

[141] Marjorie Levinson believes that '[w]hat precipitates the poem and maintains its momentum is Thel's compulsion to learn her origin' (1980, 290). Eric Pyle suggests that the action is driven by Thel's 'curiosity' (2015, 106). Robert Carr offers a darker stimulus: '[t]he drama of the poem stems from Thel's growing egocentricity' (1987, 85).

[142] Helen Bruder adds that Thel 'has not […] got much of an idea of what to do once she reaches the illicit "secret air"' (1997, 45). As Deborah McCollister speculates, Thel is 'ripe for seduction because of her willingness to separate from her sisters, while not knowing who she is' (1996/7, 91).

90). It is ironic that by wishing 'To fade away' Thel actually prolongs the fading process by maintaining the act of fading. The impetus, therefore, which appears to drive Thel's actions is not self-determination but the very opposite: she wishes to relinquish that responsibility to actualise the self which Blake makes a mandatory prerequisite for self-annihilation. Eric Pyle similarly observes that '[s]ince Blake's goal is always the coincidence and transcendence of contraries, the choice to remain in only one state for all of one's life can only be a failure' (2015, 110).[143] As such, Northrop Frye's assessment in *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) that the poem 'represents the failure to take the state of innocence into the state of experience' (1990, 238) has largely stood the test of time.[144]

Thel's soliloquies and colloquies – which, as I will argue, are a dialogic distortion through the Selfhood – offer a hermeneutic key for reading her psychological condition.[145] After she leaves her sisters and makes her way 'Down by the river of Adona' (78 1.4), Thel laments the transitory nature of corporeality:

> Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,
>
> Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water.
>
> Like dreams of infants, like a smile upon an infants face,
>
> Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air…
>
>
> (8-11).

By seeking to compare her existence to that of 'a parting cloud' and the 'dreams of infants,' Thel undercuts her individuality and substantiality; the fact that she chooses to register her identity in terms of fleeting phenomenon which 'are reflections of reflections' means that

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[143] Peter Fisher concurs that Thel 'gives way to the indolence which refuses to desire a human life' (1961, 206). Nelson Hilton adds that Thel's 'Narcissus-like lamentation centers on itself and so defeats fulfillment' (1983, 30). Thomas Altizer succinctly states that 'Innocence must become Experience' (2000, 2). Cf. Parini (1982, 77) and Carr (1987, 80).

[144] The biggest reassessment of Frye's analysis has come from feminist critics. *The Book of Thel* (along with *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*) was taken up in the 1980s in most need of critical revision. Now at the centre of a gender-informed debate, Thel was turned from an 'innocent girl on the verge of Experience… frightened at the thought of some day becoming a mother' (Damon 1988, 401; see also McCollister 1996/7, 91) into 'a determined young woman' (Bruder 1994, 148-9; cf. Bogan 1982, 156-6; Norvig 1988, 148-66). See Paul Youngquist (1989, 90) and Eaves et al. (1993, 78) for the middle ground.

[145] The State of Innocence is often solipsistic. After Tiriel tells Mnetha that he was 'once father of a race / Far in the north,' Mnetha responds, 'how I tremble! are there then more people, / More human creatures on this earth, beside the sons of Har' (*T* 90 2.50-5).

'Thel's diction heightens her representation of insubstantiality; she is only *like* a shadow in the water' (Linkin 1987, 67). Nelson Hilton goes even further by suggesting that Thel's comparison to 'transient phenomena […] disintegrates [her] as a personality, becoming only a voice living from one simile to the next' (1983, 30). Additionally, Thel's character is only ever portrayed in terms of metaphorical relations, but this is predicated upon her own self-assessment. Her words, therefore, have the power to become the sole signifier by which she and the reader are able to gauge her character.

Indeed, before the Lilly's answer, it is unclear to whom Thel is addressing her woes since she refers to herself in the third person (8). This grammatical quirk underscores ontological fragmentation as Thel 'separates herself from herself, as though consciousness without identity leads to a grammatical expression of alienation' (Eaves et al. 1993, 75).[146] Such self-alienation is reinforced when, even though the Lilly and the Cloud answer her, Thel still complains that 'no one hears my voice' (80 3.4). As Nelson Hilton explains, if 'words are not signs for what is seen (*idea*) […] what appears is a *phainomenon* or showing-forth of words, a *logosophany*' (1983, 9). Thus, when utterances act as a form of *poiesis*, the word as 'other' can become estranged from the intended meaning or principle.

In Epicurean terms, our preconceptions (*prolepsis*) may not correspond with those mental images (*phantasia*) which are produced by the atomistic silhouettes of material objects (*eidola/simulacra*), creating an existential distortion between interiority and exteriority. As is recorded in Diogenes Laërtius' doxographical study,

> we ought to judge of things which are obscure by their analogy to those which
> we perceive directly. In fact, every notion proceeds from the senses, either
> directly, or in consequence of some analogy, or proportion, or combination.
>
> (*LP* 435).

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[146] The Derridean theory of 'bricolage' posits that language is fractured even before it has been articulated. As Bijay Kumar Das writes, 'Derrida's view of language lays stress on the fact that literature is only a "free play" of signifiers without a centre. Thus, far from giving any meaning words carry with them "a certain" absence and "indeterminacy of meaning"' (2007, 52). Blake's 'canny sense of the power of discourse […] seems to have a life of its own and the ability to speak itself through subjects without their knowing it […as] a practice of subversive bricolage' (Vogler 1987, 307).

Prolepsis, as I have shown, is 'the recollection of an external object' according to which our 'opinion (δόξα)' which is also called 'supposition (ὑπόληψις)' is simultaneously true and false until either confirmed or denied by testimony (436).[147] In *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius warns that perceptual fallacies and optical illusions must be considered 'on account of the opinions of the mind ['*opinatus animi*'], which we add ourselves, so that things not seen by the senses are counted as seen' (158-9 iv.465-7).[148]

For Blake, opinions and suppositions have the performative potential to realise the subject's state of mind as epiphenomena. In *Jerusalem* (1804-20), for example, Albion regrets the words he has spoken because they become manifest in his Selfhood: 'What have I said? What have I done? O all-powerful Human Words: / You recoil back upon me in the blood of the Lamb slain in his Children' (*J* 681 i.24.1-2). Part of the problem facing Albion is that 'every little act' is remembered in the city of Golgonooza as every 'Word, work, & wish, that has existed' remains 'In those Churches ever consuming & ever building by the Spectres' (659 13.60-2). Whilst Los built Golgonooza to provide an earthly crucible for corporeal beings to renew their spiritual acquaintance through labour, one day creating 'Exemplars of Memory and of Intellect, / Creating Space, Creating Time according to the wonders Divine' (845 iv.98.30-1), it is a physical site which engenders anxiety in those under the dominion of the Selfhood who fear that their mistakes have been made permanent. Thus, as Albion degenerates across Chapters 1 and 2 of *Jerusalem*, 'Above him rose a Shadow from his wearied intellect… / A sweet entrancing self-delusion a watry vision of Albion' (*J* 720 43[29].38-9).

Albion's 'watry vision' undermines his faith in the spiritual nature of the self until he 'fell upon his face prostrate before the watry Shadow / Saying O lord whence is this change: thou knowest I am nothing' (*J* 40-2).[149] Eventually, attempting to locate some external source for self-identification, Albion becomes 'Idolatrous to his own Shadow:'

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[147] Accordingly, Epicureans employ a form of epistemological '"waiting," as if, before pronouncing that a thing seen is a tower, we must wait till we come near, and learn what it looks like when we are near it' (436). Lucretius motions to this and similar concepts in *DRN* (iv.353-468) which concludes with an analogy of dreams (453-62).

[148] As Brooke Holmes notes, 'Epicureans are often caught using *prolepseis* strategically to protect key claims from challenge, even when these extend, illegitimately it would seem, beyond the evidence available to direct perception' (2005, 548).

[149] In 'Auguries of Innocence, Blake writes that 'He who shall teach the Child to Doubt / The rotting Grave shall ne'er get out' (*K* 433 87-8).

O I am nothing when I enter into judgment with thee!

If thou withdraw thy breath I die & vanish into Hades

If thou dost lay thine hand upon me behold I am silent:

If thou withhold thine hand; I perish like a fallen leaf:

O I am nothing: and to nothing must return again:

I thou withdraw thy breath, Behold I am oblivion.

(*J* 721 46-52).

Albion's adulation of his spectral form captures Lucretius' defence of the senses in Book Four of *De Rerum Natura* (iv.469-94), which follows from his exposition on the peculiarities of vision.[150] Cicero, somewhat comically, encapsulates the Epicurean concern with sensory reliability:

Arcesilas used to attack Zeno because, whereas he himself said that all sense-perceptions are false, Zeno said that some were false, but not all. Epicurus feared that if a single sensation were admitted to be false, none would be true: he therefore said that all the senses give a true report.

(1967, 69 xxv).

For Blake, any notion or idea formed by the senses is inherently false. In *Jerusalem*, we are warned by the Eternal Prophet against such sensual confirmation: 'No Individual ought to appropriate to Himself / Or to his Emanation, any of the Universal Characteristics' (*J* 830 iv.90.28-30). Los soon after adds that 'Those who dare appropriate to themselves Universal Attributes / Are the Blasphemous Selfhoods & must be broken asunder' (830-1 90.32-3).

Thel suffers from similar ontological anxieties in *The Book of Thel*, where the 'watry vision of Albion' reflects Thel's lamentations which are projected onto the surface of the river Adona as 'a watry bow' (*BT* 78 1.8). What compounds Thel's self-doubt is that she attempts to

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[150] Lucretius, for instance, counters the sceptic's point that nothing can be known for certain by establishing truth on individual sensory experiences – 'whatever they have perceived on each occasion, is true' (160 498-9); for, without having perceived a truth or anything true with the senses our entire foundation of reality is unreliable. Lucretius adds that it is only when *prolepses* interfere that sensory collation becomes false (483-7). As a result, Lucretius can seek refuge in the fact that the senses are infallible since sense-perception remains a physical event: it is the interference of psychological idiosyncrasies which pose an epistemological problem.

anchor her identity in corporeal phenomenon but finds that her existence takes on the insubstantiality of the language used to express it:

> O life of this our spring! why fades the lotus of the water?
>
> Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile & fall.
>
> Ah! Thel is like a watry bow, and like a parting cloud,
>
> Like a reflection in a glass. like shadows in the water.
>
> Like dreams of infants. like a smile upon an infants face,
>
> Like the doves voice, like transient day, like music in the air;
>
> Ah! gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head.
>
> And gentle sleep the sleep of death. and gentle hear the voice
>
> Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time.
>
>
> (*BT* 78-9 1.6-14).

The anaphoric 'Like' (internalised three times) emphasises the relational basis of Thel's identity, whilst the repetition of 'Ah!' and 'gentle' (four times in two lines) signals the closed system of language itself.[151] Thel, however, remains unaware of her pathology as the Selfhood 'like language, generally goes unperceived' (Hilton 1996, 80). Furthermore, because she does not know that she is subject to the Selfhood nor that her articulation of her self-worth (or lack thereof) is a principal factor in her stupor, Thel becomes trapped in the linguistic range of the Selfhood.

Although Christopher Heppner does not work with an Epicurean context, he has usefully described the images used by Thel as 'epiphenomena, appearances which exist only as temporary modifications of an underlying substance' (Heppner 1977, 81).[152] The semantic significance of Heppner's critique points towards Blake's classical context, where Epicurean *eidola* and Lucretian *simulacra* act as the 'underlying substance' of material objects projecting themselves onto the minds of percipient subjects. Indeed, Thel's ability to see 'appearances which exist *only* as *temporary* modifications' (my italics) emphasises the

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[151] Laura Quinney has also observed that the repetition of 'gentle' can be construed as Thel's attempt to create a lullaby whereby she will lull herself to sleep, 'dreaming that mind can fade painlessly away' (2009, 31).

[152] Blake was not the only Romantic writer to employ such a technique. Mark Sandy has noted that Keats creates scenarios, as in 'Ode to Psyche,' where memory leads characters to become 'so utterly lost in the past that its recovery conflates perception and introspection, epiphenomenon and phenomenon' (2005, 66).

unreality of her world, a concern which can be seen replicated in *De Rerum Nature* where Lucretius modifies sensory collation so that we don't see individual atoms but the object as a whole image (iv.256-78).

Thel's entire point of comparison – and thus her ability to self-identify – is subject to such epiphenomena when '[t]he material world is something our imaginations create when we are in such a fallen condition that we see only the surfaces of things' (Pyle 2015, 123). If Thel is 'Like a reflection in a glass,' then Thel does not even occupy the existence of the person casting the reflection (she does not emit *simulacra*): she is disembodied only to become personified as a reversed image of life (*phantasia* registered without a material basis).[153] The epistemological circuit of Thel's existence is therefore predicated upon preconceptions (*prolepsis*) which have their origin in Thel's melancholia and which are mirrored in her own psyche. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Three as part of Urizenic creation, this phenomenological pattern acts as the entire foundation for postlapsarian existence.

When Thel begins to converse with the Lilly, the Cloud, and the Clod of Clay, the concept of epiphenomena can be extended to include these creatures as well. The Lilly persists with the water-based imagery used by Thel in her lamentations, whilst Thel's persistence in referring to herself as a cloud (*BT* 78 1.8; 80 2.11) brings about the appearance of the Cloud. The Cloud, in turn, takes on the appearance of 'the risen sun' (81 3.14) after Thel's original metaphorical self-identification and occupies an 'airy throne' (81 3.24) in relation to Thel's 'pearly throne' (80 2.12). This symbiosis is reinforced grammatically and graphologically by Thel referring to herself in the third person, claiming 'Thel is like to Thee' (80 3.3), where the second 'e' of 'Thee' looks suspiciously like an 'l' which, scanning back across the line, occurs again in the second 'e' of 'thee' when Thel claims 'Then we shall seek thee but not find.' In fact, on closer inspection, the 'n' of 'Then' begins to take on the appearance of an 'l' which would make the line read, 'Thel we shall seek Thel but not find. ah Thel is like to Thel.' This

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[153] After Lucretius' modification of Epicurean epistemology, he then addresses the peculiarities of mirrors (iv.269-323). Kathleen Raine reads *The Book of Thel* alongside the Ancient-Greek Neoplatonist Plotinus who fills his work with 'the imagery of shadows, reflections, and water that we find in *Thel*; and a note from Proclus is particularly relevant: "The forms which appear in matter, are merely ludicrous; shadows falling upon shadow, as in a mirror, where the position of a thing is different from its real situation"' (1968, 109). Blake may well have read Thomas Taylor's translation of this text, which was published in 1787 (two years before *The Book of Thel* was largely completed). At the request of John Flaxman, Taylor composed and delivered twelve lectures on Platonic philosophy in the mid-1780s. It is probable that Blake attended some of these lectures at Flaxman's house and thereby became personally acquainted with Taylor.

may be intentional for, as I have already noted at the beginning of this section, Thel *does* often refer to herself in the third person. Blake, accordingly, continues to repeat the anaphoric nature of Thel's initial lamentations throughout the poem in order to stress the ontological redundancy of Thel's search for the self.

Harriet Linkin borrows Heppner's terminology when she observes that all the characters with whom Thel speaks 'conveniently match the epiphenomena Thel lists' (1987, 68). It follows that if Thel's language reflects her ontological and phenomenological reality and if Thel's ontological and phenomenological reality is reflected in her language, then these epiphenomena *are* Thel. Indeed, Tilottama Rajan comes to this conclusion:

> [t]he depiction of understanding as en-gendered through the intermediary of figures is particularly striking in *Thel*, where the protagonist invents three figures for herself – a flower, a cloud and a clod – and where she often speaks of herself in the third person.
>
> (Rajan 1992, 81).[154]

Although I would caution the extent to which Thel '*invents* three figures for herself' as this implies agency, it is true that Thel is at the very least *subject to* three figures who act as intermediaries and force her to progress towards her grave plot.[155]

To summarise, Thel's psycho-topography is a manipulation of the Selfhood which, grounded within Epicurean sense perception, distorts phenomenological existence by mapping mental images (*phantasia*) onto our field of vision. Thel's progression through the vales of Har and her dialogic encounters become part of the solipsistic sphere of the Selfhood which traps the subject within an ontological and a linguistic range, preventing spiritual enlightenment and divine communion through the Prophetic Character. As I will now demonstrate,

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[154] It is strange, therefore, that Linkin decides that '[d]espite her list of likenesses, Thel possesses clear identity' when 'Thel retreats into the closed "secret air" that dooms so many of Blake's figures' (1987, 67).

[155] Kathleen Raine refers to the epiphenomena as 'actors' (1968, 100) whilst Marjorie Levinson claims that Thel acts like a ventriloquist (1980, 289). Heppner argues that '[t]he whole poem is made up of Correspondences, in the full Swedenborgian sense of appearances which reflect – or "Represent" – the state of Thel's feelings' (1977, 87). As Robert Waxler adds, '[s]he is trapped by her own imaginings' (1982, 47).

Theotormon suffers from similar bouts of self-doubt in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) but realises his melancholia in a decidedly more sadomasochistic manner.

V. 'Theotormon is a sick mans dream'

Having established that Thel progresses through a phenomenological reality which is a product of her subjection to the Selfhood – framed by the epistemological disjunction between *prolepsis* and *phantasia* – and that her dialogic partners are an exteriorisation of her own thought process, I will now consider how in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) Theotormon's sadomasochistic retrenchment within the confines of the Selfhood can be read as a counterpart – and Oothoon's embracement of self-annihilation as a counterfoil – to Thel's struggles in *The Book of Thel*.

There are, for example, some notable parallels between the two texts. Out of the 125 lines which compose the main narrative of *The Book of Thel* (not including the motto), 94 are spoken (75.2%). Out of the 218 lines which compose the main narrative of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (not including 'The Argument'), 186 are spoken (85.3%). In both poems, the heaviest concentration of dialogue also occurs in the middle section: plates 2(4), 3(5), and 5(7) of *Thel* and plates 3(6), 4(7), 5(8), 6(9), and 7(10) of *Visions*. Furthermore, in the same way that Thel's dialogic encounters frame her narrative, in *Visions* the refrain 'The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs' is repeated on plates 2, 5, and 8. Blake is clearly stressing the role of dialogue in the development of both poetic and character-related ontogeny.

Initially, Oothoon appears to occupy a similar role to Thel as she 'wanderd in woe' and speaks to 'to the bright Marygold of Leutha's vale' (*VDA* 196 1.3-5). The questions she puts forward to the Marygold, however, and her readiness to implement what she learns suggests a juxtaposition between Oothoon's utilitarian rhetoricity and Thel's solipsistic lamentations. Importantly, the dialogic encounter between Oothoon and the Marygold lasts for only five lines and, thereafter, there are no more anthropomorphised apparitions, which 'points to a receptivity in Oothoon quite different from that of her counterpart [i.e. Thel]'

(Vogler 1987, 292). Whereas Thel is limited to the naïve ideology which persists in the vales of Har where Innocence stagnates, Oothoon is wandering through the vales of Leutha which, although a place of sexual aggressiveness and hypocrisy, is at least a place of Experience and therefore a place of action, involvement, and worldliness. So, whilst Thel moves through her environment without daring to alter it, fearing change as an omen of decay and death, Oothoon acts upon her environment and alters her material reality as a result, claiming her sexuality by plucking the Marygold and placing it provocatively, and defiantly, between her breasts (1.5-13).[156]

The asexuality of Thel and the sexuality of Oothoon is pictorially represented across the title-page of *The Book of Thel* and 'The Argument' plate prefacing the main narrative of *Visions*. On the title-page of *Thel*, the closed drooping bud hovering around the female's legs at the bottom-left of the plate is a sign of her withering youth. She is often taken as Thel, and indeed shares similar physical features to Thel on plates 2(4), 4(6), and 5(7).[157] From one of the opened buds near the right-hand side of the plate a naked male is leaping out and grasping a clothed female who has one leg hidden (perhaps trapped) by the second, opened bud. The female's hands are outstretched and, facing her male pursuer, seems in a state of fear. Eaves et al. ask whether 'this is a rape or a happy union?' and, hesitant to take a definitive stance, conclude that '[t]he ambiguity' which is present in the design 'speaks to Thel's sexual uncertainties' (1993, 82).[158] Thel looks on and makes no attempt to interfere. Her sexual inactivity is further exemplified by the phallically-redundant shepherd's crook slumped between her body and her left hand.

In 'The Argument' plate of *Visions*, on the other hand, Oothoon is on her knees with her hands covering her breasts, head held forward in order to kiss a child-like nymph who is jumping up from the Marygold: the flaming flower representing the awakening of sexuality in 'a female equivalent to Prometheus' theft of fire' (Bindman 1998, 276).[159] The nymph's

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[156] Whereas Thel does not break her 'little curtain of flesh' (*BT* 84 6.20) Oothoon has her 'virgin mantle [torn] in twain' (*VDA* 196 iii.8). 'The plucking of a flower traditionally symbolizes sexual initiation' (Ostriker 2004, 904). Helen Bruder claims that Oothoon deflowers herself (1997, 75).

[157] Erdman (1974, 34) and Eaves et al. (1993, 82) view this female figure as Thel. For an alternative reading, where the bud represents a form of temptation, see Den Otter (1991, 646).

[158] McCollister poses the same question (1996/7, 93).

[159] 'Like Prometheus,' writes June Singer, '[Oothoon] would not be dominated by authority, even if it were that of the Almighty, and like Prometheus she must undergo the torture demanded of her by that powerful bird' (1970, 188).

arms are outstretched, with one extending to where Oothoon claims she places the flower – from which fire blazes on the final plate (Plate 11) – and the other hand stretched towards a sun-lit sky, suggestive of the fact that the morning accompanies sexual awakening. Blake amalgamates sexuality and divinity to create a revolutionary moment of self-actualisation. Pictorially, therefore, we begin to read Thel as sexually inactive (even sexually redundant) before she eventually decides to reject Experience and return to the vales of Har. Equally, Oothoon's sexual independence becomes an antidote for Theotormon's repressive visualisation of sexual activity on the frontispiece/tailpiece of *Visions*.

Continuing with this intertextual comparison, Thel is like 'the youth shut up from / The lustful joy':

> [She] shall forget to generate. & create an amorous image
> In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.
> Are not these the places of religion? the rewards of continence?
> The self enjoyings of self denial?
>
> (*VDA* 205 7.5-9).

The references to biological sterility are inescapable: Thel 'shall forget to generate' and carry children; Thel will occupy herself with 'an amorous image' of her own creation; Thel will refrain from fulfilling sexual desire and only reap the hollow 'rewards of continence'; and Thel will refuse herself pleasure and suffer '[t]he self enjoyings of self denial.' As Harriet Linkin notes, 'Thel willingly ascribes the role of nurturer to all with whom she comes in contact' – though it should be noted that Thel refers to the Lilly as 'thou little virgin' despite the fact she nourishes the lamb with her lactating teats ('thy milky garments' (79 2.3-5)) – 'what she remains unwilling to acknowledge is the necessarily sexual role mothers assume in creating the life they nurture' (1987, 70).[160] Although Thel does not appear to be lovelorn

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[160] In a cosmological parallel, Thel's parochial desire to experience love without sexual contact is mimicked by Urizen who attempts to find 'a joy without pain' (*BU* 244 4.10). Cf. Keynes (1972, 887); Whittaker (1999, 123); Bloom (2008, 198).

like Lucretius' pining youth in *De Rerum Natura*, there is a curious parallel in the way each attempt to 'create an amorous image' to ease the pans of unfulfilled desire.[161]

Lucretius' exposition on the nature of love and desire, which I will now discuss, follows his treatment of monstrous dreams: he continues to be concerned with the way 'there come from without idols from every body' which, for the lover, may herald 'a glorious face […] which stir and rouse their passion to bursting' (178 iv.1033-5).[162] This feverish condition is, at times, heighted to such an extent that we become obsessive and begin to see (or, rather, believe that we see) images of the desired object as a waking fancy:

> if the object of your love is away, yet images of her are at hand, her loved name is present to your ears. But it is best to flee those images, and scare away from you what feeds your love, and to turn your mind some other way, and vent your passion on other objects, and not to keep it, set once for all on the love of one, and thereby store up for yourself care and certain pain. For the sore gains strength and festers by feeding, and day by day madness grows, and the misery becomes heavier, unless you dissipate the first wounds by new blows, and heal them while still fresh, wandering after some wanton, or else can turn the movements of the mind elsewhere.

> (179 iv.1060-72).

There is both an optical and an auricular illusion as the obsessive lover simultaneously sees 'images' ('*simulacra*') and hears the 'name' ('*nomen*') of the desired object. The way in which the name sweetly sounds in the ear ('*illius et nomen dulce obversatur ad auris*') also implies the appearance or a showing forth of the desired object in a blurred distinction between sight and hearing, as if the 'images' were audibly present in the head.[163]

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[161] Steven Cox claims that Thel *is* troubled by 'love' (1992, 65). Nelson Hilton suggests that Thel suffers from 'sexual anxiety' (1983, 31).

[162] Whilst the change in discourse may seem disjointed, the erotic dream (iv.1033-5) blurs the distinction as we 'pass to the dream of love' and 'a kind of daydream' (Brown 1987, 83).

[163] The lover is an echo of a mental image, recalling Lucretius' earlier claim that our daily pursuits enter our minds at night so that those who take part in sporting events find 'the same sights pass before their eyes […] and drink in with their ears the clear-toned chant of the lyre' (176 iv.979-83). Shadi Bartsch notes 'that ocular penetration is, after all, a form of violation of the integrity of bodily boundaries' (2006, 73).

Despite the fact that there is no material object to emit *simulacra*, some form of projected *prolepsis* materialises as an apparitional *phantasia* to trick the senses into believing that the eye sees and the ear hears the desired object.[164] The phenomenological basis of Epicurean materialism during a pathological distortion of (the otherwise mechanical nature of) sense perception is, as a result, stripped of its materiality to become a purely psychological (solipsistic) process.[165] Indeed, despite the fact that these 'images' have no material basis, Lucretius still asks us 'to flee' ('*fugitare*') and to 'scare […] away' ('*absterrere*') these apparitions as if they were capable of maintaining an autonomous existence outside of, and in spite of, the subject who initially projected them.

The only way in which we are ultimately able to outstrip these phantasmagorical *phantasia* is to 'vent your passion on other objects, and not to keep it ['*nec retinere*'].' Our escape is a process of self-emptying, a process of catharsis in which the psychological circumstances of the initial epistemological distortion are obviated so that we avoid future 'care' ('*curam*') and 'certain pain' ('*certumque dolorem*'). The epidemiological language also emphasises the physical nature of the subject's pathological disturbance, as 'the sore gains strength and festers by feeding, and day by day madness grows.'[166] The '*ulcus*' of unfulfilled desire continues to be contaminated by our original impulse until it becomes a self-inflicted cycle ('*vivescit et inveterascit*') comparable to madness ('*furor*'). The language recalls Book Three where Lucretius writes that '[t]here is too the peculiar frenzy of the mind and forgetfulness of the past, yes, and it is plunged into the dark waters of lethargy' (133 iii.827-9).

Thel's reluctance, which becomes an inability, to ground the self interiorly or exteriorly in any substantial phenomena points towards a reductive and fatalistic interpretation of Lucretius' prescription to empty the self of all desires. Indeed, Thel's lack of substantiality becomes a form of self-abnegation.[167] Blake's familiarity with mirror writing (whereby the

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[164] In *Opticks* (1704), Isaac Newton writes about a similar visual trick: [i]f a burning Coal be nimbly moved round in a Circle with Gyrations continually repeated, the whole Circle will appear like Fire; the reason of which is, that the Sensation of the Coal in the several Places of that Circle remains impress'd on the Sensorium, until the Coal return again to the same Place […and] until a Revolution of all the Colours be compleated, and that first Colour return again' (1730, 141). David Hartley writes about the same phenomena in *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* ([1749]1834, 6-7).

[165] Roman authors tended to portray madness 'as an *ipso facto* self-absorbed condition' (McDermott 2016, 193).

[166] A psychological condition develops as a physiological symptom until it once more becomes an aggravated pathological illness. As Emily McDermott notes, '[t]he compulsion is material (*nervis collecta cupido*), biologically-rooted, animalistic, and deeply disruptive of the serene rationality prized by the author' (2016, 192).

[167] Cf. Deborah McCollister's 'The Seduction of Self-Abnegation in The Book of Thel' (1996/7, 90-4).

printed page becomes a mirror image of the etched plate) similarly draws our attention to the fact that Thel is an imperfect anagram of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Hades.[168] This etymology provides a further exegetical platform to understand the epistemological framework of *The Book of Thel*, for the river Lethe flows through the cave of Hypnos around whom 'in various forms of disguise, are lying / the phantom dreams' (Ovid *Met*. 452 xi.613-4). Thel's entire journey – particularly her katabatic descent into the Clod of Clay's house where 'She wanderd in the land of clouds thro' valleys dark' (*BT* 83 6.6) echoing 'the cloud-wrapped palace of Somnus' (*Met*. 451 xi.591) – can be read as participating in one of Hypnos/Somnus' 'phantom dreams' which Lucretius similarly refers to as 'dream-visions' ('*somnia*') (*DRN* 141 iii.1049).[169]

For a philosophy which is based upon the senses and requires the successful operation of the reason, *De Rerum Natura* is remarkable for its tendency to undercut the epistemological certainty of the subject by conceding the unreliability of the mind ('*furorem animi proprium*'). For example, the jealous lover is racked with painful sensations when the object of his desire 'has thrown out some idle word and left its sense in doubt, and it is planted deep in the passionate heart, and becomes alive' (181 iv.1138-40). The misinterpretation of visual and audible stimuli is replicated in the misperception of *simulacra* and the projection of *phantasia* when the jealous lover 'thinks she casts her eyes around too freely, and looks upon some other, or sees in her face some trace of laughter' (1141-3). In fact, the course of action which Lucretius prescribes to the pining lover is not simply to empty the self and to turn the mind to other objects of desire, but to add 'new blows, and heal them while still

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[168] Margaret Rudd has similarly noted that Thel 'read forwards, it has been suggested, may mean […] "I will" or "desire," but which backwards becomes Lethe or forgetfulness' (Rudd 1970, 96). Rudd's etymological source may be G. M. Harper (1961, 254). Nelson Hilton echoes Rudd when he writes that Thel is '[c]aught in the wilderness of herself she vacillates, as her palindromic Greek name suggests, between wishing or willing (*thelō*) and forgetfulness (Lethe)' (1983, 31). Cf. Eaves et al. (1993, 79); McCollister (1996/7, 94); Spector (2001, 62); Priestman (2004, 111).

[169] A critique of Epicurean *ataraxia*, the state of contentedness which was considered the goal of human life, lends itself to this context: 'the banishment of pain, as it is called by Epicurus, appears to the Cyrenaics not to be pleasure; for neither is the absence of pleasure pain, for both pleasure and pain consist in motion; and neither the absence of pleasure nor the absence of pain are motion. In fact, absence of pain is a condition like that of a person asleep' (*LP* 90).

fresh.' This sadomasochistic therapy requires the subject to inflict himself with as many '*volnera plagis*' as possible, so that the mind forgets about its original illness.[170]

There is a compelling and graphic parallel between Lucretius' therapy for unfulfilled desire and Theotormon's actions in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. To begin with, Theotormon is described as 'a sick mans dream' (*VDA* 204 6.19). As Robert Brown reflects upon Lucretius' exposition on dreams in Book Four of *De Rerum Natura*,

> nearly all the dreams described by Lucretius in 962-1036 exhibit features of obsessive effort or emotion which are similar, in a general way, to those he perceives in the life of love.

> (1987, 84).

Indeed, later in Book Four Lucretius expands the optical illusions of dreams into the irrational nature of love when the unrequited lover 'might detect, even with closed eyes, ills without number' (181 1143-4). Similarly, the besotted subject might begin to visualise features and qualities in the desired object which do not exist: 'for the most part men act blinded by passion, and assign to women excellencies which are not truly theirs' (182 1152-3). Man's blind desire ('*cupidine caeci*') not only distorts external reality but also begins to obfuscate ontological clarity as 'he cannot see his own ills' (1157).

Oothoon's critique of the self-aware 'modest virgin' (*VDA* 204 6.10) continues to allude to the Lucretian discrepancy between the reality and unreality of dreams and the visual distortions which take place in the mind of the slumbering subject. The virgin is described as a 'child of night & sleep' (7), but Oothoon wonders whether upon awakening 'wilt thou dissemble all thy secret joys / Or wert thou not, awake when all this mystery was disclos'd!' (8-9). Whilst for Lucretius it was paramount to distinguish between the monstrous illusion of unfiltered *simulacra* and the material world as it was perceived objectively by the rational subject, for Oothoon (and for Blake) this distinction is moot because any epistemology deduced from a rationalisation of atomistic materialism reduces such phenomenological distortions to the activity of the Selfhood. In this sense, Oothoon's reflection – which, it

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[170] 'This is, in itself, surrender to madness; the cure is to wound the body again and again… As usual in our poet, the imagery is vivid; Venus is described as *volgivaga* (4.1071), literally "crown-wandering": "a euphemistic metonymy for promiscuous sex"' (Fratantuono 2015, 284).

should be noted, was closed by an exclamative – becomes a demonstrative statement against the moral corruption of chastity and celibacy rather than a genuine interrogative against such practices:

> Then com'st thou forth a modest virgin knowing to dissemble
>
> With nets found under thy bright pillow, to catch virgin joy,
>
> And brand it with the name of whore; & sell it in the night,
>
> In silence, ev'n without a whisper, and in seeming sleep:
>
> Religious dreams and holy vespers, light thy smoky fires…
>
> (204 6.10-4).

The virgin's nets catch 'virgin joys' like the Lucretian *simulacra* which during dreams are caught in a 'spider's web' (168 iv.728; cf. 'meshes of love' (181 1147)). The provenance of these nets 'under thy bright pillow' becomes an important detail since it suggests that they are metaphorical representations of the sickly mind which accepts distorted representations of reality as the 'virgin' becomes a 'whore.' The knowing virgin then sells her joys 'in the night' and 'in seeming sleep' which, likened to the moral corruption of 'Religious dreams,' continue to blur the distinction between sleep and waking life: 'Theotormon hears me not! to him the night and morn / Are both alike: a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears' (199 2.37-8).

That these scenes happen 'In silence' points to the earlier masturbatory episode where Theotormon 'sits wearing the threshold hard / With secret tears' (198 2.6-7).[171] Oothoon curses the 'Father of Jealousy' for teaching Theotormon 'The self enjoyings of self denial' until 'beauty fades from off my shoulders darken'd and cast out, / A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity' (205 6.9-15).[172] Indeed, Oothoon's assessment is apt for Urizen's attempt to obscure 'His prolific delight […] more & more / In dark secresy hiding in

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[171] Ovid describes the palace of Hypnos/Somnus as a place where '[t]he silence is undisturbed' (*Met*. 451 xi.598) and as a 'dwelling of noiseless repose' (452 602).

[172] The imagery is reminiscent of 'Night the First' of *The Four Zoas* where Enion complains that Tharmas 'art [now] Terrible and yet I love thee in thy terror till / I am almost Extinct & soon shall be a shadow in Oblivion' (*FZ* 275 i.4.23-4). In 'Night the Third,' after Enion fails to return to Tharmas he proclaims 'Rage Rage shall never from my bosom. winds & waters of woe / Consuming all to the end' (*FZ* 330 iii.46.4-5). Cf. *The French Revolution* (171 156-7) and *Europe* (226 1.8-11). Jealous love is self-destructive and all-consuming, yet strangely and morbidly alluring.

surgeing / Sulphureous fluid his phantasies' (*BU* 248 10.12-4) parallels Theotormon's masturbation.[173]

Moreover, Theotormon experiences these night-time visions of depraved sexual fantasies – these 'self enjoyings of self denial' – like the dissatisfied dreamer in *America*:

> As when a dream of Thiralatha flies the midnight hour:
> In vain the dreamer grasps the joyful images, they fly
> Seen in obscured traces in the Vale of Leutha...
>
> (*A* 224 f.1-3).

Thiralatha is the erotic dream and the Emanation of Sotha. Whilst Oothoon would 'give up womans secrecy' (235 14.22), 'Sotha & Thiraltha [are the] secret dwellers of dreamful caves' (26) like the cave on the frontispiece/tailpiece to *Visions* which Oothoon describes as 'a sickly charnel house' (*VDA* 199 2.36) – and which is highly suggestive of the Ovidian cave of Hypnos/Somnus through which the river Lethe flows and where phantasmagorical shapes rise in 'vapour and murky fog [which] are exhaled from the lungs of the earth in a strange, mysterious twilight' (*Met*. 451 xi.595-6). This pestilential imagery similarly permeates *The Book of Ahania* (1795) where 'Urizens slumbers of abstraction' are intoxicated by 'Effluvia [which] vapor'd above / In noxious clouds' and 'clouds of disease' in which appear 'Disease on disease, shape on shape, / Winged screaming in blood & torment' (*BA* 263 4.11-26).

Finally, Theotormon's rejection of Oothoon on the grounds that she has been defiled – in part an appropriation of Bromion's articulation of Oothoon as 'Bromions harlot' (*VDA* 197 2.1) – becomes a form of perverse enjoyment and a self-inflicted fetish as he continues to weep and cry and sigh and exude bodily fluids in 'self-love' (206 7.21): the 'secret stings which spur them [lovers] to hurt even the very thing, be it what it may, whence arise those germs of madness' (*DRN* 179 iv.1081-3).[174] It could be possible that Blake is working with

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[173] As Wes Chapman notes, the 'sado-masochistic form of masturbation […] feeds off suffering, both the "self denial" of the masturbator and the more genuine sufferings of those it condemns' (1997, 9).

[174] The impossible nature of Theotormon's desire can be likened to the thirsty man in *DRN* who is unable to quench his thirst despite trying to drink an entire river (iv.1024-6; 1096-1105). Pamela Gordon adds that during Lucretius' exposition on love, 'in addition to copious semen (*seminis ingentis fluctus*, 1036), there is an abundance of saliva (1108), sweat that ruins fine clothes (1128), and metaphoric blood (1050-51). Saturation with this sort of sex leads to loss of strength and the destruction of reputation, wealth, and happiness' (2002, 93).

the notion of *simulacra* as sperm-like excretions (iv.1036-57) which helped to bridge Lucretius' discussion of dreams, erotic dreams, and the nature of love and desire (iv.1024-35). There is, for example, a noticeable and eerie materialisation of Theotormon's initial masturbation (2.6-7) and its reductive conclusion as 'Theotormon sits / Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire' (207 8.11-2).[175] Accordingly, Theotormon's 'tears'/sperm become the 'shadows'/spectres/*simulacra* with which he converses in a fetishized dream. This parallels the corresponding passages from *De Rerum Natura* where '[t]he loving relationship is reduced to a mere physiological process' (Müller 2007, 247). As Robert Brown notes, '[s]exual desire is thus reduced to a conspiracy of sight and semen' (1987, 63).

In its most striking parallel, Theotormon wears 'the threshold hard / With secret tears' like 'the tearful lover' in *De Rerum Natura* who, 'denied entry, often smothers the threshold with flowers and garlands, and anoints the haughty door-posts with marjoram, and plants his kisses, poor wretch, upon the doors' (182-3 iv.1177-9).[176] When the lover discovers that the object of his desire is not the perfect representation of the *phantasia* he has manipulated in his own head, he then excludes himself from her sight and becomes an '*exclusus amator*' who is offended by even the slightest suggestion of imperfection: 'yet if, admitted at last, one single breath should meet him as he comes, he would seek some pretext to be gone' (183 1179-81).[177] In a similar way that Theotormon rejects Oothoon after her rape by Bromion, Lucretius' lover is disgusted by '*aura una modo*' as if the physicality of the female form is incompatible with an ideal image of femininity.

Thus, in *De Rerum Natura*, the concept of love is 'only sustained by his self-delusion and the woman's careful stage-management […] acting out his fantasy of her' which 'turns men into adoring slaves and women into cynical manipulators' (Brown 1987, 80). Blake takes this moral pretext and projects it through Bromion and Theotormon (whilst simultaneously

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[175] '…male sexual response is directly triggered by the airborne *simulacra* of attractive boys and women (4.1052-56). It is the image that stimulates the production of semen, causes erections, and sustains a man's interest in a particular love object' (Gordon 2002, 92).

[176] Additionally, Lucretius' insistence that 'those whom mutual pleasure has bound, are often tortured in their common chains?' (183 iv.1199-1202) is pictorially represented by Oothoon and Bromion on the frontispiece/tailpiece of *Visions* where they are 'Bound back to back in Bromions caves' (*VDA* 197 2.5).

[177] 'The scene of the *exclusus amator* crystallizes Lucretius' sense of the gap between the realities of sex and the mannered, and basically shallow, obsession with external form that constitutes passionate love' (Brown 1987, 80).

undermining the notion of the Female Will through Oothoon). Oothoon's call for Theotormon's Eagle to rend her flesh in a Promethean act of defiance and self-annihilation purifies her body from the stain of Bromion's rape and Theotormon's jealousy 'As the clear spring mudded with feet of beasts grows pure' (*VDA* 198 2.19). Then, somewhat ironically, Oothoon asks Theotormon 'How can I be defild when I reflect thy image pure?' (200 3.16). One could answer that Theotormon's image is *not* pure, thus his reflection is equally impure. Additionally, even if Oothoon is meant to represent Theotormon's ideal female form then, as Lucretius informs us, this ideal image is unrealistic and unattainable and therefore an impossibility. Crucially, Oothoon's question is predicated upon the epistemological relay that the 'image' which Theotormon has formed of female purity has been projected onto Oothoon which she, in turn, is meant to 'reflect'; however, this 'image' is not a healthy standard for women to follow, and thus by reflecting the 'image' Oothoon can sardonically, and perhaps even mockingly, ask 'How can I be defild.' It follows that either Theotormon's understanding of femininity is contaminated or all womankind is impure. In response to such an ultimatum, Oothoon's self-awareness is indicative of her spiritual enlightenment:

> Sweetest the fruit that the worm feeds on. & the soul prey'd on by woe
> The new wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke & the bright swan
> By the red earth of our immortal river: I bathe my wings.
> And I am white and pure to hover round Theotormons breast.

> (200 3.17-20).

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, Lucretius maintains that erotic dreams stem from repressed notions of sexuality (*DRN* iv.1030-72) and the pursuit of the object of our desire only brings about dissatisfaction and frustration (1196-1202). Although Thel may not be a replication of Lucretius' lovelorn youth or experience the same jealousy as Theotormon, her ability to recognise fecundity in the Lilly (*BT* 79 2.5-7) and her anthropomorphising of the

worm as a child (82 4.3-6) – over which the Clod of Clay 'exhal'd / In milky fondness' (8-9) in a reiteration of the Lilly and the lamb – does suggests an awareness of sexuality.[178]

Obviously, this awareness is a form of negation: what Paul Younquist calls 'Thel's defensive maneuver' (1989, 90).[179] Thel is an onlooker (as evidenced by the title-page); not quite a voyeur, but certainly not a participant in sexual experiences. She is on the cusp of sexuality where her approach to 'the hollow pit' has been read as comparable to 'the virgin lip of her psycho-sexual awareness' (Norvig 1995, 257).[180] Indeed, the continued emphasis on Thel's sexuality, especially in feminist critiques, stresses its 'valid interpretative context for *The Book of Thel*' (Łuczyńska-Hołdys 2013, [no pagination]).

Whilst there has hitherto been no Epicurean or Lucretian reading of *The Book of Thel*, Thel's wish to 'fade away' can be considered as a drawn-out psycho-sexual process with specific physiological permutations – 'paleness' (*BT* 78 1.2), 'faint' (80 2.11), 'I pass away' (3.4), 'I fade away' (81 21; 83 5.12) – not unlike the wasting away of passion in *De Rerum Natura*:

> [r]emember too that they waste their strength and are worn away with effort, remember that their life is passed beneath another's sway. Meanwhile their substance slips away […] their duties grow slack, and their fair name totters and sickens…
>
> (180-1 iv.1120-4).

Thel has similarly abandoned her duties and her care of the 'sunny flocks' to 'The daughters of Mne Seraphim' (*BT* 78 1.1). Equally, in the same way that Lucretius prophesises that the lover's name shall disappear, Thel laments 'all shall say. without a use this shining woman liv'd' (81 3.22). Moreover, Lucretius' insistence that dreams provide the dreamer with images of the dead (*DRN* v.41-6; 62-4) is based on the same sensory illusion which causes the lover to see images of their absent loved one (iv.1060). The entirety of Thel's journey, but specifically her descent into 'the land of clouds' where 'She saw the couches of the

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[178] Cf. Jim Borck's *The Theme of Sexual Repression in William Blake's The Book of Thel* (1965).
[179] Robert Carr argues that Thel's 'rejection is also an act of Selfhood,' that her 'choice is ultimately a rejection of her sexuality,' and that her 'flight is thus not to innocence but Selfhood' (1987, 86-7).
[180] Robert Waxler comes to a similar conclusion: 'Thel has begun to explore her own sensuous body, and she desires to be of use. But she is frightened by what she finds in her confrontation with death' (1982, 46).

dead' (*BT* 83 6.3-6), can be read in terms of the epistemological slippage against which Lucretius warns the dreamer and the lover in *De Rerum Natura*.

Just before Thel hears the voice from the grave, the Clod of Clay informs her that 'I heard thy sighs, / And all thy moans flew o'er my roof. but I have call'd them down' (*BT* 83 5.14-5). If the Clod of Clay has been able to hear Thel's sighs and call them down into the earth, then the voice which speaks from the earth is a reproduction of Thel's original sighs. This means that when Thel 'stood in silence. listning to the voices of the ground' (6.8) she is listening to her own misgivings and reservations projected through a vegetative medium (perhaps her empty womb).[181] The 'voice of sorrow [which] breathed from the hollow pit' (8-10) can therefore only offer an argument which is related specifically to Thel's physical nature: 'the Ear' (84 11), 'Eye' (12; 15), 'Eyelids' (13), 'a Tongue' (16), 'an Ear' (17), and 'a Nostril' (18).[182]

Similarly, the erotic dream and the visualisation of a desirable object in *De Rerum Natura* is predicated upon the movement of *simulacra* (iv.1030-5) which pass into the body like 'delicate images' (180 1094) and which the delirious mind projects as *phantasia*: 'the mind makes itself ready, and hopes it will come to pass that it will see what follows upon several thing; therefore it comes to be' (170 804-6). When we come into contact with these 'images,' we are unable to reconciles our physicality to its ethereality (1107-9). Thel's glimpse of the State of Experience, of 'the secrets of the land unknown' (*BT* 83 6.2), equally terrifies her because she refuses to reconcile her sensual existence with sexual activity which, axiomatically, necessitates the operation of her senses, her physical nature, which the voice from her grave plot tells her to avoid. Desire is therefore doomed to be left unfulfilled. The ideal image of a loved one is also doomed to be destroyed (1152-91). Lucretius therefore tells us to shun Venus (1058-60; 1144-50). Thel, unable to look upon the land of Experience, follows this advice by spurning sexual contact as she 'Fled back unhinderd till she came into the vales of Har' (*BT* 84 6.22).

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[181] Accordingly, Thel's world is projected into and becomes an echo of her empty womb as Theotormon's world comparably becomes a visual and audible realisation of his spilt semen.

[182] Critics have noted that the voice Thel's hears is her own. Cf. Pagliaro (1987, 27); Linkin (1987, 72); McCollister (1996/7, 93).

Chapter 3

Urizenic *Phantasia*

…this abominable void

This soul-shudd'ring vacuum.

    The Book of Urizen ([1794]242 1.4-5).

Into vacuum: into non-entity.

Where nothing was!

    The Book of Los ([1795]268 3.37-8).

I. Introduction

In the Continental Prophecies and the larger Prophetic Books, Blake's primary concern is the correlation between the Fall and atomistic Creation. Each fall is an amplification and reiteration of Urizen's first fall from the Eternals; thus, the implementation of Urizenic reason is coterminous with Creation: 'Lo, a shadow of horror is risen / In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific' (*BU* 242 3.1-2).[183] As such, the narratives are often concerned with the inception and proliferation of postlapsarian frameworks which perpetuate the ideological structures

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[183] Northrop Frye was one of the first critics to note that 'the key to much of [Blake's] symbolism, is that the fall of man and the creation of the physical world were the same event' ([1947]1990, 41). See also Thomas J. J. Altizer ([1967]2000, 2), Jay Parini (1982, 79), and Alicia Ostriker (2004, 913).

(and strictures) of the Selfhood: 'Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by space in his ninefold darkness / Unseen, unknown!' (8-10). As Thomas J. J. Altizer observes in *The New Apocalypse: the Radical Christian vision of William Blake* (1967), '[i]f reason is a cosmic power, its very advent creates the cosmos that we know' (2000, 161). This chapter will argue that Blake maps the phenomenological basis of Lucretian atomism onto the epistemological parameters of Urizenic reason as Urizen creates what he sees and becomes bound to his unreality. This non-teleological materialism then acts as the basis of the Selfhood; for, once the Selfhood establishes itself as the lens through which the subject beholds the material world, the material world becomes regulated by Lucretian atomism. Urizen, therefore, and his sons and daughters who follow the same closed intellectual system, know no distinction between their own fallen states and fallen space. In fact, as I will demonstrate in Sections IV and V, mankind's postlapsarian existence is played out on a psycho-topographic landscape which is the product of the individual's reliance upon the Selfhood.

This Chapter will build on the philosophical premise of Chapter 2 where I argued that Thel is manipulated by the psychic distortions of the Selfhood. Thel's descent into the Clod of Clay's house at the denouement of the poem (*BT* 6.1-22) provides a counterpart to Urizen's exploration of his dens in *The Book of Urizen* (20.30-50; 21.1-10; 25.5-14) and *The Four Zoas* (v.65.9-12; vi.67-72). The phenomenological difference between *The Book of Thel* and *The Book of Urizen* is that Thel's psycho-topography is pastoral whilst Urizen's psycho-topography is cosmological. Thus, whilst *phantasia* manifest themselves as the Lilly, Cloud, worm, and Clod of Clay in *The Book of Thel*, the entire physical framework of the universe is a product of Urizenic *phantasia* generated by psychological tension and ontological disintegration. The Fall, therefore, and the atomistic model of fallen existence which is implemented is a psychological process represented as a material condition: materiality, in Blakean terms, is non-existence for it is a by-product of the Selfhood.

Section II will begin with a discussion of Lucretius' engagement with cosmological models. Specifically, Lucretius scrutinises Heraclitus for his belief that everything is created from fire, Empedocles for his belief in elemental creation, and Anaxagoras for his belief in homoeomeria (that everything contains within it seeds of itself). As a collective, Lucretius attacks them all for denying the existence of the void. This philosophical survey allows

Lucretius to set out his own theory in opposition to the contemporaries of Leucippus and Democritus – the originators of the atomistic school who preceded Epicurus by two centuries. The philosophical contextualisation of Lucretius' atomistic predecessors in Book One of *De Rerum Natura* will help to situate Blake's own adoption of an atomistic model in *The Book of Urizen*. In particular, I will go on to argue that Blake bases Urizen's separation from the Eternals and his creation of the physical universe on the phenomenological principles of the plasticity of the void and the fluxion of atoms.

In Section III, I will take this cosmological foundation and consider it alongside the epistemological parameters of Epicurean sense perception. Because atomistic materialism regulates both the natural laws of the physical universe as well as somatic functions, I will contend that Creation in *The Book of Urizen* is catalysed by Urizen's separation from the Eternals and his attempt to control the phenomenological vacuity of his postlapsarian existence. This vacuity, 'This soul-shudd'ring vacuum' (*BU* 242 3.5), is not distinct from Urizen: 'It is Urizen' (6). As such, materiality is a by-product of Urizen's subjection to the Selfhood as the atomistic bodies which begin to populate the void are 'Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (243 15). In Epicurean terms, the mental images (*phantasia*) which Urizen brings with him from his prelapsarian existence become the coordinates upon which postlapsarian existence is mapped. Significantly, because Urizenic *phantasia* are produced prior to the actualisation of material objects from which Epicurus derives the emission of *eidola*, materiality as it was conceived by Blake becomes a purely psychological phenomenon.

In Section IV, I will progress this argument further by discussing Urizen's cosmological designs in relation to the symbiotic and co-dependent relationship between psychological perturbation and the implementation of mechanical laws which regulate the atomistic universe.[184] In particular, I will concentrate on Urizen's ontogeny as a body 'Dark revolving in silent activity' in order to develop the fourfold etymological significance of Urizenic revolutions: the first, as a form of revolution in time or space; the second, to revolve or cogitate upon thoughts; the third, the theological and moral permutations of basing Natural Religion on the first two definitions; and fourth, the socio-political dimension of popular

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[184] Blake may be exploiting the Gnostic tradition where 'humanity's original experience of evil involved internal emotional distress' (Pagels 1989, 146).

uprisings.[185] This analysis will evidence how Blake associates the revolving nature of Urizen's thoughts with the revolution of celestial objects, developing a psycho-topographic framework which is based upon, and recycles, the original error of Urizen's fall.

I will conclude this chapter by detailing how, from the revolution of Urizen's thoughts, the *phantasia* which populate the material universe constitute both the psycho-topographic terrain upon which postlapsarian activity takes place (its phenomenological framework) as well as the (active, animated) participants of that activity against which Urizen 'strove in battles dire / In unseen conflictions with shapes' (*BU* 243 3.13-5). The first-beginnings of Creation in Chapter I of *The Book of Urizen* form the atomistic collisions of Chapter II as well as the anthropological origins of those 'living creations' (245 5.1) in Chapter III. As Urizen contends with his own psychic fragments (*phantasia*) which have become separate and now act erratically like Epicurean atoms, he wages war against his 'self-begotten armies' (16). I will preface the discussion in Section V with an examination of Hobbesian epistemology which, grounded in the Epicureanism of Pierre Gassendi, provided Blake with another source for the phenomenological non-entity of postlapsarian space. This philosophical association would have made its way to Blake through Thomas Creech's 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura* where it is noted that 'the admirers of Mr Hobbes may easily discern that his Politics are but Lucretius enlarged' and that his theory on the 'Natural Consequents of the Epicurean origin of Man; no new adventure' (b3verso).

II. Lucretian Cosmology

'There is then a void, mere space untouchable and empty,' writes Lucretius (*DRN* 38 i.334-5). The void is a primary phenomenological concept in Democritean and Epicurean atomism without which there would not exist the space into which bodies could move; and, without an empty space capable of accepting moving bodies, there would be no possibility of

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[185] Both Aileen Ward (1972, 204-27) and Michael Ferber (1985, 153) have similarly observed that revolution implies cycle. Nelson Hilton (1983, 253) notes that Blake specifically conflated its historical and celestial context, as revolution took on its astronomical meaning to exemplify 'not progressive change but rather the circular return to a previous position' (Hawes 1996, 11).

movement at all.[186] Thus, 'all things are not held close pressed on every side by the nature of body' (329-30) as bodies will 'give the example of yielding place' (339).[187] Lucretius continues by explaining that 'whatever shall exist, must needs be something in itself' (41 433-4). Bodies, as they are the only substance and therefore the only substance capable of acting upon other bodies, interact and thereby 'increase the count of body by a bulk great or maybe small […] and be added to its sum' (435-6). The void, in contradistinction, is the field of action where the meeting of bodies takes place: it allows collisions and conglomerations to go on but 'in itself' does not, and cannot, change. The void is forever empty space and must, for Lucretian atomism to operate, remain empty.[188]

Throughout much of Book One of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius takes aim at rival theories. He begins with Heraclitus who suggested 'that the void is mingled in things' (654-5). If the void, which is empty space, were mingled with bodies, which are made of matter – or, in the case of Heraclitus, composed of fire (48 635-44; 49-50 689-704) – then the void would no longer be empty but would become a body.[189] As a result, 'if void be removed from things, all things must condense and be made one body out of many' (48-9 660-1). There would be no possibility of movement because there would be no space through which bodies could pass: existence would remain static, there would be no heat or light, and everything would remain in its embryonic form.

Lucretius also criticises those philosophers who argue that a combination of the elements may act as the primal substance of first-beginnings, that 'linking air to fire or earth to water' allows for the growth of life and that all life therefore stems from 'fire, earth, wind, and rain' (50 713-15).[190] Although Lucretius celebrates Empedocles as a philosopher scarce 'born of human stock' (51 733-4), he is criticised for espousing several errors: the first, for failing to

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[186] Epicurus, in his letter to Herodotus, writes that the void exists '[o]therwise, if that which we call the vacuum, or space, or intangible nature, had not a real existence, there would be nothing on which the bodies could be contained, or across which they could move, as we see that they really do move' (*LP* 438).

[187] The Stoics, in contradistinction, believed 'that there is no such thing as a vacuum in the world, but that it is all closely united and compact; for that this condition is necessarily brought about by the concord and harmony which exist between the heavenly bodies and those of the earth' (*LP* 310).

[188] Epicurus, in his letter to Herodotus: 'the vacuum cannot be either passive or active; it is only the condition and the place of movement' (*LP* 449).

[189] Heraclitus believed that 'the universe is finite' (*LP* 378).

[190] Cf. *DRN* i.764-829. Lucretius does, however, believe in the 'unhallowed warfare' of 'the mighty members of the world [i.e. the four elements]' (198 v.379-82) which will rage until one element gains the upper hand (383-96). Lucretius reads the myth of Phaeton (396-410) and the Flood (199-200 410-5) as allegories.

account for the void but still supposing movement (743-6); the second, for failing to set a limit on the division of bodies (746-9); and thirdly, for believing that the elemental building blocks are soft and that 'the whole sum of things must then return to naught, and the store of things be born again, and grown strong out of nothing' (52 755-7).[191]

Heraclitus and Empedocles are both attacked for denying the permanently separate existence and vacant nature of the void, and Lucretius chastises 'the homoeomeria of Anaxagoras' (54 830-1) for similar reasons. Homoeomeria is the theory that everything contains within it smaller versions of itself: thus, Anaxagoras believed that larger bones are made up of smaller bones, and that flesh is made up of smaller pieces of flesh, and that blood is made up of smaller droplets of blood (836-8). Anaxagoras used this hypothesis as the basis for his cosmological speculations, arguing 'that the primary elements of everything were similarities of parts' and therefore congruent and compatible particles: 'for as we say that gold consists of a quantity of grains combined together, so too is the universe formed of a number of small bodies of similar parts' (*LP* 59-60).[192] It is this aetiological model which Lucretius attacks for imagining the Earth as a conglomeration of smaller earths (*DRN* 839-40) and for failing to set 'a limit to the cutting up of bodies' (842-4).[193]

Like Empedocles, Anaxagoras did not limit the division of first-beginnings; and, like Empedocles, Anaxagoras believed that those first-beginnings were soft. If first-beginnings are soft, then they are also susceptible to annihilation:

> [f]or which of them all will hold out beneath strong pressure, so as to escape
>
> death in the very jaws of destruction? fire or moisture or breeze? which of

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[191] Blake incorporates the elemental theory of Creation in *The Book of Urizen* through the births of Tiriel 'from a cloud,' Utha '[f]rom the waters,' Grodna from 'the deep earth,' and Fuzon who 'Flam'd out' (*BU* 225-6 23.9-21). In *Jerusalem*, the Zoas separate from Albion (the Universal Man) as he watches 'the Elements divide before his face… / And the four Zoa's who are the Four Eternal Senses of Man / Became Four Elements separating from the Limbs of Albion' (*J* 697 ii.32[36].27-32).

[192] Plato, who was born circa the year of Anaxagoras's death, suggests a similar theory in which he distinguishes between divisible entities (those entities which are made up of similar or dissimilar parts) and indivisible entities (which are whole). A house, for instance, is a divisible thing made from dissimilar parts (*LP* 150-1).

[193] Lucretius denies Anaxagoras' maxim that 'all things are in all things' by reasoning that food does not consist of bones (i.860-5), fire is not contained in logs (869-76), corn does not bleed (883-7), and that blades of grass and pools of water do not produce milk (887-90): 'since facts clearly show that none of these things come to pass, you may be sure that things are not so mingled in other things, but that seeds common to many things lie mingled and hidden in things in many ways' (56 891-6). Lucretius partially misunderstands homoeomeria insofar that Anaxagoras believed that things were composed of 'seeds.' Cf. Lucretius' 'seeds of things' (*DRN* i.57-61; i.500-3; ii.825-33; ii.1057-64).

these? blood or bones? Not one, I trow, when everything alike will be altogether

as mortal as the things we see clearly before our eyes vanquished by some

violence and passing away.

(55 851-7).

Lucretius does not allow that things will break down into nothing, nor does he allow that

things come into being *ex nihilo*, from nothing.[194] If, as Anaxagoras maintains, the first-

beginnings are soft and weak, it follows that they will be destroyed; however, if these first-

beginnings can be destroyed, then Lucretius maintains that they are not first-beginnings at

all.

Lucretius supports his argument through a morphological metaphor signifying the solidness

of first-beginnings and the vacuity of the void:

…it is of very great matter often with what others those same first-beginnings

are bound up, and in what position, and what movements they mutually give

and receive, and that the same a little changed with one another can create

beams or flames? Even as the words themselves have their letters but little

changed, when with sound distinct we signify beams or flames.

(57 909-15).

Whilst the original Latin is more to the point – for '*ligna*' (timber) and '*ignes*' (flames) share

more in common than their English equivalents – Lucretius argues that in the same way

letters come together to form words, and sentences require space to separate words,

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[194] Diogenes of Apollonia was the first philosopher to posit that nothing can be produced out of nothing and that nothing can be reduced to nothing (*LP* 400). Epicurus echoes this sentiment in his letter to Herodotus (438) as does Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (32 i.150-61). The sixteenth-century French poet Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, despite his self-professed hostility towards Epicurean atomism, adopts the same *nihil ex nihilo* principle in *The Divine Weeks and Works*: 'Since first the Lord of Nothing made This Frame, / Nought's made of nought; and nothing turns to nothing' (1611, 28). Cf. Harrison (1934, 16). For the mid-seventeenth-century poet John Hall, it is God who prevents the universe from returning into nothing: 'Who out of nothing this vast fabricke brought; / And still preserv'st it fall againe, / And be reduc'd into it's ancient nought, / But may its vigour primitive retaine' (1646, 94-5).

material constructs are built up of first-beginnings and have been allowed to form by the movement of those first-beginnings through the void.[195]

This morphological maxim was a common classical technique and 'repeated (almost ritually) by all atomists' (Hallyn 2000, 57). Aristotle, for example, in Chapter Four of the *Metaphysics*, observes how Leucippus and Democritus distinguish between atoms as 'entity' and void as 'nonentity' before explaining (in Democritean terms) that substances are composite three-part structures:

> for they affirm that entity differs merely in rhythm, and diathege, and trope; out
> of these the rhythm is figure, and the diathege order, and the trope position.
> For, indeed, the letter A differs from the letter N in figure, and AN from NA in
> order, and Z from N in position.
>
> (1896, 21).[196]

Lucretius, following in the Democritean tradition through Aristotle, articulates atomistic motion in terms of alphabetical order and syllabic positioning to also emphasise vacuity.[197] There can be no limit to the sum of things in an infinite universe, maintains Lucretius, because otherwise bodies would be bounded and the universe would be circumscribed.[198] If

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[195] Francis Bacon employed similar morphological metaphors in *Novum Organum* ('*New Method*,' 1620) with which he could decipher the alphabet of nature (1878, 199; 317-8). In *Cogitationes de Natura Rerum* ('*Thoughts on the Nature of Things*,' 1624), he added that '[s]urely as the words or terms of all languages, in an immense variety, are composed of a few simple letters, so all the actions and powers of things are formed by a few natures and original elements of simple motions' (1858, 426). Du Bartas similarly writes in *The Divine Weeks and Works* that that 'Which ioynes the Elements, from age to age' is like 'twice-twelue *Letters,* thus transpos'd, / This World of Words, is variously compos'd; / And of these Words, in divers order sowen, / This sacred *Uolume* that you read, is growen' (1611, 31). Alternatively, Erasmus Darwin in *The Temple of Nature* (published posthumously in 1803) stresses the imperfections of the alphabet and uses this as evidence against those proposing a universal language: 'in our present alphabets many letters are redundant, others are wanted; some simple articulate sounds have two letters to suggest them; and in other instances two articulate sounds are suggested by one letter' (1804, 123). Blake, who was personally and professionally acquainted with Darwin, would have found a ready-made rebuttal for Lucretius' metaphor.
[196] Aristotle may have borrowed the metaphor from Plato: 'divisible [things] are formed by some combination; as, for instance, syllables, and symphonies' (*LP* 150).
[197] It is perhaps unsurprising that Lucretius should rearticulate his theory in the language of previous atomists, since Epicurus – who is largely paraphrased in *DRN* – was tutored by Nausiphanes and Nausicydes, disciples of Democritus. Both Aristotle and Epicurus wrote books on Democritus. Cicero remarks in *De Natura Deorum* (45 BC), '[w]hat is there in the natural philosophy of Epicurus that does not come from Democritus?' (1896, 48).
[198] Additionally, if material bodies could be divided beyond their first-beginnings and brought to nought, existence would be entirely eradicated (*DRN* 905-12). Cf. Laërtius (439). Archelaus (c. fifth century BC) was the first natural philosopher to posit that the universe was boundless (63). Archelaus was the pupil of Anaxagoras and may have been the master of Socrates.

the sum of things were limited, then there would also be an endpoint to the creation and destruction of atoms.[199]

As Lucretius points out, to propose that the universe had an extreme point would be to simultaneously undermine the theoretical basis of that precept:

> nothing can have an extreme point, unless there be something beyond to bound it, so that there is seen to be a spot further than which the nature of our sense cannot follow it.

> (*DRN* 59 959-62).[200]

As a thought experiment, Lucretius asks his readers to consider whether by travelling to the ends of the universe and hurling a dart into the furthest distance, the dart would continue upon its flight or flounder:

> [f]or one or the other you must needs admit and choose. Yet both shut off your escape and constrain you to grant that the universe spreads out free from limit. For whether there is something to check it and bring it about that it arrives not whither it was sped, nor plants itself in the goal, or whether it fares forward, it set not forth from the end.

> (974-80).

Lucretius adds that if space were infinite and restrictions placed upon the universe then the sum of things would have conglomerated and, from the accumulated weight, sunk to the nethermost point of the universe. If there are sides which limit the universe, then there must also be a top and a bottom.[201] However, the opposite is true: 'whatever place every man takes up, he leaves the whole boundless just as much on every side' (966-8). If there

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[199] Epicurus posits an incalculable variety of forms which can be created from an infinite combination of atoms, since '[e]ach variety of forms contains an infinity of atoms' (*LP* 439).

[200] Lucretius is echoing Epicurus in his letter to Herodotus: 'The universe is infinite. For that which is finite has an extreme, and that which has an extreme is looked at in relation to something else. Consequently, that which has not an extreme, has no boundary: and if it has no boundary, it must be infinite, and not terminated by any limit. The universe then is infinite, both with reference to the quantity of bodies which it is made up, and to the magnitude of the vacuum' (*LP* 439).

[201] As Epicurus states in his letter to Herodotus, 'height and lowness must not be predicated of the infinite' (*LP* 446).

was a cosmic nadir, Lucretius argues that there would be no sky and no sunlight 'since in truth all matter would lie idle piled together by sinking down from limitless time' (60 994-6). By presupposing that there is an endpoint to existence it also necessitates the termination of movement and the immobilisation of matter. But Lucretius does not allow atoms to have a resting-place because '[a]ll things are for ever carried on in ceaseless movement from all sides' (999-1001).

Blake would have come across a similar theoretical precept in John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). In Book Two, Chapter 13 on the modes of space, Locke reasons that there must be a vacuum beyond the utmost bounds of body because '[i]f body be not supposed infinite […] I would ask, whether, if God placed a man at the extremity of corporeal beings, he could not stretch his hand beyond his body?' (1836, 105). In the same way that Lucretius argues that the void is infinite because there is no endpoint – no limit which would hinder the progress of a dart – Locke maintains that there is no cosmological circumference because there must always be space into which atoms can move; otherwise, if it were possible for space to suddenly appear (which would presuppose the possibility of creating void) then the man placed at the perimeter of the void 'would put his arm where there was before space without body; and if there he spread his fingers, there would still be space between them without body.' Thus, Locke echoes Lucretius by stating 'that where nothing hinders […] a body put in motion may move on' and that 'bare space in the way, is not sufficient to stop motion.' In a final rhetorical flourish which mirrors Lucretius' premise between 'one or the other' theoretical positions (*DRN* 59 i.973-4), Locke declares that 'these men must either own, that they think body infinite, though they are loth to speak it out; or else affirm, that space is not body.'

In 'Night the Sixth' of *The Four Zoas*, Blake evokes both the theoretical analogies from *De Rerum Natura* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* during Urizen's 'Endless' and 'infinite' journey through the void (*FZ* 364 vi.72.2). Twice Urizen occupies Locke's man standing at the edge of the abyss and, rather conspicuously, the verb choice in the first instance has a Lucretian inflection: 'darting into the Abyss of night his venturous limbs… / And thence throwing his venturous limbs into the Vast unknown' (10-4). When Urizen comes to where a vortex has ceased to work, Blake employs the phenomenological parameters of the void (*DRN* i.958-68) – which directly precedes the experiment of the

hurled dart – where Lucretius writes that 'whatever place every man takes up, he leaves the whole boundless just as much on every side' (59 i.966-8):

> Nor down nor up remain then if he turnd & lookd back
>
> From whence he cam twas upward all. & if he turnd and viewd
>
> The unpassd void upward was still his mighty wandring…

> (*FZ* 365 vi.72.17-9).

Struck by the futility of his journey, Urizen begs to step outside of the void in order to ascertain its limits. However, as both Lucretius and Locke state in their treatises, such a position is unattainable:

> But Urizen said Can I not leave this world of Cumbrous wheels
>
> Circle oer Circle nor on high attain a void
>
> Where self sustaining I may view all things beneath my feet
>
> Or sinking thro these Elemental wonders swift to fall
>
> I thought perhaps to find an End a world beneath of voidness
>
> Whence I might travel round the outside of this Dark confusion
>
> When I bend downward bending my head downward into the deep
>
> Tis upward all which way soever I my course begin…

> (22-9).

The void, therefore, is a permanent nothingness which must remain empty (to allow for atomistic movement) and limitless (to cancel the directional flight of weighted bodies) for Lucretian atomism to operate (both constructively in the creation of material bodies and destructively in the demolition of those material bodies back into their first-beginnings):

> the empty void cannot on any side, at any time, support anything, but rather, as
>
> its own nature desires, it continues to give place; wherefore all things must
>
> needs be borne on through the calm void, moving at equal rate with unequal
>
> weights.

> (*DRN* 73 ii.235-9).

Nothing is checked or restricted by the void because the void is an empty space which gives place to the chaotic movement of atoms and thus acts as a plane of activity.

As I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter, *The Book of Urizen* can be read as remodelling the phenomenological vacuity of the Lucretian void in terms of the psychological vacuity of the Selfhood (*BU* 2.4). Specifically, the endlessness of the Lucretian void becomes the spatial arena through which Urizen continually searches the darkness of his postlapsarian mind (3.8-12; 4. 10-1; 5.19-27; 20.46-50; 23.1-10). Urizen strives to find an endpoint, to find 'a solid without fluctuation' (244 4.11), and to impose his own will upon the universe (4.34-40). However, his inability to reverse the cosmological model which governs the physical universe is indicative of mankind's postlapsarian bondage to the original conditions of the Fall. Once the atomistic system has been set in motion and becomes the *modus operandi* of the physical universe, Urizen finds that he is no longer able to redraw its mechanical laws. In fact, Urizen's attempt to impose new scientific frameworks upon the universe simply aggravates the Fall.

Blake therefore maintains the Urizenic void as the psycho-topographical plane of corporeal existence, after which corporeal existence becomes bound somatically to the psycho-topographical plane of each individual Selfhood: 'Till the shrunken eyes clouded over / Discernd not the woven hipocrisy' (257 25.31-2).[202] When mankind refuses to engage spiritually with the world and succumbs to the epistemological framework of the Selfhood, then the world appears (and only *appears*) to lose its spirituality and to operate according to Lucretian atomistic materialism. The mechanics of space and time are the products of psychological deterioration, with Urizen acting as an early model of the universal man which Blake would later go on to revise as the sick Albion in *Jerusalem*.

III. Urizenic *Phantasia*

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[202] The subject, having succumbed to the Selfhood, can no longer perceive the world spiritually. As Thomas J. J. Altizer puts it, '[v]ision is only possible by means of a transfiguration of its matter, a loosening of the stones that bind fallen man to his divided state' (2000, 1).

Prior to the creation of the Earth there is an important theological distinction that must be addressed between Blakean Eternity and the Lucretian cosmos in order to differentiate the spirituality of Blakean existence from the materiality of Epicurean cosmogony. For Blake, the existence of Eternity precedes the presence of the void, the collision of atoms, and the subsequent creation of the Earth. There is a spiritual realm which is not determined by the mechanics of postlapsarian materiality. Thus, Urizen's ontogenesis at the start of Chapter I of *The Book of Urizen* is not, at first, subject to atomistic principles for he remains, however briefly, in Eternity (*BU* 3.1-2). It therefore also follows that Urizen's subsequent psychological and physical development sets in motion Lucretian Creation: it is Urizen's activity which produces the void and which brings about the movement of atoms (3.9-35).

Creation is, therefore, catalysed by Urizenic reason: 'Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by space in his ninefold darkness' (8-9). The correlation between Urizen's psychological degeneration and the schematisation of the universe is emphasised by the grammatical ambiguity as both space ('divided […] Space') and Urizen ('he divided') are divided. In fact, the two processes are not only simultaneous but identical: as Urizen's thoughts disintegrate into atomistic bodies, the physical universe takes shape from these thoughts. As such, I wish to frame the subsequent arguments in this chapter in terms of Epicurean sense perception and map this epistemological framework onto its Lucretian cosmology. I will maintain that material existence is a product of Urizen's psychological formulations (*phantasia*) from his troubled mental state (Selfhood).[203] In the same way that Thel moved through a psycho-topographic environment in *The Book of Thel*, Urizen catalyses a psycho-cosmographic environment in *The Book of Urizen* which becomes the blueprint of postlapsarian existence.

Crucially, because material existence is a product of Urizenic reason, materiality is fundamentally mental. In other words, the mechanical laws which regulate postlapsarian existence are only in place whilst the individual is under the control of the Selfhood. For Urizen and his sons and daughters who follow him, this means that the images which fill the void and which take on material appearances are, axiomatically, ethereal. As I will now

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[203] The Pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes believed that the universe 'was in all its parts intellect, and wisdom, and eternity' (*LP* 383). Stoic philosophers such as Chrysippus, Apollodorus, and Posidonius added that the world was a living, rational thing and that 'our own soul being as it were a fragment broken off from it' (311).

demonstrate, cosmological activity in *The Book of Urizen* can be read as the projection of Epicurean *phantasia* (mental images) onto the void.[204] It is in this sense that we should understand Blakean corporeality as 'non-entity,' with Oothoon cursing Urizen for rendering her in the eyes of Theotormon 'A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity' (*VDA* 205 7.15) and Ahania bemoaning Urizen's cruelty towards her as she 'weep[s] on the verge / Of Non-entity' (*BA* 264 4.53-4).

In a letter to Herodotus, Epicurus proposes that images in space (*eidola*) are produced 'simultaneous with the thought' (*prolepsis*) and are like 'surfaces without depth, and of an extreme thinness' (*LP* 440-1).[205] These atomistic silhouettes then pass from the material object through the air, and through the eyes, until they 'arrive at being seen and comprehended' (442). Preconceptions (*prolepses*) – by which Epicurus refers to a general idea derived from recollections (435) – allow individuals to distinguish between different *eidola* (438) and thereby 'furnish us with certainty' (436) as we process sensory data into mental images (*phantasia*).[206]

Whilst it remains reflexive, the mechanical nature of Epicurean sense perception ensures epistemological accuracy. However, when the subject overrules the objective reception of *eidola* (Lucretian *simulacra*) by maintaining the paramountcy of *prolepses*, then the internal world of the psyche is superimposed upon the external world of materiality (442). Equally, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, if the brain is unable to filter *eidola/simulacra* effectively we succumb to phantasmagorical illusions and waking fancies, such as when the sleeping mind allows *simulacra* to 'wander about in many ways […] so we see Centaurs and

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[204] 'Both the Stoics and the Epicureans developed empiricist theories of knowledge in which the word *phantasia* referred to the data of perception as they appear to us' (Sheppard 2015, 10).

[205] As I explained in Chapter 2, the subject must form preconceptions (*prolepses*) and 'determine with exactness the notion comprehended under each separate word' (438) for without this epistemological basis 'the judgment has no foundation' and we move 'from demonstration to demonstration *ad infinitum*; or else one gains nothing beyond mere words.' Thus, there are 'fundamental notions' in the brain which express objects unseen during cogitation.

[206] David Hume distinguished between '*Thoughts* or *Ideas*' and '*Impressions*,' the latter of which can be read as based on Epicurean *phantasia*, in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748): 'impressions […refer to] all our more lively perceptions when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from ideas, which are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of these sensations or movements above mentioned' (1902, 18).

the limbs of Scylla, and the dog-faces of Cerberus' (*DRN* 168 iv.725-34) or when the subject pines for an absent loved one and visualises them as if they were present (1060-72).

Thus, Epicurean sense perception is not infallible. Despite the fact that *phantasia* faithfully constitute the mental reprint of material objects, there are a number of factors which can impede the transmission and reception, such as the distance *eidola/simulacra* must travel and the obstacles (intervening objects) they must overcome. For example, 'having a (true) *phantasia* that "the oar looks bent" may guarantee that the oar-like *eidola* are bent, but it does not guarantee that the oar itself *is* in reality bent' (Kechagia 2011, 281). It is therefore possible for *phantasia* to be an exact representation of the *eidola/simulacra* without being an accurate representation of the object.

As Lucretius writes in Book Five of *De Rerum Natura*, 'what we see with the mind, and what we see with the eyes, they must needs be created in like manner' (168-9 750-1). If, therefore, the eyes fail to concentrate on material objects, then the mind is susceptible to a false impression (or representation) of *simulacra*. The eyes, for instance, when focusing on an object far away or exceedingly fine, must 'strain themselves and make themselves ready' (170 808). 'And yet even in things plain to see,' adds Lucretius, 'you might notice that, if you do not turn your mind to them, it is just as if the thing were sundered from you all the time, and very far away' (170-1 810-3). Distance and magnitude are phenomenologically distorted when the mind mismanages *simulacra*; this, in turn, establishes a false epistemological basis upon which individuals formulate 'wide opinions, and involve ourselves in the snare of self-deceit' (815-7).

Both the eyes when they are not focused and the mind when 'the memory lies at rest' (169 764-5) destabilise mental apprehension (*phantasia*). This is why 'Epicureans call opinion (δόξα) also supposition (ὑπόληψις)' (*LP* 436) because an opinion can be simultaneously true and false until it is either supported or contradicted by the testimony of our perceptions (*aistheseis*). We must therefore wait (*to prosmenon*) to have our *prolepses* verified by *eidola/simulacra*, which is why Epicureans 'introduced the expression of "waiting," as if, before pronouncing that a thing seen is a tower, we must wait till we come near.'[207]

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[207] Diogenes Laërtius may have borrowed this example from Lucretius (*DRN* iv.356-63). Elizabeth Asmis notes that '[t]he tower was a favourite example among the Epicureans' (2009, 96).

Epicurean sense perception becomes a conscious effort of the subject who actively cogitates upon 'the impressions […] receive[d]' and 'suspend[s] the judgment' as our *prolepsis* is either confirmed or rejected.

Thus, waiting for confirmation (*to prosmenon*) momentarily suspends the certainty of material reality as that which is non-evident is subject to examination:

> Epicurus held that opinions of this kind "become" true if there is "witnessing" (*epimarturēsis*) and false if there is "no witnessing" (*ouk epimarturēsis*). On the other hand, opinions about what is non-apparent "become" true if there is "no counterwitnessing" (*ouk antimarturēsis*) and false if there is "counterwitnessing" (*antimarturēsis*).

> (Asmis 2009, 96).

The epistemological problem for Urizen in *The Book of Urizen* is that his postlapsarian existence takes place in an 'abominable void' and a 'soul-shudd'ring vacuum' (*BU* 242 3.4-5). Thus, there are no opportunities for witnessing in any capacity: whilst there is no *epimarturēsis* to corroborate Urizen's notions, neither is there *ouk antimarturēsis* to contradict these notions. As such, Urizen's 'abstracted / Brooding' (6-7) remains both true and false even within an Epicurean context, as there is no evidence (*enargeia*) in the void to support (or contradict) material reality.

For Blake, there are no material objects in Eternity – which is purely spiritual – or the psychological vacuity of the Urizenic void prior to the Creation of the physical universe because Urizen is 'a shadow of horror […] risen / In Eternity!' (1-2). It is only when Urizen begins to divide and measure space (8-9) that 'changes appeard / In his desolate mountains' (10), but these changes appear *in* Urizen's mountains which are part of his psycho-topographic environment. Thus, these 'changes' are brought on 'By the black winds of perturbation' (12) because all activity in the void is psychological. This calls into question Urizen's ability to form postlapsarian *prolepses* because there is no aggregate of that which does not exist (no material objects to emit *eidola/simulacra*). Urizen's *phantasia* must, therefore, constitute those mental images which he brings with him from Eternity and, as he

remains 'Unknown, unprolific! / Self-closed, all-repelling' (2-3), the materialisation of these abstract *phantasia* are the epiphenomena of Urizenic memory.[208]

Thus, as Urizen falls further from the Eternals and becomes part of corporeal existence his memory distorts prelapsarian *phantasia* as he implements his mechanical laws:

> Here alone I in books formd of metals
>
> Have written the secrets of wisdom
>
> The secrets of dark contemplation
>
> By fightings and conflicts dire…
>
> Lo! I unfold my darkness: and on
>
> This rock, place with strong hand the Book
>
> Of eternal brass, written in my solitude.
>
> (*BU* 244 4.24-33).[209]

Materiality is therefore not only linked to the memory but phenomenologically a shadow of spirituality. The substance which underpins material existence in Blake's cosmos is therefore less real than that of Eternity:

> And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause, and Not
>
> A Natural: for a Natural Cause only seems, it is a Delusion
>
> Of Ulro: & a ratio of the perishing Vegetable Memory.
>
> (*M* 570 i.26.44-6).[210]

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[208] In *Paradise Lost*, the remembrance of heaven forms part of the torture in hell (ii.604-14), with the evocation of Tantalus' thirst repeated in Book Seven (vii.59-69). It is also Satan's 'bitter memory' which catalyses his 'revolving' thoughts (85 iv.24-31), prefiguring Urizen's activity in Chapter I of *The Book of Urizen*.

[209] In *The Four Zoas*, the void continues to be populated with Urizen's perturbed cogitations: 'Urizen saw [Los and Enitharmon] & envied & his imagination was filled / Repining he contemplated the past in his bright sphere / Terrified with his heart & spirit at the visions of futurity / That his dread fancy formd before him in the unformd void' (*FZ* 315 ii.34.5-8). Blake is likely exploiting the etymological play between phantasms and *phantasia*. As the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus stipulated, *phantasia* are presentations of objects whilst '[t]he "phantastic" is a groundless attraction, an experience in the soul which occurs as the result of no presented object, as in the case of people who fight with shadows and punch at thin air' (Inwood and Gerson 1997, 129)

[210] The Mundane Shell is similarly an encrustation over the outside surface of the Earth: 'An outside shadowy Surface superadded to the real Surface; / Which is unchangeable for ever & ever Amen: so be it!' (*J* 815 iv.83.47-8).

If 'The Memory is a State always, & the Reason is a State' (586 ii.32.34) then the physical universe is a by-product of Urizen's psychological disintegration as he separates from the Imagination and becomes subject to the Selfhood. In *Jerusalem*, Albion similarly 'Turn[ed] his back to the Divine Vision, his Spectrous / Chaos before his face appeard: an Unformed Memory' (*J* 690 ii.29[33].1-2).[211] Macrocosmically, corporeal existence becomes the 'fortuitous concourse of memorys accumulated & lost' (8), whilst microcosmically the subject becomes 'a Ratio / Of the Things of Memory' (*J* 793 iii.74.11-2).[212]

The schematisation of Urizen's psycho-cosmography according to Natural Causes represents the ethereal effluvium of 'the perishing Vegetable Memory' which are only 'Created to be Annihilated & a new Ratio Created / Whatever can be Created can be Annihilated' (35-6). In this sense, Blake's understanding of atomistic materialism overlaps with the Epicurean school, such as Lucretius' preparatory address to Memmius in Book One of *DRN*: 'I will reveal the first-beginnings of things, from which nature creates all things, and increases and fosters them, and into which nature too dissolves them again at their perishing' (28 i.55-8). Throughout Book One, Lucretius explains how first-beginnings conglomerate into embryonic structures and then deteriorate: particularly at lines 539-50 and 789-803 the periodical nature of existence comes to the fore as part of the natural teleology of atomistic materialism.[213] As Lucretius concludes, '[t]herefore, again and again, it must be that many things rise up, yea, and in order that even the blows too many not fail' (62 i.1048-50).

There is therefore 'an infinite store of matter' else the world 'pass away through the deep void' (63-4 i.1101-9). This principle equally informs the sensations of the body, for at 'any time however small the several idols are there ready at hand in all the several spots. So great is the speed, so great the store of things' (170 iv.797-800).[214] Lucretius frames the movement and swerve of atoms in terms of human freewill and the motion of living beings (ii.251-64) as somatic action becomes a microcosmic analogy of Creation:

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[211] In Chapter 3, 'Albion fell down a Rocky fragment: Eternity hurld / By his own Spectre, who is the Reasoning Power in every Man / Into his own Chaos which is the Memory between Man & Man' (*J* 741 iii.54.6-8).

[212] In the same way the subject as a ratio of memory 'frames Laws & Moralities' (*J* 793 iii.74.12), Urizenic creation settles 'Laws of peace, of love, of unity: / Of pity, compassion, forgiveness' (*BU* 245 4.34-5).

[213] The Pre-Socratic philosopher Zeno as well as the Stoic philosophers Chrysippus and Posidonius maintained that God provided the substance and structure of the universal world and that He also sometimes produced the things upon the Earth: 'nature is a habit which derives its movements from itself, perfecting and holding together all that arises out of it, according to the principles of production, in certain definite periods' (*LP* 313).

[214] Cf. *DRN* iv.770-800.

[f]or the whole store of matter throughout the whole body must be roused to movement, that then aroused through every limb it may strain and follow the eager longing of the mind…

(74 ii.267-71).

Blake is working with such Lucretian passages at the beginning of *The Book of Urizen* as well as throughout the Prophetic Books as man 'stores his thoughts / As in a store house in his memory he regulates the forms / Of all beneath & all above' (*FZ* 433 viii.110[1].12-4).[215] As I will now demonstrate in the rest of this chapter, Blake specifically draws on this scientific basis in order to conflate material Creation with the psychological turmoil of Urizen's thoughts and, therefore, to imply that material creation is a phantasmagorical illusion of Urizen's perverted *phantasia*.

In the following section I will establish an etymological link between Urizen's 'Dark revolving in silent activity' (*BU* 243 3.18) and the revolution of satellites, societies, and thoughts. Each definition will help to frame Urizen's 'Dark revolving' as a process of anarchistic psycho-cosmographical activity. This will then inform Section V which will expatiate on Urizen's 'unseen conflictions with shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (14-5) and detail the way in which Urizen's cosmological wars act as the template for mankind's sanguinary tendencies upon Earth.

IV. 'Dark revolving in silent activity'

Urizen acts as the causal link between the pre-existent Blakean Eternity and the advent of Lucretian Creation, but there remains a conceptual in-between, a cosmographical crossroads, which must be mapped out in order to connect these two systems. What takes

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[215] In *The Divine Weeks and Works* (trans. 1592-1608), Du Bartas' architect God constructs the universe from his own being: 'this Store-house of his Wonders' (1611, 32-3; 442-3). In the Lucretian-inspired *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), Richard Payne Knight writes about how all impressions tend towards the centre of the human frame: 'the complex storehouse of the brain' (5 69).

place in the no-man's-land of a post-spiritual, pre-atomistic world?[216] What laws, what principles, regulate this abstract space? '[W]hat Demon,' asks Blake, 'Hath form'd this abominable void / This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?' (242 3.3-5).[217] This ambiguous stage represents the juncture at which Urizen undergoes the despiritualising process which severs him from Eternity and where he first becomes trapped in the mechanical principles of postlapsarian existence.

At this point in the Fall, Urizen is 'unprolific' and 'all-repelling' (242 3.2-3). He does not interact with the Eternals from whom he has recently separated, nor does he encounter anything (for there is nothing and no one) in the space which he now occupies: he is alone, 'abstracted / Brooding secret' (6-7), a sentient being floundering in the darkness of his ontological indeterminacy. He is apart from Eternity, post-spiritual, but he has yet to instigate or become subject to the physical universe, and is therefore pre-atomistic. If Urizen remains in this state, an isolated body which refuses to collide or to conjoin with other bodies, then according to Lucretius schema creation will not take place (*DRN* ii.132-7).[218] Blake is seemingly aware of this for he does not allow Urizen to remain inactive: he becomes cognisant, he begins to exert himself, 'Dark revolving in silent activity' (*BU* 243 18).[219]

The arena in which this 'silent activity' takes places, however, remains the 'unprolific,' 'all-repelling' void of Urizen's psyche.[220] The activating agent of Urizen's cognizance is his own

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[216] Linus of Thebes (c. 15th century BC) wrote that there was a moment in time when everything suddenly came into being. The Pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras may have derived his own cosmological model from Linus, with the addition 'that […] intellect had come and arranged them all in order' (*LP* 6-7; cf. 59). Plato similarly argued that matter 'was moving about at random, [until] it was brought by God into one settled place, as God thought order better than disorder' (138).

[217] Joanna Witke notes that natural philosophers 'have limited perception to appearances, absurdly abbreviated reality, and created a hollow world of abstract ideas: they have curved the earth inward by placing causes of existence in its interior, posited a generalised material substance, superimposed divinity on this substance, and directed the artist to abstract his forms from it' (1986, 180).

[218] 'Descartes made the first conclusive statement of inertial linearity: a particle at rest remains at rest without an impetus or push' (Bundy 2008, 242).

[219] Anaxagoras was the first to attribute mind to matter, to propose the concept of a Cosmic Mind (*Nous*), and 'taught that Mind was the principle of motion' (*LP* 60). Zeno, moreover, asserted that God was the substance of the universal world – a principle echoed by Chrysippus and Posidonius (313) – whilst Plato believed the two primary causes were God and matter (137-8). The eighteenth-century classical scholar Richard Payne Knight similarly asks '[w]hether primordial matter sprang to life / From the wild war of elemental strife; / In central chain, the mass inert confine / And sublimated matter into mind?— / Or, whether one great all-pervading soul / Moves in each part, and animates the whole' (1796 3, 1-6).

[220] 'Why art thou silent & invisible,' asks the speaker in the note-book poem 'To Nobodaddy,' 'Why darkness & obscurity / In all thy words & laws' (*K* 171 1-6).

abstraction (242 3.6-7) and thus he comes into collision with his own thoughts 'Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (243 15). The external, material world also remains empty: 'Earth was not' (36). Thus, it is rather bathetic that Urizen should reflect upon his 'activity' as part of his 'enormous labours' (22). [221] When the Eternals look upon Urizen's 'labours' they see 'vast forests' (243 3.23), but this is a staple image for those who attempt to peer through the psycho-topographical darkness of the Selfhood.[222] Nothing has been created, nothing has been achieved: the void remains a 'petrific abominable chaos' (26) with Urizen entirely preoccupied with the 'revolving' nature of his own thoughts.[223]

Etymologically, Blake is incorporating this psychological stasis. From the Latin *revolvere*, the early usage of 'revolution' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries indicated a revolving, cyclical motion in time or space (Williams 1983, 270).[224] In *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), which was an expansion of the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), Francis Bacon discusses 'astrological matters' in terms of 'greater revolutions' (1815, 87).[225] In the fragmentary piece 'Thema Cœli' (1612), Bacon similarly discusses the movement of the heavens 'in a diurnal motion' upon 'the axis of revolution' (1858, 551-2), the planets nearer to the earth in terms of their smaller 'revolutions' (553), as well as the stars as part of the '*long revolutions of ages*' (541).[226] The seventeenth-century physician Henry Power adopts the same language in his *Experimental Philosophy* (1664), describing the perpetual motion of the stars and planets as 'Magnetical Atoms' continuously stream through heavenly bodies

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[221] in *Aurora* (1604), William Alexander, the First Earl of Stirling, recalls 'Strange troupes of thoughts their musters make, / Which tosse my fancie like a ball… / And though alone, am hem'd about with bands: / I build great castles in the skies, / Whose tender turrets but of glasse' (1870, 58-9). Alexander returns to this theme in *The Tragedy of Crœsus* (1604): 'Since in my brest I beare about my hell, / And cannot scape the terrours of my soule. / Those fearfull monsters of confus'd aspects, / *Chimæra*, *Gorgon*, *Hydra*, *Pluto's* apes… / Not halfe so monstrous as my selfe I finde, / When on mine owne deformities I gaze, / Amid'st blacke depths of a polluted minde' (250). This prefigures Satan's condition in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (iv.73-80).

[222] Ahania, for instance, looks upon 'thy black forests and floods, / A horrible waste to my eyes!' (*BA* 264 4.58-9) whilst Oothoon similarly claims that Urizenic reason fills the subject 'With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude' (*VDA* 202 5.19).

[223] In *Paradise Lost*, Satan tells the assembled devils that they are 'self-begot, self-raised / By our own quickening power, when fatal course / Had circled his full orb' (139-40 v.859-61).

[224] The late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century cartographer John Norden writes in *Vicissitudo Rerum* (1600) that the heavens, 'Keeping by turne, their *Reuolutions* sure: / Though still reuoluing yet alike endure. / As *Orbes* and *Circles* figures perfectest' (2). Norden posits God as the First Cause, hence why 'the *spheres* are moued and adrest, / To volue and reuolue by the higher hest… / Not of selfe *nature,* but so destinate' (72).

[225] Bacon also rejects the 'revolutions' of 'fictitious horoscopes' (94).

[226] Cf. *De Sapientia Veterum* ([1609, revised 1625]1860, 147), *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis* ([1612]1858, 511), and *Cogitationes de Natura Rerum* ([1624]1815, 435).

and perform 'circumrevolutions about their central Sun.'[227] During his discussion on magnets, Power adds that 'Magnetical Effluviums' are channelled through the stone and acquire their own motion, are then repulsed by the air, before they 'recoyl again, and return in a Vortical Motion, and so continue their revolution for ever' (157). The eighteenth-century naturalist Henry Baker in his *An Attempt Towards a Natural History of the Polype* (1743) quotes this passage during his own exposition on magnets (210).[228]

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) John Locke refers to 'the revolutions of days and nights' (1836, 111), the '*revolutions of the sun and moon*' (114), the passage of time as 'the annual revolution of the sun' and as 'periods of revolution' (117-20), whilst there is also a graphical collation of 'each planet's revolution about the sun' in *Elements of Natural Philosophy* ([1720]1758, 18).[229] David Hume similarly writes about 'the revolutions of the planets' (1902, 14) in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779) he similarly discusses 'the revolutions of the sun' (37), the way in which 'matter [may] be susceptible of many and great revolutions' (71), 'the eternal revolutions of unguided matter' (86), as well as the creation of planets through 'innumerable revolutions' (84).[230]

This cosmological diction, then, informs the psychological activity of Urizen's 'Dark revolving' thoughts and 'tormenting passions' (*BU* 243 3.18-9), but it is the semantic slippage between celestial revolutions and cognitive revolutions which underpins Blakean materiality. In Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605), for example, as part of his

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[227] See also p. 189-90.

[228] See also Thomas Browne's discussion of 'Magnetical […] effluxions' in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* ([1646]1904, 218-54). These treatises couch their expositions in the semantics of Lucretian atomism. See, for example, Book Six of *De Rerum Natura* (266 vi.921-4). The permeability of bodies in Power's *Experimental Philosophy* also draws on Lucretius' elucidation of the same phenomena in rocks (267 vi.942-4), the human body (944-8), metals (948-51), walls (951-3), and even the circumference of the world (953-6). See also David Hartley's *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* ([1749]1834, 565). Whilst neither Power nor Henry Baker refer to Lucretius, Power does quote the sixteenth-century naturalist Thomas Muffet's exposition on '*Atomis Epicurus*.' Moreover, whilst discussing microscopic lenses in relation to the magnetic effluvium from a loadstone, Power once again refers to '*Epicurus* [and] his Atoms' (1664, 155). What is particularly striking is that one of the two epigraphs on the title-page to *Experimental Philosophy* contains a quotation referencing Democritean atomism from Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620).

[229] James Axtell proposes that Locke's *Elements of Natural Philosophy* was indebted to Isaac Newton (1965, 235-45). For a full discussion of the authorship, authenticity, and date of *Elements*, see J. R. Milton (2012, 199-219).

[230] Blake focuses our attention on the philosophical similarities between Locke and Hume in the prose satire *An Island in the Moon* (1784-5) where Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is retitled 'An Easy of Huming Understanding' (*K* 52). As Nelson Hilton points out, '[t]he choice of Locke's *Essay* (and the invocation of Hume's *Treatise concerning Human Understanding*) here seems hardly fortuitous' (2006, 93).

exposition on 'that excellent Book of Job,' Bacon suggest that 'if it be revolved with diligence, it will be found pregnant and swelling with natural philosophy; as for example cosmography' (1840, 108). Then (amongst other sources) Bacon cites the Vulgate: 'Canst thou join together the sparkling stars of the Pleiades, / Or disturb the revolutions of Arcturus?' (109). Bacon slips from revolution as the process of reflection to revolution as a form of astronomical movement; in fact, the revolution of our thoughts has allowed us to understand the revolution of the stars.

The two processes become linked not only by association but also by the succession of ideas set out by Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: 'having got the idea of succession and duration, by reflecting on the train of our own ideas […] we can, in our thoughts […] apply them, so added, to durations past or to come' (1836, 118). In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), David Hume similarly writes about 'the constant revolution of our ideas' (1896, 10) and in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* contests that even in erratic discourses 'there had [still] secretly revolved in his mind a succession of thoughts' (1902, 23). In *Paradise Lost* (1667) John Milton twice employs revolutions in relation to Satan's cogitations: initially, as Satan nears Eden and his thoughts are 'much revolving' (2008, 85 iv.31), and then again when Satan's 'thoughts revolved' (209 ix.88) as he considers adopting the form of a snake. The other reference to revolutions in *Paradise Lost* is in relation to the way the moon borrows light from the sun and '[r]evolve[s] on heaven's great axle' (179 vii.381).

In his 1755 *Dictionary*, Samuel Johnson defined 'to revolve' as '[t]o roll in a circle; to perform a revolution,' '[t]o fall by a regular course of changing possessors: to devolve,' '[t]o roll any thing round,' and '[t]o consider: to meditate on' ([no pagination]). If Urizen's thoughts 'roll in a circle' whilst 'revolving in silent activity' (*BU* 243 3.18), then his thoughts are bound in a cyclical revolution: there is no kinetic or dynamic movement within the intellectual reductionism of Urizenic reason. Moreover, if his thoughts simply continue '[t]o roll […] around' the void of his own mind, then Urizen's ability 'to consider' and 'to meditate' is limited to the vacuity of his empirical existence.[231] Having lost his spiritual vision, 'the

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[231] Urizen's activity captures Lucretius' critique of Democritean atomism in *De Rerum Natura* (72 ii.220-4). Cyril Bailey comments that the introduction of the 'swerve' 'combats Democritus' belief in complete determinism' (1948, 287). Lucretius may have been influenced by Aristotle's modification of Democritean atomism (O'Keefe

Philosophic & Experimental' has been reduced to 'the ratio of all things, & [now] stand[s] still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again' (*TNR* 75) – with the use of 'round' meaning to circle the universe and to repeat motions within that universe, both a movement and a stagnation of that movement.[232] Linguistically, as well, there are signs of such mental sluggishness within *There Is No Natural Religion* (1788), as 'dull round' is repeated in section [a] as well as [b].[233]

Pictorially, Blake seems to be employing the same trick of conflating 'round' with the revolutions of circles/cycles. The frontispiece to *Europe* (1794), which was produced in the same year as *The Book of Urizen*, shows Urizen reaching into the darkness of the void. His left hand is outstretched, holding a golden compass with which he is attempting to measure the empty space before him – though he will later find 'himself compassed round' (*BA* 262 3.69; *FZ* 373 vii.78.9).[234] He is hunkered within a solar circle flamed in red and yellow. Blake may have intended for Urizen's 'revolving' activity in *The Book of Urizen* to find its visual expression in the way 'The Ancient of Days' was sequestered in the circle/cycle of his own thoughts. If so, it is likely that Blake also had in mind the further definitions of 'revolution': the '[c]ourse of any thing which returns to the point at which it began to move' and '[s]pace measured by some revolution.' Urizen's unproductive attempt to measure the void with his

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2005, 120). See also Evangelidis (2020, 12). This might explain the adoption of the morphological metaphor in Book One (i.908-15).

[232] In *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), Richard Payne Knight asks 'Whether, in fate's eternal fetters bound, / Mechanic nature goes her endless round' (3 9-10). Blake and Knight are likely drawing on the classical imagery of seasonal cyclicity, such as in Horace's Ode IV: 'Yet Time those daily Wastes repairs; / The Stars again restore the Spring, / Produce new Seasons, and new Years, / And move in an eternal Ring' (trans. James Arbuckle 1729, 299).

[233] In *The Book of Thel*, the Clod of Clay asks Thel 'Wilt thou O Queen enter my house. 'tis given thee to enter, / And to return' (*BT* 83 5.16-7). The first-person singular is conflated with the second-person singular as the Clod of Clay both claims the earth as '*my* house' but also offers it to Thel for '*thee* to enter' (my italics). As Jonathan Shears notes, '[t]he fallen nature of Romantic language means it is unable to fully separate the subject from the object, and the one ends up reflecting the other' (2009, 90). This mirroring is further emphasised by the promise that Thel may 'return' which Samuel Johnson defined as both an 'Act of coming back to the same place' as well as a form of 'Retrogression.' Through the preposition 'back,' the final line of the poem stresses Thel's regressive tendency as she 'Fled back […] into the vales of Har' (84 6.22).

[234] The representation of Urizen holding a compass is repeated in 'Newton' (1795-c.1805). Blake may have derived this visual *topos* from James Barry's 'Elizium' (1783) where in the bottom left-hand corner sits René Descartes (in front of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton) holding a compass in each hand. Blake is also likely drawing on *Paradise Lost* where God creates the Earth from chaos (2008, 174-5 vii.224-31) and 'in his hand / He took the golden compasses… to circumscribe / This universe, and all created things' (224-7). This is explored in more detail below.

compass pictorially represents the psychological process where Urizen's 'enormous labours' achieves nothing by simply returning upon itself.

In 'Night the Sixth' of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen has set out on his 'Terrific voyage' through the void in a parallel of Satan's flight through Chaos in *Paradise Lost* (ii.629-1055). Failing to understand that the phenomenological vacuity through which he travels is psychological vacuity, Urizen attempts to chart a course across 'Hills & Vales of torment & despair' (*FZ* 363 vi.71[2].19).[235] In a desperate attempt to escape the 'Void pathless' (16),[236] Urizen throws 'Himself into the dismal void. falling he fell & fell / Whirling in unresistible revolutions down & down / In the horrid bottomless vacuity falling falling falling' (21-3). The repetition of 'falling' as well as the grammatical boomeranging from the present progressive to the past and back to the present progressive replicates the cyclical movement of the 'unresistible revolutions.' Indeed, Urizen would continue to fall *ad infinitum* were it not for 'The ever pitying one who seeth all things… / And in the dark vacuity created a bosom of clay' (14-5).[237]

Although Urizen receives that momentary respite from further psychological deterioration which is not permitted to Milton's Satan – 'And in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatening to devour me opens wides' (86-7 iv.76-7) – the infinite magnitude of the void becomes a prison into which the fallen mind continues to sink as it desperately struggles against the epistemological frameworks of the material universe. As David Quint observes, '[i]t is not the universe that is falling, then, Milton responds to Lucretius, but rather the hardened sinner, who, unable to repent, falls ever further away from his Creator' (2004, 861). The void subsequently transforms into an active, predatory agent by opening up further space into which the subject falls, 'threatening to devour me' like Death himself who '[Satan] his parent would full soon devour / For want of other prey' (53 ii.805-6).[238]

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[235] Milton's Satan has understood his ontological prison by Book IV: 'Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell' (86 iv.75).

[236] Du Bartas writes in *The Divine Weekes and Workes* that Heber '[t]hrough path-less paths his wandring steps doth bring' (1611, 373).

[237] Debates about the movement of particles raged during the Enlightenment. Whilst René Descartes argued that 'a particle in motion moves in a straight line at the same speed unless deflected by collision with another particle,' Galileo expounded a 'concept of inertia [which] was Earth-orientated, implying circularity' (Bundy 2008, 242). Blake appears to utilise both theories in *The Four Zoas*, moving from a Galilean cosmology towards a Cartesian form of inertial linearity.

[238] Blake also conflates the void and death in *Europe* (2.11).

Although the Lucretian void is an empty space which allows atomistic collisions to take place 'as its own nature desires, [and] continues to give place' (*DRN* 73 ii.236-7), its 'desires' and ability to 'give place' does suggest activity.[239] Milton exploits this appetency when, after describing the elemental battles between 'Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry' (56 ii.898), Chaos deliberately aggravates the primordial turmoil: 'He rules a moment; Chaos umpire sits, / And by decision more embroils the fray' (907-8).[240]

Even after Urizen is relieved from his fall, his strength returns and 'rising threw his flight / Onward tho falling thro the waste of night & ending in death' (*FZ* 363 vi.71[2].32-3).[241] Urizen becomes a Lucretian atom tumbling through the emptiness of the void; and, because he is alone in the ontological darkness of his fallen psyche, he continues to fall in 'sorrow & weary travel' (34).

The grammatical repetition of 'falling falling falling' (23) further replicates the 'unresistible revolutions' which similarly trap Los in Chapter II of *The Book of Los* (1795):

Falling, falling! Los fell & fell

Sunk precipitant heavy down down

Times on times, night on night, day on day

Truth has bounds. Error none: falling, falling:

Years on years, and ages on ages

---

[239] There is an echo of the void's 'desires' in Bacon's description of 'the appetite or instinct of primal matter' (1860, 122).

[240] Whilst Blake predominantly adheres to the phenomenological conditions of the Lucretian void – variously describing it as 'a fathomless void' (*BU* 246 6.5), 'the infinite void' (257 25.46), 'the unformd void' (*M* 547 i.18.44), 'the Aerial Void' (592 ii.35.52), 'unbounded space' (*J* 639 i.5.2), 'the Chaotic Void' (642 63), and 'a Void around unfathomable' (762 iii.63.19) – Blake occasionally follows in the Miltonic tradition by activating the void and, specifically, imbuing it with a destructive predilection. In *The Book of Urizen*, for example, after Los completes the construction of Urizen's body, 'The void shrunk the lymph into Nerves' (*BU* 251 13.56). The act of material creation is concomitant with psychological degeneration and physical ossification: a self-incubated 'globe of blood' forms 'upon the Void' (58-9) and eventually branches out into 'Fibres of blood, milk and tears' from which 'A female form' is brought forth (252 18.4-7). There are further examples of the void's sentience in *Jerusalem*: the 'orbed Void of doubt, despair, hunger, & thirst, & sorrow' (*J* 669 i.18.4) recalls the 'desires' of the Lucretian void and the 'appetite' of Baconian particles; Jerusalem is 'Driven on the Void in incoherent despair into Non Entity' (709 ii.38[43].68); and 'Luvahs World of Opakeness' becomes a 'void / Accumulating without end' (791 iii.73.22-4).

[241] Blake imbues the scene with the semantics of fertilisation (*FZ* 363 vi.71[2].25-31) which recalls *De Rerum Natura* (v.772-1010). In fact, once Urizen's 'powers [are] weakend [by] every revolution,' he again settles like 'a seed in the vast womb of darkness' until he is 'regenerated' (366 73.8-12). In 'Night the Fifth,' Blake had already linked revolutions to the births of the Earth where 'The wheels of turning darkness / Began in solemn revolutions. Earth convulsd with rending pangs' (*FZ* 345 v.58.7-8) until from Enitharmon's heart 'a terrible Child sprang forth' (346 17).

Still he fell thro' the void, still a void

Found for falling day & night without end.

For tho' day or night was not; their spaces

Were measurd by his incessant whirls

In the horrid vacuity bottomless.

(*BL* 269 4.27-36).

Once more Blake employs the grammatical oscillation between the present progressive and the past (repeated four times) to emphasise the cyclical descent of atomistic bodies. Equally, despite the fact that there is no navigational framework in the void – it is a 'horrid vacuity bottomless' – both Urizen and Los fall 'down down' as they sink further into ontological oblivion. If 'Truth has bounds. Error none,' then the void is an erroneous philosophical principle in which the fallen psyche flounders.

Blake's descriptions of cosmological machinations are consistently repetitive. In *Jerusalem*, when 'The Starry Wheels revolv'd heavily over the Furnaces; / Drawing Jerusalem in anguish of maternal love,' a pillar of smoke blows eastward which 'reaches afar outstretch'd among the Starry Wheels / Which revolve heavily in the mighty Void above the Furnaces' (*J* 641 i.5.46-53). The Starry Wheels draw in fallen existence and catalyse the mechanisation of the physical universe which, contiguously, also traps fallen existence within the revolutions of the Wheels. Thus, the Starry Wheels are both the beginning and the end of temporal space as the revolutions establish postlapsarian chronology.[242]

Once the Starry Wheels have been set in motion, Jerusalem and Vala are brought further away from the divine and begin to wander through the void:

And there Jerusalem wanders with Vala upon the mountains,

Attracted by the revolutions of those Wheels the Cloud of smoke

Immense, and Jerusalem & Vala weeping in the Cloud

Wander away into the Chaotic Void, lamenting with her Shadow

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[242] The industrial language reflects the ideological saturation in Blake's work of the growth of mercantilism in London during his childhood, epitomised by the commercial mill in Southwark known as Albion Mills. Blake takes the mill as 'an emblem both of the oppression of the Industrial Revolution and of the mechanical cosmos of Newton's followers' (Summerfield 1998, 45). I explore the Newtonian connotations in Chapter Four.

> Among the Daughters of Albion, among the Starry Wheels;
>
> Lamenting for her children, for the sons & daughters of Albion…

(642 i.5.60-5).

By packing the enjambed lines with verbs and prepositions, Blake condenses and overlaps the actions and thereby conflates multiple events as one continuous movement: with Jerusalem wandering '*with* Vala upon the mountains' (my italics) but also potentially separately whilst 'Vala [remains] upon the mountains' (641 i.5.48). In turn, from being 'Attracted by the revolutions of those Wheels' which produced the cloud of smoke, Jerusalem and Vala are then found 'weeping in the Cloud.' The movement from outside to inside is a continuation of the act of wandering as well as a form of attraction: the wandering becomes the attraction. Then, as they 'Wander away into the Chaotic Void,' the enjambment suggests that Jerusalem and Vala remain in the cloud but it is unclear whether or not Vala remains upon the mountains. Ultimately, the action returns once more to the Starry Wheels with Vala 'lamenting with her shadow […] among the Starry Wheels.' The way in which actions and objects form a compound scene in which characters and space converge into single processes would suggest that Blake wishes to stress the cyclicity of corporeal existence which is bound to the revolutions of mechanical laws.[243]

As I have demonstrated thus far in Section IV, Blake associates the 'Dark revolving' of Urizenic Creation at the beginning of *The Book of Urizen* with both the revolution of celestial objects as well as the revolution of cerebral activity. Blake was likely drawing on the semantic tradition from seventeenth and eighteenth-century scientific treatises, working with the scientific principles of Epicurean cosmogony, which also provided the atomistic blueprint of the physical universe throughout the Prophetic Books. For the remainder of this

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[243] Blakes employs a similar technique at the end of *Jerusalem* where Los and Enitharmon are conversing upon Mam-Tor whilst 'Albion cold lays on his Rock: storms & snows beat round him. / Beneath the Furnaces & the starry Wheels & the Immortal Tomb' (*J* 838 iv.94.1-2). Albion's limbs are wracked by 'wind' and 'storms' and 'thunders' and 'Around them the Starry Wheels of their Giant Sons / Revolve: & over them the Furnaces of Los & the Immortal Tomb around' (839 11-2). Then, when 'The Breath Divine Breathed over Albion / Beneath the Furnaces & starry Wheels and in the Immortal Tomb' (18-9), Brittania finally awakens and 'Her voice peirc'd Albions clay cold ear. he moved upon the Rock… Albion mov'd / Upon the Rock, he opend his eyelids in pain; in pain he mov'd' (840 95.1-3).

section, I will look at the way in which the first two etymologies (revolution in time or space and to revolve or cogitate upon thoughts) underpin eighteenth-century conceptions of Natural Religion, before moving on to evidence how Blake based Urizen's mathematical construction of postlapsarian structures on seventeenth-century theological and anthropological poems.

So, the cosmological error of *The Book of Urizen* and *The Four Zoas* is further replicated in the latter prophecies such as *Jerusalem*, where Blake continues to associate the movement of astronomical bodies with revolutions:

> the revolving Sun and Moon pass thro its porticoes
>
> Day & night, in sublime majesty & silence they revolve
>
> And shine glorious within…
>
>
> (*J* 750 iii.58.27-9).

Blake then uses this empirical template as the system which underpins Natural Religion; for, when Stonehenge is built by 'Mighty Urizen the Architect,' the 'unhewn Demonstrations' of the trilithons are erected so that 'The Heavens might revolve & Eternity be bound in their chain' (770 66.3-5).[244]

Vala, the Female Will of Mother Nature, also remains on the plain of Salisbury 'turning the iron Spindle of destruction / From heaven to earth' (10-1). 'Her Two Covering Cherubs afterwards named Voltaire & Rousseau' (12) guard the edifice like 'Two frowning Rocks' (13).[245] Blake continues to associate rocks with the stultifying effects of science in order to demonstrate how an empirical understanding of the universe ossifies the spiritual faculties.[246] Thus, the trilithons are described as 'chains / Of rocks' (2-3) and druidic Britain

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[244] Blake may have based Urizen's measurements on Jehovah's instructions to Moses during the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 25-7).

[245] Although Vala's Covering Cherubs exist before Voltaire and Rousseau, they are 'afterwards named Voltaire & Rousseau' because the same errors are repeated throughout time.

[246] Blake is also drawing on the designation of the Hebraic God as 'the Rock of Israel' (Sam.2 23.3). Moses refers to Jehovah as 'the Rock' (Deu. 32.4), David refers to Jehovah as 'the God of the rock of my salvation' (Sam.2 22.47), and in Psalm 18 and 31 'The Lord *is* my rock, and my fortress' and 'my rock and my fortress' (Psa. 18.2; 31.3). The Ten Commandments are also described as 'two tables of testimony, tables of stone' (Ex. 31.18). in *The Book of Ahania*, the rock which Urizen fires from his bow and which pierces the bosom of Fuzon falls to Earth and lands on 'Mount Sinai, in Arabia' (*BA* 262 3.45).

as 'a wondrous rocky World of cruel destiny' (6).[247] Thus, Stonehenge represents 'A building of eternal death' (9) because it is a physical representation of the way in which 'the Philosophic & Experimental' has become bound to 'the ratio of all things & stand[s] still unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again' (*TNR*[a] 75). Blake reincorporates this meaning when he identifies Voltaire and Rousseau as the 'Frozen Sons of the feminine Tabernacle of Bacon, Newton & Locke. / For Luvah is France: the Victim of the Spectres of Albion' (*J* 770 iii.66.14-5). As Blake elsewhere descries, 'God forbid that Truth should be Confined to Mathematical Demonstration!' (*K* 474).

Natural Religion, the belief in a natural god who is indistinguishable from materiality, is not only a direct consequence of an empirical understanding of the universe but it also apotheosises the mathematical principles which regulate postlapsarian existence, mirroring the cosmological activity of Urizen and the Bands of Heaven in 'Night the Second' of *The Four Zoas* who employ their 'golden compasses, the quadrant & the rule & balance' (*FZ* 303 ii.24.12) to erect furnaces and anvils to petrify 'all the Human Imagination into rock & sand' (25.6). Urizen is both one of 'the primeval Priests' (*BU* 242 2.1) who has replaced spirituality with 'religion' (2) as well as 'the Architect' who a 'wondrous scaffold reard all round the infinite' to bind life within mathematical bounds:

> Quadrangular the building rose the heavens squared by a line.
>
> Trigons & cubes divide the elements in finite bonds
>
> Multitudes without number work incessant: the hewn stone
>
> Is placd in beds of mortar mingled with the ashes of Vala…
>
>
> (*FZ* 309 ii.30.8-13).[248]

The Mundane Shell, the outer membrane (which mankind perceives as the sky) of the Mundane Egg (the postlapsarian world into which mankind hatches), is similarly described

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[247] On Plate 70 of *Jerusalem*, Blake depicts a large trilithon which dominates the centre of the plate. Through its arch, the sun is framed with three figures walking beneath it. The clouds trail from one side of the plate to the other like chains.

[248] Blake superimposes socio-sexual structures upon 'The wondrous scaffold,' thus verifying Oothoon's claim in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* that it is Urizenic reason which builds 'castles & high spires. where kings & priests may dwell / Till she who burns with youth. and knows no fixed lot; is bound… / To turn the wheel of false desire' (*VDA* 202-3 5.20-1; 27). If atomistic laws inform the theological tenets of Natural Religion, then the sexual framework within which Urizen binds the infinite is concomitant with the strictures of morality.

as a 'wondrous work,' 'a Golden World whose porches round the heavens / And pillard halls & rooms receivd the eternal wandering stars' (*FZ* 312 ii.32.7-9). The Mundane Shell frames celestial revolutions in their 'beauteous order' (313 33.3) and the 'Cubes of light & heat' (4) emanating from the stars. In the void, Urizen's sons and daughters are equally bound to follow the trigonometric coordinates according to which their postlapsarian existence has been circumscribed: 'Travelling in silent majesty along their orderd ways / In right lined paths outmeasurd by the proportions of number weight / And measure' (314 22-4). The mechanised systems then start to resemble 'fiery pyramid[s]. or Cube[s]. or unornamented pillar[s] square… / biquadrate[s]. Trapeziums Rhombs Rhomboids / Paralellograms. triple & quadruple. polygonic' (22-36). These shapes provide the coordinates which map the seasons (27-31) as well as the template upon which mankind formulates the mathematical dimensions of Stonehenge in *Jersualem*: 'In sevens & tens & fifties, hundred, thousands, numberd all / According to their various powers. Subordinate to Urizen' (314 19-20).

The mathematical schematisation of the universe recalls Thomas Browne's description of 'God [a]s like a skilful Geometrician' in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* ([1646]1904, 26).[249] Urizenic cosmogony, moreover, is evoked by the empirical methodologies of astronomers detailed in Kenelm Digby's *The Nature of Bodies* (1644):

> Astronomers when they enquire the motions of the Spheres and Planets: they take all the Phenomena or seuerall appearances of them to our eyes; and then attribute to them such orbes, courses, and periodes, as may square and fitt with euery one of them; and by supposing them, they can exactly calculate all that will euer after happen to them in theire motions.
>
> (16).

The theological and poetic background to Blake's implementation of a Urizenic psycho-cosmography can be read as being indebted to such seventeenth-century works as John

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[249] Browne adds that 'Art is the perfection of Nature: were the World now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a Chaos: Nature hath made one World, and Art another. In brief, all things are artificial; for Nature is the Art of God' (27). John Norden similarly writes in *Vicissitudo Rerum* (1600) that '*Geometrie* the mother of all Arts, / Was not at first found by a former Art: / *Nature* did first deliniate those parts, / That *Wits* and *Willes* might come vnto her mart, / And buy by practise (to adorne the heart) / The principles of Art, as *Archimedes* did, / *Archytas* too, and other, to some hid' (144). In *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes also refers to geometry as 'the Mother of all Naturall Science' (1909, 521).

Norden's *Vicissitudo Rerum* (1600, reissued as *A Storehouse of Varieties* in 1601),[250] Godfrey

Goodman's *The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature* (1616), Robert Burton's *The*

Anatomy of Melancholy (1621),[251] Kenelm Digby's *The Nature of Bodies* (1644), Thomas

Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646),[252] as well as Du Bartas' *Semaines* (translated into

English by Joshua Sylvester in 1605).[253] Indeed, such was the popularity of Du Bartas in

England that 'it can be taken for granted that a number of poets of the earlier seventeenth

century would [thereby] have made indirect contact with Lucretius' (Gillespie 2010, 248).[254]

Norden and Browne's description of God as an architect evokes the second day of the

second week of Creation where Du Bartas marvels at the 'Wonders of *Numbers* and

Geómetrie: / New Obseruations in *Astronomy*' (1611, 358) and how 'close by *Geometry* /

And *Numbring Art*, hath plaç't *Astronomie*' (365).[255] Celestial objects, like in Blake's

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[250] Norden's work was heavily influenced by Robert Ashley's translation of Louis LeRoy's *Of the Interchangeable Course of Variety of things in the Whole World* (1594). For a further discussion of this literary debt, see Koller (1938, 228-37).

[251] Burton wrote under the pseudonym 'Democritus Junior.' C. T. Harrison writes that '*The Anatomy of Melancholy* represents the high-water mark of Democritus's literary popular' (1934, 10).

[252] C. T. Harrison claims that 'many years before Epicurus came to be a figure of general interest, Browne was attracted to him, and did his name a service by clearing it of charges of atheism and bestiality' (1934, 12). Despite his defence of Epicureanism in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Browne nevertheless provides an Orthodox tale of Creation in *Religio Medici*: 'I cannot hear of Atoms in Divinity' (34).

[253] 'After Sylvester's Du Bartas and John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum* were published, it became a regular procedure for those poets who wrote long-winded works about the soul, the universe, or other such ambitious themes, to take some kind of fling at Epicureanism' (Harrison 1934, 17). Blake, too, was working within the same tradition which inspired such eighteenth-century works such as Richard Payne Knight's *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796) and Erasmus Darwin's *The Temple of Nature* (1803). Both Payne and Darwin draw on passages from *De Rerum Natura* (i.e. i.661-91, ii.314-73, and v.795-808). Cf. Priestman (2010, 292).

[254] For the widespread influence of Du Bartas, see Peter Augur's *Du Bartas' Legacy in England and Scotland* (2019). Whilst Du Bartas' debt to *De Rerum Natura* is largely poetic – he objects, for instance, against atomistic creation as well as Lucretian magnetism – 'his description of the warring elements clearly resembles that of Lucretius. Du Bartas, that is, paraphrases the *DRN* freely, and without acknowledgement' (Gillespie 2010, 247-8). C. T. Harrison notes that '[t]he first two books of Du Bartas's *Holy Days and Weeks* owe their general plan directly to Lucretius' (1934, 14). See also Ford (2010, 229-30). Moreover, the seventeenth-century English texts inspired by Du Bartas were written during 'the general advance of rationalism' and 'neoclassical consciousness' (Bush 1962, 286) and at the height of the Epicurean transmission into England. It is also pertinent, especially within a Romantic context, that John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) adopted 'the simple biblical story on a partly humanistic and rational basis' and therefore 'had behind him the whole tradition of Christian humanism' (397) amongst which Douglas Bush includes Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (as well as Henry More's *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, 1653). As Stuart Gillespie adds, 'Milton knew his Sylvester too, as well as his Lucretius, and *Paradise Lost* undoubtedly shows the effects' (2010, 248). Cf. Hardie (1995, 13-24); Hopkins (2010, 268-70). C. T. Harrison notes that 'Milton used Lucretius as a school text' (1934, 73).

[255] The characterisation of God as an architect is a staple throughout *The Divine Workes and Weekes*: 'great Architect of Wonders' (2), '[t]h' All's Architect' (16), 'Great Enginer, Almighty Architect' (67), 'the supream peer-les Architect' (156), and 'Heav'ns great Architect' (227).

postlapsarian cosmology, are organised by mathematical principles which God has mapped according to an empirical blueprint:

> it is *Geometrie*,
>
> The Crafts-mans guide, Mother of *Symmetrie*,
>
> The life of Instruments of rare effect,
>
> Law of that Law which did the World erect.
>
> Heer's nothing heere, but *Rules*, *Squires*, *Compasses*,
>
> *Waights*, *Measures*, *Plummets*, *Figures*, *Ballances*.
>
> Lo, where the Workman with a steddy hand
>
> Ingeniously a leuell *Line* hath drawn,
>
> War-like *Triangles*, building-fit *Quadrangles*,
>
> And hundred kindes of *Forms* of *Manie-Angles*
>
> *Straight*, *Broad*, and *Sharp*…
>
> (362).[256]

Because man has a similar capacity to form rules and compasses and weights with which he can measure the world, it is possible for 'the *Geometrician* [to] finde / Another World where' he can apply 'His wondrous Engines and rare Instruments, / Euen (like a little God)' and one day 'transport this World away' (364).[257] The use of 'rare instruments' by this 'little God' resonates as part of Blake's 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece where Urizen sits in a solar sphere attempting to measure out the empty space all around him.[258] Described by Blake as 'the Architect' (*FZ* ii.30.8; iv.48.28; 49.1; *J* iii.66.4),[259] Urizen implements his own

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[256] In *Theophilia* (1652) Edward Benlowes similarly describes God as 'Th' ARCHITECT of Wonders blesse,' adding that 'When callow *Nature,* pluckt from out her Nest / Of Causes, was awak'd from Rest, / Her shapeless Lump with fledg'd effects He trimly drest' (24). The apocalyptically-minded William Alexander, first Earl of Stirling, contended in *Aurora* (1604) that '[t]his world shal once againe renuerst resume her shape-less shape' (1870, 40). Amongst Du Bartas' imitators, Alexander came closest 'to writing a continuation of the *Semaines*' (Augur 2019, 133).

[257] Lucretius had similarly posited other worlds (*DRN* ii.1086-7).

[258] Du Bartas' description of 'That sallow-faç't, sad, stooping *Nymph,* whose ey / Still on the ground is fixed stedfastly, / Seeming to draw with point of siluer Wand / Som curious Circles in the sliding sand' (1611, 362) recalls numerous depictions of Urizen throughout Blake's works and is also reminiscent of the posture of Newton in the painting titled 'Newton' (1795-c.1805).

[259] In *Night Thoughts* (1742-5), Edward Young also refers to God as 'the glorious Architect' (262 ix.766) and as a 'Stupendous Architect!' (286 ix.1586).

atomistic principles from the 'Crafts-mans guide' as 'he divided, & measur'd / Space by space' (*BU* 242 3.8-9):

> He form'd a line & a plummet
>
> To divide the Abyss beneath.
>
> He form'd a dividing rule:
>
> He formed scales to weigh;
>
> He formed massy weights;
>
> He formed a brazed quadrant;
>
> He formed golden compasses
>
> And began to explore the Abyss…
>
> (255 20.33-40).

The anaphoric repetition of 'He formed' captures the repetitive, cyclical, stultifying effect of quantifying the material universe according to mathematical principles. What compounds Urizen's subjection to the Selfhood is that he now requires these scientific preconditions in order 'to explore the Abyss.' Indeed, most of Chapter III of *The Book of Urizen* is concerned with Urizen's conflicts with his psychic fragments as 'All the seven deadly sins of the soul // In living creations appear'd' (*BU* 245 4.49-5.1). The atomistic collisions which take place in the void of the Selfhood appear upon 'the dark desarts of Urizen,' amongst 'Urizen's self-begotten armies' (5.14-6).

As I will explain in greater detail in the final section of this chapter, Blake conflates Urizenic *phantasia* – mental images mapped onto his postlapsarian world – with Lucretian first-beginnings – the smallest atomistic building blocks. Consequently, Urizen's revolving, revolutionary cogitations provide the primordial force whereby atoms begin to collide with one another. Material Creation, therefore, is a consequence of Urizen's psychological turmoil. Additionally, the physical universe manifests itself upon Urizen's psycho-topography which means that the mechanical laws which regulate postlapsarian existence are bound within the epistemological framework of the Selfhood. But first, I will bring Section IV to a close by finishing with the final etymological derivation of 'revolution' as a

form of socio-political uprising and revolt and briefly link this to the Epicurean 'swerve' and Lucretius' understanding of freewill.

Cosmological revolutions derive from *revolvere* as a movement in time or space, but socio-political revolutions derive from *revolutare*, to roll or revolve. The coupling of political revolutions with fate or chance and the 'image of the Wheel of Fortune' upon which 'men revolved' emphasised its 'downward movement, the *fall*' as much as 'the *reversal* between up and down' (Williams 1983, 271). It is therefore no coincidence that Blake emphasises the downward trajectory of Urizen and Los' ontological fall by repeating 'down & down' (*FZ* 363 vi.71[2].22) and 'down down' (*BL* 269 4.28). Moreover, after Tharmas self-identifies as an atom at the beginning of 'Night the First' of *The Four Zoas*, he 'stretch[es] out his holy hand in the vast Deep sublime / Turnd round the circle of Destiny with tears & bitter sighs' (*FZ* 277 i.5.10-1). The Circle of Destiny is a perverse form of providence: it is 'the revolving world of matter with its system of cause and effect' (Damon 1988, 86).

After the Daughters of Beulah have completed the Circle of Destiny, they 'gave to it a Space / And namd the Space Ulro' (*FZ* 278 36-7). Ulro is the reductive space of materiality: it is 'deepest night' (*J* 716 ii.4217), 'Voidness' (801 iii.78.20) and from where 'the Dead […] descended from the War / Of Urizen' after Enitharmon weaves 'Vegeted bodies' for the Spectres' (*FZ* 410 viii.100[1].20-3). It is in Ulro 'where Tirzah & her sisters / Weave the black Woof of Death upon Entuthon Benython' (*M* 579 i.29.55-6). Blake consistently associates weaving with atomism such as in *The Book of Urizen* where 'the Eternals / A woof wove, and calld it Science' (*BU* 252 19.8-9). In *Milton* as well, Los refers to Satan as the 'Prince of the Starry Hosts… / Art thou not Newtons Pantocrator weaving the Woof of Locke' (*M* 518 i.4.9-11). This association is then maintained in *Jerusalem*: 'behold the Loom of Locke whose Woof rages dire / Washd by the Water-wheels of Newton' (*J* 662 i.15.15-6).

Atomistic creation is concomitant with the introduction of fate, with Blake likely working with the concept of the Epicurean swerve which Lucretius introduces in Book Two of *De Rerum Natura* (72 ii.218-21). The association is suggested by Lucretius himself: 'without doubt it is his own will which gives to each one a start for this movement, and from the will the motions pas flooding through the limbs' (*DRN* 74 262-4). Interestingly, although

Lucretius does not make an overt reference to revolution, his language does suggest such an impulse:

> …in the seeds too you must needs allow likewise that there is another cause of motion besides blows and weights, whence comes this power born in us… the very mind feels not some necessity within in doing all things, and is not constrained like a conquered thing to bear and suffer, this is brought about by the tiny swerve of the first-beginnings in no determined direction of place and at no determined time.

> (75 283-93).

Revolution is both a cyclical movement in space but also a form of socio-political revolution determined by freewill. For Blake, the errors sown during the creation of the physical universe are repeated throughout time and occasionally erupt into socio-political unrest as part of the Orc cycle: 'And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his fury' (*E* 236 15.2).[260] This is why in *Europe* 'The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire, / Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend' (228 4.15-6).[261] Orc is 'sur*round*ed' by fire which produces 'circles *round*' (my italics) him as he ascends from his 'deep den' (10) in a grammatical realisation of 'The Ancient of Day' frontispiece. Both Urizen who 'Glows like a meteor in the distant north' (228 3.12) and Orc who trails 'red stars of fire' are explicitly linked to the revolution of celestial objects, which further emphasises the periodical nature of the Orc cycle and Blake's waning belief in the efficacy of popular uprisings.[262]

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[260] If 'every revolution' has the potential to 'turn to counterrevolution' (Erdman 1977, 427) then '[t]he contraries of thesis and antithesis do not end. The progression to synthesis is not made by one revolution, in France or in the world' (Bronowski 1972, 181).

[261] Cf. *Milton* (578 i.29.29-31).

[262] 'In 1795 Blake etched [...] *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*. To read them is to understand why this year marked the end of Blake's most vigorous and productive period. His faith in the apocalyptic finality of the French Revolution had faded, and with it the sanguine vigour of his visionary naturalism. Orc appears in neither work' (Hirsch 1964, 82). Nelson Hilton similarly adds that 'after Robespierre and Napoleon had successively seized the Great Revolution, it was evident that [...] political revolution was just another turn of the wheel' (1983, 253).

This is exemplified by the Angels of Albion who lay buried beneath the ruins of the council hall 'In thoughts perturb'd' (*E* 230 10.1)[263] until they eventually rise and follow the banks of the river Thames to Verulam:

> Thought chang'd the infinite. to a serpent…
>
> Then was the serpent temple form'd, image of infinite
>
> Shut up in finite revolutions, and man became an Angel;
>
> Heaven a mighty circle turning; God a tyrant crown'd.
>
> (231 10.16-23).

Atomistic teleology is causational: the postlapsarian psyche mismanages its relationship with the divine and thereby perverts its understanding of the divine; this, in turn, brings about Natural Religion and corrupted iconography which mankind associates with the divine. Finally, the Church establishes moral law which tyrannises over the souls of mankind. The 'image of infinite / Shut up in finite revolutions' and 'Heaven a mighty circle turning' mirrors the cyclicity of errors transmitted across generations as 'God [becomes] a tyrant crown'd' when we accept the atomistic laws of the physical universe.

V. 'Urizens self-begotten armies'

Blake's exploitation of the etymological usage of 'revolution' along with his acute sensitivity to its late eighteenth-century socio-political incarnation 'contains a tragic irony: it is itself a part of the revolving of life and death in a circle of pain' (Frye 1990, 218). Indeed, when Los forms a body for Urizen and when Urizen begins to explore the world of men (of which he is the architect), he is sickened at the sight of his sons and daughters 'For he saw that life liv'd upon death' (*BU* 256 23.27).

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[263] In *The Book of Urizen*, Urizen's psychological confusion becomes projected onto his psycho-topography as 'the black winds of perturbation' (*BU* 242 3.13).

The revolutions of the cycle of Eternal Death can therefore be read as re-enacting on a human scale the ebb and flow, the construction and destruction, and the life and death of Lucretian first-beginnings:

> time changes the nature of the whole world, and one state after another must needs overtake all things, nor does anything abide like itself: all things change their abode, nature alters all things and constrains them to turn. For one thing rots away and grows faint and feeble with age, thereon another grows up and issues from its place of scorn.

> (*DRN* 213 827-3).

Having already established the philosophical pretext that Urizen re-enacts the movement of celestial objects as they revolve through the heavens and that the mechanical laws which govern fallen existence materialise upon a psycho-topographical plane of Urizenic activity, for the remainder of this section I will explore the way in which the physical universe first becomes filled with atomistic bodies. I will maintain that since fallen existence is a product of Urizen's cognitive revolutions (*phantasia*), and these cognitive revolutions are a teleological tautology, the atomistic system which is produced is similarly a recapitulation of that original 'silent activity' (*BU* 243 3.18) and thus a death-like image of eternal life.

Blake may have had Thomas Hobbes in mind when he developed his Urizenic universe. It would have been a common critical habit – perpetuated by Thomas Creech in his preface to the 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura* – for Blake to have read Hobbes as part of an Epicurean context. As C. T. Harrison explains, during the seventeenth century 'Hobbes and Epicurus are almost universally treated together' and it was 'not uncommon for a teaching of Hobbes to be ascribed to Epicurus, and vice versa' (1934, 24).[264] Indeed, commentators on Hobbes' work often designated it 'Epicurean' in order 'to draw parallels between his views and those of Lucretius, or those ascribed to Epicurus' (Evrigenis 2014, 180).[265] Hobbes

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[264] See also Robert Kargon's 'Thomas Hobbes and the Mechanical Philosophy,' *Atomism in England from Hariot to Newton* (1966, 54-62) and Patricia Springborg's 'Hobbes's materialism and Epicurean mechanism,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (2016, 814-35). Cf. Evrigenis (2016, 235). David van Dusen writes that Hobbes expounded 'neo-Epicurean' doctrines (2014, 64).

[265] Ioannis Evrigenis adds a note of caution that '[t]he characterization of Hobbes as an Epicurean was more often than not superficial' and that 'it was doubtless facilitated by Hobbes's association with Gassendi' (2014, 180). See also Herbert (1989, 27-8).

was likely acquainted with Lucretius from the 1630s (possibly even the 1620s), with Catherine Wilson going so far as to suggest that he 'embedded his main propositions' in 'Epicurean ontology' (2008, xlvi).

In Part I of *Leviathan* (1651) Hobbes does, indeed, begin his discussion on the imagination by integrating the French Epicurean-atomist Pierre Gassendi's exposition on mechanical motion.[266] As an example, Hobbes notes how waves continue to lap even after the wind has ceased, a phenomenon which he applies to the sense perceptions of man:

> so also it happeneth in that motion, which is made in the internall parts of a man, then, when he Sees, Dreams, &c. For after the object is removed, or the eye shut, wee still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it.
>
> (1909, 13).

From this sensory illusion, the Romans derived the term '*Imagination*, from the image made in seeing' and the Greeks derived the term '*Fancy*; which signifies *apparence*.' The mental images (*phantasiae*) produced by the impression of an object (*eidola/simulacra*) are therefore nothing more than '*decaying sense*' which troubles man when he is 'sleeping, as [well as] waking.'[267]

Hobbes then takes the example of how the light of the sun predominates over the light of the stars and how the voice of a man is lost in the noise of the day in order to demonstrate that 'the Imagination of the past is obscured, and made weak… So that distance of time, and of place, hath one and the same effect in us' (14). Thus, in the same way that objects which are far away appear indistinct,[268] 'our imagination of the Past is weak.' 'This *decaying sense*,' declares Hobbes, 'wee call *Imagination*… But when we would express the *decay*, and signifie

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[266] For Hobbes' association with Gassendi, see Sarasohn (1985, 363-79), Sorell (1993, 235-72), and Schuhmann (1995, 162-9). In Chapter III, Hobbes adds that '[a]ll Fancies are Motions within us, reliques of those made in the Sense' (19).

[267] Ralph Cudworth in in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) similarly observed that the ancient atomists conceived of the imagination as 'the *Reliques* and *Remainders* of those *Motions* of *Sense* formerly Made, and Conserved afterwards in the Brain (like the *Tremulous Vibrations* of a Clock or Bell…)' (851).

[268] Cf. *DRN* iv.356-63.

that the Sense is fading, old, and past, it is called *Memory*.' For Hobbes, therefore, the '*Imagination* and *Memory*, are but one thing.'

Hobbes continues by drawing on the same perceptual fallacy (14) to which Lucretius referred in *De Rerum Natura* where the centaur is a compound image of a man and a horse unfiltered by the reason (iv.725-34). Hobbes adds that man has the same capacity to compound images within himself, so as to make himself believe that he is a Hercules or an Alexander. The compounded imagination is therefore 'a Fiction of the mind' but this 'Fiction' has the potential to assume the dimensions and proportions of reality; for example, 'from being long and vehemently attent upon Geometricall Figures, a man shall in the dark, (though awake) have the Images of Lines, and Angles before his eyes' (15). As I have demonstrated in Section IV, Urizen's conception of the Mundane Shell is based upon the schematisation of *phantasia* as the phenomenological basis of the material world: 'Urizen comforted saw / The wondrous work flow forth like visible out of the invisible' (*FZ* 313 ii.33.9-10). What's more, Blake incorporates Hobbes' 'Geometricall Figures' as part of Urizenic cosmological construction – the 'mathematic motion wondrous' – whereby Urizen and all his sons and daughters must follow 'right lined paths outmeasurd by proportions of number weight / And measure' (314 23-4).

Gary Herbert notes that 'Hobbes's materialism is through and through phenomenal… Space, imaginary space (place), real space (magnitude or extension), and solid space are all accidents of body' (1989, 50). T. Sorell similarly writes that Hobbes 'proposed that physical as well as psychological phenomena were nothing more than motions in different kinds of bodies' (1993, 235). The subject's phenomenological relationship with material reality, therefore, is dependent upon the way in which bodies are conceived:

> we bring into account, the Properties of our own bodies, whereby we make such distinction: as when any thing is *Seen* by us, we reckon not the thing it selfe; but the *sight*, the *Colour*, the *Idea* of it in the Fancy…
>
> (Hobbes 1909, 30).

In *De Corpore* (1655), Hobbes would add that 'the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another' (12). Sense, therefore, is tantamount to fancy, and fancy is a product of external

objects. So, although the original stimulus is an object (Epicurean *eidola* and Lucretian *simulacra*), the mental image (*phantasia*) is purely subjective:

> [t]he object becomes imaged, or the magnitude gets placed, by the constructive faculty of human comprehension. The generation of body is, then, the generation of those accidents which individuate body. That is, the generation of body is, in effect, the construction of images.
>
> (Herbert 1989, 51).

Importantly, in a similar way that *prolepses* conjure up the image of an object in Epicurean sense perception, Hobbes maintains that '*A* NAME *is a Word taken at pleasure to serve for a Mark, which may raise in our Mind a thought like to some thought we had before*' (1656, 12).[269] Names are therefore purely arbitrary and 'not signes of the Things themselves'; they are, instead, 'signes of our Conceptions.'[270]

Hobbes uses the terms 'body,' 'thing,' and 'object' interchangeably to describe both real and unreal things:

> [n]or indeed is it at all necessary that every Name should be the Name of some Thing. For as these, a *Man*, a *Tree*, a *Stone*, are the Names of the Things themselves; so the Images of a Man, of a Tree and of a stone, which are represented to men sleeping, have their Names also, though they be not Things, but onely fictions and Phantasmes of things.
>
> (13).[271]

It is therefore as important for Hobbes to have a name for a thing which exists as for a thing which does not exist (such as 'this word *Nothing*') for, without a name, a thing cannot be

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[269] For example, Hobbes writes 'for that the sound of this word *Stone* should be the signe of a Stone, cannot be understood in any sense but this, that he that heares it, collects that he that pronouunces it thinkes of a Stone' (1656, 12-3).

[270] As W. G. Pogson Smith writes in a prefatory essay to the early twentieth-century edition of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, '[l]et men agree what is to be truth, and truth it shall be… truth is only of universals, that there is nothing in the world universal but names, and that names are imposed *arbitrio hominum*. Fiction is not, as people hold, the image or the distortion of the real which it counterfeits; it is the very and only foundation of that reality which is rational' (1909, xii)

[271] Cf. Herbert (1989, 51).

said to exist for the subject who cannot conceive of that which is nameless.[272] Furthermore, the subject must be continually reminded of names since 'men's thoughts are […] unconstant and fading' (10). Without 'Measures,' 'Patterns,' or 'Numbers' the concepts which 'man has put together in his mind by ratiocination […] will presently slip from him, and not be revocable but by beginning his ratiocination anew.'

Urizen's separation from the Eternals, after which he 'sought for a joy without pain, / For a solid without fluctuation (*BU* 244 4.10-1), recalls Part I, Chapter 3 of *Leviathan*, on the train of thoughts and consequences of the imagination, where Hobbes writes that the mind is continually caught in a process of '*Seeking*':

> the Discourse of the Mind, when it is governed by designe, is nothing but *Seeking*, or the faculty of Invention, which the Latines call *Sagacitas*, and *Solertia*; a hunting out of the causes, of some effect, present or past; or of the effects, of some present or past cause. Sometimes a man seeks what he hath lost; and from that place, and time, wherein hee misses it, his mind runs back, from place to place, and time to time, to find where, and when he had it; that is to say, to find some certain, and limited time and place, in which to begin a method of seeking… This we call *Remembrance*, or Calling to mind: the Latines call it *Reminiscentia*, as it were a *Re-conning* of our former actions.

> (1909, 20-1).

It is from the threat of descending into a cyclical process of ratiocination that 'sensible Moniments are necessary, by which our past thoughts may be not onely reduced, but also registred every one in its own order' (1665, 10). Hobbes calls these monuments, these sensible things, 'MARKS' which 'by the sense of them such thoughts may be recalled to our mind, as are like those thoughts for which we [took them].' Marks, therefore, provide the individual with his own, relative mental images that enable him to enter into a form of mental discourse with himself.

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[272] 'Everything knowable and delimitable about a thing-itself is exposed only in its phenomenal situation as an object of study for man, relative to his well-being' (Herbert 1989, 75).

The problem with the arbitrary nature of naming and the subjective quality of mental images is that the entire epistemological process is idiosyncratic and therefore, potentially, inconsistent – not only within a culture but even as part of individual experience:

> all men [are] not alike affected with the same thing, nor the same man at all times... For seeing all names are imposed to signifie our conceptions; when we conceive the same things differently, we can hardly avoyd different naming of them. For though the nature of that we conceive, be the same; yet the diversity of our reception of it, in respect of different constitutions of body, and prejudices of opinion, gives every thing a tincture of our different passions... one man calleth *Wisdome*, what another calleth *feare*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*... And therefore such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination.

> (31-2).

Not only is naming inconsistent, but a name's signification is inconstant. Objects are registered by the individual's 'reception' and mental images (*phantasia*) are always the approximation of the individual's 'tincture.' This process, moreover, is bound in an epistemological loop: because we name objects as a consequence of our tainted perceptions, our understanding of those objects are tainted; then, as we view these objects under new passions or different prejudices, we continue to contaminate the naming process. Although we are unconscious of this error, individuals will deceive themselves in their relationship with external reality as well as in their social relationships.

As early as *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-3) Blake is seemingly aware of the perceptual fallacies of Hobbesian and Epicurean epistemology. In one of the memorable fancies, Blake is shown his 'eternal lot' (*MHH* 189 17.14) by an Angel who takes him down into a church vault, through a mill, and out through a cave which opens onto 'a void boundless' (*MHH* 190 17.19-20). In 'the infinite Abyss' (18.3) Blake beholds a black sun around 'which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey [...] in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption' (6-9). Blake's lot is to be cast between the white and black spiders, but when a (Hobbesian) leviathan approaches and the Angel retreats back into the mill Blake finds himself on a pleasant riverbank. When the Angel asks how Blake

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escaped, he responds 'All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics: for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper' (191 19.12-4). The 'terrific shapes' which populated the void were a psycho-topographical representation of the Angel's subjection to the Selfhood. Blake counters Hobbes' epistemological supposition that objects are imaged by the subject, insofar that physical and psychological phenomena are accidents of body, if the body itself can only be comprehended by a succession of arbitrarily constructed and tainted – by the Selfhood – images.

Significantly, the point which Blake stresses is not only that the phenomenological world perceived through the Selfhood is false, and thus that the materiality of the Epicurean school and its adherents is non-entity, but that the subject suffers under the delusion and illusion of a false reality. To this end, Blake reinforces the symbiotic relationship between psychological torment and physical torture and the proliferation of atomistic bodies in phenomenological vacuity when the sons and daughters of Urizen have 'A Universe of fiery constellations [fixed] in their brain' (*FZ* 360 vi.70[1].9):

> The horrid shapes & sights of torment in burning dungeons & in
> Fetters of red hot iron some with crowns of serpents & some
> With monsters girding round their bosoms. Some lying on beds of sulphur
> On racks & wheels…

> (360-1 21-4).[273]

'The horrid shapes' recalls Urizen's earlier battles 'In unseen conflictions with shapes' (*BU* 243 3.14), whilst the 'monsters girding' his children's bosoms as 'dishumanizd men [… are] woven by ribbd / And scaled monsters' (*FZ* 361 vi.70[1].34-8) recalls Urizen's 'fightings and conflicts dire, / With terrible monsters Sin-bred' (*BU* 244 4.27-8). The 'Fetters of red hot iron,' moreover, exacerbates the way in which the postlapsarian mind is rent from eternity 'Like fetters of ice shrinking together' (*BU* 248 10.26), as the metaphor which describes the 'chains of the mind' (25) is realised in its material form.[274] The 'beds of sulphur' also draw on

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[273] Oothoon rages against this imposition: 'They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up. / And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle. / And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning / Till all from life I was obliterated and erased' (*VDA* 199 2.31-4).

[274] The progression from metaphor to material circumstance and psychological incarceration is exemplified during the construction of Urizen's body in 'Night the Fourth' of *The Four Zoas*: 'And thus began the binding of

the Miltonic image of Satan lying on a burning lake in Hell (i.209-29), reinforcing the shared fate of Urizen's children 'hissing in eternal pain' (*FZ* 361 vi.70[1].39).

Crucially, as well, the way in which images are maintained, either in their original sense or in a metamorphosed, contorted fabrication, harks back to Hobbes' premise that we continue to entertain an obscured idea of the shape and movement of objects even after the object itself has disappeared. In a Hobbesian manner of speaking, this is the psycho-topographical basis of Urizenic *phantasia* which are a product of misremembered *prolepsis*. Indeed, Hobbes maintains that images are '*decaying sense*' ([1651]1909, 14) and that when sense – the 'Imagination' – has decayed, it is called 'Memory.' The search for truth – or, rather, an earlier articulation of what man perceived to be truth – is therefore called remembrance. However, as Blake tells us as part of his diatribe against the 'idiot Questioner' in *Milton* (1804-20), we destroy Jerusalem and murder Jesus 'By imitation of Natures Images drawn from Remembrance' (*M* 604 ii.41.12; 24).

Blake continues to frame Urizen's battles with his self-produced shapes – the *phantasia* of Hobbesian imagination in the epistemological tradition of the Epicurean school – in terms of both elemental and physical torture in order to underline the causational regression from cosmic strife to social conflict. In Chapter VIII of *The Book of Urizen*, after Urizen sets out to explore the abyss of his own mind with a globe of fire, he is 'anoy'd / By cruel enormities' (*BU* 255 20.49-50):

> And his world teemd vast enormities
> Frightning; faithless; fawning
> Portions of life; similitudes
> Of a foot, or a hand, or a head
> Or a heart, or an eye, they swam mischevous
> Dread terrors! delighting in blood

Urizen day & night in fear / Circling round the dark Demon with howlings dismay & sharp blightings / The Prophet of Eternity beat on his iron links & links of brass / And as he beat round the hurtling Demon. terrified at the Shapes / Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld' (*FZ* 340 iv.53.20-4). Los is similarly implicated in this process a few plates later (343 55[2].1-8).

(23.2-7).[275]

The anthropomorphised 'vast enormities' are 'Frightning' to Urizen because they are his own psychic fragments (*phantasia*) which have become 'faithless' and 'mischevous' in the void.[276] Like Epicurean atoms, the 'vast enormities' obey the blind dictates of chance and even refuse to assemble into a recognisable human form as they remain 'similitudes' of body parts.[277] Urizen himself is 'sicken'd to see / His eternal creations appear / Sons & daughters' (8-9). Significantly, the 'similitudes' only 'appear' to be his children which further emphasises the fact that 'His eternal creations' are neither humanoid – for the 'Dread terrors' only take on the resemblance of a hand or foot – nor human – for it is only in relation to Urizen's sight that they 'appear / Sons & daughters.'

Blake then conflates the anthropological origins of mankind with elemental creation, as 'first Thiriel appear'd / Astonish'd at his own existence / Like a man from a cloud born' (256 11-3).[278] Again, Thiriel only appears 'Like a man' as the metaphor draws our attention to the fact that Thiriel is *not* a man. The birth of Thiriel is followed by Utha who emerges from the waters, Grodna who emerges from the earth, and Fuzon who emerges from fire (13-8). The personified elements are born from Urizen's psychological degeneration: the building blocks of the material universe are psychic projections from the Selfhood. In Hobbesian terms, man compounds images as part of 'a Fiction of the mind' ([1651]1909, 15) and, once an error is perpetuated and becomes commonplace (man calls it 'truth'), it in turn gives rise to further errors based upon the initial falsification, as each subject colours established errors with his own arbitrariness. Indeed, because Hobbes maintains that body and object are interchangeable and that, moreover, the names of real and unreal things – such as tree that we see and a tree that we imagine in sleep, which is an example of the 'Phantasmes of

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[275] '…monsters of worlds unknown / Swam round them [the Nobles], watching to be delivered' (*FR* 171 9.4-5).
[276] '…the forehead of Urizen gathering, / And his eyes pale with anguish… in his dark solitude / When obscur'd in his forests fell monsters, / Arose. For his dire Contemplations / Rush'd down like floods from his mountains / In torrents of mud settling thick / With Eggs of unnatural production / Forthwith hatching' (*BA* 261 3.1-11)
[277] In *The Book of Ahania*, during 'Urizen's slumbers of abstraction' and 'In perturb'd pain,' 'Effluvia vapor'd above / In noxious clouds; these hover'd thick / Over the disorganiz'd Immortal… / Disease on disease, shape on shape, / Winged screaming in blood & torment' until 'The shapes screaming flutter'd vain / Some combin'd into muscles & glands / Some organs for craving and lust / Most remain'd on the tormented void: / Urizen's army of horrors' (*BA* 263-4 4.11-35).
[278] In his 1789 annotations to Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels* (1788), Blake writes '[t]hink of a white cloud as being holy, you cannot love it; but think of a holy man within the cloud, love springs up in your thoughts, for to think of holiness distinct from man is impossible to the affections. Thought alone can make monsters' (*K* 90).

things' (13) – the subject often forgets, or does not even know that he misremembers, reality. In order that we have a way of distinguishing truth (which may already be a falsehood) from a falsehood, man must be continuously reminded by artificial patterns and systems: Hobbes calls these 'MARKS' (10). The problem remains that men see things and cogitate upon things differently, 'in respect of different constitutions of body' (31). As Hobbes clarifies, 'REASON, in this sense, is nothing but *Reckoning* (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of the Consequences of generall names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts' (33).

In Blake's mythopoeia, Urizen taints all Creation by bringing corporeal beings (under the dominion of the Selfhood) within the same psycho-topographical sphere. All postlapsarian existence then follows the same natural, Urizenic laws:

> All his eternal sons in like manner
> His daughters from green herbs & cattle
> From monsters, & worms of the pit
>
> He in darkness clos'd, view'd all his race
> And his soul sicken'd!
>
> (*BU* 19-23).

Urizen's 'vast enormities' transform into 'similitudes' of body parts (whilst remaining 'Dread terrors') which then take on the appearance of his 'Sons & daughters.' This anthropological model then gives rise to the Empedoclean model of elemental creation (incorporated in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*)[279] which in turn combines with Lucretian evolutionary theory (v.782-820) as Urizen's sons and daughters come into being from 'herbs & cattle.'

Urizen's monstrous offspring then impede their father's journey through the void: 'Infinite was his labour without end his travel he strove / In vain for hideous monsters of the deeps annoyd him sore' (*FZ* 359 vi.69.25-6).[280] The battles which took place at the beginning of *The Book of Urizen* continue to thwart Urizen's journey throughout *The Four Zoas*; but, instead

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[279] 'None of the elements kept its shape, / and all were in conflict inside on body: the cold with the hot, / the wet with the dry, the soft with the hard, and weight with the weightless' (Ovid *Met.*, 5-6 17-9).
[280] Cf. *The Four Zoas* vi.70[1].36-8.

of cosmological 'shapes,' Urizen is confronted with the anthropological degeneration of the human form as he 'wanderd many a dreary way / Warring with monsters of the Deeps in his most hideous pilgrimage' (368 74.9-10).

In 'Night the Eighth' of *The Four Zoas*, Blake combines cosmological strife with the monstrous metamorphoses which take place in Chapter VIII of *The Book of Urizen*.[281] Thus, 'Urizen in self deceit his warlike preparations fabricated' (*FZ* 412 viii.101[1].26) until he gives the signal 'And all the hollow deep rebellowd with the wonderous war' (29). The void 'rebellowd' Urizen's voice insofar that the void constitutes the psycho-cosmographic plane upon which Urizenic activity takes place; and, as a consequence, the void becomes filled with the material manifestations of Urizen's 'warlike preparations' until 'All futurity / Seems teeming with Endless destruction never to be repelld' (101[2].30-1).

From Urizen's initial formation of the void as an 'all-repelling […] Demon' in *The Book of Urizen* (242 3.3), his psychological battles continue to dominate postlapsarian existence as if they were 'never to be repelld.' Urizenic reason repels spirituality as it simultaneously rejects the repeal of war. And, in the same way that Urizen has no control of the 'shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (*BU* 243 3.14-5),[282] Urizen has no control of the wars in the void:

> Terrified & astonishd Urizen beheld the battle take a form
> Which he intended not a Shadowy hermaphrodite black & opake
> The Soldiers namd it Satan but he was yet unformed & vast…
>
> (*FZ* 413 viii.101[2].33-5).[283]

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[281] Blake employed similar imagery in 'King Edward the Third' (1769-78): 'Our fathers move in firm array to battle, / The savage monsters rush like roaring fire… / Our fathers, sweating, lean on their spears, and view / The mighty dead: giant bodies, streaming blood, / Dread visages, frowning in silent death!' (*PS* 57-8 9.25-36).

[282] Urizen's psychological freefall shares certain similarities to the proliferation of language discussed in Hobbes' *De Corpore*: 'though some Names of living creatures and other things, which our first Parents used, were taught by God himselfe; yet they were by him arbitrarily imposed, and afterwards both at the Tower of Babel, and since in processe of time, growing every where out of use, are quite forgotten, and in their roomes have succeeded others, invented and received by men at pleasure' (1656, 12).

[283] As Hobbes writes in *De Corpore*, '[h]aving understood what Imaginary Space is, in which we supposed nothing remaining without us, but all those things to be destroyed that by existing heretofore left Images of themselves in our Minds; let us now suppose some one of those things to be placed again in the World, or created anew. It is necessary therefore that this new created or replaced thing do not onely fill some part of the Space above-

The conglomeration of warring bodies in the void 'take[s] a form' like 'a Shadowy hermaphrodite' where after 'the terrors […] take the human visage & the human form' (38-42).[284] Once more, however, these forms metamorphose as 'the beastial droves rend one another' (413 viii.101[2].47) until the battle enters a lull and 'those that remain / Return in pangs & horrible convulsions to their beastial state' (102.1-2).[285] The rapid transformation from 'terrors' to 'human[s]' to 'beastial droves' evinces the uncontrollable, spontaneous, and monstrous nature of mechanised existence.[286] Blake continues to conflate physiognomies as 'the monsters of the Elements Lions or Tygers or Wolves' appear like 'loud terrify[ing] men […] to one another laughing terrible among the banners' (413-4 3-5). But then, 'when the revolution of their day of battles over / Relapsing in dire torment they return to forms of woe' (414 7-8). Urizen's battalions which were sourced from his own psyche ultimately lapse 'To moping visages returning inanimate' until once more 'war begins' (8-12). The cycle of Eternal Death is relentless.[287]

Blake takes this cosmological template and applies it to human society. In 'Night the Ninth,' the wine presses of Luvah (which represent mankind's warmongering) are full of 'wailing terror & despair' (*FZ* 470 ix.136.5):

> in the Wine Presses the Human Grapes Sing not nor dance
>
> They howl & writhe in shoals of torment in fierce flames consuming
>
> In chains of iron & in dungeons circled with ceaseless fires
>
> In pits & dens & shades of death in shapes of torment & woe…

(470-1 21-4).[288]

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mentioned, or be coincident and coextended with it, but also, that it have no dependance upon our thought' (74).

[284] 'Lo these Human form'd spirits in smiling hypocrisy War / Against one another; so let them War on; slaves t the eternal Elements' (*SL* 237 3.13-4).

[285] In *The French Revolution* (1791) the 'terrors' are 'bred from the blood of revenge and breath of desire, / In beastial forms; or more terrible men' (*FR* 174 11.215-6).

[286] There is an echo of Satan's complaint in *Paradise Lost* 'that I who erst contended / With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained / Into a beast, and mixed with bestial slime' (211 ix.163-5).

[287] 'O! how the torments of Eternal Death, waited on Man: / And the loud-rending bars of the Creation ready to burst: / That the wide world might fly from its hinges & the immortal mansion / Of Man, for ever be possessd by monsters of the deeps: / And Man himself become a Fiend, wrap'd in an endless curse, / Consuming and consum'd for-ever in flames of Moral Justice' (*J* 703 ii.36[40].25-30). Cf. *The Book of Urizen* (256 23.23-7) and *The Four Zoas* (358-9 vi.69.6-22).

[288] Cf. *Milton* (572 i.27.30-41).

Dehumanised, mankind turns into 'shapes of torment & woe' and remain incarcerated in the 'pits' from which Urizen's sons and daughters arise (*BU* 23.21) as well as the dens which Urizen explores in both *The Book of Urizen* (20.30-50) and in 'Night the Sixth' of *The Four Zoas* (cf. *FR* 12.228). Moreover, whereas in the first stages of Creation 'The eternal mind bounded began to roll… / In chains of the mind locked up' (*BU* 248 10.19-25), by the latter stages of *The Four Zoas* these chains have become 'chains of iron' and bind all mankind to 'The Plates the Screws and Racks & Saws & cords & fires & floods' (*FZ* 471 ix.136.25).

The human form continues to be tortured as the mind continues to fall: 'Urizen wept in the dark deep anxious his Scaly form / To reassume the human & he wept in the dark deep' (443 ix.121.1-2). It is both Urizen initially, as his body is constructed in 'ghastly torment' (*BU* 249 11.26), as well as his children who have been 'deformd with hardness with the sword & with the spear' (*FZ* 444 ix.121.14), which contributes to the cycle of Eternal Death perpetuating the psychological and physical torture of postlapsarian existence. Ultimately, the atomistic conflicts in the void between Urizen and his 'shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness' (*BU* 243 3.14-5) are re-enacted by successive generations as the Wine Presses of Luvah intoxicate and drive men to wage war and 'to dance in the Circle of Warriors / Before the Kings of Canaan' (*J* 780 iii.68.56-7).[289]

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As I have shown throughout Sections IV and V of this chapter, Blake casts Urizen as the physical representative of the phenomenological vacuity of the void. As Urizen psychologically degenerates, he is subject to the atomistic flux of his own thoughts. So, when Urizen strives 'in battles dire, / In unseen conflictions with shapes' (*BU* 243 3.13-4), these shapes are the physicalised manifestations of his psychological disturbance: psychic fragments of mental images (*phantasia*) which have gained autonomy and have begun to

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[289] 'Canaan […] symbolizes the ideal home or (more often) that state which the Individual thinks is ideal. He may be mistaken' (Damon 1988, 67). As Blake writes in *Milton*, 'Satan vibrated in the immensity of the Space! Limited / To those without but Infinite to those within: it fell down and / Became Canaan: closing Los from Eternity in Albions Cliffs / A mighty Fiend against the Divine Humanity mustring War' (*M* 531 i.10.8-11).

populate the psycho-topographical plane of the atomistic universe.[290] The void becomes a battleground with 'Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination' (*J* 642 i.5.58); battles which, moreover, will continue *ad infinitum* in accordance with the decay and rebirth of the vegetative world set out by Lucretius in Book Five of *De Rerum Natura*:

> when we see the mighty members and parts of the world consumed away and
> brought to birth again, we may know that the sky too likewise and earth had
> some time of first-beginning, and will suffer destruction.

> (194 v.244-7).[291]

Thus, Blake combines intellectual strife with symbols of fate, industrialisation, and war to reinforce the cosmological and mechanical nature of the cycle of Eternal Death:

> Terrific ragd the Eternal Wheels of intellect terrific ragd
> The living creatures of the wheels in the Wars of Eternal life
> But perverse rolld the wheels of Urizen & Luvah back reversd
> Downwards & outwards consuming in the wars of Eternal Death

> (*FZ* 301 i.20.12-5).

These battles continue throughout 'Night the Eighth' of *The Four Zoas* where 'Urizen g[i]ve[s] life & senses by his immortal power / To all his Engines of deceit' (414 102.14-5). It is Urizen who acts as the source and as the catalyst for all the competing elements. Thus, the 'battles' which take place in *The Book of Urizen* remain 'unseen' (*BU* 243 3.19) because the phenomenological parameters remain cerebral: nothing of that which takes place in Chapter I occurs outside of the 'soul-shudd'ring vacuum' (242 5) of Urizen's mind.[292] By pitting Urizen against himself, Blake draws attention to the fact that although Urizen may be the originator of these shapes and postlapsarian existence more generally, he is not in control of them; and, although Urizen has the capability to reinterpret his space, he has no

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[290] Blake draws on the elemental battle in *Paradise Lost* (ii.898-906).
[291] Cf. *SL* 237 3.11-7.
[292] '…in the Brain of Man we live, & in his circling Nerves… / this bright world of all our joy is in the Human Brain. / Where Urizen & all his Hosts hang their immortal lamps' (*FZ* 288 11.24-6).

power over it: 'Nor could he calm the Elements because himself was Subject / So he threw his flight in terror & pain & in repentant tears' (*FZ* vi.362-3 13-4).[293]

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[293] Urizen later laments 'O thou poor ruind world / Thou horrible ruin once like me thou wast all glorious / And now like me partaking desolate thy masters lot' (*FZ* 365-6 vi.72.35-7).

Chapter 4

The Cosmic Chains of the *Machina Mundi*

…from the Horologe of the understanding of nature, the Heathens were
answered by their Images and Idolls…

Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum* ([1623]1656, 249).

Time, eternity!

('Tis these mismeasur'd, ruin all mankind)

Set them before me; let me lay them both

In equal scale, and learn their various weight.

Let time appear a moment, as it is;

And let eternity's full orb, at once,

Turn on my soul, and strike it into heav'n

Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* ([1742-5]1863, 278-9 ix.1331-7).

I. Introduction

Whilst Los and Enitharmon come to recognise Satan as the fallen form of Urizen (*M* i.10.1) who in this world represents the Selfhood (14.30; *J* ii.27.76; 49.29-30),[294] Los as 'the Eternal

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[294] For readings of Urizen as a satanic figure, see Frye ([1947]1990, 274), Altizer ([1967]2000, 46), Mitchell (1969, 100), Ankarsjö (2005, 137), and Hobby (2010, 55). For readings of Satan as the Selfhood, see Frye (*ibid*, 134-5), Altizer (*ibid*, 23), and Pyle (2015, 124).

Prophet' is often considered above such somatic and psychological fragmentation. [295] Yet the Fall of mankind and, specifically, the fall of Urizen which Los limits through his industrial activity in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), concomitantly reduces him (and everyone else) to the same temporal and spatial existence as Urizen. Original Sin is shared by all mankind: Urizen is rent from Los' side (*BU* 6.2-6) in a biblical parody of the birth of Eve and, despite convalescing from the psycho-somatic schism in Chapter III (5.38-7.7), Los continues to divide 'Before the death-image of Urizen' (251 15.2) as the void closes around them both (13.40).

It is apposite that whilst Urizen 'Hath form'd this abominable void' (*BU* 243 3.4) it thereafter becomes 'The Abyss of Los' (251 15.5). Blake believed that we become what we behold and how we behold – looking at the material world through the Selfhood rather than the spiritual world through the Prophetic Character. Additionally, we also become how we behave and how we are treated, as Los' incarceration of his son Orc 'With the Chain of Jealousy / Beneath Urizens deathful shadow' (254 20.24-5) becomes a marker of Los' fall into and within the postlapsarian strictures of Urizenic reason.[296] For example, in 'Night the Fourth' of *The Four Zoas* which repeats the creation narrative from *The Book of Urizen* (8.10-13.41),

> Pale terror seizd the Eyes of Los as he beat round
>
> The hurtling Demon. terrified at the shapes
>
> Enslavd humanity put on he became what he beheld
>
> He became what he was doing he was himself transformd

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[295] Los has been variously described as 'the personification of the prophetic powers and of the creative movement of time' (Altizer *ibid*, 83), 'the principle of the poetic imagination' (Webb 1966, 172), 'the imaginative faculty within the individual' (Billigheimer 2000, 94), and 'man's visionary and creative powers' (Ostriker 2004, 993). See also Rose (1965, 589), Mellor (1971, 599), Ferber (1985, 79), Ackroyd (1997, 299), Punter (2006, 168), and Mounsey (2011, 5). It has been noted, however, that Los has an 'ambivalent relation to the fallen world' (Otto 2006, 59), with Jean Hall going so far as to claim that '[i]n striving to be different from Urizen Los becomes the same' (1991, 33). John Howard suggests that the creative potential of Los 'parodies Plato's *Timaeus* and Genesis […] in a tradition of cosmogonic accounts that would include the *Timaeus*, Genesis 1, the *Kore Kosmou*, Boehme's *Signatura Rerum*, or Lucretius's *De rerum natura*' (1984, 200).

[296] In fact, it is only after Los' mistreatment of Orc that Urizen explores his dens and is 'sicken'd to see / His eternal creations appear / Sons & Daughters (255 23.8-10). In 'Night the Sixth' of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen remains terrified of 'The ruind spirits once his children' (*FZ* 360 vi.70[1].6). As Blake declares in *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* (1793-1818), 'Perceptive Organs closed. their Objects close' (*K* 767). Cf. *FZ* (i.5.48-53; ii.25.22-3); *J* (ii.32[36].14-9).

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(*FZ* 343 iv.55[2].5-8).

This is not, of course, to say that Los recapitulates Urizenic reason, but he is limited to the same existential sphere as the rest of mankind.[297] Whilst the mechanical laws of nature are instigated by Urizen, these remain epiphenomenal until Los' industrial activity regulates both space (bodies) and time as the 'links' and 'chains' of Urizen's physical frame are mapped onto the Mundane Shell as the duration (revolution of celestial satellites) of 'days' and 'months' and 'years' (*BU* 247-8 10.1-18).[298]

As I have argued across Chapters 2 and 3, the fall of mankind into Urizen's phantasmagorical universe forces every individual to engage with the epistemological parameters of Epicurean sense perception. As I will now maintain in Chapter 4, across Blake's mythopoeia the Fall also forces mankind to occupy the phenomenological reality of Lucretius' '*machina mundi*' (v.96): the natural, self-established, and self-propelled mechanism of atomistic cycles.[299] Nature, accordingly, becomes her own 'helmsman' as she 'steers the courses of the sun and the wanderings of the moon' without 'forethought of the gods' (*DRN* 188 v.76-81).[300] Thus, providence is replaced with 'the order and regularity of nature' as 'a functioning mechanical device' (Popa 2018, 16). The universe itself becomes 'a giant mechanism' (Jenkyns 1998, 230), a 'world machine' (Forman 1998, 680) which, when saturated with the 'momentous specificity [of] the *clockwork metaphor*,' was readily understood as 'a spring mechanism that, having once been wound up, can be relied on to tick smoothly and continuously until the end of time' (Blumenberg 2010, 64).[301]

This chapter carries forward the argument from Chapter 3 that Urizen's separation from the Eternals catalyses the Fall, with the additional premise that the Fall not only schematises

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[297] The relegation of Los to the same mortal space as Urizen is likened to a 'Tent' thrown over the void by the Eternals (*BU* 19.2-8) which they complete as Enitharmon gives birth to Orc (19.37-40). It is therefore not when the 'Eternals beheld [Urizen's] vast forests' (243 3.23) but, rather, when they 'Beheld the dark visions of Los, / And the globe of life blood trembling' (251 15.12-3) – which becomes Enitharmon – that they 'A woof wove, and called it Science' (252 18.9).

[298] It is Los' being (as separate from Urizen *and* Enitharmon) and, specifically, his biological and industrial actions (which through the construction of Urizen's body and the birth of Enitharmon become conflated) which force the Eternals to close the tent so that 'No more Los beheld Eternity' (*BU* 254 20.2). The cosmological fabric of postlapsarian existence is therefore both constructed by, and imposed upon, Los.

[299] The '*machina mundi*' is a poietical, rather than a strictly mechanical, instrument (Berryman 2009, 37-9) since it has the capacity to create ('*natura naturans*') as well as to destroy (Bade 2017, 156). At its most literal, it constitutes 'a complex structure' imbued with architectural semantics (Markovic 2008, 52-3).

[300] Cf. Epicurus' letter to Herodotus (*LP* 453-4).

[301] Cf. Smith (2015, 8).

atomistic frameworks but also the iconography that Blake links with Urizenic creation which is interrelated with the empirical methods used to measure the physical universe. I will contend that Blake associates Urizen's body and its industrial genesis with the concept of the *machina mundi* by evoking the Enlightenment model which 'view[ed] nature as a machine that could be taken apart to see how one part acts on another part' (Grant 2007, 283). The *machina mundi* provided a template for understanding the human body where the vital organs and cardiovascular, lymphatic, and respiratory systems were read as a microcosmic site of cosmological mechanics. As the English-Epicurean philosopher Walter Charleton detailed in *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* (1654), the body's 'Mechanique Operations' are operated by 'Pole[s], Lever[s] [...] slender Hooks, Lines, Chains, or the like intercedent Instruments' (344).[302] In the eighteenth century, the concept of man as a machine was honed in *L'homme Machine* (1747) where Julien Offray de La Mettrie describes nature as creating 'millions of men, with a facility and a pleasure more intense than the effort of a watchmaker in making the most complicated watch' (1912, 145).[303]

As such, there are two principal strands to this chapter. The first explores the way in which Los' metallurgy (the construction of Urizen's body and the creation of the celestial spheres) parallels the predominantly feminine process of weaving, where Los' 'hammers' and 'tongs' and 'furnaces' operate alongside the 'wheels' and 'looms' and 'spindles' of Enitharmon (*FZ* iv.53.5-8; *M* i.6.27-35; *J* i.14.15).[304] For Lucretius' age, the process of weaving provided a practical metaphor for the creation of stories, cultures, and worlds where the weaver/Creator spun cloth upon a (cosmic) loom.[305] Blake similarly builds his physical universe upon the woven fabric of Lucretius' '*moles et machina mundi*' but combines cosmological and somatic generation to evidence how all postlapsarian frameworks are

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[302] The 'chain' image has a persistent presence in Western culture from Ancient Greece to the scientific discourses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* (1936).
[303] The first civic clocks were built in fourteenth-century Europe. They told time and measured the movement of celestial satellites, such as Giovanni de' Dondi's (dall'Orologio' ('from clock') (Innocenzi 2019, 281)) *astrarium* at Padua in 1364. The mechanical clock 'came to offer a metaphor of enormous power, comprehensibility, and consequence [...] in ordering human affairs' (Shapin 1996, 33).
[304] From his youth, Blake was acquainted with the textile industry: his father was a hosier, the drawing school he attended was known for producing fabrics, and he was familiar with the textile-producing areas of Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, Shoreditch, and Whitechapel (Ackroyd 1997, 321; Mazzeo 2013, 121). The decision to conflate male and female roles – '[w]eaving was men's work, not women's; and was taken into the factory only towards the end of the time during which Blake was writing' (Bronowski [1965]2008, 120) – is therefore a way of drawing everyone into the same mechanised process.
[305] Cf. Crowfoot (1936/7, 38); Jongeward (1990, 159); Kruger (2001, 23). For an analysis of spinning and weaving in Blake's mythopoeia, see Hilton (1983, 102-26).

regulated by the same mechanical forces.[306] The second component to this chapter explores the mechanical nature of the physical universe as epitomised by the clockmaker God, which was retrospectively mapped onto the concept of the *machina mundi* by seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth-century natural philosophers. As I have argued across Chapters 2 and 3, the projection of *phantasia* and the emission of *eidola*/*simulacra* from Urizen's psycho-topography affects mankind's epistemological reading of materiality. Now, in Chapter 4, I will maintain that phenomenological existence is a reconstruction of our ability to experience material reality.

II. Cosmic Chains

In *The Book of Urizen*, Los is initially 'smitten with astonishment' as the 'hurtling bones' and 'the surging sulphureous' develop into 'whirlwinds & pitch & nitre' to form Urizen's body (*BU* 247 8.1-5). Los then casts 'nets & gins' in an attempt to control somatic generation, binding 'every change / With rivets of iron & brass' (7-11). Whilst this allows Los to manage (even deliver) Urizen's birth into its material form, the process becomes a deathly stupor as 'ages roll'd over' and 'Ages passed over':

> Ages on ages roll'd over him!
>
> In stony sleep ages roll'd over him!
>
> Like a dark waste stretching chang'able
>
> By earthquakes riv'n, belching sullen fires
>
> On ages roll'd ages in ghastly
>
> Sick torment; around him in whirlpools
>
> Of darkness the eternal Prophet howl'd

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[306] In 'Night the Second' of *The Four Zoas*, for instance, when the sons of Urizen divide the deep with their compasses (*FZ* ii.28.31-2), golden looms weave the atmospheres (29.3-13) and spirits are caught in nets (29.15-6; 30.1-2). Blake then incorporates Lucretian anthropology (v.782-1027) when some of the spirits 'became seed of every plant that shall be planted; some / The bulbous roots, thrown together into barns & garners' (309 30.6-7). Jane Snyder argues that Lucretius frames atomistic activity as weaving as early as Book One, line 55, through the use of '*primordia*' (atomistic first-beginnings literally translated as 'first warp-threads'), and line 149 through the use of '*exordia*' (a rhetorical opening as well as the atomistic beginnings of the universe) (1983, 39-41). The image of an upright loom provided a convenient metaphor in Book Two (ii.100-218) for the movement of atoms falling vertically through the void (37; 41).

Beating still on his rivets of iron…

(247-8 10.1-8).

The antecedent syntactical stress on 'ages' pronominally belittles the unnamed Urizen, whilst Blake also phonetically shackles Urizen's body with brass 'rivets' as it is 'riv'n' by earthquakes – a geological association which is later reinforced in *The Four Zoas* where Tharmas (the Zoa of the body) struggles to assume a human form until 'at length emerging from the smoke / Of Urizen' finds that his 'skull [is] riven into filaments' (*FZ* 328-9 iii.44.19-24). The prepositional concentration ('on,' 'over,' 'in,' 'around') also emphasises internal transmogrification, as 'the surging sulphureous' of the 'Perturbed Immortal' (247 8.3-4) becomes the space where Urizen '*In* dark secrecy hid*ing in* surge*ing* / Sulphureous fluid his phantasies' (248 10.13-4) (my italics).[307] This is further picked up by the staccato beat of the 'd' sound as '*In d*ark' becomes mirrored in 'hi*ding*' and 'flu*id*,' coupled with the sibilance of '*s*ecre*sy*,' '*s*urgeing,' '*S*ulphur*eous*,' 'h*is*,' and 'phanta*sies*.'

The typographical fluidity adds to the transmutation as the tall vertical stroke of '*d*ark' joins with the corresponding downstroke of '*p*rolific,' emphasising the disintegration of Urizen's 'prolific delight' into 'dark secrecy.' Blake employs a similar graphological trick when the second 's' of 'secre*s*y' extends to form the serifs of the 'f' and 'l' of '*fl*uid' and again when the final 's' of 'phantasie*s*' trails down to connect with the 'k' of 'dar*k*.'[308] The interconnecting letters link like chains which bind the body of Urizen 'With rivets of iron & brass' (247 8.11) and the cosmos 'with links. hours, days & years' (248 10.18) as the poetic work itself becomes like 'a link in the chain of speech communion' (Bakhtin 1986, 76) through its integrated typeface, repeated refrains, and recurring dialogue.[309]

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[307] Blake was employing similar imagery in *The French Revolution* (1791): 'The millions of spirits immortal were bound in the ruins of sulphur heaven / To wander inslav'd; black, deprest in dark ignorance' (*FR* 174 11.213-4). Urizen's 'Sulphureous fluid' also recalls '[t]he black tartareous cold infernal dregs' in *Paradise Lost* which are '[a]dverse to life' (Milton, 175 vii.238-9).

[308] Nelson Hilton notes that '[c]hains, locks, and manacles […] present themselves as "auto-icons" (e.g., c-h-a-i-n, fetters of letters)… A "chain" is not simply a chain, but also an instance of what it refers to and (as a word) itself participates in: historically, the image of order epitomized by the great chain of being, and, more immediately […] the image of the "chain of discourse" and its "links" of signified and signifier' (1980, 212). Discourse, John Jones adds, 'that has not been developed through dialogic means comes only from the limited perspective of its author – in Blake's terms, the author's Selfhood' (1994, 4).

[309] Dialogic exchange presupposes that the speaker is responding to an utterance and that '[h]e is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe' (Bakhtin 1986, 69). Each utterance

At the same time, Los undergoes a form of physical and psychological degeneration; for, as 'Los shrunk from his task' (250 13.20), he shrinks with terror as well as in size as his strength diminishes and 'His great hammer fell from his hand' (13.21).[310] In fact, the physical incarceration of Urizen's immortal form in 'hurtling bones' (247 8.2) is replicated as Los 'With hurtlings […] endur'd his chains' (250 13.25-6). This process, when repeated in the final scenes of 'Night the Fourth' of *The Four Zoas*, accentuates the coterminous collapse of both characters as 'The bones of Urizen hurtle on the wind the bones of Los / Twinge & his iron sinews bend like lead' (*FZ* 344 iv.55[2].15-6).[311] The elliptical line devoid of either punctuation or conjunction amalgamates Urizen's bones (bound with iron) with Los' bones ('iron sinews') as Los begins to move ('writhd' (13)) in the same way that Urizen's spine 'writh'd' in *The Book of Urizen* (*BU* 248 10.37).

The correlation between the fall of Urizen and the fall of Los is further emphasised through the industrial activity which binds Urizen to a physical form: Los 'bound every change / With rivets of iron & brass' (247 8.10-1), 'Beating still on his rivets of iron' (248 10.8), creating 'chains new & new… / Los beat on his fetters of iron' (17-28) after which 'Restless turnd the immortal inchain'd' (31) as Urizen's spine becomes an 'infernal chain' (36). Urizen then succumbs to a 'stony sleep' (247 10.2) and his somatic formation occurs 'In a horrible dreamful slumber' (248 35) in the same way that Los, as the architect of Urizen's body, 'endur'd his chains, / Tho' bound in a deadly sleep' (250 13.26-7) until finally 'his eternal life / Like a dream was obliterated' (33-4). The syntax, moreover, confuses identities as it becomes unclear to which 'Immortal' Blake is referring when 'The Immortal endur'd his chain.' It similarly calls into question whether 'Los beat on his fetters of iron' and thereby beat on his (Los') fetters or his (Urizen's) fetters. In truth, Blake condenses and conflates

connects with previous utterances so that '[a]ny utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances.' Bakhtin adds that '[c]omplexly structured and specialized works of various scientific and artistic genres, in spite of all the ways in which they differ from rejoinders in dialogue, are by nature the same kind of units of speech communication' (75).

[310] Urizen undergoes a similar physiological diminution In *The Book of Ahania*: 'Urizen shrunk away / From Eternals, he sat on a rock / Barren; a rock which himself / From redounding fancies had petrified / Many tears fell on the rock, / Many sparks of vegetation; / Soon shot the painted root / Of Mystery, under his heel: / It grew a thick tree; he wrote / In silence his book of iron' (*B* 263 3.55-64). Cf. *FZ* ii.24.3-4. The repetition of 'rock' and the persistent assonance throughout 'shot,' 'root,' 'wrote,' and 'book' creates a phonetic pounding which begins to permeate the sharp consonance of 'rock,' 'shrunk,' and 'sparks.' The monosyllabic 'sat' coupled with the trochaic 'Barren' on the enjambed line has a physiological effect of constricting the throat (replicating the shrinking of Urizen from the Eternal) so that we reach for breath after reading, 'he sat on a rock / Barren.'

[311] The construction of Urizen's body during Chapters IV[a] and IV[b] of *The Book of Urizen* (8.1-13.19) is repeated in 'Night the Fourth' of *The Four Zoas* (iv.52.11-55[1].9).

actions as both 'The Eternal Prophet & Urizen clos'd' and 'Ages on ages rolld over them' (251 40-1).[312] The fact that Blake repeats the refrain 'ages roll'd' and 'Age passed' during the construction of Urizen's body and now applies it to both Urizen and Los suggests that the two Immortals have fallen into the same postlapsarian space.[313]

In *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius also utilised a quasi-industrial context when describing how 'the fastenings of the first-elements are variously put together […into] texture[s]' (1948, 35 i.244-50) as the semantics of mechanisation ('fastenings'/'*nexus*') and weaving ('texture'/'*textura*') link the '*materies*' with the '*machina mundi*' of Book Five where 'the rays of the sun with constant blows ['*cogebant*'] along its outer edges constrained the earth into closer texture ['*extrema ad limina fartam*']' (202 v.483-4). At its dissolution, the 'textures' of the land, sea, and sky ('*tria talia texta*') collapse upon themselves ('*ruet moles et machina mundi*,' v.91-6); a process which takes place every day as the sun 'unravels' ('*retexens*') the seas' 'fabric' ('*aequora*') with his 'rays' ('*radiisque*)' (v.266-8; 389-92).[314] The division of labour and technological advancement described at the end of Book Five,[315] where Lucretius talks about garments and woven raiment ('*quam textile tegmen*') being

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[312] Whilst Los chained Urizen to a physical frame by heaving his bellows and hammering rivets of iron and brass during Chapters IV[a] and IV[b], by Chapter VII Los similarly feels himself enchained with girdles of 'sorrow & pain' (254 20.8). The repetitive procedure as each 'girdle' (11; 12; 15; 16) reforms after Los breaks them (10; 13) is underscored by the final Promethean analogy of cyclical punishment (16-7). In *The Four Zoas*, Los' 'tightening girdle grew / Around his bosom like a bloody cord' (*FZ* 348 v.60.7-11) which Enitharmon identifies as 'the bloody chains of nights & days' (19). Father and son are bound by 'the chain of generations' (Hilton 1983, 72) which becomes 'a symbol both of clock time and the exhaustion of energy to which Orc is subject' (Frye [1947]1990, 252).

[313] Part 6 of Chapter I of *The Book of Los* picks up where part 8 of Chapter III begins and Chapter IV[a] ends of *The Book of Urizen*. Notable similarities include Urizen 'mad raging… / Round the furious limbs of Los' (*BU* 247 8.4-6) and Los 'In the midst' of flames 'Raging furious… thro' heaven & earth' (*BL* 268 3.27-30); the 'flames of Eternal fury' (*BU* 246 5.18) and 'quenchless flames' (19) reappear as 'flames of desire' (*BL* 268 3.27), 'Rivers of wide flame' (40), and 'gigantic flames' (4.3); and both Urizen (*BU* 3.30; 41; 4.3; 5; 5.5-6; 10.1-2; 5; 19; 11.10; 13.30; 41; 28.23) and Los (3.34; 36; 40) are associated with the popular Blakean verb 'to roll.' Admittedly, Urizen is described as 'rolling' much more than Los, but the specific passage in part 7 of Chapter I where Los *is* described as 'rolling' he is 'Raging' like Urizen and stamps on flames which make 'their way / Into darkness and shadowy obscurity' (*BL* 268 3.41-2) which has clear parallels to Urizen's abode 'in the north, / Obscure, shadowy, void, solitary' (*BU* 242 2.3-4).

[314] In Book Six, Lucretius frames dissolution as a form of tearing: '*tremere et divolsa repente maxima dissiluisse capacis moenia mundi*' (v.122-3). In *Milton*, Blake writes that 'The veil of human miseries is woven over the Ocean / From the Atlantic to the Great South Sea, the Erythrean' (*M* 579 i.29.62-3).

[315] In Book Four, Lucretius's description of the way *simulacra* 'become linked with one another in the air, when they come across one another's path, like spider's web and gold leaf' is predicated upon their 'subtle nature ['*subtilem naturam*'] and fine fabric ['*tenvia texta*']' (168 iv726-8; 44-5). The lightness with which these *simulacra* move ('*levitate feruntur*') and produce subtle images ('*subtilis imago*') recalls the lightness with which cloth is spun ('*levia gigni insilia ac fusi*') until the mind itself becomes a woven fabrication of *simulacra*: '*mens est et mire mobilis ipsa*' (iv.747-8). The interlacing of *simulacra* also informs the semantics of the soul and body in Book Three.

produced by treadle ('*insilia*'), spindle ('*fusi*'), shuttles ('*radii*') and ringing rods ('*scapique sonantes*') (v.1350-3), similarly evokes the movement of the sunbeams unpicking the threads of the sea.[316]

The binding of Urizen to the sun in *The Book of Los* (1795, 5.47-56) and Blake's depiction of Urizen as a mechanised solar deity in 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece to *Europe* (1794) is informed by the destructive capacity of the sun in *DRN*. In fact, Urizen's imprisonment within his solar sphere harkens to Lucretius' own admission that superstitious fear 'must needs be scattered, not by the rays of the sun ['*radii solis*'] and the gleaming shafts of day ['*lucida tela diei*'], but by the outer view and the inner law of nature' (*DRN* 67 ii.58-61; 109 iii.91-3; 236 vi.40-2).[317] Urizenic light is unable to pierce the darkness of Acheron, unlike the comforting words which affix the third iteration of the sunlight metaphor: '[w]herefore I will hasten the more to weave the thread of my task in my discourse' (236 vi.42-3). Earlier in Book One, Lucretius had already set out 'to weave again at the web, which is the task of my discourse' (40 i.418-9). To weave words ('*pertexere dictis*') in one's philosophical treatise – as *De Rerum Natura* becomes the woven 'text,' from the Latin '*texere*' ('to weave') and the Greek *teckhne* (skill or craft) – is therefore to have 'unravelled' ('*dissolui*') (vi.46) the secrets of the heavens and of the earth.[318]

Lucretius maintains a similar context of textile production during his exposition on the union ('*coniuncta teneri*') of mind and body (110 iii.135-6). Lucretius adds that it is absurd to conceive of the soul as coming into being without a birth because the soul and body are

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[316] Nature herself, the 'creatress of things ['*primum natura creatrix*'], was first a pattern ['*specimen origo*'] for sowing and the beginning of grafting' (*DRN* 231 v.1360-1).

[317] The warp is the beginning of nature and *De Rerum Natura*; for, as Lucretius professes the importance of the study of nature, he uses a weaving image ('*exordia*,' i.149) to describe the first rule that 'nothing is ever begotten of nothing by divine will' (32 i.150-1). As Jane Snyder notes, '[a]lthough *exordium* had by the first century BC already acquired its rhetorical sense of "beginning of a speech," its literal meaning had not been supplanted… Lucretius' use of the plural, *exordia*, suggests that he is thinking primarily of the root meaning of the term: *exordium* is from *exordior*, "to lay the warp of," "to begin a web," and in the plural would thus seem best to be translated as "warp threads"' (1983, 39). Kathryn Kruger adds that '[b]y working threads back and forth across a warp, the shuttle is comparable to the speaking tongue. This analogy was probably suggested to the Greeks because of the sound a shuttle produces when thrown across a wide warp, a whirring sound suggestive of song' (2001, 56).

[318] Blake appears to both condemn and appropriate this context. In *Milton*, for instance, the Shadowy Female's garments are woven with 'sighs & heart broken lamentations' and 'sufferings poverty pain & woe' (*M* 545 i.18.6-8), but then the clouds of Ololon also fold around Jesus 'a Garment dipped in blood / Written without & without in woven letters: & the Writing / Is the Divine Revelation' (606 ii.42.12-4). Jerusalem explains the distinction to Albion: 'Why should Punishment Weave the Veil with Iron Wheels of War / When Forgiveness might it Weave with Wings of Cherubim' (*J* 679 i.22.34-5).

united from their inception and incubation in the womb (iii.343-5;456-8). It would be impossible to have the soul 'grafted' ('*adnecti*') onto the body because 'the soul is so interlaced ['*conexa*'] through veins, flesh, sinews, and bone' (129 iii.689-71). Whilst admitting that it would 'be ever so profitable for them [souls] to fashion ['*facere*'] a body wherein to enter,' there is no conceivable way in which this could be accomplished:

> [s]ouls then do not fashion ['*faciunt*'] for themselves bodies and frames ['*artus*'].
> Nor yet can it be that they are grafted ['*insinuentur*'] in bodies already made; for
> neither will they be able to be closely interwoven ['*conexae*']…

> (130 iii.736-9).

Rather, 'the two cling together by common roots, and it is seen that they cannot be torn asunder without destruction' (116 iii.324-6). [319] If body and soul were 'torn asunder' ('*divelli*') it would be 'destruction' ('*pernicie*') for both as the atomistic ties – the 'first-beginnings so closely interlaced from their very birth' (117 iii.330-1) – are 'dissolved' ('*dissoluantur*') (117 iii.328-9).[320]

Blake exploits this textile imagery throughout his mythopoeia: both cosmically, where the celestial satellites revolve on 'the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night' (*M* 518 i.4.10), and somatically as vegetative bodies are woven 'fibre by fibre' (*J* 808 iv.80.63) on Enitharmon's looms inside Cathedron. The two contexts are often conflated or can be read as contiguous, such as when 'Enitharmon's Looms & Los's Forges' work concomitantly to create the physical frameworks of postlapsarian existence:

> The times & spaces of Mortal Life the Sun the Moon the Stars
> In periods of Pulsative furor beating into wedges & bars

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[319] In the 1743 English edition of *DRN*, the anonymous translator writes that '[t]he *Epicureans* believed an Animal to be as it were a Web in the Loom, that the Body is as the Chain, and the Soul the Woof, so that the Intermixture of each with the other composes the whole Work; but if either of them be dissolv'd, the other, and therefore both together, must be dissolved likewise' (227). Blake reframes the woven ties between body and soul as the Chain of Jealousy which roots itself into Orc (*FZ* v.62.17-32; 63.6). Urizen, when he sees his fallen children, laments that 'He could not take their fetters off for they grew from the soul' (362 vi.71[2].1).

[320] The description of the 'interlaced' ('*consorti praedita*') 'union' ('*coniuncta teneri*') and 'mutual union' ('*mutua vitalis*') of soul and body recalls the way in which the earth and the heavens are woven together like a fabric; for it is equally true that the soul and body cannot be separated 'without hurt and ruin; so that you can see, since the cause of their life is linked ['*coniunctast*'] together, that their natures too must be linked ['*coniunctam*'] in one' (346-8).

> Then drawing into wires the terrific Passions & Affections
>
> Of Spectrous dead.

> (*FZ* 417 viii.113[1].1-10).

Although Enitharmon weaves the Web of Life from 'the ashes of the Dead' (*M* 523 i.6.29),[321] Los claims that without his involvement 'No Human Form [would exist] but only a Fibrous Vegetation' (*M* 563 i.24.37).[322] Indeed, the sons of Los provide a welfare service to these new beings as they 'clothe them & feed & provide houses & fields' (*M* 570 i.26.30). It is this process which Satan, Og, and Sihon pervert when they 'Build Mills of resistless wheels to unwind the soft threads & reveal / Naked of their clothing the poor spectres before the accusing heavens' (19-20).[323] It is by picking apart the threads of vegetative existence like the Lucretian sun and 'weav[ing] them anew in the forms / Of dark death & despair' (418 31-2) that Satan compounds postlapsarian suffering.[324]

'Satans Watch-Fiends' similarly attempt to ambush Los (*M* i.29.47-50), allowing Rahab – 'the System of Moral Virtue' (*J* 701 ii.35[39].10) – and Tirzah – the daughter of Rahab – to 'Weave the black Woof of Death upon Entuthon Benython' (the void of into-nothing-beyond-nothing) until they 'are covered with Human gore / Upon the treddles of the Loom' (56-9). Tirzah is one of the five daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 27.1) and the 'Five Females' (*M* 588 ii.34.27) reappear in Ulro like 'a vast Polypus / Of living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space' (24-5). By sabotaging Los' humanising influence, Tirzah and her sisters slip into the same phenomenological non-existence with the 'Shadowy Mother' spinning the polypus 'from their bowels with songs of amorous delight' (27-8).[325]

Tirzah and her sisters are therefore 'compelld / To weave the Woof of Death' (590 35.8) because it is part of their natural (female) inclination to propagate postlapsarian

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[321] In 'Night the First' of *The Four Zoas*, Enion loses control of the weaving process as her woof becomes animated (*FZ* i.5.19-22).

[322] Los gives 'a body to Falshood that it may be cast off for ever. / With Demonstrative Science piercing Apollyon with his own bow! / God is within, & without! he is even in the depths of Hell!' (*J* 654 i.12.13-5).

[323] Cf. *FZ* 417-8 viii.113[1].18-32.

[324] Orc, for instance, asks the Shadowy Female 'Wherefore dost thou Create & Weave this Satan for a Covering' (*M* 546 i.18.30).

[325] 'The head of the Polypus […] is Verulam, home of the empiricist Bacon' (Frosch 1974, 54).

existence.[326] Mapped onto the cosmos, this industrial Generation constitutes the cycle of Eternal Death which entraps all mankind:

> Loud roll the Weights & Spindles over the whole Earth let down
>
> On all sides round to the Four Quarters of the World, eastward on
>
> Europe to Euphrates & Hindu, to Nile & back in Clouds
>
> Of Death across the Atlantic to America North & South

> (*M* 590-1 35.14-7).

Biological birth is a form of weaving from the bowels (womb/loom/tomb) such as the spider-like activity of the spun polypus.[327] Children are woven in the womb and rewoven on the loom as postlapsarian existence itself is woven like a dream: 'Till the shrunken eyes clouded over / Discernd not the woven hypocrisy' (*BU* 257 25.31-2).[328]

All aspects of postlapsarian life are therefore regulated by various forms of weaving, including the way in which time itself becomes a woven tapestry of human threads: 'The dark changes' which Los binds 'With rivets of iron & brass' (*BU* 247 8.10-1) organises both time – 'chains new & new / Numb'ring with links. hours, days & years' (248 10.17-8) – and

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[326] The Daughters of Albion weave somatic bodies (veil for the soul) in the same way the Mundane Shell forms an encrustation (veil for spirituality) around the Earth (*J* iv.83.33-48).

[327] Nelson Hilton notes that 'polypus' may be an innuendo on 'polypuss' (1982/3, 167). For Blake's association of the womb with looms, see Damon (1988, 74), Connolly (2002, 118), and Sklar (2011, 256-7). For the association of the womb with tombs, see Rose (1968, 217; 222), McClellan (1977, 205-6), Hilton (1983, 22), and Rawlinson (2003, 209-10). Kathleen Raine provides a Neoplatonist reading, deriving Blake's imagery from Porphyry's cave ([1969]2002, 86-7; [1979]2002, 8-11). It is also possible that Blake derived this imagery from Lucretius (84-5 ii.569-74; 105 ii.1172-3; 194 v.259-60).

[328] In the Prophetic Books, Mother Earth assumes the role of the Female Will and combines 'Sexual organization' with the theological strictures of Natural Religion in 'nets of beauty & delusion,' Vala's 'shuttles / Drop with the gore of the slain' (*J* 805 iv.79.68-78) as the individual body and the body of the Church become weaponised 'In cruel holiness' (806 80.8; 777 iii.68.14-5). Vala weaves a 'Scarlet Tabernacle' (679 i.22.29-30). It is in this sense that Blake often plays on the homophone 'veil' as a (female) covering and 'vale' (and Vala) as slang for female genitalia – often the hymen (i.20.30-1). See also Vala's 'secret Cave' (692 ii.29[33].50). The epistemological and physiognomic diminution of mankind occurs 'Beneath the dark net of infection' (30) which – like Lucretius' enmeshed *simulacra* caught in the spider's web of the mind – Urizen spreads over the cities of men as his 'cold shadow follow'd behind him / Like a spiders web,' like 'a Female in embrio,' becoming 'the Net of Religion' (256 25.9-10; 18; 257 22). The Net of Religion is woven into the brain (*BU* 25.20-1). A similar process is repeated in *The Four Zoas*, where Urizen promises to give 'Chains of dark ignorance & cords of twisted self conceit' (*FZ* 357 vi.68.22). Urizenic creation, therefore, provides the blueprint upon which Vala and Tirzah and her sisters later spin vegetative bodies and the polypus of time and space; so, the Female Will can be read as the actualisation of the 'Female in embrio' which is born from Urizen's 'cold shadow.' See also Milton's *Paradise Lost* (i.17-22). It is perhaps in this sense that 'the death-image of Urizen' (*BU* 251 15.2) maps 'this vegetable Earth [...as] a shadow' (*M* 578 ii.29.22).

space (both mental and physical).[329] The schematisation of the celestial satellites suggests that astronomical calculations are both a form of 'numbering' and 'numbing' as an empirical understanding of the universe ties the senses by a 'numb ring' to material objects.[330] As Thomas Hobbes sets out in *De Corpore* (1655, translated into English 1656),

> Numbring is an act of the Mind; and therefore it is all one to say, *Time is the Number of Motion according to Former and Later*; and *Time is a Phantasme of Motion Numbred*.

> (1656, 70).

All postlapsarian life is thereby reduced to experiences of sensory perception, although this epistemological basis obfuscates our ability to comprehend the structures of postlapsarian life such as in *Jerusalem*, where the gate of Los (which admits transitory souls) 'cannot be found / By Satans Watch-fiends tho' they search numbering every grain / Of sand on Earth every night' (*J* 701 ii.34[38]-35[39].59; 1-2).[331]

Remaining with the numbing act of numbering atomistic creation, the nocturnal activity of numbering grains of sand is by analogy mapped onto the 'Numb'ring […of] hours, days & years' which Blake exploits in an explicitly atomistic context in the notebook poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau':

> And every sand becomes a Gem
> Reflected in the beams divine
> Blown back they blind the mocking Eye
> But still in Israels paths they shine
>
> The Atoms of Democritus
> And Newtons Particles of light
> Are sands upon the Red sea shore

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[329] Mortals refer to Los as Time (*M* i.24.68). Los himself declares that 'the swing of my Hammer shall measure the starry round' (*J* 824 iv.88.2).
[330] Cf. Eron (2012-3, [no pagination]).
[331] In Ben Jonson's comedy *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), one of the tasks which Hell thought an 'exquisite torment' was 'numbring atomes' (v.ii.8-9). Jonson also uses the phrase 'out of *rerum natura*' (iii.i.35) which he repeats from *Epicoene* (1609) where Truewit asksed, 'is the bull, bear, and horse in *rerum natura* still?' (iii.ii.5-6).

Where Israels tents do shine so bright

(*NP* 494 5-12).[332]

When we question the divine, the innumerable grains of sand like the innumerable stars in the sky blind the 'mocking Eye' which attempts to quantify 'Atoms' and 'Particles of light': 'Every Universal Form, was become barren mountains of Moral / Virtue: and every Minute Particular hardend into grains of sand' (*J* 725 ii.45[31].19-20). The spiritually enlightened, on the other hand, see through materiality to the spiritual foundations of creation.[333] As Blake reminds us in another miscellaneous poem, those who possess the Prophetic Character are able 'To see a World in a Grain of Sand' (*PM* 506 1).

This theoretical basis constitutes the epistemological limitations of the search conducted by Satan's Watch Fiends in *Jerusalem*, as they are inhibited by their own reductive reasoning:

> There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find
>
> Nor can his Watch Fiends find it: tis translucent & has many Angles
>
> But he who finds it will find Oothoons palace, for within
>
> Opening into Beulah every angle is a lovely heaven
>
> But should the Watch Fiends find it, they would call it Sin…

(*J* 705 37[41].15-9).

Blake seems to deliberately mock 'Satans Watch-fiends' (*J* 701 ii.35[39].1) through the homonymic play on 'Watch' as both 'to look' and as a mechanical timepiece,[334] an

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[332] Blake had engraved a full-page portrait of Democritus the 'Laughing Philosopher' – from whom Epicurus derives his own atomistic philosophy – after Rubens for Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1788). Blake's use of Democritean atoms and Newtonian particles recalls Edward Benlowes' *Theophila* (1652), Canto V (Section XCV): 'And there, on every *Angel-trodden Way* / Loose *Pearls,* instead of *Pebbles,* play, / Like duskie atoms in the *Suns* embrightning *Ray*' (79).

[333] In *Jerusalem*, despite the fact that Albion's Minute Particulars have been 'degraded & murderd,' they remain 'the jewels of Albion' (*J* 725 ii.45[31].7-17).

[334] Blake may be indebted to *Paradise Lost* where Satan explains that a new assault on heaven is futile since 'what evasion bear him safe / Through the strict sentries and stations thick / Of angels watching round?' (Milton, 42 ii.411-3). Cf. ii.129-34; iv.776; 782-4; ix.57-62; xi.120-8. In Book VI, when 'night her course began' (153 vi.406), the cherubim resemble stars as 'Michael and his angels prevalent / Encamping, placed in guard their watches round, / Cherubic waving fires' (154 vi.411-3). It is the vigilance of these 'flaming ministers [who] watch and tend / Their earthy charge' that Satan 'dread[s]' (211 ix.156-8). In turn, Satan tells his fallen comrades 'intermit no watch / Against a wakeful foe' (43 ii.462-3). Cf. x.427-41.

association which first arises in *The Book of Urizen* where Los, 'Beating still on his rivets of iron,' divides 'The horrible night into watches' (*BU* 248 10.8-10).[335] This scene draws on the biblical assignment of 'night watches' (Psa. 63.6; 119.148) where the Israelites split the night into three watches: 'the beginning of the watches' (Lam. 2.19), 'the middle watch' (Jud. 7.19),[336] and 'the morning watch' (Ex. 14.24; 1Sam.11.11).[337] After the Roman conquest, this included 'the fourth watch of the night' (Mat. 14.25) which divided the night into 'even,' 'midnight,' 'cockcrowing,' and 'morning' (Mark 13.35).[338]

It is the dawn of the 'morning watch' which Blake associates with the spirituality of the rising sun/Son, signalled by the release of an angelic lark (Los' messenger) to carry news across the world (*J* ii.35.61-36.12).[339] In fact, the lark nests at the Gate of Los, which is the eastern gate (the rising sun) of Golgonooza and, later in Chapter 4, the lark's song harmonises with 'the Song of Los, the Song that he sings on his Watch' (820 iv.85.21).

For those who are receptive to poetic inspiration and spiritual enlightenment, the morning watch 'when the morning odours rise abroad' (*M* 592 ii.35.48) constitutes an epiphanic moment; but, for those under the dominion of the Selfhood, the morning watch continues to confound the empirical eye:

> There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find
>
> Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious find
>
> This Moment & it multiply. & when it once is found
>
> It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed…

---

[335] Cf. *America* (212 6.1). In Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, Adam tells Eve that he has heard '[c]elestial voices in the midnight air… / While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk… / Divide the night' (104 iv.682-8).

[336] Gideon divides the Israelites of 'three hundred men *into* three companies' (Jud. 7.16). Saul similarly 'put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch' (1Sam.11.11).

[337] The morning watch (Ex. 14.24) recalls Blake's 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece to *Europe*.

[338] The spiritually enlightened do not require a sentry, as their 'soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say*, *more than* they that watch for the morning' (Psa. 130.6). See the eighteenth-century theologian George Horne's reading of Psalms 130.6 in *Commentary on the Psalms* ([1771]1812, 167-8). The expectant soul rises before the rising sun, before the weary sentinels, and before the Levites in the Temple: it anticipates, even heralds, the morning and offers its oblations to God: 'thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day' (Psa. 25.5; cf. 62.1; 5).

[339] In Chapter 4 of *Jerusalem*, the Daughters of Albion supplicate Los to 'Arise upon thy Watches let us see thy Globe of fire' (*J* 818 iv.84.27).

(42-5).[340]

Time becomes a burden to Satan's Watch Fiends because they are subjected to its linear progression.[341] However, 'the Industrious' are able to reimagine the flow of time – expressed by two streams, one flowing through Golgonooza, Beulah, and on towards Eden and the other flowing through the 'Aerial Void' back again to Golgonooza (49-53) – allowing them to carry the moment of illumination forward throughout the day. As Northrop Frye states, the 'merging of imagination and time is the axis on which all Blake's thought turns' (1990, 299). Ololon, who descends to Los and Enitharmon along Milton's track during the morning watch (which has opened a way to Eternity (35.34-6)), finds that 'time nor space was / To the perception of the Virgin Ololon' (593 36.17-8). Moreover, when she appears to Blake at his cottage in Felpham, her presence reaffirms his belief that 'Satanic Space is delusion' (594 20).[342]

This section has addressed the way in which the construction of Urizen's body is coterminous with the construction of celestial satellites and the passage of postlapsarian time.[343] Los utilises the same material (mostly iron but also brass) and the same techniques (metallurgy alongside gins, nets, and traps) to give substance to Urizen's 'formless unmeasurable death' (*BU* 247 7.9) as well as the 'ages' which begin to roll over 'Like a dark

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[340] Blake continues to associate morning/enlightenment with industry as Los walks with 'the red Globe of Fire […] from furnace to furnace directing the Labourers' (*J* 819 iv.85.19-20).

[341] During the Renaissance, '[a]s time was isolated from events and given the status of an independent entity, it became an increasingly potent enemy of man' (Cohen 2014, 155).

[342] When the Daughters of Albion unite in Rahab, they form Gwendolen's falsehood into 'a Space & an Allegory' which they name Canaan (*J* 818-9 iv.84.31-85.2) after which Los takes 'Reuben from his twelvefold wandrings & led him into it' (4). Twelve is a significant biblical number: Jacob had twelve sons (Gen. 35.23-6) who formed the twelve tribes of Israel (49.28), Jesus had twelve disciples (Matthias replaced Judas in Acts 1.16-26), and the holy city of Jerusalem has twelve gates, upon which sit twelve angels representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21.12). The number twelve represents authority, harmony, and completion. It would not have been lost on Blake that there is also an astrological significance, as there are twelve signs of the zodiac, as well as a horological significance, as there are twelve hours on a clockface. In fact, Blake amalgamates these contexts when Los plants the seeds of the twelve tribes of Israel in Canaan 'And gave a Time & Revolution to the Space Six Thousand Years' (*J* 819 iv.85.6). The lapse of six thousand years marks the Second Coming of Christ as each millennium is a day of Creation (Psa. 90.4; Pet.2 3.8) with the final millennium encompassing the reign of Christ (Rev. 20.2-3).

[343] During his discussion on Plotinus, the seventeenth-century theologian Ralph Cudworth observes that mankind cannot conceive of a timeless realm 'because our selves are *Essentially Involved* in *Time*, and accordingly are our Conceptions Chained, Fettered, and Confined, to that narrow and dark Dungeon, that our selves are Imprisoned in' (1678, 781).

waste' (10.3).[344] The 'rivets' (8.11) which bind Urizen's body and the 'rivets' which 'with links. hours, days & years' divide 'The horrible night into watches' (248 10.8-18) reveal that Urizenic creation is the materialisation of Urizen's 'dark changes' (247 8.10) – both the psychological projection of *phantasia* as well as the ontological divisions occurring inside Urizen and Los – onto the Mundane Shell (the circumference of the visible universe).[345] As Los takes the hammer of Urthona, he forms the 'hours' and 'The days & years. in chains of iron round the limbs of Urizen / Linkd hour to hour & day to night & night to day & year to year / In period of pulsative furor' (*FZ* 339 iv.52.9;53.1-2).[346] Mankind subsequently accepts the revolution of celestial satellites as a standard of time and thereby perpetuates Urizenic *phantasia* as phenomenological reality.

As I will continue to detail in the next section, the homonymic irony that Satan's Watch Fiends are bound to the clockwork mechanism of the physical universe – but are unable to see all the moments of the day – epitomises Blake's condemnation of the ratiocination of natural philosophers who attempt to understand the material, rather than the spiritual, foundations of existence.[347]

III. The Cosmic Clock

Having established Blake's use of time as a key signifier of mankind's postlapsarian existence as well as the introduction of 'watches' as a means of measuring (and becoming bound by) the passage of time, in order to contextualise Blake's work this section will now trace horological symbolism in relation to the concept of the *machina mundi* as it was expressed in eighteenth-century anthropological and cosmological poems. I will then extend this poetic framework by locating its specific scientific context in Enlightenment discourses as

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[344] '…others of the Sons of Los build Moments & Minutes & Hours / And Days & Months & Years & Ages & Periods; wondrous buildings' (*M* 576 i.28.44-5).
[345] Blake casts Los in the mould of James Thomson's Newton, who 'bound the *Suns*, / And *Planets* to their spheres! th' unequal task / Of human kind till then' (1734, 52 17-9).
[346] The apocalypse is described as the unravelling of these chains: 'rivn link from link the bursting Universe explodes / All things reversd flew from their centers' (*FZ* 446 ix.122.26-7).
[347] The evocation of satanic blindness recalls Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 6.9-10) that the unenlightened have eyes but cannot see. Cf. Jer. 5.21; Ez. 12.2; Acts 28.26; Mat. 13.13-4; Mark 4.12; 8.18.

well as its arbitrary attribution to a Newtonian God. I will then conclude this chapter in Section IV by considering how the construction of Urizen's body with the same cosmic chains as those which measure the passage of time are pictorially represented in 'The Ancient of Days.'

The division of *The Four Zoas* into 'Nine Nights' has been read as largely indebted to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-5) for which Blake had produced 537 watercolours between 1795-6 (Richard Edwards' edition was published in 1797).[348] Although neither poem is divided into 'biblical' watches,[349] Young does employ horological metaphors evocative of Lucretius' *machina mundi*:

> From old Eternity's mysterious orb,
>
> Was Time cut off, and cast beneath the skies;
>
> The skies, which watch him in his new abode,
>
> Measuring his motions by revolving spheres;
>
> That horologe machinery divine.
>
> (1863, 27 ii.208-12).[350]

Later in 'Night Ninth,' Young rearticulates the *machina mundi* as 'circles intricate,' a 'mystic maze' which '[w]eave[s] the grand cipher of Omnipotence' (272-3 ix.1132-3) and '[t]his exquisite machine, with all its wheels' (278 1323). The 'sonorous instruments' (273 ix.1150) of the spheres not only '[m]easure duration (274 ix.1172) but by their revolutions provide evidence of 'th' existence of a God' (1186) for it is with the senses that we at first discern the divinity of existence (1176-81) – thereafter by the flight of imagination (1217-39; cf.

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[348] For Blake's commission of, and debt to, *Night Thoughts*, see Helmstadter (1970, 27-54), Bentley (1975, 4; 89-94), Hilton (1983, 58), Rosso (1993, 48-9), Ackroyd (1997, 205-8), and Jeremy Tambling's *Blake's Night Thoughts* (2005).

[349] There does, however, appear to be a biblical framework in place during the invocation for Lorenzo to remain '[f]ix'd as a sentinel… / Lest slumber steal one moment o'er thy soul, / And Fate surprise thee nodding. Watch, be strong' (1863, 113 v.889-93)

[350] Horological metaphors continue to dominate 'Night Fifth.' For instance, Young chastises those individuals who, despite 'see[ing] Time's furrows on another brow,' fail to reflect upon their own mortality but, rather, with grey hairs on their head pursue youthful activities '[l]ike damag'd clocks, whose hand and bell dissent; / Folly sings six, while Nature points at twelve' (105-6 627-35). Blake similarly appropriates the association between false time telling and folly: 'The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock, but of wisdom: no clock can measure' (*MHH* 183 7.16-7).

vi.246-56).[351] In fact, at the denouement of 'Night Ninth,' Young compares his 'song' as shooting 'Beyond the flaming limits of the world' (311 ix.2416), echoing Lucretius' praise for Epicurus as he 'passed on far beyond the fiery walls of the world' (*DRN* 29 i.73).[352]

Whilst for Young, the numbering of celestial satellites provides a way of ascertaining God's providence (ix.1303-21), Blake associated astronomy – and, specifically, the act of 'numbering' – with empirical enquiry.[353] Nevertheless, Blake likely derived his understanding of the contrasting effects of time (on Satan's Watch Fiends and the 'Industrious') from *Night Thoughts* where those attempting to break 'all the chains of Providence' become 'moated round, with fathomless destruction' (101 v.476-81).[354] Young calls on individuals to repent and to contemplate their mortality (our deathbed's are '[t]he seat of wisdom!') and to '[n]umber their moments' since 'in every clock' we may '[s]tart at the voice of an eternity' (102 497-501). Like Blake's momentous grains of sand (*J* 37[41].15-9; iv.85.42-5), 'Time is dealt out by particles; and each, / [Is] mingled with the streaming sands of life' as each tomorrow becomes 'another world' (Young 1863, 16 i.368-76).[355]

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[351] James Thomson similarly notes in *The Seasons* that there is a time 'For those whom Wisdom, and whom Nature charm, / To steal themselves from the degenerate crowd, / And soar above this little scene of things' (1733, 53 909-11).

[352] Cyril Bailey notes that 'Lucretius conceived of our world as a sphere, of which the outer coat was a circling stream of fiery ether (v.457-70). The expression here is then to be taken quite literally' (1948, 280-1). In a dedicatory poem, James Thomson similarly envisages Isaac Newton taking 'his ardent flight / Thro' the blue Infinite' (1734, 54 57-8). Cf. Baker (2010, 275) and Hopkins (2010, 267).

[353] Although Young largely adopts the iconography of the Newtonian world-system (Schaffer 2011, 90), he is not uncritical of the extent to which such mechanical divinity can inspire piety. In 'Night Ninth,' Young criticises the notion of 'a universe [as] an orrery' (1863, 262 ix.789) which falsely assumes that heavenly satellites are *identical to* God rather than a *representation of* God. Richard Blackmore notes the same error in *The Nature of Man* (1711): 'Some blinded by the Splendor of the Sun, / Lost in the spacious Skies, and govern'd by the Moon, / Mistook for Heav'n's blest King his royal Seat; / And deify'd his Throne and Rooms of State' (1720, 28-9).

[354] Urizen's battles with his self-bred shapes (*BU* 243 3.13-7) and fires (244 4.14-23) recalls how 'time turns torment, when man turns a fool. / We rave, we wrestle, with great Nature's plan; / We thwart the Deity; and 'tis decreed, / Who thwart his will shall contradict their own. / Hence our unnatural quarrels with ourselves; / Our thoughts at enmity; our bosom-broils' (Young 1863, 26 ii.166-71). As Young declares in 'Night Eighth,' '[t]here is a time, when toil must be preferr'd, / Or joy, by mistim'd fondness, is undone' (218 viii.791-2). James Thomson similarly writes *The Seasons* that the savage wastes time 'till *Industry* approach'd, / And rous'd him from his miserable sloth' (1733, 9 72-3). These eighteenth-century conceptions of labour are indebted to Virgil's *Georgics* where man is prompted by Jupiter (1.121-4) to learn to use tools (121-59) and through graft conquer nature (145), an anthropological cycle which was similarly expounded by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* (v.925-1457). Stefanie Lethbridge notes that 'Thomson's "Praise of Industry"' […] recapitulates a common literary and cultural theme' (2003, 112). Andrew McRae similarly reads *The Seasons* as the epitome of the formal georgic in England with its emphasis on rural life and agricultural labour (1996, 198-9). Cf. Ralph Cohen (1969, 1112). Blake was clearly following in this tradition by suggesting that 'the Industrious' are capable of enlightenment.

[355] The semantic consistency between the opening lines of 'Auguries of Innocence' and the notebook poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' may have been inspired by *Night Thoughts* (vi.227-33).

The use of clockwork imagery in *Night Thoughts* predominantly refers to God's cosmic designs, as divine instruments measure the movement of the spheres and chart the passage of time. Similar symbolism informs James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-46) where God '[a]djusts, sustains, and agitates the whole' and where 'with such perfection fram'd / Is this complex, amazing scheme of things' that '[t]h' informing author in his work appears; / His grandeur in the heavens: the sun, and moon' (1731, 58-9 802-8).[356] The clearest evocation of the *machine mundi* comes in 'Summer' where God has set 'a perfect world-revolving power' to fix the planets to the courses: 'faithful; not excentric once: / So pois'd, and perfect is the vast machine' (1735, 5 32-41). Indeed, littered throughout 'Summer' are various references to mechanical regularity: gravitational force is 'a chain indissoluble' (8 102), commerce is 'a golden chain' (10 141), the universal order is a 'mighty chain of beings' (19 301), and all these chains are bound to '[t]he chain of causes and effects to *Him*' (62 1150).[357]

Whilst Thomson's model for *The Seasons* was largely indebted to Virgil's *Georgics*,[358] Lucretius remains at the very least 'a shadowy presence' throughout the poem (Sambrook 1981, xxiv).[359] Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie stress this point more firmly, arguing that the entire structure of *The Seasons* draws on *De Rerum Natura* (2010, 4). By the end of the eighteenth century, Richard Payne Knight was openly adopting 'the general design' of Book Five as well as 'many particular passages' of *DRN* in *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796, v). [360] In fact, Knight begins his poem (3 i.1-4) by adopting the cosmological model from Book One

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[356] Thomson largely imbues nature with a deistic, rather than a clockwork, divinity. See also 'A Hymn on the Seasons' (1734, 45-7 40-72) and 'A Poem to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton' (59 140-3). Nevertheless, the night is divided into biblical watches (59 813).

[357] In *The Plants* (1808-11), William Tighe similarly writes of 'the elastic band […] that hold[s] / In gravitating chains the balanced spheres' (1808, 22 i.343-5). Thomas Bewick writes about 'every link of the great chain' (xxii) and 'the connecting links in the great chain of nature' (93) in the *History of British Birds* (1809). John Evans evokes the same teleological link in *The Bees* (1806-13) when describing the bond between the queen bee and her workers: 'such the strong-link'd chain of sweet controul, / Which binds to one fair head th' accordant whole' (50 ii.525-6).

[358] Cf. Mustard (1908, 13-20); Chalker (1963, 41-56); von Albrecht (1997, 702); Lethbridge (2003, 22-3). Rachel Crawford claims that Thomson 'wrote the fundamental georgic poem of the century' (1998, 126).

[359] The conclusions to 'Summer' and 'Autumn' are especially redolent (Pellicer 2018, 127-8). Alan McKillop notes that Thomson was likely influenced by Virgil and Lucretius as well as Cicero (1942, 91).

[360] Although Blake was not personally acquainted with Knight, he was aware of *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786). For Blake's incorporation of Priapic phalluses, see Whittaker (1999, 120-1), Hobson (2000, 11), Otto (2001, 6-8), and Brylowe (2019, 78-81). Blake had produced engravings for the Society of Antiquaries of which Knight was a member and became vice president in 1803 as an apprentice to James Basire, who was also that Society's official engraver. Blake may also have been aware of Knight's membership to the Society of Dilettanti, a scholastic club of noblemen who sponsored the study of classical texts.

(i.146-634) and Book Two (ii.216-93).[361] More pertinent to the current discussion, the cosmic chains of the *machine mundi* which structure Thomson's *The Seasons* are rearticulated by Knight as 'fate's eternal fetters' according to which '[m]echanic nature goes her endless round' (3 i.9-10; cf. 32-3 ii.99-146). Society itself is also bound by links that order 'the chaos of mankind' (17-8),[362] where the anthropological model (cf. 21 451-60; 30 ii.73-6) is recast as a microcosmic mirror of cosmological creation which 'connect[s] the links of nature's endless chain' (4 42). All existence, Knight states, is 'obedient to mechanic laws' (5 59).[363]

Whilst Erasmus Darwin was at pains to stress God as the First Cause in *Zoonomia* (1794),[364] the same mechanical language informs 'the perpetual chain of causes and effects […] of the natural world' (530).[365] Indeed, Martin Priestman notes that whilst neither Darwin nor Knight refer to one another, their work 'shows an almost uncanny resemblance […to] Lucretian materialism' (2016, 169). Patricia Fara even refers to Lucretius as both writers' 'major literary hero' (2012, 58).[366] As I will explore in more detail during my analysis of Blake's 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece in Section IV, Darwin also associates heliotropic plants with astrolabes and orreries in *The Botanic Garden* (1789-91; 'The Loves of the Plants' ii.165-84 and 'Economy of Vegetation' ii.501-20). Moreover, whilst *The Temple of Nature; or, the Origin of Society* (1803) is principally written in the georgic tradition of Thomson's *The Seasons*, it follows a similar didactic strain to Knight's *The Progress of Civil Society*. Industrial links bind society 'in golden chains' (9 i.8; cf. 64 ii.92; 76 250), 'the long line of Being' is linked by a 'vital chain' (57 ii.19-20), the association of ideas are part of 'the sparkling rings of Fancy's chains,' the mind's 'mechanic powers' (129-30 iii.276-89) become

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[361] Although Knight attempts to disparage the atheistic origins of materiality by asking 'whether one great all-pervading soul / Moves in each part, an animates the whole' (5-6) – echoing Virgil's '*mens agitat molem*' ('mind moves matter'); cf. *Aeneid* (2013, 136 vi.724-34) – the fact that he refuses to support his own addendum (15-6) suggests a closer affiliation to Lucretius and the anthropological model (v.925-1457).

[362] John Evans similarly wrote about 'the chain of soft humanity' in *The Bees* (1806, 30 i.374).

[363] Knight notes in *Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology* that '[a]n opinion very generally prevailed among the ancients, that all the constituent parts of the great machine of the universe were mutually dependent upon each other' (1892, 133).

[364] Darwin's teleological model allows us to trace the 'perpetual chain of causes and effects, whose first link is rivetted to the throne of God' (532) and thereby climb 'the links of these chains of being, till we ascend to the Great Source of all things' (533).

[365] Whilst James Logan claims that Lucretius' presence in Darwin is 'ghostlike' (1936, 121), Philip K. Wilson has more recently suggested that Darwin was 'committed to an atomic theory of matter' and his 'heavy reliance upon Lucretius is suggestive of his support of mechanistic, materialistic beliefs' (2005, 123).

[366] Cf. de J. Jackson (2016, 155).

manifest in the printing press which '[c]hain'd down in character, the winged thought' (177 iv.266), and the universe is catalysed by 'Galvanic chain-work' (103 iii.25). [367] In fact, the initial stage of Creation is a process of welding saturated with magnetic imagery which recalls the creation of Urizen's body and time in *The Book of Urizen*: '[p]ress drop to drop, to atom atom bind, / Link sex to sex, or rivet mind to mind' (10 i.25-6).[368]

Even in texts which were decidedly anti-Lucretian, similar semantics associated with the *machina mundi* permeate the divine cosmographical blueprint. In *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* (1712), for instance, Richard Blackmore asks whether the mechanical proficiency of the *machina mundi* does not, in fact, prove Christian teleology:

> But if the earth, and each erratic world,
>
> Around their sun their proper centre whirl'd,
>
> Compose but one extended vast machine,
>
> And from one spring their motions all begin;
>
> Does not so wide, so intricate a frame,
>
> Yet so harmonious, sov'reign art proclaim?
>
>
> (1806, 94).

'This wide machine,' continues Blackmore, 'this mighty system' is with such skill put together that if astronomers were capable of understanding the motions of all the planets through their telescopes, then '[w]ould not this view convincing marks impart / Of perfect prudence, and stupendous art?' (94-6). Blackmore praises '[t]he masters form'd in Newton's famous school' for studying with 'mathematic laws […] nature's steps' and for 'piously' ascribing to God the cosmic forces which weave together the fabric of the universe (96).[369] In fact, Isaac Newton is praised by both Edward Young (ix.1479-80) and by James Thomson

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[367] Darwin is working with the contemporary belief that the electric ether consisted of positive (vitreous) and negative (resinous) electricity and that motion is a consequence of the attraction and repulsion of the chemical affinities of bodies. The magnetic ether can similarly be said to consist of two fluids, one which attracts the compass needle and the other which repels it.

[368] Darwin repeats the sexual semantics in Canto II (76 ii.239-50). Darwin goes on to exaggerate this imagery in Canto III (103-4 iii.18-30).

[369] In contradistinction, the seventeenth-century classicist and Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth argued that the 'Final Causality' of natural (and artificial things 'as a House or Clock') cannot be understood 'meerly from *Matter* and *Mechanism*, or the Necessary and *Unguided Motion* thereof; without *Design* or *Intention* for *Ends* and *Goods*' (1678, 681-2).

for tracing 'the secret hand of *Providence*, / Wide-working thro' this universal frame' (1734, 52 15-6).

Blackmore continues that in nature, there are 'ten thousand miracles' (1806, 113) which evidence intelligent design by 'place, proportion, harmony [...] beauty, order, and dependence' (115).[370] In the same way that the Earth constitutes a single 'habitable seat' which '[b]y different parts is made one whole complete,' Blackmore attacks the atomistic principles of Epicurus and Lucretius by comparing the mechanistic blueprint of the universe with the man-made limitations of a watch:

> You own a watch, th' invention of the mind,
>
> Though for a single motion 'tis design'd,
>
> As well as that which is with greater thought,
>
> With various springs, for various motions wrought.
>
> (113).

What becomes apparent is that whilst Blackmore attempts to reassign the industrial language of a self-regulating clockwork universe to a divine creator and, moreover, whilst Edward Young evokes the concept of the 'horologe machinery divine' as the ideal image of God's providential machinations, the mechanical semantics of the *machina mundi* were being variously appropriated throughout eighteenth-century poetic works. For James Thomson, the consistency of cosmic revolutions epitomised the regularity of seasonal cycles. For Richard Payne Knight, the mechanical nature of the cosmos was reflected in the anthropological chains which bind human societies. For Erasmus Darwin, the chemical and gravitational chains ordering existence derived from God.

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[370] Blackmore insists that God must be the First Cause because 'mere mechanic art, / Can never motion to the globes impart' (67). The Epicurean hypothesis that fate catalyses the 'extended chain' of cause and effect is a misunderstanding of the 'mode of things, / Which from continu'd revolution springs' (161; cf. 107; 166). In Book One of *The Nature of Man* (1711), Blackmore describes 'Providence divine [as] the secret Chain' (1720, 30). Ralph Cudworth employs a similar argument in *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678) when he maintains that the souls of men and animals 'are not mere Machins, neither can Life and Cogitation, Sense and Consciousness, Reason and Understanding, Appetite and Will, ever result from Magnitudes, Figures, Sites and Motions, that therefore they are not Corporeally Generated and Corrupted' (36). Almost a century later in David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (1779), Philo similarly remarks, '[t]hrow several pieces of steel together, without shape or form; they will never arrange themselves so as to compose a watch: Stone, and mortar, and wood, without an architect, never erect a house' (30).

The saturation of Blake's works with the same mechanical imagery can be read as part of this semasiological tradition. Thus, there are chains (chains of chastity (*SE* 118 11-25) and 'bonds of religion' (*A* 15.23), 'the chain / Of life' (*VDA* 5.22-3), the Chain of Jealousy (*SL* 3.21; *BU* 20.24; *FZ* v.60.21-7; *M* i.19.38; 20.61; 23.37-8), iron chains (*SE* 130 20; *A* 3.7; *BU* 20.19; *FZ* v.60.18), 'a living Chain (*FZ* v.63.3), chains of time (*BU* 10.8-18; *FZ* iv.52.29-3.3; vi.73.20), 'chains of the mind' (*BU* 10.25; *FZ* iv.54.4; *M* i.3.6), chains of Natural Religion (*J* iii.66.1-10), chains of fury (*BL* 3.33-5), chains of love (*J* iv.82.70-1), and chains of sorrow (*FZ* iv.53.6; 340 28)), which are used to create bodies (*SE* 125 9-16; *BU* 8.1-10.43), identify bodies (*BL* 5.12-7; *FZ* iv.54.11-3), chain bodies to rocks (*BU* 20.18-24), and chain the body of man from falling into the abyss (*FZ* ii.33.16-7).[371]

When Urizen rages at the beginning of 'Night the Eighth' of *The Four Zoas*, the proliferation of mechanical fastenings conflates industrial action with cosmic creation by overlapping the semantics of the *machina mundi*:

> Horrible hooks & nets he formd twisting the cords of iron
>
> And brass & molten metals cast in hollow globes & bor'd
>
> Tubes in petrific steel & rammd combustibles & wheels
>
> And chains & pullies fabricated all round the heavens of Los…

(*FZ* 412 viii.100[2].29-32).

The human form is also bound by more traditional ties such as nerves, sinews, veins, vessels, muscles, and pipes by which the body and brain are either 'inchained,' 'inclosed,' 'infolded,' 'inwoven,' or 'inwrapped.'[372] Blake deliberately utilises the 'chain' imagery associated with

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[371] These chains are, in turn, often employed with industrial links (*BU* 10.18; *BL* 5.25-6; 'The Links of fate' (*FZ* iv.53.28)), 'nets & gins & traps' (*VDA* 5.18; *SL* 4.2; cf. *BU* 8.7-8; *FZ* i.30.1-2), meshes (*BU* 25.20-1; *FZ* viii.103.26-7; *J* ii.37[41].8-9), rivets (*A* 1.11-2; *BU* 8.11; 10.8-9; *FZ* v.61.1), fetters ('the triple forg'd fetters of times' (*FR* 4.62); *NB* 148 8; *A* 15.24; *BU* 10.24-30; *FZ* iv.54.5-6; vi.71[2].1-4; vii.77.8-21; vii.80.29-31), manacles (*FR* 2.4-5; *SE* 128 8; *PM* 500 23), wheels (*TNR*[b] 76 iv; 'wheels of blood' (*A* 4.6; cf. *E* 15.5); *FZ* i.16.20; iv.53.3-4; vi.73.23; vi.72.22; ix.138.5-14; *M* i.9.41; ii.37.21-2; *J* i.18.8-9; iii.65.21-4; 73.13-5; 74.5-9; satanic wheels (*FZ* viii.417.113[1].18-9; *J* i.12.44); 'the Starry Wheels' (*M* i.3.43; cf. 4.10; *FZ* vii.96.13-4; *J* i.5.4; 46-2; 64-8; 7.1-4; 12.11-8; 51; 14.32; ii.48.46; iv.94.1-21), and weaving wheels (*M* i.6.27; *J* iii.59.26-41; iv.88.54) which are also associated with birth (*FZ* v.58.7-9) – for the difference between empirical and spiritual wheels, see *FZ* i.20.12-5 and *J* i.15.14-20), cogs (*M* i.27.8-10; *J* i.13.12-4; 15.17-9), 'locks & bars' (*BL* 3.20), bonds and bands (*FR* 2.27; 4.65; 13.254; *SE* 129 5-6; *A* 6.5; *E* 2.13-4; 12.29-30; *FZ* i.10.8; ii.24.6-9; 30.11; ix.134.26; *M* i.20.5; *J* i.5.55; 20.31-2; ii.42.37; iii.54.11-2).

[372] Organic chains further bind the human form with fibres (*BU* 18.1-5; *BL* 5.1-20; *FZ* i.4.31-2; iii.38.9; iv.49.7; 55[2].10; v.57.8-9; 62.23-63.6; viii.105.31-5; *M* i.19.48-55; ii.34.24-8; 37.6-7; 38.5; and 'fibrous roots' (*BT* 6.3-4) and 'fibrous veins' (*J* ii.47.4) – fibre(s) is mentioned 34 times in *Jerusalem*), roots (*SE* 133 6-7; *BU* 18.1-2; *BA* 3.60-

the *machina mundi* in order to interweave cosmic, industrial, organic, textile, and physical bodies as the individual threads of one vegetative whole. The human form is therefore born into and becomes part of a mechanised vegetation called the cycle of Eternal Death:

Such is the nature of the Ulro: that whatever enters:

Becomes Sexual, & is Created, and Vegetated, and Born.

From Hyde Park spread their vegetating roots beneath Albion

In dreadful pain the Spectrous Uncircumcised Vegetation.—

Forming a Sexual Machine…

(*J* 711 ii.39[44].21-5).

It is with 'immense machines' that the sun is placed in Urizen's temple (*FZ* 395 vii.96.10-8) and it is Urizen's 'dark machines' which surround the world of Los' (411 viii.101[1].6-7). When the subject accepts an empirical blueprint of existence and succumbs to the Errors of the Selfhood, he too becomes part of this satanic machinery like Albion who finds his 'machines are woven with his life' (*J* 713 ii.40[45].25).[373]

Blake's conception of the mechanised man was a common *topos* of Enlightenment discourses, epitomised by the eighteenth-century French materialist Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *L'homme Machine* (*Man a Machine*, 1747) – a treatise built upon René Descartes *Traité de l'homme* (*Treatise of Man*, 1632-3), with La Mettrie describing his own system as 'Epicuro-Cartésien' (1796, 83) in *Les Animaux plus que machines* (1750) and expanded in *Système d'Épicure* (1750).

As part of his discussion against God's existence in *L'homme Machine*, La Mettrie maintains that mankind should be governed by nature (our new religion) for it links 'the whole chain of this vast universe' (1912, 125). The mechanical cosmos then provides the theoretical basis

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7; *BL* 4.63-5; *FZ* i.4.41; v.62.21-31; ix.117.6-9; *M* i.23.37-8; *J* ii.47.5; and 'rootlike fibres' (*FZ* viii.107.30); cf. *FZ* vii.85.23-5; *M* i.17.34-6) with root(s) mentioned 19 times in *Jerusalem* alone, webs (*VDA* 7.19; *SL* 6.1-4; *BU* 25.10-9; *FZ* vi.73.32-5; 75.25-34; vii.98.3-2; viii.103.26; 113[1].21-3; 106[2].1-2; *M* i.20.37-8; *J* i.20.4; and 'the Web of Life' (*M* i.6.28-33; *J* iv.83.73; *GP* 862 50), 'A Web of Death' (*M* i.24.36), and 'the Web / Of Ages & Generations' (*J* iii.64.2-3)), and cords (*BU* 25.20-1; *FZ* ii.29.15; v.60.11; viii.100[2].29-30; iv.123.31; *J* iv.82.13-4).

[373] In a *Public Address* (c.1810), Blake states that 'A Machine is not a Man' (*K* 603), but in a letter written to John Linnell on 5th July 1826, he describes his hopes for better health 'if the Machine is capable of it' (*K* 873). Blake therefore differentiates between natural man (the corporeal form) and the spiritual man.

for understanding the human body; for, moving on to the relationship between the soul and the body – which formed the middle section of Book Three of *De Rerum Nature* (iii.417-829) – La Mettrie argues that since the 'organization of the brain and of the whole body' influences the wellbeing of the soul, each component of our natural frames constitutes 'this organization itself, [whereupon] the soul is clearly an enlightened machine' (128). The soul is treated as, or rather limited to, the cognitive portion of the body as each organ is organised according to its motive force (128-31).[374]

La Mettrie often has recourse to horological metaphors to express the mechanical order of the human body. For instance, he claims that organised matter is only differentiated from inorganic matter by the principle of motion, and that the anthropological evolution of organised matter is determined by the development and diversity of the organisation of its parts. Accordingly, the entire universe is governed by one type of organisation, of which man is the most exact model:

> [h]e is to the ape, and to the most intelligent animals, as the planetary pendulum of Huyghens is to a watch of Julien Leroy. More instruments, more wheels and more springs were necessary to mark the movements of the planets than to mark or strike the hours…
>
> (140).

It is the addition of wheels and cogs and levers – for man is but 'a collection of springs' (135) – that produces a more elaborate machine and it is only such an intricate device which could 'mark all motions of the heart and of the mind' (141).[375] 'The human body is a watch,'

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[374] '…the soul is but a principle of motion or a material and sensible part of the brain' (135).

[375] The heart is referred to as 'the mainspring of the machine' (141). Having claimed that '[t]he body is but a watch, whose watchmaker is the new chyle' (135), La Mettrie adds that whilst 'one does not tell time by the pulse, it is at least the barometer of the warmth and the vivacity by which one may estimate the nature of the soul' (141). Blake incorporates this image across his mythopoeia. In 'Night the Seventh' of *The Four Zoas*, Orc's flames gush from his heart: 'Pulse after pulse beat on his fetters pulse after pulse his spirit / Darted' (*FZ* 372 vii.77.21-2). It is this 'deep pulsation / That shakes [Urizen's] caverns with strong shudders' (355 v.65.9-10). In *Milton*, Blake explicitly links the heartbeat to the passage of time: 'A Moment equals a pulsation of the artery… Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery / Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years' (*M* 576-7 i.28.47-63). Cf. *M* i.29.1-26. Earlier in his treatise La Mettrie also refers to the soul as 'the mainspring of the whole machine' (135). In Book Four of *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), Richard Payne Knight describes the classes 'as springs and weights' which fit together like cogs 'as in [a] mechanism, springs of steel, / Or weights of lead, alike can turn the wheel' (84 iv.233-8). In the 'Preface' to *Zoonomia* (1794), Erasmus Darwin laments the fact that epidemiological knowledge has lagged behind the other sciences which, 'idly ingenious, busied

declares La Mettrie, 'a large watch constructed with such skill and ingenuity, that if the wheel which marks the seconds happens to stop, the minute wheel turns and keeps on going its round.'[376]

La Mettrie's identification of the body with clockwork mechanisms came at the height of the horological revolution (1660-1760) when such imagery permeated Enlightenment discourses (Macey 1994, 113).[377] Indeed, of all the developments in mechanical engineering 'whose characteristics might serve as a model for the natural world, it was the *clock* more than any other that appealed to many early modern natural philosophers' (Shapin 1996, 22). Johannes Kepler, for instance, told a friend in 1605 that '[m]y aim is to show that the heavenly machine is not a kind of divine, live being, but a kind of clockwork' (qt. Koestler 1967, 331). René Descartes employed the 'watch' analogy in *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) and *The Passions of the Soul* (1649), whilst Matthew Hale similarly frames his discourse around a horological anecdote in *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (1677) – a scene which is recycled at the beginning of William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802). Perhaps most significantly for Blake, it is a recurring image in the correspondence between the Anglican clergyman Samuel Clarke, who was a supporter of Isaac Newton, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who, in a letter written November 1715, accuses Newton for failing to conceive of perpetual motion and instead creating a 'machine of God's making' which 'is so imperfect […] that he is obliged to clean it now and then by extraordinary concourse, and even to mend it, as a clockmaker mends his work' (1956, 11-2).[378] Clarke responded by

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themselves in attempting to explain the laws of life by those of mechanism and chemistry; they considered the body as an hydraulic machine' (1). Discussing the distinction of organic and inanimate nature in the notes appended to *The Temple of Natura* (1803), Darwin explains that '[t]he circulation of fluids in vessels may exist in hydraulic machines, but the power of reproduction belongs alone to life' (1804, 4). Darwin repeats the same sentiment in his notes on Canto II, lines 13-4 (39).

[376] The frailties of the human form are likened to the strokes a pendulum which cannot remain in motion forever (135). Only two years after the publication of *Man a Machine*, David Hartley describes how the vibrations made by the impression of external objects is 'of the same kind with the oscillations of pendulums' ([1749]1834, 8).

[377] Peter Rowlands broadens the historical range, noting that the clockwork metaphor predates the seventeenth century: 'Nicholas Oresme, for example, was already using the metaphor as early as the fourteenth century… A version of it is found even earlier in that great thirteenth century textbook, the *De Sphaera* of Sacrobosco' (2018, 15). Cf. Joel Kaye (1998, 224-5) and Edward Grant (2007, 283-4). Lynn White Jr. concurs: 'towards the middle of the fourteen century, the mechanical clock seized the imagination of our ancestors' (1964, 124).

[378] In Query 31 of *Opticks* (1704), Newton writes that natural motion is regulated by gravitational attraction and that bodies are moved by a passive power ('*Vis inertiæ*'). Since bodies could not by this power have gained motion, some other principle must have catalysed movement (1730, 397). Therefore, motion can be gained as well as lost (398). Newton concludes that God formed matter into indivisible units which in turn form divisible forms: 'that Nature may be lasting, the Changes of corporeal Things are to be placed only in the various Separations and new Associations and Motions of these permanent Particles' (400). The Irish immaterialist

explaining that God's care of the universe (and mankind) is teleologically implicit and that the notion of a 'clockmaker' God would, in fact, preclude divine intervention:

> [t]he notion of the world's being a great machine, going on without interposition of God, as a clock continues to go without the assistance of a clockmaker; is the notion of materialism and fate, and tends, (under pretence of making God a *supra-mundane intelligence*,) to exclude providence and God's government in reality out of the world.
>
> (14).[379]

Thus, although the 'clockmaker' God was not Newtonian in origin, critics began to associate Newtonian cosmology with clockwork mechanics as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century and, by the end of the century, Blake was following in this tradition by presenting Newton as the promoter of 'cruel Works / Of many Wheels [...] with cogs tyrannic' (*J* 662 i.15.17-8).[380] Newton is also singled out in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809) for numbering the stars (K 567),[381] a sentiment which informs the way in which empiricists map the Mundane Shell in *Milton*:

George Berkeley poses a similar question to Leibniz in *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710): 'how comes it to pass, that whenever there is any fault in the going of a watch, there is some corresponding disorder to be found in the movements, which being mended by a skilful hand, all is right again?' (1843, 109). Early mechanical clocks were expensive to make, inaccurate, frequently broke down and required repair (Landes 2000, 43; 56-8; Matthews 2000, 178), which meant that '[t]he use of clock symbolism alongside traditional images of destruction served to visually differentiate between time's perpetuity as opposed to the discontinuity of temporal existence' (Cohen 2014, 154). After the pendulum became part of clockwork mechanisms from 1657, the accuracy of clocks increased 'approximately sixtyfold' (Macey 2010, 77).

[379] Newton's God was much more of a tinker than a clockmaker, with the 'watch' metaphor signalling mankind's insufficient industrial knowledge to effectively capture the complexity of mechanical laws. In a comical analogy, Newton's contemporary Robert Boyle compared mankind's attempt to decipher God's designs to the difference in magnitude between 'a town-clock' and 'a pocket-watch,' adding that God 'work[s] with much finer materials' so that 'the structure even of the rarest watch is incomparably inferior to that of a human body' (1772, 71).

[380] See Chapter 1 of this thesis for Blake's appropriation of common associations and stereotypes in relation to Francis Bacon's atheism and Epicureanism. Mark Schorer notes that Blake's first-hand knowledge of Newton was likely limited and 'must have consisted either of the general information in possession of the vulgar or of his gleanings from some comparatively simple outline of science or popular exegesis of Newton's theories' (1935, 218). Donal Ault adds that, despite Newton's rejection of the world systems of Descartes and Leibniz, these mechanical models were often considered part of Newtonian cosmology as illustrated by the 'clock' metaphor – which Blake may have imbibed from Voltaire (1974, 7-8). For Blake, 'the machine became one with the mechanics of Newton... The Satanic Wheels and the Satanic Mills are symbols for the planetary orbits and the laws of gravitation which govern and constrain them, filling "the abstract Voids between the Stars" with the machinery of Newton's astronomy' (Bronowski [1965]2008, 122). As Eric Pyle adds, 'clockwork is often, in Blake's writing, a symbol of the Newtonian universe' (2015, 252).

[381] Cf. Blake's letter dated 14th October 1807 to Richard Phillips, the publisher of *The Monthly Magazine* (*K* 865).

In the Newtonian Voids between the Substances of Creation

For the Chaotic Voids outside of the Stars are measured by

The Stars, which are the boundaries of Kingdoms, Provinces

And Empires of Chaos invisible in the Vegetable Man

(M 596 ii.37.46-9).

It is the composite incrustation of 'Star to Star' which 'compose[s] the Mundane Shell' (596-7 52-3) and creates 'this Newtonian Phantasm' (602 40.11). Natural Religion is therefore 'the End of Epicurean or Newtonian Philosophy' (*K* 475) because the *machina mundi* is the apotheosis of empirical practices.[382]

Although the 'watch' analogy was not available to ancient atomists,[383] it is significant that the transmission of Epicureanism through *De Rerum Natura* into England coincides with the horological revolution.[384] The French philosopher Pierre Gassendi, who is largely credited with the revival and dissemination of Epicureanism throughout early-seventeenth-century Europe, refers to the heavens as '*quoddam generale horologium*' ('a sort of general clock') (1643, 224-5).[385] In Walter Charleton's *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* (1654),[386] which rearticulated Gassendi's Epicureanism from *Animadversiones* (1649),[387] the incomprehensible subtlety of nature is likened to an exquisite watch (114) whilst the periodical destruction of matter is juxtaposed with a watch which 'may be taken in pieces,

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[382] Blake was conflating atomism with Newtonianism in the notebook poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' (c.1800-6) where Democritean atoms mingle with Newtonian particles to blind the 'mocking Eye.'

[383] The seventeenth-century polymath Thomas Browne similarly made this observation in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), though he adds that the ancients had 'Horologies, and severall accounts of time; for they measured the hours not only by drops of water in glasses called Clepsydrae, but also by sand in glasses called Clepsammia; there were also from great antiquity, Sciotericall or Sun Dialls, by the shadow of a stile or gnomon denoting the houres of the day… Of latter yeares there succeeded new inventions, and horologies composed by Trochilick or the artifice of wheeles, whereof some are kept in motion by weight, others performe without it' (259-60).

[384] Cf. Masey (1994, 114; 2010, 78-9).

[385] In Du Bartas' *La Sepmaine* (1578) and *La Seconde Semaine* (1584-1603) which were translated into English by Joshua Sylvester between 1592-1608 as the *Divine Weekes and Workes*, it is God who 'keeps th' eternall Clock of Time, / And holds the waights of that appointed Chime' (1611, 12).

[386] Charleton also refers to 'the whole Coelestial Machine' in *The Immortality of the Human Soul* (1659, 44).

[387] Charleton also drew upon Jean Francois Saresin's *Discours de morale sur Epicure* (1645). Cf. Long (1986, 242).

and easily recomposed again into the very same numerical Engine, both as to matter and Forme; the Artificer recollecting the divided parts thereof' (431).[388]

In *The Origins of Forms and Qualities* (1666), the Anglo-Irish chemist Robert Boyle asks his readers to consider the universe as 'a great Engine' (44) and the motion of bodies in space 'as in a Clock, [where] a small force apply'd to move the Index to the Figure of 12, will make the Haromer strike often and forcible against the Bell' (45).[389] Later, during his discussion of an intelligent being as 'the Worlds Architect' (193), Boyle returns to this image by once more describing the universe as 'this great *Automaton*,' 'a Watch or Clock,' and 'so curious an Engine' which once devised and set in motion will continue to operate according to its own impetus through the 'Mechanical Affections of the Spring, Wheels, Pillars, and other parts it is made up of [...like] those effects of such a Watch' (194-5).

Boyle recycles the same imagery in *Of the Excellency and Grounds of the Mechanical Hypothesis* (1674) where the naturalist's world is described as 'a great *Automaton*' and 'a great piece of Clock-work' (169). The human body, moreover, is said to be structured in a much more complex way to 'the rarest Watch' (14), whilst horological metaphors continue to be employed in relation to scientific enquiry (17-8), the operations of chemical principles (26), as well as God's relationship with all parts of existence which he understands 'far more perfectly, than a Watch-maker can understand one of his own Watches' (181).[390]

By the time of the first full-length English translation of *De Rerum Natura* in 1682,[391] Thomas Creech was also employing horological symbolism in his notes on Lucretian anti-providentialism and freewill:

> for if a man follows *Fate* blindly, is *driven* on, not *perswaded* to act, if He is an
>
> *Automaton*, and moves by *Wheels* and *Springs*, bound with the chain of *Destiny*:

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[388] Blake's association of atoms with sand in 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' recalls Charleton's analogy that 'well may we allow the finer fingers of that grand Exemplar to all Artificers, Nature, to distinguish a greater multiplicity of parts in one Grain of *Millet seed*, then ruder man can in that great Mountain, *Caucasus*; nay, in the whole *Terrestrial Globe*' (1654, 114).

[389] To Robert Boyle 'must go a large portion of the credit for the acceptance of atomism in England' (Kargon 1964, 187).

[390] Up until 1660 Boyle's assistant at Wadham College, Oxford, was Robert Hooke. Hooke who was building on the work of the Italian astronomer Giovanni Riccioli in his advancement of the pendulum mechanism and the invention of the anchor escapement as well as developing the balance spring (at the same time as the Dutch astronomer and inventor Christiaan Huygens) as a way of improving the accuracy of portable timepieces.

[391] John Evelyn had described nature as 'that beautiful *Machine*' and *De Rerum Natura* as 'so full of Ornament and exquisite Workmanship' (1656, [unnumbered]).

tis evident that Fate is the *Cause* of all his miscarriages and the Man no more to be blamed for wicked actions, than a *Clock* for irregular strikings when the Artist designs it should do so.

(1683, 59).[392]

For Creech, the compulsion of a clockwork mechanism fails to reflect human agency for it presupposes an involuntary action in the same way that a predetermined course contradicts freewill.[393] In the same decade John Locke, who Leibniz considered a Gassendist, [394] employed horological metaphors in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) whilst discussing the sentience of the soul (1836, 54), the notion of duration (116), the distinction between genera and species (338-9), and the primary qualities of corpuscles (426-7).[395]

One of the key thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith also freely draws on Epicurean theories of knowledge during his discussion of the motion of bodies and appears to specifically refer to Lucretian first-beginnings moving through empty space (*DRN* i.334-

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[392] Lucretius echoes Epicurus by associating the 'swerve' with freewill (ii.251-64). The anonymous translator of the 1743 edition of *De Rerum Natura* makes a similar observation (123). Although Lucretian freewill differs from the Pre-Socratic principles discussed in George Berkeley's *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher* (1732), it retains a horological context: 'Gorgias hath […] demonstrat[ed] man to be a piece of clock-work or machine; and that thought or reason are the same thing as the impulse of one ball against another. Cimon hath made noble use of these discoveries, proving as clearly as ay proposition in mathematics, that conscience is a whim, and morality a prejudice; and that a man is no more accountable for his actions than a clock is for striking' (1843, 315-6).

[393] In *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), Ralph Cudworth adopts a similar set of images as part of his discussion on the substantiality of souls whilst refuting René Descartes' hypothesis that the souls of brutes – whom 'he chose rather to make them meer *Sensless Machins*' – are mortal, '[b]ut on the contrary, if it be evident from the *Phaenomena,* that Brutes are not meer *Sensless Machins* or *Automata,* and only like *Clocks* or *Watches* […] they must have something more than *Matter* in them' (863). Locke refers to Descartes opinion in *Elements of Natural Philosophy* (1758, 103). In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke distinguished between man as a machine (who derives his motion from within) and inorganic devices (which derive their motion from without) (1836, 223). William Warburton, who became the Bishop of Gloucester, equally finds recourse for the horological metaphor employed by Creech on freewill. In *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1738), Warburton insists that an individual cannot be 'obliged' to conform to 'a particular system' by fate, which 'is blind and unintelligible,' but rather 'by the necessity of its nature; and this will, indeed, make men obliged as clocks are by weights, but never as free agents are' (1765, 49-50).

[394] Cf. Aaron (1971, 31).

[395] Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury whose education was supervised by Locke, describes the affections and passions as a form of clockwork in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions* ([1711]1790, i.98; ii.70). The Irish rationalist and deist John Toland, whose works are indebted to Lockean epistemology, also has recourse to clockwork imagery when describing the process of empirical enquiry in *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696, 78) and whilst disputing elemental theory and speculating upon the motion of objects in *Letters to Serena* (1704, 184-5; 196). Locke initially held a favourable opinion of Toland (Daniel 1984, 144-5). For Toland's debt to Locke's *Essay*, see Marko (2017, 3). For a reading of Toland's Epicureanism, see Niblett (2009, 137-59).

915) in section 17 of his first essay *Of the External Senses* (most likely written before 1752).[396] As Smith freely admits, he is indebted to the ancient atomists:

> [t]his doctrine, which is as old as Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus, was in the last century revived by Gassendi, and has since been adopted by Newton and the far greater part of his followers. It may at present be considered as the established system, or as the system that is most in fashion, and most approved of by the greater part of the philosophers in Europe
>
> (1795, 203-4).

In his *History of Astronomy* (published posthumously in 1795), Smith also reverts to horological metaphors to describe the oscillating movement of Euxodus' planetary spheres (34-5) and the wheels turning the eccentric spheres (43-5) which informs the creation of the world 'as a complete machine' (106-7) in the *History of Ancient Physics*.

Thus, to take stock of the arguments presented in this section, clockwork symbolism saturated the intellectual milieu of Enlightenment discourses and was particularly championed by René Descartes in France, Robert Boyle in England, and Johannes Kepler and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in Germany. It was, in turn, readily adopted as a poetic image in creation and anthropological narratives such as Du Bartas' *La Sepmaine* (1578) and *La Seconde Semaine* (1584-1603), John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), Richard Blackmore, *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* (1712), Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-5), Richard Payne Knight's *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), and Erasmus Darwin's *The Temple of Natura; or, the Origin of Society* (1803).[397] As part of its acceptance into common poetic and philosophical parlance, the concept of the *machina mundi* was modified from its classical Lucretian framework and began to incorporate the clockwork mechanics of a divinely-ordered universe; for, as the syllogism imputed, if the universe was a clock then the universe was created by a clockmaker, and if there was a clockmaker then there is a divine being. Even Jacob Boehme, the late-sixteenth-century German mystic whose *Works*

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[396] For the date of composition, see Schabas (2003, 273).
[397] As Samuel L. Macey summarises, the clockwork metaphor 'is to be found in the writings of virtually every major thinker, and a host of minor ones' (2010, 79).

(London, 1764-81) Blake had read and largely approved, maintained the mechanical symbols of a clockwork cosmos whilst modifying the *machina mundi* into the *Spiritus Mundi* in *On the Election of Grace* (1623).[398] Blake, however, never lost sight of the atomistic origins of the *machine mundi*, which is why he continued to associate mechanical imagery with the empirical blueprint of Urizenic creation. As I will now demonstrate, 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece epitomises for Blake this concept of an Enlightenment clockwork God.

IV. 'The Ancient of Days'

'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece prefixing *Europe* (1794) depicts Urizen in a solar circle reaching out his left (material) arm into the abyss to divide and measure the physical universe with an instrument redolent of Milton's 'golden compasses' (*PL* 174 vii.225).[399] The iconography of the design can be traced to various sources such as biblical creation (namely Genesis but also Proverbs 8.27 and Daniel 7.9, 13-4),[400] Gnostic creation,[401] Plato's Demiurge in *Timaeus* (c. 360 BC),[402] Dante's 'Paradiso' (c.1308-20),[403] Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667),[404] and Gray's *The Bard* (1757).[405] Other likely sources include Albrecht Dürer's 'Melencolia I' (1514) which depicts a female personification of melancholia toying with a

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[398] Cf. Bryan Aubrey's *Watchmen of Eternity: Blake's debt to Jacob Boehme* (1986). The eighteenth-century theologian Joseph Butler follows a similar Christianised exegetical model in *The Analogy of Religion* (1736) as he asserts that 'the Appearances of *Design* and of *final Causes* in the Constitution of Nature […] really prove[s] this acting Agent, to be an *intelligent Designer*' (1740, 158).

[399] Although the instrument which Urizen wields more closely resembles a divider than a compass, it is a critical commonplace to refer to the instrument as a compass. For the seminal discussion on Blake's design, see Anthony Blunt's 'Blake's "Ancient of Days": The Symbolism of the Compasses' (1938, 53-63).

[400] For Genesis and Proverbs 8.27, see Gilchrist ([1863]2005, 137), Damon (1924, 348), Blunt (1938, 53), Berger (1968, 104-5), Bentley (1975, 62), Wardle (1978, 143), Whyte (1986, 239), and Spector (2020, 1). For Daniel 7.9 and 13-4, see Spector (2003, 73; 2020, 2-3) and Jesse (2013, 60). There are also clear aesthetic affiliations between 'The Ancient of Days' and the depiction of God as an architect in medieval picture bibles, such as the frontispiece to the *Bible moralisée* (c.1208-15). Cf. Tachau (1998, 27). Similar images occur in the depiction of Christ the Pantocrator in the *Bible of St Louis* (1226-34) and Gautier de Metz's *L'Image du monde* (1245).

[401] Cf. Blunt (1938, 57) and Raine (2002, 86).

[402] Cf. Blunt (1938, 58), Harper (1954, 142-3), Damrosch (1980, 264), Lincoln (1995, 51), Whittaker (1999, 37-9), and Corradi (2008, 13).

[403] Cf. Pyle (2015, 77-8). Blake's design seems especially evocative of 'Paradiso,' Canto XXIV (10-5).

[404] Gilchrist ([1863]2005, 137) refers to vii.236 (though lines 224-31 are also relevant; cf. Damon (1924, 348), Paley (1970, 72), and Wardle (1978, 143)). Perhaps Blake was also parodying Uriel's perspicuity '[a]mid the sun's bright circle where thou sit'st' (2008, 101 iv.578).

[405] Cf. Damrosch (1980, 264).

compass,[406] Du Bartas' *La Sepmaine* (1578) and *La Seconde Semaine* (1584-1603),[407] Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (1617),[408] Jacob Boehme's use of *Cirkel-Messen* (the practice of drawing esoteric geometrical forms with compasses) and the clockwork cosmos of *On the Election of Grace* and *Mysterium Magnum* (1623),[409] Emanuel Swedenborg's *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* (1763),[410] Richard Blackmore's *Creation: A Philosophical Poem* (1712),[411] Henry Baker's *The Universe: A Philosophical Poem* (1727),[412] and James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1731-5).[413]

Martin K. Nurmi (1957, 207-16) has also observed similarities with the frontispiece to Andrew Motte's English translation of Isaac Newton's *Principia* ([1687]1729).[414] In this design, a robed Newton sits in the heavens receiving instruction from the Muse of Geometry: below them, the clouds part to reveal the universe obeying mathematical laws. This reading seems propitious, since Blake parodies the apotheosis of the heavenly Newton by recasting him in a Urizenic posture in his painting 'Newton' (c.1705-1805): both Urizen and Blake's Newton look down, holding golden compasses, alone in their own rationalistic

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[406] Blake admired Dürer and 'Melencolia I' hung on his workroom wall (Ott 1976, 49; Mitchell 1982, 27).

[407] '…as also in a Clock well tended, / Just counter-poize, justly thereon suspended, / Makes the great Wheel goe round, and that anon / Turns with his turning many a meaner one, / The trembling watch, and th' iron Maule that chimes / The intire Day in twice twelue equall times: / So the grand Heav'n, in foure and twenty houres, / Surueying all this various house of ours, / With his quick motion all the Sphears doth moue' (1611, 100).

[408] S. Foster Damon (1924, 348) has noted similarities between 'The Ancient of Days' and the Ape of Nature on the first plate of Fludd's treatise.

[409] Boehme was drawing on masonic and Kabbalistic traditions, therefore opposing the semantic trend during the Renaissance when compasses were being depicted with figures representing mechanical laws and mathematical sciences (Wardle 1978, 143-4). See, for example, Johann Sadeler's 'Geometria' (c.1570-1600). 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece also seems represent proposition 80 of the fifth chapter of *Grace*. For Boehme's clockwork imagery, see Sklar (2011, 33).

[410] Blake criticises Swedenborg's argument on essence and identity in the *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* (London edition published 1788, annotated c. 1789) for turning the cosmos into a mechanised clock (*K* 91).

[411] 'What huge machine, what forceful instrument / Did your blind builder of the world invent?... / Did chance the compass take, and in the dark / The wide dimensions of the ocean mark?' (1806, 134).

[412] Blake parodies Baker's benevolent God: 'See, to the West, he downwards bends his Way, / Looks kindly back, and gives a milder Ray: / The Clouds around him, beauteous to behold, / Blush with Carnation Streaks, and flame with Gold' (1760, 3).

[413] In 'Spring' (1731), the setting sun (19-20 211-21) is described as 'running from the red, / To where the violet fades into the sky. / Here, mighty NEWTON, the dissolving clouds / Are, as they scatter round, thy numerous prism, / Untwisting to the philosophic eye / The various twine of light' (20-1 231-6). In Thomson's dedicatory poem, '*Newton* rose, our philosophie sun' (1734 56 90). The colour palette of 'flaming *Red*,' 'tawny *Orange*,' and 'delicious *Yellow*' (57 102-4) is highly evocative of Blake's pigments.

[414] Roger Cotes, who proofread the second edition of *Principia*, often used clock metaphors in his treatises.

world.[415] Whilst 'Newton' is not the only painting to employ such imagery,[416] Anthony Blunt notes in his discussion on the symbolism of the compasses that 'Newton is for Blake the great rationalist and representative of Urizen in modern times' (1938, 61).

Such a plethora of sources complicates the aesthetic, philosophical, and theological origins of 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece and, whilst it is not my intention to offer a definitive exegetical model for understanding its symbolic permutations, I do wish to provide a further context which has hitherto been overlooked. Specifically, a threefold horological context: the first, based on orreries; the second, based on astrolabes and watches; and the third, based on sundials. To begin with, there are some notable similarities between 'The Ancient of Days' and the technical advancements in the production of orreries in the eighteenth century. An orrery is a mechanical, clockwork model of the sun, earth, and moon, famously captured by Joseph Wright of Derby in the painting *A Philosopher Giving a Lecture on the Orrery* (1766). Proto-orreries were being devised in the first decade of the eighteenth century based on seventeenth-century tellurions, with the first fully-functioning orrery invented by Thomas Tompion and George Graham in 1704-10 and subsequently constructed by the London instrument-maker John Rowley in 1713.[417] A complete model of the solar system was known as a grand orrery, with the first working model likely constructed by the English astronomer Thomas Wright (1711-86) and variously imitated throughout the eighteenth century.[418]

In 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece, Urizen sits in a sphere which could either be the circular base of the orrery or the globe of the sun as it hovers above the circular base.[419] As I

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[415] Cf. Paley (1970, 72). Mark Schorer defined Urizen as 'a mechanist who preserved a mechanistic order' (1935, 220). Jacob Bronowski notes that '[r]easoning, the mill, and the machine worlds of Newton […] become Urizen' and that the use of compasses links Urizen to 'the great makers of clocks and precision instruments' ([1965]2008, 136; 141).

[416] A man on all fours holds a compass on the 'Application' plate of *There Is No Natural Religion* (1788), Joseph holds a pair of dividers over the infant Jesus in 'The Christ Child Asleep on a Cross' (c.1799-1800), a male figure bends down and divides his fingers like a compass in 'The Woman Taken in Adultery' (c.1805), a posture which is similarly adopted in 'Mary Magdalene Washing Christ's Feet' (c.1803-5) and, somewhat more positively, Blake depicts Christ holding dividers in 'Christ in the Carpenter's Shop: the Humility of the Saviour' (c.1803-5) and Los holds his hammer and a compass on the final plate of *Jerusalem* (1804-20).

[417] Cf. Buick (2014, 77-9).

[418] Cf. Bud ed. et al. (1998, 467); Edney and Pedley (2020, 127-31). Blake captures his horror of such a mechanical universe in *The Four Zoas* where thousands of spirits 'Expanded they behold the terrors of the Sun & Moon / The Elemental Planets & the orbs of eccentric fire' (*FZ* 350 v.61.22-3).

[419] The colour palette also seems to draw on the lavish materials which were used to construct complex orreries, such as gold, silver, and brass.

will soon demonstrate, Urizen is often associated with the sun and, as the architect of the physical universe, it is likely that Blake considered the Copernican system as an apt representation of Urizen's centrality (physically and psychologically) to postlapsarian existence. Furthermore, the gears which are hidden inside the base are brought to the fore in the frontispiece, as the teeth of the cog are represented as solar spikes. This is a common Blakean ploy, where the invisible machinery of the *machina mundi* is made visible as imposing, industrial monuments of the Fall. The compass with which Urizen measures the void could also be read as a bracket or, indeed, the arms of an escapement mechanism. Rather ironically, the escapement mechanism is not facing the wheel in which Urizen hunkers: he has turned away from self-regulation (and self-annihilation) and, despite being the 'Architect,' is unable to regulate the motion of the cosmic wheels which turn across the Mundane Shell. Urizen reaches out into the void, but the void is nothingness; thus, the arms of the escapement mechanism cannot control the passage of objects in space, demonstrating the solipsistic redundancy of Urizenic phenomenality: 'Times on times he divided, & measur'd / Space by space in his ninefold darkness / Unseen, unknown!' (*BU* 242 3.8-10).

In 1732 the equal-area machine – a mechanical device which would come to be known as a cometarium after Benjamin Martin and the predicted return of Haley's comet in 1758 – was constructed by J. T. Desaguliers to illustrate the path of a comet. It was designed according to Newtonian laws set out in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687) and Johannes Kepler's laws of planetary motion, and was popularised through the public lectures of the Scottish astronomer James Ferguson.[420] In *Europe*, Urizen is 'unloos'd from chains' and 'Glows like a meteor in the distant north / Stretch forth your hands and strike the elemental strings!' (*E* 228 3.11-3). In his description of 'The Bard, from Gray' in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), the Bard also bears a striking resemblance to Urizen: 'Loose his beard, and hoary hair / Stream'd like a meteor to the troubled air' (*K* 576). It is curious, however, that it is Orc specifically, and not Urizen, who is described as a comet in *America* (1793), which was completed a year before 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece:

> The terror like a comet, or more like the planet red

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[420] Cf. Beech (2016, 16-7).

That once inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere.

Then Mars thou wast our centre, & the planets three flew round

Thy crimson disk; so e'er the Sun was rent from thy red sphere…

(*A* 211-2 5.2-5).

One explanation for Orc's meteorological association (cf. *MHH* 194-5 25-6.14-11) is that during the composition of *America* Blake was effected by the sanguinary events in France known as the Reign of Terror, and that by the time *Europe* was written the following year Blake had given way to the inevitability of the Orc cycle. Already there are signs of the abnormality of Orc in *America* where, for instance, a serpent with a forked tongue appears from the genitalia of a woman on Plate 16 and, at the bottom of the same plate, a fire-breathing serpent rages uncontrollably. This seems to be supported by the fact that Urizen as the 'The Ancient of Days' faces Orc as a serpent on the title-page of *Europe*: the tongue of the revolutionary serpent replicating the forked nature of Urizen's mathematical instrument. This symbolism is foreshadowed in *The French Revolution* (1791) where the 'chaos-born soul' of Aumont is described as 'Eternally wand'ring [like] a Comet and swift-falling fire' (*FR* 171 9.159-60).[421]

Furthermore, armillary spheres, Copernican spheres (as Enlightenment Europe moved from the Ptolemaic system to the sun-centred Copernican system), and planetariums were also being designed and constructed throughout the eighteenth century, demonstrated in theatres, popularised in lectures, and written about in pamphlets and tracts. What becomes clear is that the symbolism of 'The Ancient of Days' can be read as drawing upon a scientific milieu saturated with models, images, and astronomical theories which were being distilled into miniature form and that, as a pictorial microcosm, the frontispiece informs the theoretical framework of Blake's entire cosmogony. As a celestial agent, Urizen signifies the deification of a clockwork universe. The sublime had become mechanical. We can even read the movement of Urizen and his sons and daughters as they travel 'in silent majesty along their orderd ways' (*FZ* 314 ii.33.22) in a manner which is redolent of Adam Walker's Eidouranion – a large-scale, transparent orrery and precursor to the development of

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[421] In 'The Approach of Doom' (1787-8), which was an early attempt by Blake at relief and white-line etching, the appearance of a comet signals impending disaster rather than relief.

planetariums.[422] The way in which Urizen and his sons and daughters maintain 'right lined paths outmeasurd by the proportions of number weight / And measure. mathematic motion wondrous. along the deep' (23-4) replicates the carefully-staged geometric coordinates and sublime revolutions of the celestial spheres which moved across the theatre in a divine spectacle of cosmological architecture. Indeed, as Adam Walker's son William Walker explains in a lecture on the Eidouranion, '[t]his elaborate Machine […] is certainly the nearest approach to the magnificent simplicity of nature' (1793, 3):

> [w]ell might the Psalmist say, that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." Well might he express himself as overwhelmed with the idea of the power and omnipresence of the Deity; since all our discoveries serve only to convince us, that […] every where, as here, [we are] surrounded with his infinite energy;—eternity, and immensity, filled with his vital presence.

> (28).[423]

Urizen is the manifestation of this mechanical god as he is part of 'this world of Cumbrous wheels / Circle oer Circle' (*FZ* 365 vi.72.22-3), 'the turning wheels of heaven' (367 73.23), and a physical representation of the Error which sustains celestial motion:

> Urizen said. I have Erred & my Error remains with me
> What Chain encompasses in what Lock is the river of light confind
> That issues forth in the morning by measure & the evening by carefulness
> Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite & unbounded
> Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens

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[422] After its construction in Birmingham in the 1780s, Walker's Eidouranion became something of a scientific marvel and a hugely successful theatrical attraction, touring across England with Walker's sons well into the nineteenth century. Blake was in contact with the Walkers in 1804 on behalf of William Hayley and thus it is probable that Blake was at the very least aware of the astronomical lectures being held in Covent Gardens and the London Lyceum at this time.

[423] Kenelm Digby had attacked such scientific providentialism in *The Nature of Bodies* (1644) over a century before the Eidouranion's invention: '[a]stronomers when they enquire the motions of the Spheres and Planets: they take all the Phenomena or seuerall appearances of them to our eyes; and then attribute to them such orbes, courses, and periodes, as may square and fitt with euery one of them; and by supposing them, they can exactly calculate all that will euer after happen to them in theire motions' (16).

(*FZ* 446 ix.122.21-5).

Moving on to the second exegetical model, 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece lends itself to being interpreted as an astrolabe or watch where the the spikes of the solar circle represent the teeth of a wheel like the suns at the bottom of Plate 22 and 39 of *Jerusalem*.[424] Urizen's two fingers along which the points of the compass stretch then act like the minute and hour hands on a clock.[425] Urizen's outstretched limb, accordingly, becomes the hands of time.[426]

Looking down at the abyss from his clock tower, Urizen becomes the cosmic emblem of those clock faces which began to appear on civic and religious buildings from the fourteenth century.[427] Urizenic time, therefore, not only measures duration but also contributes to the way in which societies experience temporality as postlapsarian existence becomes not only circumscribed by the passage of time but also the way in which that passage is measured by mechanical instruments: '[i]t was a widespread seventeenth-century sentiment that humans can securely know *only* what they themselves construct by hand or model by mind' (Shapin 1996, 32).[428] It in this sense that Lucretius also envisioned the *machina mundi* 'as a concrete image' represented by man-made 'astronomical instruments' (Bignone 1936, 2.415 n.3; qt. Marković 2008, 52).

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[424] In *The Temple of Nature* (1803), Darwin describes Eros descending 'on swift wheels […] from his radiant car' (1804, 119 iii.177-8).

[425] On the right-hand side of Plate 12 of *Jerusalem*, a figure descends holding out his fingers into two compass points which meet at a circular globe, possibly 'this Vegetable Glass of Nature' (*K* 605) or a magnifying glass.

[426] It is apposite that 'The Ancient of Days' is placed opposite Orc-as-a-serpent on the title-page of *Europe*, for the solar circle may also represent the coil of Orc as an *ouroboros* (the cyclicity of time). Since the Hellenistic period, serpents were a solar symbol specifically associated with Aion, the god of ages and the 'personification of eternal temporal renewal' (Cohen 2014, 18; 155). Blake likely derived the solar/serpentine iconography from the feud between Apollo (god of the sun) and Python (the Delphi serpent) recounted in the Homeric hymns to Apollo. Orc, accordingly, represents the chthonian serpent in Ovid (2004, 26-7 i.438-41): he is born from Enitharmon's cave-like womb (the labour is like 'wheels of turning darkness […] in solemn revolutions' (*FZ* 345 v.57.27-8)), is almost immediately forced underground by his parents into a secondary cave-like womb, and is often depicted as struggling to rise from his 'dark abode' (*A* 208 1.2) and 'deep den' (*E* 228 4.10). Ironically, Apollo's slaying of Python is meant to represent the triumph of order over chaos (Hanning 1979, 490-1; Madder 1990, 330) but Urizen's compass points bifurcate like Orc's tongue on the title-page, reinforcing the correlation between Urizenic creation and Orcan revolt.

[427] See Gurevich (1976, 241). Especially within a monastic context, the clock became 'not merely a means of keeping track of the hours, but of synchronizing the actions of men' (Mumford 1934, 15). There arose a scholastic and theological 'passion to measure and quantify […] not only entities that had never been measured before, but also those that have never been measured since' (Kayle 1998, 3). Blake, discussing his depiction of time in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, reflects that 'I have, however, somewhat accommodated my Figure of Time to the common opinion, as I myself am also infected with it & my Visions also infected' (*K* 614).

[428] As Frank H. Gorman Jr. states, '[t]ime is also a social convention' (1990, 33).

Rather bathetically, however, Blake's engraving is two-dimensional and static and does not move like horological dials, which means that Urizen is even denied the dynamism of a clockwork mechanism and more closely resembles a sundial than a watch. Accordingly, the frontispiece becomes the sundial plate whilst Urizen's hand becomes the gnomon (*gnosis*) which casts the shadow of corporeality. Rather than independent of time and space like a divine Creator, Urizen is bound to the cycles of the sun and inexorably part of the natural rhythms of vegetative existence.[429] Urizen's body is principally trapped in the circle of the sundial plate/watch face because, although he is capable of measuring the void, he is bound by the mechanical laws of postlapsarian existence.

Urizen is persistently associated with the sun throughout Blake's mythopoeia. When Los creates the sun in Chapter IV of *The Book of Los* (5.10-57) he binds Urizen's spine 'to the glowing illusion' (272 47) until life itself becomes 'a Human Illusion' (56). In *The Four Zoas*, Urizen has possession of the solar 'horses & chariots' (*FZ* 288 i.11.30) alongside Luvah, the unfallen form of Orc, who in 'Night the First' 'pourd / The Lances of Urizen from chariots' (*FZ* 298 i.22.13-4).[430] In 'Night the Second,' the Lions of Urizen work at the forge and cast 'their sparkles dire abroad into the dismal deep' (307 ii.28.30) whilst the Sons of Urizen '[w]ith compasses divide the deep' (308 32). Then, in 'Night the Seventh,' Urizen's priestesses take the sun and place it in his temple:

> And with immense machines down rolling. the terrific orb
>
> Compell'd. The Sun reddning like a fierce lion in his chains
>
> Descended to the sound of instruments that drownd the noise
>
> Of the hoarse wheels & the terrific howlings of wild beasts
>
> That draggd the wheels of the Suns chariot & they put the Sun

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[429] Lucretius consistently refers to nature as a mother (i.169-70; 251-2; ii.597-9; 994-1001; v.794-5; 821-4; 1401), the skies as a father (i.251; ii.993-4), and ties both to the seasons (i.175-80; ii.1001-4; v.737-48). Lucretius also links seasonal cyclicity with the normal passage of time and terms aberrations 'ill-starred season[s]' (33 i.183) during which 'little children would grow suddenly to youths, and at once trees would come forth, leaping from the earth' (186-8).

[430] In 'Nigh the Seventh,' when Urizen descends into the Cave of Orc, he finds his horses, lions, and tigers chained and fettered (*FZ* vii.77.5-12). As Northrop Frye observes, in eternity Urizen is the spiritual sun but 'in the fallen world the sun is part of the dying and reviving rhythm of "Generation." Hence the usurpation of power by Luvah involves the seizure of the sun from Urizen' ([1947]1990, 285). Frye suggests that Blake is drawing on the story of Lucifer in Isaiah and the story of Phaethon in Plato's *Phaedrus* and in Ovid (286). The coupling of Urizen with Luvah has a precedent in Ovid's Apollo-Cupid (*Met*. 28 i.455). Cf. Nicholl (1980, 174-82). Cupid's usurpation of Apollo's arrows (i.456-73) similarly evokes Blake's Orc cycle. Cupid's inflammation of Apollo's desires and cooling of Daphne's desires (i.474-5) may also provide a context for Los' rape of Enitharmon (*BU* 19.10-6).

Into the temple of Urizen to give light to the Abyss…

(395 i.96.10-5).

Indeed, throughout *The Four Zoas* Urizen is persistently referred to as the 'Prince of Light' and the 'King of Light.' There are also intertextual references to 'The Ancient of Days' when '[a]t the first Sound the Golden sun arises from the Deep / And shakes his awful hair' (*FZ* 317 ii.34.58-9) and later in 'Night the Sixth' when Urizen forms 'gold silver & iron / And brass vast instruments to measure out the immense' (*FZ* 366 vi.73.16-7).

Solar iconography, in turn, becomes associated with the epistemological parameters of rationalistic thought as the 'Prince of Light [is] bound in chains of intellect' (*FZ* 345 v.57.16). Urizen, for instance, sits in chains as the sun shines like a halo on Plate 26 of *The Book of Urizen*. The solar eye on the frontispiece/tailpiece of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* looks into – or, rather, keeps an eye on – Bromion's cave as the religious condemnation of Oothoon's sexuality is later manifested as the sun framed like an eyeball by a trilithon (the physical representation of Natural Religion) on Plate 70 of *Jerusalem*. A figure, moreover, is trapped in a sun-like sphere on Plate 3 of *Europe* whilst an Atlas-figure seems to be holding up a solar orb on Plate 43 of *Milton*. The giant head on Plate 62 of *Jerusalem* is trapped by strands of hair in the rising sun, which recalls the winged figure at the bottom of Plate 1 of *Europe* and the final plate (17) of *The Book of Urizen*. Angelic figures trapped in a chain of spheres on Plate 75 of *Jerusalem* are evocative of the procession of children at the top of 'Holy Thursday' (Plate 19 of *Songs of Innocence*). The spindles on Plate 59 of *Jerusalem* also look like mechanical suns, whilst chains pull apart a figure at the bottom of Plate 67 and cover the right-hand side of Plate 65 like the human figures on Plate 42 and vines on Plate 40. This mechanical imagery is consistent with Plate 73, where Los beats his hammer on the rising sun (this scene is repeated at the top of Plate 36). It is, of course, Los who forges the chains of time (*BU* 10.17-8) with which he binds Urizen to the sun (*BL* 5.47-56), which is why he looks down contentedly at the sun on the final plate (8) of *The Song of Los* and the final plate (5) of *The Book of Los*.

Part of the theological context is the distinction between Urizen as the material sun from Jesus as the spiritual sun. As Emanuel Swedenborg maintains in *Angelic Wisdom Concerning The Divine Love And The Divine Wisdom* (1763), there are two suns (one living and the other

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dead) corresponding with the division of the universe into two worlds, the spiritual and the natural: '[n]ow because these two worlds are so distinct, it is necessary that there should be two suns, one from which all spiritual things are, and another from which all natural things are' (1835, 75). Swedenborg adds that the dead sun was created by the spiritual so that 'all things may be fixed, stated, and constant, and that thence those may exist which will be permanent and endure.' The creation and binding of Urizen's body to the sun by Los (an anagram of *sol*) can therefore be read as a limit upon the Fall: an act of mercy promoting the path towards redemption and eventual reunification with God.

When the sun is the Son it heralds a spiritual morning, but when the sun is Urizen (Ur-i-zen/horizon/your-eye-sun) it forebodes mourning.[431] So, when the cosmic clock strikes the hour of morning in *Jerusalem*, the 'theme' of the poem 'Awakes me [Blake] at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me / Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song' (*J* 638 i.4.4-5).[432] The dead sun of Urizenic mourning, on the other hand, fosters uncertainty and self-doubt; for, having fallen with Urizen, Los is 'Cut off from life,' his fires 'decay,' and he 'wept obscur'd with mourning' (*BU* 251 13.42-8). Similarly, the darkness of the Selfhood overcomes Theotormon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* where 'the night and morn / Are both alike: a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears' (*VDA* 199 2.37-8), and in *The Book of Ahania* – which is Blake's 'Exodus' after the 'Genesis' of *The Book of Urizen* – Ahania asks 'Where [is] the joy of my morning hour' (*BA* 265 5.5). Blake therefore exploits the spiritual semantics of the homonymic sun/Son in order to isolate the Urizenic sun as the timepiece of mankind's vegetative existence.[433] This iconographic dichotomisation is epitomised by Urizen trapped in the solar circle on 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece and those enlightened figures who are bathed in the light of the rising sun such as Oothoon and

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[431] Blake is exploiting the homonymic quality of biblical morning/mourning as those who fail to bathe in the 'lovingkindness in the morning' (Psa. 92.2) succumb to the anxiety of the Selfhood: 'I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all day long' (Psa. 38.6). Cf. 'Psalms' (30.5, 90.6, 130, 143), 'Isaiah' (14.12), 'Jeremiah' (3.23), and 'Ezekiel' (7.7). In 'The Book of Job,' the way in which Job's 'bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest' (30.17) specifically recalls the painful ossification of Urizen's body during Chapters IV[a], IV[b], and V of *The Book of Urizen*.

[432] In Dante's 'Paradiso,' there are similarly 'several living and blinding brilliances' which start to sing 'just as the clock which summons us / At the hour when the spouse of God rises' (2008, 393 x64; 395 x.139-40). Du Bartas envisions God given 'Light, Course, and Force to all the Lamps of Heav'n: / That still he guides them, and his Providence / Disposeth free, their *Fatall* influence' (1611, 104).

[433] The potential to read the compass points as a phallic extension of Urizen's obscured genitalia alongside 'the rays of the sun' which warmed '[t]he seeds of animal life […] in the mother's womb' (Ovid *Met.*, 26 i.418-20) is indicative of 'the quasi-Lucretian style which characterized [Ovid's] account of the original creation from Chaos' (Nicholl 1980, 181).

the nymph on 'The Argument' plate of *Visions* and Milton-as-Jesus taking off his robes on Plate 13 of *Milton*.

Blake further distinguishes between the spiritual sun/Son and the Urizenic sun in 'To the Christians' which prefixes the fourth chapter of *Jerusalem*. In this prefatory address, Blake attacks the insubstantiality of the material world which 'is but a faint shadow' and our co-dependable and perishable forms which are but 'Vegetable Mortal Bodies' (*J* 797 iv.77.13-5), before recounting a vision in which he 'saw a flame of fire, even as a Wheel / Of fire surrounding all the heavens' which moves in a contrary motion to the day arc, rolls the sun into an orb, turns the moon into a globe, and from which 'Man himself shrunk up / Into a little root a fathom long' (789 2-11). When Blake asks 'a Watcher & a Holy-One' the name of this wheel of fire, the Watcher replies 'It is the Wheel of Religion... It is Natural Religion' (789-8 12-20). The solar imagery and theological permutations indicate a shared ideological source which informed the iconography of 'The Ancient of Days,' whilst the horticultural analogy literalises the vegetative nature of mankind's anthropological devolution. In fact, man becomes 'a little grovelling Root' (668 i.17.32) because Simeon – who left Los for Tirzah to become generated (*M* i.24.2) and thus represents the fall towards corporeality – 'took Root beneath the shining Looms / Of Albions Daughters in Philistea' after which a feminine form (Dinah) arises from the four Zoas 'Rooted in Shechem' (*J* 794-5 iii.45-54). Philistea is a druidic nation (801 iv.78.30) and thus associated with Natural Religion, which in turn means that the looms upon which Albion's Daughters weave vegetative bodies is a reductive replication of the weaving performed in Cathedron. Moreover, the circumcision of the Hivites after Shechem's betrothal to Dinah (Gen. 34.13-31) presages the ritualistic and sacrificial practices which Blake associated with the biblical patriarchs and druidic forms of worship as evidenced pictorially on Plates 9, 25, and 69 of *Jerusalem*.[434] The Daughters of

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[434] 'Your Ancestors derived their origin from Abraham, Heber, Shem, and Noah, who were Druids' (*J* 685 ii.27.13-4). Blake later declares in 'To the Deists' which prefixes Chapter 3 of *Jerusalem* that 'Greek Philosophy [...] is a remnant of Druidism' (*J* 737 iii.52.13-4). Blake may also have been the designer of a medal for the Ancient Druids Universal Brethren of Stonehenge in 1796. See Cunnington (1927-9, 9), Grinsell (1978), and Brown (1980), though Stephen Allen has cast doubt on its provenance (2005, 347-8). If Blake was the designer, he would also have produced the inscription *tantum religio potuit*, a quotation taken from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (i.101). As an isolated fragment, the quotation reads 'so great was the power of religion.' However, as part of its original context (*tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*), the literal translation is 'to such heights of evil are men driven by religion.' Cyril Bailey translates it as 'You yourself sometime vanquished by the fearsome threats of the seer's sayings, will seek to desert from us' (1948, 30 i.101-2). This misreading would have illustrated to Blake the miscommunication and contamination of philosophies and religions over time.

Albion, therefore, who on Plate 59 can be seen weaving on looms that look like Urizenic suns (whilst the stars at the bottom of Plate 9 look like cogs cut out of the burning sky) are part of the somatic cycle which informs Natural Religion and to which man becomes rooted in his earthly existence.

When man becomes rooted in materiality, he is both physically and spiritually chained to his vegetative existence. Thus, the Tree of Mystery roots itself in the foot and then begins to grow in the brain in 'The Human Abstract' (*SE* 128 11-6). Blake pursues this botanical theme in another *Songs of Experience* (1794) lyric where, as part of the pictorial and semantic tradition across the Lambeth poems and the larger Prophetic Books, Blake subverts the well-established sixteenth-seventeenth-century theological association of the heliotropic plant as a symbol of man's relationship with the divine.

In 'Ah! Sun-flower,' the sunflower represents the world-weary soul which pines to return to Eternity and thus follows the course of the sun, but it is rooted in the earth and therefore cannot leave its earthbound (and earth-dependent) existence:

> Ah Sun-flower! weary of time.
> Who countest the steps of the Sun:
> Seeking after that sweet golden clime
> Where the travellers journey is done
>
> Where the Youth pined away with desire,
> And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
> Arise from their graves and aspire,
> Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.
>
> (*SE* 126 1-8).

The sunflower suffers from a similar deep-rooted stupor as Vala in *The Four Zoas* who complains, 'Alas am I but as a flower then will I sit me down / Then will I weep then Ill complain & sigh for immortality' (*FZ* 455 ix.127.16-7). The sunflower is also like the astronomer who will fail to find Eternity because Eternity cannot be measured by the

mathematical revolutions of celestial satellites.[435] Indeed, the futile task of counting 'the steps of the Sun' recalls the 'Numb'ring' of 'hours, days & years' (*BU* 248 10.17-8) as Los divides the night into watches in *The Book of Urizen* as well as the Newtonian measurements between stars in *Milton* (*M* ii.37.46-9).[436] Trapped within the ratiocinative framework of the Selfhood, the subject becomes like 'the Youth' – who, unable to consummate his sexual desires – and 'the pale Virgin' – redolent of Thel in *The Book of Thel* – only manage to escape the integuments of corporeal existence when they 'Arise from their graves' (7).[437]

Remaining once more with the lyrics from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789-94), the dependence of the sunflower on the corporeal sun can be further contrasted with the self-sufficiency of the charity-school children of 'Holy Thursday' who are described as 'these flowers of London town' who 'sit with radiance all their own' (*SI* 111 5-6). Because they are not reliant for their spiritual wellbeing on the 'beadles' (3) or 'the aged men wise guardians of the poor' (112 11), they shine with their own 'radiance' in a metaphorical (but also literal) realisation of inner-light Protestantism.

Blake emphasises mankind's ability to take responsibility for their spiritual wellbeing in an epistolary poem, 'To Mrs Ann Flaxman' (1797):

> A little Flower grew in a lonely Vale.
>
> Its form was lovely but its colours pale.

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[435] Blake's 'Ah Sun-flower' can be read as reacting against the scientific conflation of astronomy and providence which began in the early fourteenth century with such timepieces as Richard of Wallingford's astronomical clock at St. Albans (c.1330-35) which had a 'wheel of fortune.' From such 'technology […] associated with astronomy, late medieval clocks symbolized the culture's belief that time, far from being neutral or objective, was either propitious or inauspicious for human action' (Bradbury and Collette 2009, 356-8). As John North also observes, '[t]his was an age in which almost all scholars, even the most orthodox of theologians, accepted the idea that the stars, Sun, Moon, and planets, influenced the material and spiritual life of mankind' (2006, 59). Sir John Davies in *Nosce Teipsum* (1599) encapsulated the ontological estrangement of the individual who attempts to calculate his sense of self-worth in relation to external objects rather than seeking contentedness within his soul. Significantly, Davies reappropriates the clock metaphor: 'All things without, which round about we see, / We seeke to know, and haue therewith to do: / But that whereby we *reason, liue, and be,* / Within our selues, we strangers are thereto. // We seeke to know the mouing of each spheare, / And the strange cause of th'ebs and flouds of Nile: / But of that clocke within our breast we beare, / The subtill motions we forget the while' (4-5).
[436] The Cambridge Platonist Henry More captures this philosophical sophistry in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (1660) where, whilst discussing loadstones and the polar star, notes 'if the Events that Astrologers take upon them to predict did as steadily point to the Causes they alledge' then he would accept their mathematical providentialism; but, as there is no proof of their efficacy, such 'Allegations […] will stand them in no stead' (346).
[437] Cf. Dante's 'Inferno' (ii.127-9); 'Purgatorio' (xix.1-15); 'Paradiso' (iii.1-6).

One standing in the Porches of the Sun,

When his Meridian Glories were begun,

Leap'd from the steps of fire & on the grass

Alighted where this little flower was.

With hands divine he mov'd the gentle Sod

And took the Flower up in its native Clod;

Then planting it upon a Mountain's brow—

"'Tis your own fault if you don't flourish now."

(*K* 414).

The flower growing in the 'Porches of the Sun' is both physically closer to the sun/Son but also spiritually closer to the divine; thus, Blake exploits the geographical and hierarchical order – such as the charity-school children who sit above their guardians in 'Holy Thursday' (*SI* 112 11) – of the little flower's habitation in 'a lonely Vale' which is far removed from the sun's beams and isolated like the Innocents in the vales of Har. Although it remains rooted to a mountaintop, Blake has already motioned to mankind's ability to uproot itself from materiality by the flight of the solar flower which passed from the sun to the Earth and back again.

Similarly, in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) when the Marygold tells Oothoon to pluck her 'she ceas'd & closd her golden shrine' (197 1.10) whilst Oothoon herself 'rose up from the vale' (196 iii.6). The light of the heliotropic plant, however, does not pass away since Oothoon takes the flower 'and put thee here to glow between my breasts / And thus I turn my face to where my whole soul seeks' (12-3).[438] Oothoon herself absorbs and thereafter embodies divine light which provides the individual with the self-awareness to reject materiality. Indeed, despite the fact that it is Oothoon who uproots the Marygold, it is

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[438] The speaker of the prefatory poem to *Europe* asks a fairy 'what is the material world, and is it dead?' to which the fairy responds 'I will write a book on leaves of flowers… and shew you all alive / The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy' (*E* 225-6 iii.13-18). In a parallel of Oothoon's plucking of the Marygold and placing it between her breasts, the speaker takes the fairy 'home in my warm bosom' and 'as we went along / Wild flowers I gatherd; & he shew'd me each eternal flower: / He laugh'd aloud to see them whimper because they were pluck'd' (226 19-21). Blake adds that the flowers 'hover'd round me like a cloud of incense' (22) in a similar manner to Oothoon who 'hover[s] round Theotormons breast' (*VDA* 200 3.20) and which, in *Milton*, is expanded when 'eer the morning breaks joy opens in the flowery bosoms' (*M* 583 ii.31.50). The centre of a flower holds eternity (*M* ii.31.46-9; *J* i.13.34-5).

spiritual enlightenment which frees Oothoon from her earthly fetters as 'she went in wing'd exulting swift delight; / And over Theotormon's reign, took her impetuous course' (14-5). Oothoon then becomes a source of light in her own right on the final plate (11) as she flies over the Daughters of Albion.

As early as Dante's 'Paradiso,' the fourth realm of Heaven is the sun (intellectual happiness) and the Father's love is described as having 'opened out my confidence as the sun / Opens the rose' (446-7 xxii.55-6).[439] Although *The Divine Comedy* (c.1308-20) predates the growing mid-fourteenth-century familiarity with mechanical clocks – the first at Milan in 1335 and the first outside Italy probably at Strasbourg in 1352 (White 1964, 124) – Dante evinces an interest in the mechanised nature of time and planetary cycles. In Canto 33 of 'Paradiso,' for instance, Dante maps mankind's terrestrial desires onto astrological revolutions:

> already my desire and my will
> Were being turned like a wheel, all at one speed,
>
> By the love which moves the sun and the other stars.
>
> (499 xxxiii.143-5).

Dante may have had in mind the late-medieval *topos* of 'the new escapement mechanism that served to regulate or "moderate" the movement of the mechanical clock' which was being 'allegorized as *Temperantia* or *Attempra(u)nce*, the virtue that regulates the body and the will' (Bradbury and Collette 2009, 351).

This moral paradigm accrued a specific scientific context during the Enlightenment with the advancements in magnetism. As part of his analysis of the seventeenth-century German polymath Athanasius Kircher's sunflower clock, Koen Vermeir notes how the developments in mechanical clocks, magnetism, and the introduction of sunflowers from the Americas during the sixteenth century produced an ideological 'pattern' where 'these objects acquired similar meanings, even if they were used and represented in different practices' (2012, 66).[440] Thus, we find in Joachim Camerarius' *Symbola et Emblemata* (1590-1604) a

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[439] Cf. 484-5 xxx.100-26.
[440] From at least the early fourteenth century, the clock had already begun to emerge as an image of disciplined life regulated by Divine Wisdom (Whyte 1986, 202).

sunflower facing the sun's rays with 'Christ guid[ing] my mind' (1677, 98) and Otto van Veen similarly depicting a sunflower impelled by love growing towards the sun in *Amorum Emblemata* (1607).[441] In the spiritual emblem book *Pia Desideria* (1624), the Jesuit priest Herman Hugo compares the constancy of love to how 'the faithful *Steel* / Does the lov'd *Pole's* magnetic infl'ence feel… / So the find *Hyacinth* pursues the *Sun*' (1702, 171). Moreover, in the work of the English clergyman Robert Bolton the soul is described as turning towards God '*as the Sun-flower towards the Sun; the iron to the load-stone; and the load-stone to the Pole-star*' (1631, 327). The same semantic crossover occurs in Henry Hawkins' *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) where the sunflower (the '*Heliotropion*') is called 'the *Gnomon* of the Garden, a Dial… a verie needle, pointing to its radiant Starre' (49).

In Erasmus Darwin's 'Economy of Vegetation' (1791), Blake would have come across the appropriation of this semantic tradition:

> The obedient Steel with living instinct moves,
> And veers for ever to the pole it loves.
>
>
> "Hail, adamantine *Steel*! magnetic Lord!
>
>
> (1798, 49 ii.199-201).

In the same canto, Darwin reverts to clockwork imagery (and perhaps Walker's Eidouranion) as he describes how the Gnomes of Earth 'glide unseen, on printless slippers borne' like the arms 'mark'd on orreries in lucid signs, / Star'd with bright points the mimic zodiac shines' (62 ii.501-6). Then, in the first canto of 'Loves of the Plants,' the portrayal of the 'Great Helianthus' (sunflower) recycles the imagery from the 'Economy of Vegetation' (ii.199-201) as the flowerhead bends towards the Lord's sunbeams:

> With zealous step he climbs the upland lawn,
> And bows in homage to the rising dawn;
> Imbibes with eagle eye the golden ray,
> And watches, as it moves, the orb of day.

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[441] Cf. Edward Winters' *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture* (2005, 113-4).

(25 i.225-8).[442]

'The gentle LAPSANA, NYMPHÆA fair, / And bright CALENDULA' (Calendula is the Latin name for a number of species commonly known as the marigold, and may have provided a potential source for Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*) similarly 'trace with mimic art the march of Time' (51-2 ii.165-70). In an evocation of Lucretian symbolism, these flowers become cogs in the wheels of the *machina mundi*:

> First in its brazen cell reluctant roll'd,
>
> Bends the dark spring in many a steely fold.
>
> On spiral brass is stretch'd the wiry thong,
>
> Tooth urges tooth, and wheel drives wheel along;
>
> In diamond-eyes the polish'd axles flow,
>
> Smooth slides the hand, the balance pants below.
>
> (173-8).

Although Urizen is holding dividers/compasses in 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece, Blake may have noted the homophonic possibilities of those Miltonic 'compasses' with which Christ channels the Father's creative capacity in *Paradise Lost* and the ideological associations between heliotropic plants, clocks, and magnetic compasses. Indeed, Darwin's depiction of '*Time*'s huge fingers grasp[ing] his giant mace, / And dash[ing] proud Superstition from her base' (183-4) – which, as well as paralleling the central concern of *De Rerum Natura* (i.62-7) – provides an eerie echo of Urizen schematising postlapsarian existence with his divided, compass-like, '*Time's* huge fingers.'[443]

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[442] The same semantics permeate John Evans' *The Bees* (1806-13), where the 'large yellow radiate blossoms' of the Goat'sbeard (Tragopogon pratensis) 'wakes with morn's first ray' and 'from plumy seed or radiate flower, / Pure Nature's clock, they tell the passing hour' (1806, 71 iii.830-3). As Evans adds in a note, '[t]his plant stands first in the Horologe of Flora, opening its flowers about three in the morning, and closing them before noon.' Cf. Darwin (52).

[443] By the fifteenth century, 'the increasing accuracy of clocks led, or enabled, Europe to abandon experiential time for abstract time… Human life no longer adapts the mechanism to its needs; mankind is in some measure shaped by a machine which it adores' (Whyte 1986, 198).

Thus, Blake imbues 'The Ancient of Days' frontispiece with a symbolic significance which includes, but also goes beyond, traditional biblical exegeses and points towards a form of Urizenic creation which explicitly draws upon the industrial semantics of the *machina mundi*, where the solar orb in which Urizen hunkers becomes a wheel and where the solar spikes form the teeth of that wheel. The horological revolution, coinciding with the transmission of Epicureanism into England, provides a further context for understanding the frontispiece, where the wheel not only fits into the *machina mund* but becomes the solar timepiece measuring postlapsarian existence. Blake deliberately rejects the Enlightenment deification of a clockwork God by recasting Urizen as a perverted image of the 'horologe machinery divine' (Young [1742-5] 1863, 27 ii.212). The compass points of Urizen's fingers become the hands of time which regulate the cycle of Eternal Death: the vegetative growth and decay of corporeal lifeforms.

By distinguishing Urizenic time from Eternity, Blake condemns Satan's Watch Fiends who – despite becoming scripturally-distorted watchmen – fail to find the grain of sand in Lambeth (*M* ii.35.42-53; *J* ii.37[41].15-22) which opens out into a world of imaginative and spiritual delight (*PM* 506 1-4). To this end, Blake appropriates the association between heliotropic plants and sunlight/Son's-light to underscore the true relationship between man and God. The mid-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century semantic crosspollination between horticultural signifiers of spiritual enlightenment (epitomised by the introduction of the sunflower from the Americas) and developments in magnetism also offers a way of reading such religious imagery within the industrial context of the *machina mundi*; for, whilst the orientation of compass needles provided a convenient metaphor for the soul's desire to return to God, it is also a reflexive process which Blake laments in the lyric 'Ah! Sun-Flower' as the sunflower remains rooted to the Earth. It is in this sense that we should understand Urizen as the 'Flower of morning!' (*BA* 264 4.53).

Instead, Blake encourages us to pluck the heliotropic plant like Oothoon in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and to 'put thee here to glow between my breasts / And thus I turn my face to where my whole seeks' (*VDA* 197 1.12-3). It is only by following the spiritual sun/Son and by rejecting the dead sun of vegetative existence that we escape the clockwork

mechanism of the *machina mundi*.[444] As the Sinless Soul tells Vala, 'Yon Sun shall wax old &

decay but thou shalt ever flourish' (*FZ* 455 ix.127.25). In response, the now spiritually

enlightened Vala answers 'O sun thou art nothing now to me' (29).

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[444] 'Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended' (Isa. 60.20).

Conclusion

This thesis has shown for the first time that Blake was aware of the atomistic materialism of the Epicurean school, its specific rearticulation through the first-century BC Roman philosopher Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*,[445] and its subsequent adoption in Enlightenment discourses and late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century anthropological and cosmological poems. In particular, Chapter 1 evidenced the way Blake engaged with contemporary Epicurean polemics through his annotations to Francis Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political* (written c.1798) in which he claimed that Bacon was 'Epicurus and Lucretius' (*K* 397) and 'Evidently and Epicurean' (403) – claims repeated in annotations to Joshua Reynold's *Discourses* ten years later. These accusations were clearly informed by Bacon's engagement with Democritean and Epicurean atomistic models, whilst the marginalia's conflation of Epicureanism with atheism marks a standard exegesis amongst seventeenth and eighteenth-century translators of Lucretius, natural philosophers, theologians, and poets. Blake, therefore, was not only mindful of this atomistic tradition as it was transmitted through Epicurean treatises and apologias,[446] but actively reflected upon this debate when condemning Bacon's *Essays*.

I have also shown that an epistemological model based upon Epicurean sense perception provides a useful exegetical tool for understanding Blake's own mythopoeia. In particular, by mapping Lucretius' cosmogonic exposition of atomistic fluxion (*DRN* i.146-328; 483-634; ii.62-729; 991-1022) onto Urizen's ontological Fall in *The Book of Urizen* (1794) and *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), the entire psycho-topographical premise of Blake's narratives can be read as a projection of Epicurean phenomenality through the Selfhood:

> Imagination [is] the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but
> a faint shadow & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies,
> when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more.

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[445] The late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century poet-physician Richard Blackmore even suggested that 'the Epicurean philosophy had not lived so long, nor been so much esteemed, had it not been kept alive and propagated by the famous poem of Lucretius' ([1712]1806, xli).

[446] As well through a counter tradition of Christian refutations epitomised by Melchior Cardinal de Polignac's *Anti-Lucretius* (1745), translated into English by George Canning in 1766.

(*J* 797 iv.77.11-5).

Blake's consignment of Lucretian imagery and atomistic principles to the epistemological parameters of the Selfhood emphasises the perceptual relationship between atomism and materiality. When Urizen prepares his thunders in the darkness of the void, for instance, 'the rolling of wheels' of mechanical laws appear 'As of swelling seas' (*BU* 243 3.30-1) but neither the wheels, which are industrial signifiers of unseen causes and effects, nor the seas which occupy a relational role exist in the void. Similarly, when Urizen's 'Rage, fury, intense indignation' appear 'In cataracts of fire blood & gall / In whirlwinds of sulphureous smoke' (245 4.45-7), the whirlwinds are the phenomenological expression of psychological disturbances. Geological phenomenon like earthquakes – when Los 'earthquak'd with sighs' – also pertain to somatic functions. Thus, when Urizen runs 'To the desarts… / To hide, but he could not' (246 5.20-1), he is not travelling upon a physical terrain but the psycho-topography of his own Selfhood. When Urizen 'dug mountains & hills in vast strength' (22), he is occupied with the *phantasia* which are being projected onto his postlapsarian existence. By relegating the cosmological language of *De Rerum Natura* to a phantasm, Blake imbued the psychological Fall with atomistic atrophy in order to play out the fatalism of an entropic space within the psychodrama of a metaphysical sphere.[447]

In Chapter 3, I read the cosmological blueprint of postlapsarian existence as a product of Urizen's psychological struggle to control his thoughts as he ends up populating the emptiness of the void with his own mental images (*phantasia*).[448] As a result, the materiality of the physical universe is axiomatically immaterial, as everything becomes an epiphenomenal realisation of distorted preconceptions (*prolepsis*). The objects which thereafter fill existence are a spectral reimagining of Epicurean *eidola* and Lucretian *simulacra*. Such is the extent to which mankind has succumbed to the machinations of the Selfhood, that we fail to distinguish the illusionary nature of the material world. Hence, as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Thel does not recognise that her pastoral interlocutors are

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[447] The apocalyptic language of *DRN* which informs Urizen's psycho-topography shares similar phenomenological qualities to Satan's fall in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Cf. Worden (1948, 229; 302), Bloom (1970, 10), Hardie (1995, 13), Zwi Werblowsky (2001, 28), Lowenstein (2004, 45), Quint (2004, 861), and Shears (2009, 61).

[448] By placing a sentient rather than a merely reflexive body in the void, Blake highlights the solipsistic nature of material existence: 'all was / Darkness round Los' (*BL* 268 4.1), all existence seems 'a night of vast durance' (269 13), and for Urizen the darkness of the void is the darkness of the 'Self-closed, all-repelling' mind (*BU* 242 3.3).

epiphenomenal beings generated by the Selfhood. She subsequently fails to understand that the Lilly, Cloud, and Clod of Clay simply echo the ideological strictures of her lamentations and that she only hears what her myopic psyche is able to articulate.

By incorporating this philosophical framework in Chapter 4 as part of my discussion of the Lucretian concept of the *machina mundi* (the world machine), I revealed how Blake saw all creation as interwoven by the same atomistic ties which catalysed Creation, then regulate the revolution of celestial satellites, according to which mankind apotheosised natural laws as Natural Religion, and with which Los and Enitharmon clothe the spectral dead (souls descending to Earth) in vegetative bodies. I specifically addressed the conflation of cosmic and somatic chains in *The Book of Urizen* as Los binds Urizen's body 'With rivets of iron & brass' (*BU* 247 8.11) and then divides the night into watches by 'Beating still on his rivets of iron' (248 10.8). This semantic association develops in *Jerusalem* (1804-20), where the Twelve Daughters of Albion 'drew out from the Rocky Stone' – which 'are opake hardnesses covering all Vegetated things' and become known as the 'Atomic Origins of Existence' – 'Fibres of Life to Weave for every Female is a Golden Loom' (*J* 774 iii.67.3-5). The rocks are coverings like Epicurean *eidola* and Lucretian *simulacra*: the ethereal surfaces emitted as images of objects. The fibres drawn from the rocks act as the threads with which human bodies are woven. Human bodies, therefore, are a 'covering' produced by a 'covering.' Although there was no scope in Chapter 4 to explore the relationship between 'atoms' and 'anatomy' any further, I can now briefly point towards a pattern with which Blake exposed this philosophical context.

In 'Night the First' of *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804), Tharmas complains to Enion that she examines 'every little fibre of my soul' and that her empirical scrutiny is destroying the spiritual foundation of life:

> The infant joy is beautiful buts its anatomy
> Horrible Ghast & Deadly… I am like an atom
> A Nothing left in darkness yet I am an identity
> I wish & feel & weep & groan Ah terrible terrible
>
> (*FZ* 276 i.4.31-47).

Tharmas understands his ontological solitude in terms of the spiritual nothingness of an atom.[449] Morphologically, Blake is likely highlighting the causal link between the infant joy's 'anatomy' and Tharmas' self-identification as 'an atom,' since '*an atom*' can be found anagrammatically in '*anatom*y.' Furthermore, in the same way that 'anatomy' must be dissected into 'an atom' in order for the word to appear, Tharmas only begins to consider his existence in atomistic terms after Enion has spread the fibres of his soul 'out before the Sun like Stalks of Flax to dry' (32).[450]

A similar morphological manoeuvre might have informed Antamon's name, who is fifth on the list of the sons of Los and Enitharmon (viii.115.2). Antamon's ethereality is reinforced through his Emanation Elythiria, who also appears fifth in the list of the daughters of Los and Enitharmon (8). As the name phonetically suggests, Elythiria is 'ethereal.'[451] Antamon, or '*an atom*,' first appears in *Europe* and is described by Enitharmon as the 'prince of the pearly dew' (*E* 235 14.15). Enitharmon claims that only she can 'see thee crystal form. / Floting upon the bosomd air' (16-7). The appellation and association of Antamon as a cloud recalls the appearance of the Cloud in *The Book of Thel* who 'emerg'd, / Hovering and glittering on the air' (*BT* 80 3.5-6) and 'reclind upon his airy throne' (81 24).[452]

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[449] Tharmas' identification as 'an atom / A Nothing' (*FZ* 276 i.4.45-6) is repeated in Enitharmon's lament that 'Now I am nothing' (*FZ* 318 ii.34.91), fallen Man's iterative claim that 'I am nothing' (*FZ* 323 iii.40.8), 'O I am nothing' (324 13), and 'O I am nothing & to nothing must return again' (17-8), rearticulated by Albion (*J* 720-1 43[29].42; 47-52), and reinforced by Bath who notes that 'The Man is himself become / A piteous example of oblivion' when 'In Selfhood, we are nothing' (*J* 712-3 ii.40[45].8-13). These passage motion to the warning in John Davies' *Nosce Teipsum* (1599) that '*Epicures* make them [souls] swarmes of *Atomies*, / Which do by chance into our Bodies flee' ([1599]1876, 10) and similarly draws on the scope of such early-seventeenth-century texts as John Donne's *First Anniversarie: An Anatomy of the World* (1611) and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

[450] The way Blake exploits 'mimetic similarity' and employs typographical idiosyncrasies 'force the reader back to the individual words and syntagms' (Hilton 1983, 4).

[451] Cf. Damon (1988, 25).

[452] What furthers the affiliation between *Europe* and *The Book of Thel* is that when Enitharmon awakes from her sleep of eighteen hundred years, she calls 'Arise Ethinthus! tho' the earth-worm call' (*E* 234 13.16). This echoes Thel's lamentations (*BT* 81 3.23) and further suggests an association between Ethinthus as 'queen of waters' and Thel as a 'Queen' (*BT* 80 2.13; 81 3.29; 83 5.14; 16) associated with water (78 1.4-9). Moreover, whilst Ethinthus 'shinest in the sky' (*E* 234 14.1), Thel describes herself as 'this shining woman' (*BT* 81 3.22) and the Cloud refers to her as 'virgin of the skies' (25). After exploring his dens at the beginning of 'Night the Sixth' of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen alights at a river where he meets three women. Urizen refers to the 'youngest Woman' as 'Queen of these dreadful rivers' (*FZ* 356 vi.67.17-9). Thel is the 'youngest' of '[t]he daughters of Mne Seraphim' (*BT* 78 1.1-2).

The atomistic link between Antamon as '*an atom*' and the Cloud of *The Book of Thel* is further emphasised by the Blakean conflation of bodies with (and as) clouds, since it is Antamon who clothes Spectres in their physical bodies in *Milton* (1804-10):

> The little weeping Spectre stands on the threshold of Death…
>
> Antamon takes them into his beautiful flexible hands,
>
> As the Sower takes the seed, or as the Artist his clay
>
> Or fine wax, to mould artful a model for golden ornaments.
>
> The soft hands of Antamon draw the indelible line:
>
> Form immortal with golden pen; such as the Spectre admiring
>
> Puts on the sweet form; then smiles Antamon bright thro his windows…

(*M* 574-5 28.10-8).

The Spectre's insubstantially is reflected '[i]n Blake's symbolic language [where the] cloud is always the body, which will "vanish" when the soul has learned to look upon the face of God unveiled' (Raine 1968, 10). The biological birth of the Spectre combines the horticultural symbol of the sower with the looms of the Daughters of Los where it is bound in 'integument soft for its clothing with joy & delight' (*M* 575 28.20). The pervasive sexuality of this act is also suggestive of the sexual nature of the Cloud in *The Book of Thel*: the Cloud knows about the activities of Luvah, the Zoa of passion (*BT* 80 3.7-8),[453] he envisages a time when he shall 'court the fair eyed dew' and be taken 'to her shining tent' (81 13), and he leaves Thel 'to find his partner in the vale' (31).[454] When Thel makes her katabatic descent into the Clod of Clay's house, 'She wanderd in the land of clouds thro' valleys dark, listning / Dolours & lamentations' (*BT* 83 6.6-7). The notable geographical contradictions as Thel descends into the Earth but also wanders through a 'land of clouds' and then appears to be simultaneously moving through the earth and air yet also through 'valleys dark' points to an ideological schema; for, if clouds and (as it is commonly accepted) vales constitute insubstantial bodies, then the Earth itself is a macrocosmic covering of which the human

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[453] 'The Cloud seems to feel important largely because he serves a god of eros' (McCollister 1996/7, 92).

[454] The Cloud may even be attempting to sexualise Thel when '[h]e makes Thel identify with the female dew' (McCollister 1996/7, 92). S. Foster Damon also notes that 'Los once asks Oothoon if she is hiding in Oxford with Antamon (*J* 83:28); perhaps Blake had in mind the Oxonian Shelley, author of "The Cloud," and a notorious propagandist for free love' (1988, 25).

form is a miniature. All postlapsarian structures – from atoms to anatomy to the cosmological fabric of the heavens – are part of the psycho-topographical plane of unreality which is produced by the subject's relinquishment of agency to the Selfhood.

A more substantial analysis of Blake's atomising and anatomising of bodies would hopefully achieve a threefold objective. The first would reveal in more detail the relationship between the human anatomy and the subject's self-reflection as an atom. The second, the way in which this self-reflection creates the illusion of human existence being atomistic; not only in terms of the physical universe as an atomistic creation and obeying atomistic laws, but human society as a conglomeration of atomistic individuals. And thirdly, the distinction between an atomistic worldview and a holistic worldview where individuals form a collective upon the Earth within Albion and, upon their return to Eternity, within Jesus as Blake's Brotherhood – a form of the Cosmic Man found in creation myths such as the Kabbalistic Adam Kadmon and Ymir in Norse mythology.

This philosophical survey would then act as the foundation for a thematic continuation of the principles discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 but in relation to the 'fortuitous concourse' of thoughts. This Ciceronian term, which was applied to the random movement of Epicurean atoms, is used twice by Blake in his Prophetic Books: first in *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804, ii.27.12) and then once more in *Jerusalem* (1804-20, ii.29[33].8).[455] Thomas Creech employed the term in his 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura* and it was readily adopted within scientific and theological discourses during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with Blake possibly having come across it whilst reading Francis Bacon, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Emanuel Swedenborg, David Hume, James Arbuckle, or William Godwin. The application of Blake's understanding of 'fortuitous concourse' to my exegeses of psycho-topographical landscapes in *The Book of Thel* (1789), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), and *The Book of Urizen* (1794) would reinforce the philosophical legitimacy of this thesis' arguments as well as highlighting the consistency of Blake's thought for over thirty years.

Finally, although there was not the scope in Chapter 2 to explore the semantic significance of Southey's translation of '*effluvia*' and '*simulacra*' as 'spectre' in *The Doctor, &c* (1834-47),

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[455] Cf. Johnson (1994, 110); Glausser (1991, 76).

it is worth revisiting Southey's choice for its historical implications. The term 'spectre' did not appear in Thomas Creech's 1682 translation of *De Rerum Natura*; instead, *simulacra* is often translated as 'Shapes,' 'Forms,' 'Fantoms,' 'Wantons,' and 'Images.' Creech's translation was the best-known and most reprinted edition in the eighteenth century, so Southey's idiosyncratic revision implies a second-hand source. It is noticeable, for instance, that 'spectres' begins to appear in the marginalia surrounding Creech:

> in an "Animadversion… on the Fourth Book," he [Creech] says that "Lucretius has… disputed of these Spectres and Images with great Sharpness of Wit & Elegancy of Style"; and a footnote to Book IV mentions that Catius had called them *spectra*… Creech's edition [also] quotes Dryden's *Aeneid*: "Forms without Body, and impassive Air: / The squallid Spectres, that in Dead of Night / Break our short Sleep, and skim before our sight."'

(Glausser 1991, 78).[456]

In *Sylvae* (1685), Dryden also talks of 'groaning Spectres' (156) and 'Spectres and pale Shades' (401). However, in his translation of certain passages from the first four books of *De Rerum Natura*, Dryden does not use the term 'spectre.' As an example, when Lucretius describes the apparition of absent loved ones in Book Four as '*nam si abest quod ames, praesto simulacra tamen sunt illius et nomen dulce obversatur ad auris*,' Dryden renders it 'strive those pleasing fantomes to remove, / And shun th' Aeriel images of Love' (81). Creech, similarly, had translated the same passage as '*Forms* attend; or if we chance to hear / Her *Name, Love enters with it at the Ear*' (1683, 133). It would therefore appear that in the seventeenth century 'spectres' was not the principal translation of *simulacra*.

The 1743 anonymous translation of *De Rerum Natura*, on the other hand, begins to systematically associate *simulacra* with spectres. Lucretius' description of souls escaping Acheron, '*cùm sæpe figuras contuimur miras simulacraque luce carentum*,' is translated as 'when we think we see strange Phantoms and Spectres of the Dead' (11). And again, '*simulacra modis pallentia miris*' is translated as 'certain Spectres strange and wond'rous

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[456] In a note, Glausser points out that 'Creech puts the three lines from Dryden together, as if he were extracting them from a continuous passage; but in fact he has taken them from two separate places. The first line comes from Book VI (line 409), the second and third from Book XI (lines 423-4)' (87).

pale' (15). In a note, the anonymous translator adds that Lucretius believed in the transmigration of souls and that ghosts (the third nature of man) appeared as spectres: '[t]hese Spectres and Shadows of the Dead, appear, or seem to appear, when we are asleep, or awake, or sick, and terrify our Minds.' Although it remains common practice to translate *simulacra* as 'Images,' the specific association of *simulacra* with 'Spectres' within the context of dreams (and death) points towards a developing semantic schematisation.

Indeed, from about the 1720s there is a continued growth in the usage of 'spectre(s)' which rises exponentially at the end of the century.[457] Following a similar correlation in the usage of '*simulacra*' upon the publication of Creech's 1682 edition and the anonymous 1743 edition of *De Rerum Natura*, the growth of the Gothic novel during the eighteenth is conspicuous for its adoption of the term 'spectre.' Thus, whilst not all eighteenth-century 'spectres' are necessarily Epicurean in origin, Blake would have become aware of the term '*simulacra*' as a description for spectral forms in the conventional eighteenth-century sense that 'supernatural imagery [acted] as a mode for expressing psychological truth' (Spacks 1962, 113). It therefore remains pertinent that 'spectres' are associated with apparitions, ghosts, and hideous forms such as the monstrous *simulacra* which scare the dreamer in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

Moreover, the linguistic habit of Lucretius' eighteenth-century translator does suggest that there might be an underlying philosophical framework which was being exploited as part of a secondary Gothic context. The fact that *simulacra* began to be more commonly translated as 'spectre' in John Mason Good's 1805 edition also suggests that Blake's Epicurean sources were likely the eighteenth-century rather than the seventeenth-century translations. Indeed, it is a mark of consistency that the largest concentration of 'spectres' in Good's edition is in relation to 'the existence of spectres, ghosts, and apparitions [...] and why the night has commonly been the season of their supposed appearance and operation' (38).[458]

To bring this thesis to a close, then, we are able to pinpoint a steady engagement in Blake's writings with Epicureanism and, specifically, the atomistic principles of Lucretius' *De Rerum*

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[457] Cf. Hilton (1983, 148).
[458] The association between Epicurean *eidola* and Blakean Spectres which was first suggested by W. H. Stevenson in a 1971 edition of Blake's poetry and which has subsequently been traced by Nelson Hilton (1983), Morton D. Paley (1983), and Wayne Glausser (1991)

Natura. In the 1780s, Blake caricatured Suction the Epicurean in *An Island in the Moon* (1784-5), annotated a passage about 'Epicurism' (*K* 75) in Lavater's *Aphorism on Man* (c.1788), and engraved 'Democritus' for Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789). In the 1790s, as well as labelling Bacon with an Epicurean tag, Blake becomes specifically concerned with the Fall as a form of atomistic Creation in *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Los* (1795), and *The Four Zoas* (1795-1804) and begins to place his characters in the 'void' and 'abyss' of postlapsarian existence. Blake continues to employ this psycho-topographic space in *Milton* (1804-20) and *Jerusalem* (1804-20) where the Daughters of Albion call 'the Rocks Atomic Origins of Existence; denying Eternity / By the Atheistical Epicurean Philosophy of Albions Tree' (*J* 774 iii.67.12-3). In these works we also see the adoption of atomistic terms associated with Epicurus and Lucretius, such as 'fortuitous concourse,' 'seeds of things,' and 'effluvia.'

Blake also attacks the Democritean tradition as it passed through Newton, Voltaire, and Rousseau in the notebook poem 'Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau' (1800-3), returning to this concern in his annotations to Reynolds' *Discourses* (c.1808, *K* 456; 474-5) and in a letter written to George Cumberland on 12th April 1827 (*K* 878). In fact, in annotations to Thornton's *New Translation of the Lord's Prayer* (written 1827), Blake reserves the term 'Antichrist' for 'The Greek & Roman Classics' (*K* 786) before once more grouping 'Newtonian & Baconian Philosopher's (787) together as one irreligious pack. Only a few years earlier Blake had produced 27 illustrations for the third edition of Robert John Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil* (printed in 1830), including one of Epicurus which included the following caption:

> A Grecian Philosopher, Flourished 264 years before Christ, His philosophy was transfused into Latin, by the great Roman Poet Lucretius, who flourished 105 years before Christ, and wrote his "De Rerum Natura" on the Nature of Things.

> (Object 13 (Bentley 504.27)).

The adoption of classical atomism within Enlightenment discourses and the subsequent battleground which opened up between defenders and opponents of its teleological legacy, as well as the saturation of Lucretian poetics in cosmological and anthropological poems, reveals that Blake was part of a culture which closely engaged with the atomistic materialism of the Epicurean school. It is, therefore, not surprising that Blake should

incorporate the concept of the void or the fluxion of atoms to express his particular, eighteenth-century socio-political struggles. Nor should it be surprising that this debate provided a template for a universal theosophical contest, when the ideological incongruity between atomism and spirituality had been raging for over two millennia. Indeed, Blake enters the fray to defend his Christological faith from the threat of atomistic atheism. As he declares in *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (1810):

> Many supposed that before the Creation All was Solitude & Chaos. This is the most pernicious Idea that can enter the Mind, as it takes away all sublimity from the Bible & Limits All Existence to Creation & to Chaos, To the Time & Space fixed by the Corporeal Vegetative Eye, & leaves the Man who entertains such an Idea the habitation of Unbelieving demons.

> (*K* 614).

Blake himself was not free from these 'Unbelieving demons.' Sometimes, they even affected his poetry (*A* 210 2.18-20). As he explains in a letter to William Hayley on 23rd October 1804, for twenty years he had been fighting a 'spectrous Fiend' who was 'the ruiner of ancient Greece' and had made him 'a slave bound in a mill among beasts and devils' (*K* 851-2). In the last few months of his life, Blake adopts a more recognisably combative tone when he tells George Cumberland in a letter dated 12th April 1827, 'I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life, not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever' (*K* 878). In the same letter, reflecting upon the death of his friend the neo-classicist sculptor John Flaxman, Blake writes 'we must All soon follow, every one to his Own Eternal House, Leaving the Delusive Goddess Nature & her Laws' (879). Blake lived in the imagination and the imagination was an antidote to the atomistic epistemology of the Epicurean school. As he declares at the end of *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, 'I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it' (*K* 617).

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