William Blake's Satan as a Hermaphrodite

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WILLIAM BLAKE’S SATAN AS A HERMAPHRODITE

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THESIS

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WILLIAM BLAKE’S SATAN AS A HERMAPHRODITE

By

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ABSTRACT

Depictions of Satan had started off with a grotesque and monstrous figure, but depictions of and attitudes towards the character shifted with the publication of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. However, although the aesthetics of the figure shifted, I argue that William Blake’s renderings of Satan continue the tradition of rendering them as monstrous and grotesque in a new way, in that Blake renders Satan as a hermaphrodite. Attitudes towards hermaphrodites has shifted over time, but the attitude of regarding them as unnatural or monstrous harkens back to ancient Greece, and these attitudes were only furthered with time and the advent of modern medicine. Ambiguous sex was both lauded and reviled in Blake’s time, where in theory it was regarded as a pinnacle of humanity, but in actuality it was regarded as nature’s mistake that needed rectifying. I argue that this is a tradition that Blake continued.
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INTRODUCTION

William Blake’s depictions of Satan are some of the most recognizable of the figure in the history of western art. From a history of grotesque renderings, Blake’s Satan stands radiant and fair, representing the more appealing modern Devil, as inspired by John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* of 1667. Blake’s Satan continues a tradition in art history that denies the Devil a phallus and instead bestows doubtful sex, and this is because Blake interprets Satan as a hermaphrodite. Blake’s interpretation of hermaphroditism coincides with the contemporary notion of questionable sex as being deceptive and leading to moral error, casting the blame on the absence of a phallus and the fear of femininity, all of which is captured in Blake’s figure of the hermaphrodite. This thesis will consider the reasoning behind the history of assigning Satan doubtful sex and will examine Blake’s own interpretation of the Divine and of gender, which stems from the artist’s own understanding of the androgyne and the hermaphrodite.

The hermaphroditic Satan can be seen in Blake’s *Satan Smiting Job with Boils* watercolor of 1821 [Fig. 1], where Blake uses a scaly texture over the areas of the body that traditionally determine the reading of sex. Especially in the presence of clothed humanity, Satan is rendered an antagonist and degenerate, but with the possibility of redemption. Redemption as a possibility is something that Blake applies to the hermaphrodite, in that redemption comes in the form of transcending into another gender. This thesis will travel through the history of the hermaphrodite, mentioning the myths behind the creation of the being and how they were viewed in the Western world, which was met with a mix of veneration and fear. The hermaphrodite then went through an existential crisis, where
medicine would seek to prove the non-existence of the hermaphrodite in humans. This belief in the non-existence of the hermaphrodite would coincide with the fall in belief of Satan. This thesis will then discuss views of the hermaphrodite in the Victorian Age, which continued the tradition of denying the existence of the hermaphrodite through eliminating, surgically, cases of “superfluous” sex, and then move on to mention a case of the intersexed contemporary to Blake, the Chevalier d’Eon. With the publication of *Paradise Lost*, Satan would experience a resurgence in popularity, along with a resurgence in the popularity of the androgynous figure in popular culture. Blake, taking both of these into account, would merge the hermaphrodite and Satan as he developed his own method of studying the sexes and what they meant to him. This thesis will conclude with discussing Blake’s continuation of granting Satan ambiguous sex, through his use of nudity. This thesis will, intermittently, offer comparisons to the works of Blake’s contemporaries in rendering Satan.
Before delving into this thesis, one must understand Blake’s interpretation of Lucifer, Satan, and the Zoa Urizen, and that while each term may refer to the same being, they are to be recognized as that being in different states. Blake understood Lucifer for its original translation as an earthly king, or the name of Satan before their fall from grace:¹ this fall from grace mirrors mankind’s own from the graces of Divinity, and encompasses much of Blake’s mythos. To Blake, Lucifer was a self-centered state before a fall, and was otherwise near-perfection. Satan was a state after a fall, and in Blake’s mythos Satan was a male without a

female counterpart to complete him, and was also Death. Urizen, a creation of Blake’s, was a being that encompassed these states of Lucifer and Satan and acted largely as the Devil - as opposed to a general devil, or demon - although was not the sole one to do so, and was Satan as they posed as the God of the material world, but in a fallen state. Urizen was born, as Lucifer, with a female counterpart, or an emanation of pleasure named Ahania, yet rejected her and dubbed her Sin, leading to Urizen becoming Satan with the damnation of rejecting their female counterpart. This rejection of the feminine within resulted in Urizen, or Satan, becoming a hermaphrodite. Such rejection resulted in many of Blake’s other characters, including his version of Milton, to embody the state of Satan. Their emanations may exist, but the act of rejecting the feminine results in the fallen state of Satan.

Blake’s understanding of the hermaphrodite must also be taken into account. A hermaphrodite is, traditionally, an individual with the markings of sex on their bodies that read as both male and female. However, there are a slew of moralizations attached to such beings since far before Blake’s time, and these moralizations continue on into Blake’s time, and even past it. According to Doctor Ruth Gilbert, the hermaphrodite was both an “elevated ideal and disturbing actuality” that included a range of “physical, social, and sexual possibilities.”

Blake’s understanding of the hermaphrodite is such that the being is in a contradictory state, as this thesis hopes to delve upon, and extends beyond the reading of their sex. Much like Blake’s Satan is a state of being, the Blake’s hermaphrodite is a fallen state that can be rectified into a traditional binary role, but this does not mean that all of Blake’s intersexed characters are hermaphrodites. Although once interchangeable,

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“androgyne” and “hermaphrodite” would, in the early modern period, come to represent two different things, and Blake embraced this distinction for his understanding of the sexes. “Sex,” in this thesis, shall refer to bodily areas that determine the traditional reading of physical gender, such as genitalia or the chest, and “sexes” shall refer to the reading of the physical body in terms of gender.

This thesis will strive to refer to Satan with gender-neutral pronouns - not because the figure is definitely not-male, but rather because the figure has always been gendered as male, yet lore and depictions of their actual sex have been historically doubtful. This is not to say that the figure is not male, but rather to say that the figure has questionable sex, and they/them/their are being used as the most inclusive pronouns. Also, I don’t believe anyone has asked Satan as to their gender-preference. After all, “no one heard the Devil’s side of any story, because God wrote all the books.”

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3 Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories*, 11. The androgyne would come to represent the gender-fluid nature of a physic state, whereas the hermaphrodite would continue to embody the physical merging of the binary-understanding of the sexes.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HERMAPHRODITE LEADING UP TO THE ROMANTIC ERA

The history of the hermaphrodite, leading up to Blake’s own interpretation of the being, is vast, so I shall focus on the studies attributed to the being, starting with the scientific approach to the hermaphrodite of the Medieval era. I will very briefly mentioned the Western mythological origin of the hermaphrodite, and I shall delve past further mythological study and into the medical, as this is where Blake’s understanding of the hermaphrodite takes root.

In the ancient Greece, the hermaphrodite was synonymous with extreme monstrosity, and was often viewed as a threat from the gods, prompting many hermaphroditic babies to be killed. In Rome, hermaphroditic offspring were likewise killed, reportedly thrown into the sea. The distaste for the human hermaphrodite was early set. Outside of physical examples of the hermaphrodite, the hermaphrodite was found in early mythology, and was much more favorably looked upon. Plato’s Symposium had posed the concept of mankind as originating from three sexes, divided by the gods. Ovid’s tale of the Hermaphrodite was well-circulated

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6 Ibid., 21.
7 This is to say that while actual cases of hermaphroditism were viewed as ominous portents of the gods, hermaphrodites found within mythology, as opposed to historical records, were viewed in a more favorable light that might have even viewed them as blessings, or a step above humanity.
9 Ovid, *Ovid Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 197-205. In the tale, Hermaphroditus stops by a pool inhabited by the nymph Salmacis. Salmacis is overcome with lust for Hermaphroditus, and after he spurns her affections, she assaults him and begs the gods to make it so that they can never be separated. The gods oblige, resulting in Hermaphroditus and Salmacis merging into one body, the hermaphrodite. Upon seeing that his body is no longer completely male, Hermaphroditus, now a hermaphrodite, asks his parents to curse the pool to afflict the sex of any man that approaches it. “[Whoever] comes into this pool as man may he go forth half-man, and may he weaken at the touch of water.” At least according to this translation by Frank Justus Miller, it would seem that Ovid’s hermaphrodite is a state that can afflict men. This translation seems to gage the sex of the hermaphrodite based on how “far” from male that state is.
through the middle ages, and late Medieval poets such as Dante used Ovidian material within their own works. Aristotle’s *De Generatione Animalium* was also well circulated in the 13th century, which argued that the hermaphrodite was not so much a third sex, but rather a case of superfluous genitalia in either a male or female subject, identified by various factors of the body. This idea of the hermaphrodite as simply being a person with incorrect or superfluous sex would permeate into more modern medical ideology. The 13th century medical treatise *De Secretis Mulierum*, attributed to Albert the Great, placed hermaphrodites in the category of monstrous births, and argued that hermaphrodites should be considered male because it was the “worthier sex.”

But hermaphroditism was not always treated as a malady. According to Gilbert, Saint Augustine (354-430) argued that while hermaphrodites were still to be classified as monsters, they were still creatures made by the Divine and were not to be abhorred. Castiglione (1478-1529) argued that as the Divine fashioned male and female to their likeness, the Divine was therefore androgynous - a sentiment that Blake would agree with, as seen in his writings and his art. Some Jewish authorities believe that Adam was originally an androgyne or a hermaphrodite before his separation from Eve, given that the two bodies were originally

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11 Ibid., 196-197.

12 Ibid., 197.


one. In the 13th century, the idea that Adam was originally a hermaphrodite before their separation from Eve, which would constitute as their fall, would become heretical. Although the hermaphrodite as a monster would dominate the narrative, the idea that the hermaphrodite was a reflection of the Divine was still a present thought that Blake would seek to reconcile with his own beliefs while still adhering to the more popular narrative of the hermaphrodite as monstrous. For Blake, the hermaphrodite was an affliction and the androgynous was a choice, as this thesis will prove through his writings and his art.

Peters of Poitiers of the 13th century likened masturbation to hermaphroditism, in that the individual participated in a dual role of giving and receiving the act of sex. This role of dualism as hermaphroditic was seen again in the 1570’s in Europe when it became a trend for women to take to dressing in masculine attire, and transvestitism was likened to hermaphrodites, as if clothing alone would change one’s gender. 1620 saw the pamphlets *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, which attacked masculinized women and feminized men for challenging the binary system, especially targeting women, viewing them as unruly

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16 Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories*, 15. This belief is believed to be drawn from Plato’s *Symposium*.

17 The fall of mankind, in this theory, was the separation of mankind from their original hermaphroditic body and into the male and female sexes, as this separation was falling further from the ideal androgynous or hermaphroditic Divine. The idea that mankind’s fall originated with the creation of the separate sexes was heretical, as opposed to the narrative that the fall of mankind originated with the consumption of the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Ibid.


creatures requiring a firm hand, especially in terms of their passions. Gender as performative is something that is more widely accepted now, but it was treated as a malady - as an act of the monstrous - in Europe in the 13th century, in the 16th century, and would continue to be so in Blake’s time. In the 18th century, hermaphrodites were treated like transvestites, damned for performing whatever was considered the “wrong” gender for them. Even for Blake, gender performance was within and without.

In the 14th century, male medical experts were called in on cases of gender, and their examinations would determine the legal, social, and religious fates of those in question. In the case of the hermaphrodite, what gender they would be assigned to perform would dictate what rights they had. It fell into the hands of elite surgeons to certify the gender and dominant sex of the hermaphrodite, and they would offer “cures” for conformity to what was considered standard anatomy. These male surgeons would, in the late Middle Ages, standardize the human body, and acted as experts on gender. Manuals were created to realize a more systematic approach to gender, which also acted to move medical knowledge from oral traditions to literary, leading to the practice of surgery as becoming elitist. Standardizing the human body eliminated, through action, the existence of the

21 Ibid., 27.
24 Ibid., 18.
25 Ibid., 19.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 20.
hermaphrodite. Although hermaphrodites were recognized as existing, it became medicine’s role to exact the decision of there being only two genders, and any deviation from these two genders could be “corrected.”

The exterior genitals played a major role in the deciding of gender for the hermaphrodite in the Middle Ages. Surgeries were performed to “return” the body to its more “natural” form, and subjects were inspected to determine if they were more masculine or feminine to decide which of the binary genders they could present. According to Doctor Leah DeVun, "Features that were too large or too numerous were associated in the Middle Ages with monsters and [demons.]" The “standardized” human form was damning for those that did not conform. If the subject had a penis, just how active that member was determined if the subject got to keep it, or if it was cauterized. Genitals were “unnatural,” whereas surgery for those genitals was “natural.”

Hermaphrodites were a product of nature, and nature was imperfect, needing surgeons to master her. Nature was viewed as feminine due to its landscape features: its mountains peaked like feminine breasts, and its valleys dipped like a feminine pelvis. Civilization clothed her, and man was the epitome of civilization. It extended beyond nature: woman was imperfect, hence the rise of men in society, to subdue those imperfections. When it came

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29 Ibid., 30.
30 Ibid., 22.
31 Ibid., 25.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
to the rise of male surgeons over the women who previously dominated the medical field, DeVun said "men's greater capacity for reason and literacy distinguished them from 'vile and presumptuous women' who approached the body with 'neither art nor understand.'” If women were imperfect beings, then this truly damned the hermaphrodite, who dared to straddle the sexual divide and challenge the norms within.

Even in America, hermaphrodites overlapped with the concept of the “deliberately deceptive or shady character.” This continued to tradition of likening the hermaphrodite to criminals and prostitutes, as if existing between the divide of the gender binary was morally apprehensible. Such moral-strife extended the hermaphrodite into the realm of the inhuman. Early American texts likened the hermaphrodite to monstrous births. A popular medical manual in America, titled *Aristotle’s Master-Piece*, detailed a 1512 creature-birth in Ravenna that had hermaphroditic attributes. In 1637, Mary Dyer, a woman who had been believed to earn the Divine’s ire, gave birth to a misshapen stillborn of indeterminable sex, and it was said that “Satan lurked nearby.” According to Doctor Elizabeth Reis, "In America [nonconforming bodies] have been marked as 'other,' as monstrous, sinister, threatening, inferior, and unfortunate.” The fear of hermaphrodites and what they could portend

39 Ibid., 416.
40 Ibid., 415.
41 Ibid., 414.
extended into the New World, and that Satan had a hand in the creation of the hermaphrodite was a fear that persisted. After all, any creature that could challenge the perceived balance of the binary, created by the Divine, was surely a tool of evil.

Just as Mother Nature was to blame for the hermaphrodite, so too were women to blame for monstrous births. In *Aristotle’s Master-Piece*, monstrous births were told to be the fault of the mother’s imagination. Just as the fall of man has been blamed on Eve for falling for temptation, so too were the births of monsters into mankind blamed on woman. But just as it was the duty of male surgeons to correct nature’s mistakes, it was also their duty to eliminate monsters from mankind, lest the existence of non-conforming individuals reflect poorly on the intention of the Divine in the creation of mankind. In his 1741 treatise on hermaphrodites, physician James Parsons blamed “mistaken” cases of hermaphrodites largely on enlarged clitorises deceiving viewers. It was as if the clitoris was an invading or leeching force, infecting the “perfect” human body with its presence. Perhaps it harkens back to the idea of Adam being better off without Eve: that mankind would not have fallen had there not been a female to tempt.

According to Doctor Richard Wayne Collins, “[by] the eighteenth century, [doctors] and lawyers were not allowed to recognize ‘the presence of two sexes, juxtaposed or intermingled,’ but had to decipher which was ‘the true [sex.]’” Moving into Blake’s time was the notion that there were no hermaphrodites, but rather cases of mistaken sex, and that

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43 Ibid., 420.
those with authority had the duty to discover the true sex of an individual. Also according to Collins, hermaphrodites were treated like transvestites,\(^{45}\) choosing how to perform, regardless of whether or not if that performance was “correct.”

Enter Satan, who was not human and therefore could bear the mantle of straddling the boundary of sex. Where man could no longer accept the existence of the hermaphrodite amongst themselves, Satan was a figure that could be a hermaphrodite without the connotations of imperfection. Satan could be that monstrous birth, or that performative nuisance, given that hermaphrodites had long been linked to them. It was a compromise that man could accept: that hermaphrodites existed at the further end of the Divine’s reach, man-shaped yet damned.

VICTORIAN VIEWS ON SEX

Blake’s androgyne may have been safe from misgendering due to the established existence of male sex, but that did not keep the androgyne from being identified as intersexed. According to Doctor Alice Dreger, the power of determining the sex of bodies, behaviors, and desires resided in medical and scientific men of the time,\(^\text{46}\) and non-conforming groups such as feminists and homosexuals were found to be “behavioral hermaphrodites,” which would lead to strict definitions of gender roles in order to eliminate instances of doubtful sex in the Victorian Age.\(^\text{47}\) According to Dreger:

> [Hermaphrodite…] was the blanket term commonly used […] for persons suspected of being subjects of double, doubtful, or mistaken sex. The label “hermaphrodite” was sometimes given to people we would now call homosexuals, transvestites, [and feminists.]\(^\text{48}\)

Blake’s androgyne, whilst intersex, was “safe” from doubtful sex due to the fact that they could masquerade as definitively male, and would be “redeemed” from the state of intersexuality by Victorian medicine, despite feminine traits. Blake’s hermaphrodite, just like the state of Satan, could be “rectified” through the same medicine, either by being defined out of the existence of ambiguousness, or medically altered to be more suited to their “true” self. This was emphasized by the visions of Jane Lead in the 17th century, whose visions saw Christ say that Satan and their fallen angels would be redeemed,\(^\text{49}\) and before her the visions of St. Jerome, who “tells us that this mighty angel will one day be reinstated in the primal

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\(^\text{47}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^\text{48}\) Ibid., 30.

splendor and in [their] prior rank.” Both Blake's androgyne and Blake’s hermaphrodite could have been recognized as hermaphrodites by Victorian medicine, but Blake foresaw the disassembly of the hermaphrodite by modern medicine and found his behavioral hermaphrodite as the androgyne, safe from mis-sexing and safe from the negative connotations associated with the hermaphrodite.

English surgeon Jonathan Hutchinson, in 1896, had to say about hermaphrodites, “So much of what is repulsive is attached to our ideas of the conditions of a hermaphrodite that we experience a reluctance to even use the word.” The Victorian hermaphrodite was a monster, and such a term was reluctantly applied to what could surely be determined as man or woman. Victorian medicine was to save mankind from the labeling of monsters. According to Dreger, “hermaphroditism causes a great deal of confusion, more than one might at first appreciate, because […] the discovery of a ‘hermaphroditic’ body raises doubts not just about the particular body in question, but about all bodies.” After all, what defines sex? If we are a sum of parts, then surely those parts play some role in the definition of sex? But what parts exactly are apt criteria to define? The breasts? A penis? What if there are multiple indicators that points to differing sexes? What, exactly, defines a male or female? What does it mean when there are indictors of both, or neither? And what if a subject does not behave as society dictates that one of their sex should? Victorian medicine sought exact answers, slicing into bodies to sate their questions and cut away differing material. Dreger’s book offered different accounts of hermaphrodites where men of medicine cut away offending indicators of sex.

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52 Ibid., 6.
other than the ones that they assigned, or “permitted” subjects to continue living as one
gender when aspects of their sex indicated another. Victorian medicine did not acknowledge
differing sexes and genders other than to label them as “other” and “mistaken,” dissecting the
hermaphrodite into parts and weighing those parts against each other to determine either
male or female, but never both.

Blake utilizes the same language when he talks about hermaphrodites, labeling them
as “he” or “she.” According to S. Foster Damon, “a hermaphrodite is a being with the organs
of both sexes. To Blake it symbolized a sterile state of unreconciled and warring opposites.”
This harkens back to Schotz’s quote about the opposition of sexes being fundamental to
Blake’s beliefs: the binary rules all, and even Blake’s beings of intersex must submit to it.
According to Dreger, “the history of hermaphroditism is largely the history of struggles of
the ‘realities’ of sex - the nature of ‘true’ sex, the proper roles of the sexes, the question of
what sex can, should, and must mean.” To Blake, sexes are the source of all fundamental
balance and imbalance, creation and destruction. The sexes mean a great deal to Blake, as
this thesis will delve into, and their roles are pivotal to human essentiality. Sexes at odds
means war, destruction, and slavery, and this is what the hermaphrodite represents to Blake.

In Blake’s mythology, there are temptuous daughters that are hermaphroditic. In his
*Milton*, Blake’s Milton is tempted by hermaphrodites, "The Twofold form Hermaphroditic:
and the Double-sexed: The Female-male & the Male-female, self-dividing stood Before him
in their beauty, & in the cruelties of holiness!” Blake heeds Victorian medicine and finds

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54 Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 15.
his hermaphrodites with indicators to superior sex-readings in regards to the binary. Blake’s Satan follows this rule and is referred to as male, despite being a hermaphrodite born from another hermaphrodite, as seen in Blake’s prophetic book *The Four Zoas,*⁵⁶ and giving birth to Sin, as seen in *Paradise Lost.*⁵⁷ We look to Blake’s art for physical indicators of sex for Satan to determine how their body is hermaphroditic. Blake sometimes utilized a scaly texture over the areas that determine the reading of sex, such as in *Lucifer and the Pope in Hell (The King of Babylon)* [Fig.2], with the scaly texture hinting at the “otherness” of Satan’s sex as a hermaphrodite. This is again seen in a number of other artworks by Blake, including his watercolor of *Satan Smiting Job with Boils* [Fig. 1], where Satan stands confrontational, if not triumphant, over Job as he inflicts him with boils. Splayed as he is, Blake’s Satan holds no shame over his questionable sex as he is presented to the viewer, the scaly texture more defined over the pelvis. Job, the other masculine figure in the image, lacks the texture over his chest, and has a cloth draped over his pelvis to preserve his modesty and hide his penis. Although we cannot see Job’s genitals, he is definitively male, whereas Satan is not. “After all, deceptive genitalia were the root of the problem in such cases of ‘doubtful sex’; it hardly seemed that in cases of ambiguous sex the offending organs should stand as trustworthy witness.”⁵⁸ Hence Satan is referred to as a male, although Blake determines, like a man of medicine, that his sex does not obey the traditional rhetoric of the sexes.

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⁵⁸ Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex,* 22.
According to Dreger:

Ultimately it was not only the hermaphrodite’s body that lay ensconced in ambiguity, but medical and scientific concepts of the male and the female as well. We see [here, in the Victorian Era,] not stagnant ideas about sex, but vibrant, growing, struggling theories. Sex itself was still open to doubt.  

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59 Alice Domurat Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex, 16.
To Blake, sex was such a central concept to his understanding about the human condition.

The hermaphrodite answered some of his questions about the realities of a perfect form, but he could not accept the hermaphrodite as the perfect answer. Just as Maerker said about early medical writings of the hermaphrodite, the hermaphrodite was viewed as a monster; a hybrid of the normal and abnormal. Despite Blake’s understanding of the androgyne, he could not allow the hermaphrodite to mark the perfect human - an Adam and an Eve joined together - when that physical union was viewed as monstrous. It could not be so. So he turned to behavioral-hermaphroditism and labeled it the androgyne, and left the physical representation of the presence of multiple sexes to be entrenched in despair.
A CONTEMPORARY CASE OF INTERSEX: THE CHEVALIER D’EON

There existed, in Blake’s time, an intersexed figure that was quite the sensation in both France and England. Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Thimothée d’Éon (1728-1810), also known as the Chevalier d’Eon, was at the time of her death believe to have been a daughter born to a man who wished to have a son to the extent that d’Eon was made to dress and present as a male. At the age of forty-nine, once the performative-farce that had been forced upon d’Eon was discovered, the French Crown forced d’Eon to assume feminine attire. She had accomplished what no records could repeat for a woman of her station: she had been a soldier in the Seven Years’ War, a captain of the Dragoons, a diplomat to the court of a Russian empress, had served her king in England and was instrumental in the arrangement of the Peace of Paris there in 1763, and was awarded the Cross of Saint-Louis for her public service. She was a soldier, diplomat, and spy while identifying as a male, and saw the fall of the crown with the French Revolution, and she was lauded for her accomplishments both in her service to the Crown, and as a stimulating woman. However, in London 1810, upon d’Eon’s death, it was discovered by her housemate that d’Eon had male genitalia. D’Eon’s housemate called for a group of gentlemen: a professor, two

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61 Ibid., 11.

62 Ibid., xv.


64 Ibid., xii.
surgeons, a lawyer, and a journalist, all to help examine the body and discover its truth. The results were conclusive in their eyes: d’Eon had the body of a man.

In reading d’Eon’s body, the group of men sought to dispel any myth about d’Eon being a hermaphrodite. The examination briefly detailed in Gary Kates’ *Monsieur d’Eon Is a Woman: A Tale of Political Intrigue and Sexual Masquerade* is similar to the examinations recorded in Dreger’s book, such as that of Abel/Alexina Barbin, where men of some standing categorized aspects of their subject’s physique as masculine and feminine and made scientific decisions of sexing based on the sum of those parts, where some aspects weighed more than others, such as facial hair and skeletal build. Just as Victorian medicine sought to eradicate the hermaphrodite, d’Eon’s examiners sought to dispel any thought of hermaphroditism not because evidence was not there, but rather because evidence of hermaphroditism threatened gender boundaries that were burgeoning in the medical field. After all, d’Eon had been examined during her lifetime and had been determined to be female, and such was declared by both France and London in 1776 and 1777.

When d’Eon was outed as a female by King Louis XVI and the London court, but still dressed as a man in her Dragoon captain uniform, it was said of her that she would surely perform more womanly, and less like the captain that she was and therefore less masculinely, once she’d don appropriate womanly dress, as if merely wearing the “uniform”

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65 Ibid., xii.
66 Ibid., xiii.
67 Ibid.
68 Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 16-17.
70 Ibid., 3.
of sex would automatically “correct” any misgivings about her gender. The public mocked her for her uniform because she was not abiding by social customs of gender. Eventually, the King ordered that d’Eon dress as a woman and retire her uniform, in order to repair the faux pas of her performance as a woman, despite d’Eon’s pleas and reasoning with her accomplishments. She became lauded as an accomplished woman who had assumed a male identity in order to serve her King, yet seemed forced into her womanly role by pressure from her very King and those surrounding her.

Because she was so revered and accomplished, d’Eon could not be a hermaphrodite, because a hermaphrodite could not be accomplished. Regardless, Blake would have likely been familiar with the tale of d’Eon when he was a young man - after all, d’Eon’s reveal as a woman was quite the news, published and socially. Blake knew of d’Eon before the reveal of their sex post-mortem, and therefore knew d’Eon to have been a woman raised as a man, accomplished because she had lived initially as a man. The posthumous reveal of d’Eon’s genitals would have furthered Blake’s convictions of the confluence of the sexes and the chaos resulting due to the sexes conflicting. Blake would not have been a stranger to gender-corrections such as d’Eon’s: British and French medicine practiced correcting genders in Victorian medicine, although British preferred “desexing” medical strategies to French’s system of public admission of “mistaken” sex. Cases such as this happened in Blake’s time.

71 Ibid., 9.
72 Ibid., 11.
73 Ibid., 3.
74 Alice Domurat Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex, 123.
enough for it to not be a totally foreign concept to him, and thus would have fueled his curiosity of genders as driving forces in his understanding of the world.
ABOUT SATAN

Malcolm Godwin said, “the Devil is, of course, an essential ingredient in any religion which preaches Redemption. To overcome evil, in the first place one must have evil to overcome.” In Abrahamic religions, God is synonymous with good, and therefore must have an enemy to overcome. For what is good without evil; light without the dark? Man must have the ultimate adversary to overcome, in order to prove their worth, and ultimately, that adversary is Satan, whose name literally means “adversary” in Hebrew. It doubles as a warning to mankind, that God’s favorite son fell so far from grace, and one must watch that they do not fall too. In the Romantic Era, Satan experienced a resurgence in popularity and was recast in a new role as a hero. William Blake endeavored to cast Satan in both roles, and utilized Satan’s sex to emphasize their role as the adversary. For if man was created in the image of God, God was a man, and Satan could not be a man as well. With this in mind, Blake pictured Satan as an intersexed figure to continue a history of doubtful sex for the character, using their sex to emphasize their failings.

With the dawning of the Enlightenment, Satan had been diminished, no longer feared, as compared to the horror that was associated with the character beforehand. The Spanish Inquisition, which had ravaged the terrified minds of visionaries - of whom Blake possibly would have been included - claimed its last victim in 1826. Even centuries before this,

75 Malcolm Godwin, Angels: An Endangered Species, 80.
76 Ibid. The name “Satan” comes from “ha-satan” of the Old Testament.
77 Ibid., 104.
79 Ibid., 182.
Desiderius Erasmus of 1466-1536 brought forth the debate that the Devil was merely a “metaphor for the vice and evil tendencies in human hearts.” According to Peter Stanford, “later materialists including Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), René Descartes (1596-1650), and John Locke (1632-1704) added more nails to the Devil’s coffin when they rejected the whole notion of incorporeal substances.”\(^{80}\) Satan, a feared and reviled icon, diminished in power as the minds of man sought science over theurgy. Instead, as man’s musing turned inward, the Devil became a device of self-scrutiny, or a foil to the accomplishments of man. Satan went from being an almost insurmountable force save for the powers of the holy, to a state so fallen that they were mockable, and ultimately, imaginary. Satan was no longer the epitome of the antithesis to God and thus revered, but was now a device for use of artists. Coinciding with this was the West’s enduring views of the hermaphrodite as being a tragicomic figure of the Ur-Hermaphrodite,\(^{81}\) from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in which the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, Hermaphroditus, is assaulted by a nymph and merged with her body.\(^{82}\) John Milton would introduce almost a rebirth of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, if only for infamy and a modified character in the eyes of man, and William Blake would further revise the character to fit into his own theurgical mythos. Satan had been reduced to a relic of the past, the former horror inspired by the character turned to ridicule and derision, but Milton would inspire a resurgence of popularity for the character in a new and sympathetic light, which Blake would seek to harness within his own works.


\(^{81}\) Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 31.

\(^{82}\) Ovid, *Ovid Metamorphoses*, 197-205.
HISTORY OF AMBIGUOUS SEX FOR SATAN

The fascination with Satan’s genitalia has been noted throughout the history of the character. For although angels, demons, and spirits of all sorts were assumed to be bodiless, they were still assigned bodies in early Abrahamic beliefs. According to Arturo Graf:

The gods of all mythologies are, to a lesser or a greater degree, corporeal; those of Greek mythology feed on ambrosia and nectar, and in case they meddle (as they are sometimes wont to do) in the brawls of mortals, they run the risk of catching a sound drubbing. It ought not to seem strange, then, that the pneumatological doctrines of both Jews and Christians generally assign bodies to angels and to demons. Graf explains this as Christians assigning corporeal designations to incorporeal beings, such angels and demons. Graf also explains that demons, or rebel angels, no longer welcomed in Heaven, grew heavier with their fall, leading to some amount of corporality, hence assigning the Devil a body, even if monstrous in varying degrees. If Satan’s body itself was in question, then their genitals were sure to follow, and inevitably become a somewhat defining part of the character.

Knowledge of the Devil’s genitals became a recurrent crime in the Spanish Inquisition, and those genitals varied greatly. Writer David M. Friedman accounted that “[the] Devil’s penis was the obsession of every Inquisitor and the ‘star’ of nearly every witch’s confession.” Several accounts recorded the member as chilled, others recounted that it was placed differently on the body, and others still reported that it was differently shaped or textured from a human penis. But some accounts of interest detailed missing parts to the male

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84 Ibid.
anatomy, or others still that “his penis was smaller than a finger and not even as thick.”

“Incomplete” anatomy may fall under the jurisdiction of the Victorian entries for hermaphroditism, and a smaller member might bring to question whether it was a penis at all, and not instead an engorged clitoris.

The member of Satan was overall described to be un-manlike, able to reach areas within women to incite more pleasure than possible with normal men. Sex with this member also resulted in pain like that of labor, which may imply that the member was weapon-like, such as Satan’s spear. There was also an account of Satan’s member being covered in scales: another possible reason for why Blake rendered his Satan with scales on their chest and groin.

Blake’s choice to depict Satan as a hermaphrodite, outside of the artistic history of the ambiguous sex of the figure, could derive from Paradise Lost’s explanation of the sex-fluidity of spirits:

[...] for spirits, when they please,
    Can either sex assume, or both; so soft
    And uncompounded is their essence [pure.]

This idea could draw from the lack of a definitive form, in terms of sex, for angels, as they are bodiless according to Morgan A. Matos’s analysis of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, coupled with the amalgamation of the many forms Satan assumes in the Bible, as

86 David M. Friedman, A Mind of Its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis, 2.
88 Ibid., 105.
90 John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 423-425.
an extension of their duplicitous nature and trickery. The hermaphrodite, however, is not bodiless, but is rather the battleground of medicinal intervention as an effort to establish the definitiveness of a sex-binary. According Dreger, as far as Victorian medicine was concerned, "deception was the nature of hermaphroditism" that challenged the boundaries of the social construct of two-sexes, and therefore the understanding of sex and gender, prompting intervention. This deceitfulness reflects the Victorian fear that if sex was not strongly identified and defined for those of doubtful sex, they could flaunt an improper life.

The hermaphrodite is rendered as a deceiver in Blake’s 1795 image, Satan Exulting over Eve [Fig. 3] where the figure is shown tricking Eve, while simultaneously calling the gender of Satan into question. According to Myra Glazer Schotz, “the hermaphrodite [ emerged] as a symbol incarnating [the] fear of powerlessness, […] thwarted sexual energy, and [the] rejection of the feminine,” and Satan Exulting over Eve shows that fear embodied by Eve, as she is tempted and doomed. Satan had tempted and tricked Eve into an action that would damn the future of humanity out of the good graces of the Divine, and she was blamed for this event as much as the Devil. The damning of humanity was a union between Satan and Eve where Eve was fooled and her nature suppressed; the innocent union that had existed earlier between the masculine and the feminine was shattered. The hermaphrodite, in Blake’s telling, ceased creation and union to exult over the feminine, who is beneath and bound by a snake: the representational phallus of Satan.


93 Alice Domurat Dreger, "Doubtful Sex: The Fate of the Hermaphrodite in Victorian Medicine,, , 345.

Figure 3: William Blake, *Satan Exulting Over Eve*, 1795, graphite, pen, and ink.

The snake is not the only pseudo-phallus of Satan present in *Satan Exulting over Eve*. In their hand, Satan wields a spear, much like the hermaphrodite in *Of the Sexes*. The spear is held horizontal, mirroring the positioning of both Satan and Eve, yet is given a more suggestive role due to the lining-up of pelvises and the indelicate positioning of the serpent. The positioning mirrors that which Malcolm Godwin refers to as the “male-superior position required by Divine Law,”⁹⁵ should Satan be viewed as a male. Satan assumes a male-role with their positioning and sex-crutches, yet the appearance of these crutches emphasizes the absence of their maleness. The positioning would suggest a copulation betwixt the two, but

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⁹⁵ Samuel Butler, seen in Malcolm Godwin, *Angels : An Endangered Species*, 89. This positioning refers to the “missionary posture” of copulation that Adam’s first wife, Lilith, rejected, which predestined her to fall for more carnal pleasures with demons. Lilith and her demonic offspring favored a role-reversal, placing a female atop a male, which was somehow religiously offensive.
Eve remains a virgin until the passionate sex she experiences with Adam after they’ve first fallen from grace. Where Satan cannot penetrate Eve, however, they implant the idea of sin into her mind.

Eve’s placement under Satan is not only sexually suggestive, but also represents the clash between sexes within Blake’s hermaphrodite, as well as alluding to status of woman compared to man. To Blake, “the female life lives from the light of the male,” which mirrors the Biblical creation of Eve and Adam. According to anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist anthropology in philosopher Judith Butler’s analysis, natural or biological females become subordinate in social constructions of gender due to their sex, or genitalia. In *Satan Exulting over Eve*, Blake renders both Eve and Satan as subordinate due to their lack of penises, yet Satan is placed over Eve due to the doubtfulness of their sex. After all, according to Blake, a hermaphrodite is the suppressed masculine fear of the feminine, thus Satan exults symbols of their masculinity over Eve.

In terms of being a sexually suggestive union, the copulation of Satan and Eve can be found in Talmudic sources, even resulting in a child betwixt the two. Melding ideologies, this would not be Satan’s first child, as they had given birth to Sin in *Paradise Lost*. In the 17th century, hermaphrodites were found abominable in their straddling of the gender-binary in terms of tales of their copulations, but also arousing. Medical treatises on human biology

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96 Myra Glazer Schotz, “For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover”,” 19.


and copulation evolved into pornography, leading to the creation of pornographic works such as Antonio Beccadelli’s poem *Hermaphroditus* of the 15th century, and later the novel *The Gallant Hermaphrodite* by François de Chavigny de la Bretonnière in 1688. By the 18th century, hermaphrodites were rarely depicted as engaging in the act of sex, but they seemed to become an emblem of it, and photos taken of them for medical purposes blacked out their eyes, similar to pornography of the time. In her essay exploring the development of pornography of hermaphrodites from medical texts, Gilbert opens with a quote from Satan in *Paradise Lost*, where “Satan confesses an ‘unspeakable desire to see, and know.’” This sentiment was continued in man, according to Gilbert, when it came to the hermaphrodite, and the “unspeakable desire” became sexual desire answered through pornography. Blake’s *Satan Exulting Over Eve* [Fig. 3] does not necessarily render Satan a male in their role over Eve, but rather continues the voyeuristic discourse of the

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101 Ibid., 157.

102 Ibid., 164.


104 Ibid., 33.

105 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book III, Lines 662-663. This quote originates from Book III, where Satan, disguised as a cherub, addresses the archangel Uriel, claiming that they have “Unspeakable desire to see, and know / All these his wondrous works, but chiefly [Man.]”


107 Ibid., 150-170.
hermaphrodite in a sexual act, tricking Eve just as the titular hermaphrodite did in *The Gallant Hermaphrodite*, engaging in lesbian seduction.  

Blake also renders Satan as lesser to other Angels in their state of nudity. In Blake’s *The Fall of Satan* print of 1825 [Fig. 4], the host of Heaven and even the human onlookers on earth are clothed, yet Satan and their accompanying falling rebel angels are nude. According to the print, “Hell is naked before him and Destruction has no covering.” Although the Divine are meant to be without flesh, as they are depicted clothed - even if only with the suggestion of cloth - their roles as male, or even as androgyne, cannot be called into question, whereas Satan is definitively not male because there is nothing to cover their lack of a phallus. According to Butler’s own interpretation of theorist Jacques Lacan’s theory, “to be the Phallus is to be signified by the paternal law, to be both its object and its instrument and […] the ‘sign’ and promise of its power.”  

Because Satan definitively does not possess a penis, Satan is a subordinate symbol of power possessed by the Divine, and therefore becomes the symbol of the Divine as the utmost authority.

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According to Luther Link, nudity was a sign of humiliation and criminality of Satan. Blake’s Satan is inescapably criminal, unnatural, and subordinate to the Divine, just as femininity is to masculinity in Blake’s hermaphrodite. In their nakedness, Satan’s hermaphroditism is inexcusable compared to the nudity of Eve and Adam, Christ, and

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110 Luther Link, *The Devil: A Mask Without a Face* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), 56. Link argues that because pagan gods were often nude, at least in pictorial and sculptural traditions, Satan and their demons should also be nude. Nudity became the sign of someone cast out, and in medieval and Renaissance Europe, criminals would be forced naked into the streets.
Blake’s androgyne. According to art critic Flaminio Gualdoni’s analysis of medieval classifications of nudity, there was the natural nudity of birth, such as that of Eve and Adam, and the nudity of criminality and sin to mirror the damnation of the soul, such as that of Satan. According to Brian Cummings, “nudity was a clear indication of monstrousness or of bestiality.” This echoes the sentiment of hermaphrodites as being monstrous, but also removed from the civilized perfection of man. Adam and Eve blushed upon realizing their nude state, but Satan never experienced such shame, and shame, according to Aristotle, sets man apart from beasts. Perhaps being more monster than man, more beast than man, would explain the scales often found on Blake’s Satan.

Blake created a watercolor in 1805 titled Satan in his Original Glory [Fig. 5] that served as a reminder that Satan had not always been a fallen angel. In the painting, Satan is rendered in finery and grace, with a softness to their physique that is similar to the androgyne’s in Albion Rose. This Satan wears a covering, which can be seen through the translucent wings covering their pelvis. This Satan wears a crown upon their curly, golden locks, wields a scepter and a globus cruciger, and dons a cape, all royal accents that not only signify the fallen angel’s former glory, but also foreshadow the Pride that would cause the

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111 Flaminio Gualdoni, *The History of the Nude*, Milan (Skira, 2012), 42. “Medieval theology carefully distinguished between four types of nudity. *Nuditas naturalis* is that of the person who is born, it is purity before sin contaminates it, typical of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. *Nuditas temporalis* is an involuntary and blameless situation due to constraints such as poverty. *Nuditas criminalis* is that of impenitence, dissoluteness, sin, sexual appetite, of the body that becomes the damnation of the soul. *Nuditas virtualis* is nudity that is deliberate and achieved, born from the choice of a way of living, such as the Baptist’s, made of the same substance as the nudity of the soul and of […] the bare truth.”


113 Ibid., 32.

114 Ibid., 28.
angel to fall. The figure stands above the stars, is heralded by putti, and radiates their own light rather than being illuminated by it, not unlike the figure of *Albion Rose*. Before their fall, Blake’s Satan appears, like other angels, as either male or an androgyne, glorious and perfect, soft and regal. It is especially in this image, compared to Blake’s depictions of Satan after their fall, that Blake’s hermaphrodite is defined as a lesser being: this is the perfection of the androgyne that becomes defiled by not only the subjugation of the feminine within, but also the definitive lack of male genitalia. After all, according to Gilbert, “the androgynous ideal suggested a harmonious transcendence of the sexed body, but many dreams of divine androgyny were also shadowed by the phantom of monstrous hermaphroditism.”115 Blake’s hermaphrodite is inadequate and, as Schotz observes, “the child of the hermaphrodite is seen as a son incapable of procreation or indeed of creative unions of whatever nature.”116

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116 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover"," 21.
Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) was a contemporary artist to Blake that accomplished his own artistic renditions of *Paradise Lost*, and whose work and company may have influenced Blake. Oil painting was more his media, but like Blake, he dabbled in drawings, watercolors, and ink caricatures. Fuseli teeters on the edge of sexing Satan, but does leave

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117 Peter A Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*, 44.
some obscurity in some of his images. Take, for instance, his *Satan and the Birth of Sin* of 1796–1799 [Fig. 6].

![Image of Satan and the Birth of Sin](image)

Figure 6: Henry Fuseli, *Satan and the Birth of Sin*, 1796–1799, Oil painting.

The painting is set in the dark, and the figures therein are starkly lit and warm. Satan sits on a throne, the sides of which are just barely visible. At Satan’s feet lays their spear, abandoned save for the foot pressed atop it. Above Satan’s head arises Sin, garbed like a
Greek goddess, her own spear and shield wielded as if she were born to do battle. She looks back down to her sire and dam, Satan, perhaps armed against them, as Satan is doomed to rape Sin to beget Death. Sin ascends from the light of her birth, clad as a goddess, positioned almost to be the backing of the throne upon which Satan sits, while Satan reposes beneath her, naked.

Satan is sprawled across their throne, a cloth draped over their leg, but leaving their genitals visible. The cloth continues behind Satan as they pull it up over their head, as if unfurling their body to reveal themselves to the viewer. Their chest reads male, but their pelvis is a blurred mound. Perhaps it is a softly painted penis, but because the image is of Satan giving birth, perhaps the vagueness of the brushstrokes was intentional. With Satan’s spear at their feet, perhaps they, in this instance, abandoned their phallus in order to give birth, a “female” action.
ABOUT BLAKE AND HIS WRITINGS

William Blake was a printmaker, painter, and poet, born in London in 1757. Blake was raised in the 1760’s that led to the Industrial Revolution and constitutional unrest. After attending the drawing academy of Henry Pars and, as a boy, he apprenticed under the tradition of commercial engraving with James Basire, and later attended the Royal Academy Schools as an engraver, with personal studies into medieval and Renaissance art. Blake would later develop his own system of creating monotypes that he largely used in his work, as he was self-printed. According to David Bindman, “His new method offered [hope] that poets and artists would finally have the means to drown out the ubiquitous message of Satan, carried by religious and state ritual and the printing press.” According to Blake, his method of monotype came from a vision that he had of his brother Robert after Robert’s death in 1787, and utilized oil and tempera paints on a flat surface for unique editions. Blake’s monotypes, not requiring the larger printing press monitored by the state, were able to be free of influence from the state and Church that Blake would come to mistrust. Much of

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119 Ibid., 13.
122 Ibid., 8.
123 Elizabeth E. Barker, “William Blake (1757–1827).”
Blake’s art is based on his personal mythologies and convictions, involving a belief that Satan was imposing on the Earth as a stand-in God-figure, though his initially successful artwork - drawings, paintings, and printings - drew from traditional historical and biblical inspirations. He had wanted to be a public artist of large-scaled paintings, but this was never realized. Instead, he focused on more intimate editions of his works in books, spanning from early lullabies to later prophetic works, which were able to be widely-spread. The 1770’s marked Captain Cook’s exploration of the South Pacific and his accounts of enslavement found there, which would heavily influence Blake’s beliefs, along with the beginning of the War for Independence with the United States. In 1787, Blake suffered the loss of his brother, which was followed by the creation of his method for illuminated printing and his first illustrated manuscripts *There is No Natural Religion* and *All Religions are One.*

*All Religions are One* and *There is No Natural Religion* of 1788 were etched amidst the Anti-Catholic Gordon riots of the 1780’s, which Blake sympathized with, and both deal with prophetic vision and man’s interpretation of it. Both poems were published in the same

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126 Ibid., 13.

127 Ian Haywood, “The Gordon Riots of 1780: London in Flames, a Nation in Ruins - Professor Ian Haywood,” YouTube video, 46:40, Lecture at Museum of London, U.K, Posted by “Gresham College,” April 10, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gd4Mbh8tm8&t=3s. The Gordon Riots began with the government introducing the Catholic Relief Act, which granted modest rights to Catholics, mainly to encourage them to join the army for the fight against America. Opposition for this Act came in the form of Protestants, led by Lord George Gordon. When Parliament refused to discuss repealing the act, violence in the city ensued, mainly against sites associated with Catholicism and Catholics, but later also sites representing the power of the government, including prisons. Martial law was declared, and it was the largest “civil commotion” since 1685. Poet William Cooper reportedly said that the riots left “a metropolis in flames and a nation in ruins.”
year that an abolitionist bill was presented to Parliament,\textsuperscript{128,129} the sentiment of which would be found in Blake’s works, and were Blake’s first attempts at his illuminated printing process.\textsuperscript{130} \textit{All Religions are One}, printed in 1794, consists of ten plates: a fore-plate with an image of a man sitting with the text “The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness,” the title plate, a plate with the heading “The Argument,” which beings the poem, and the seven subsequent “Principle” plates that detail the rest of the poem. \textit{There is No Natural Religion} was printed in 1794 and 1795 as two separate series. The first contained twelve plates: an image plate, the title plate, a plate titled “The Argument”, which began the poem, and subsequent numbered plates that detailed the rest of the poem. The second 1795 edition contained eleven plates: an image plate, the title plate, and the poem on the remaining plates. Both poems had a plate dedicated to each stanza. \textit{All Religions are One} refers to a Poetic Genius as “the true Man,” where he doubles as both a prophet, such as Blake himself, and God himself. The knowledge of this Poetic Genius was “call’d an Angel & Spirit & Demon” by the “Ancients,” meaning that throughout the history of man, the works of God and of prophets have been realized as supernatural, yet mistaken from different sources, and prophets especially have suffered from misinterpretations of their visions. Blake claims that the works of the Poetic Genius are recognized all over the world, but puts emphasis on the


\textsuperscript{129} James W. LoGerfo, “Sir William Dolben and ‘The Cause of Humanity’: The Passage of the Slave Trade Regulation Act of 1788,” \textit{Eighteenth-Century Studies} 6, no. 4 (1973): 431–437, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3031578. This abolitionist bill would come to be known as the Dolben Act. It concerned the slave trade, mostly that of the Middle Passage, where slaves were crammed aboard too small of ships and were offered less than the minimum in terms of accommodations, resulting in diseases and death en masse. Sir William Dolben argued for a maximum capacity for ships for slaves and better accommodations. His speech before the House reflected British society’s concerns for the abuses of the slave trade, possibly fueled by enough men of eminence searching their consciences, or even the planned abolishment of the trade in America by 1808.

\textsuperscript{130} “There is No Natural Religion,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 402.
origins of Abrahamic religions.\textsuperscript{131} \textit{There is No Natural Religion} deals mainly with perception and reasoning, and reasons that man is an image of God due to what can be naturally perceived, but only with the presence of imagination.\textsuperscript{132} Both poems introduce Blake as a prophet, aligned with Abrahamic religions, yet able to perceive and interpret the works of his Poetic Genius in an unprecedented way. Both poems introduce Blake’s concept of enslavement, to our senses, our religions, and the material world. \textit{All Religions are One} especially questions the origins of perceived good and evil, which Blake pursues in his understanding of the role of Satan. Both poems emphasize the need for prophetic vision to lead peoples of the earth, but that such vision can be incorrectly interpreted, and Blake sets himself up as the one to properly interpret the vision of the Divine gifted to man. The art accompanying \textit{All Religions are One} consists largely of small motifs of people in profile in the margin of the text, attended by vegetal swirls. The art accompanying \textit{There is No Natural Religion} consists of more vegetal swirls with people in repose. The images of the earlier \textit{There is No Natural Religion} printing, as opposed to the 1795 edition, have more obviously gendered figures, and mostly feature female depictions in maternal roles.

\textsuperscript{131}William Blake, \textit{All Religions are One}, Plates 3-10.

\textsuperscript{132} William Blake, \textit{There is No Natural Religion}, Plates 3-10.
Blake followed his anti-established-religion poems with the pastoral poems of *Songs of Innocence* in 1789 and *Songs of Experience* in 1794, following the outbreak of the French Revolution. According to Damon, “Innocence” and “Experience” were used in terms of man before and after their fall. The first was rife with Christian imagery and abandonment and death, with a glimpse into the racial views of the Romantic era in *Little Boy Black*, and bleaker views of death and chains in the later text. The two poems shared an overall title plate. *Songs of Innocence* contains twenty-six plates: an image plate, the title plate, and nineteen poems spread across the remaining plates. Each poem varies in size, from two stanzas to nine. *Songs of Experience* contains twenty-seven plates: an image

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133 William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. These poems appear as simple, idyllic verses that could be enjoyed by children, but quite a few of the poems have deeper meanings that could be enjoyed by adults, and each poem had its own dedicated plate or plates. In *Songs of Innocence*, Blake introduces himself as a prophet and interpreter of the Divine, and each subsequent poem is meant to be interpreted as a proverb. Many of the poems deal with children and innocence and needing to be led in life. God is a major theme in these poems, either leading the proverbial flock, or helping the stray to return to said flock. The poems also deal with the cycle of life for man, but emphasize that death is not something to be feared. In *Songs of Experience*, Blake emphasizes his role as a prophet and introduces the concept of a not-so-benevolent God, “the father of the ancient man,” that Blake would later identify as Urizen. The poems are generally more bleak than those of *Songs of Innocence*, and the theme of death is much more prominent. All in all, these poems emphasize Blake’s belief in mankind as being redeemable; a belief that would extend to Urizen and the status of the hermaphrodite.


136 William Blake, *Songs of Innocence, Little Boy Black, The Chimney Sweep, The Little Boy Lost, and The Little Boy Found* stand out from the largely idyllic writings of the other poems, as they concern a child abandoned by his father, reunited with his mother and God in death, revealing some of Blake’s insight on Romantic gender roles and performances, and his ideas on innocence equating with youth, and experience equating with tarnishment. *Little Boy Black* concerns a child of color with a “soul white”, compared to the “English child white”, whose role is to block the white child from the harshness of God’s love so that his skin does not darken. It is the first direct incidence of Blake’s abolitionist views, marked by the belief of pure souls as being “white”.

137 William Blake, *Songs of Experience*. *Songs of Experience* contemplate Christianity and its role in Blake’s world. The poems have a prophetic start in *Introduction*, and speaks of wary, experienced souls, and possibly of Satan in the role of God. The roles of Heaven and Hell are made vise-versa in *The Clod & The Pebble*, and the roles of the Church are rendered dreary and bleak. Where *Songs of Innocence’s Little Boy Lost* and *… Found* told the story of an abandoned child who had to die to find God, *The Little Girl Lost* and ... *Found* have a girl find God through sexual maturity, possibly foretelling of England’s return to Paradise, revealing Blake’s views on sexuality as being innocent.
plate, the title plate, and twenty-six poems spread across the remaining plates, again varying in size.

One stanza that stands out for directly relating to Blake’s concept of sex is in Blake’s *Songs of Experience*’s *To Tirzah* is “The Sexes sprung from Shame & Pride Blowd in the Morn; in evening died But Mercy changed Death into Sleep; The Sexes rose to work & weep.” According to Blake, Tirzah was the last of the five daughters of Zelophehad, and together they represented the Female Wills that restricted the senses of man. Tirzah, the final daughter, represented the sex of the body, and the body itself. In addition with Rahab, these women also represented the three wives and three daughters of Blake’s Milton.138 Tirzah, representing the mortal body, also therefore represents death, and is a prude, “pure” woman, especially compared to her mother Rahab, who is regarded as a harlot.139 *To Tirzah* is Tirzah’s separation from her mother, having been taught by her to utilize her “pure” body to be desired by man, finding independence, and therefore, experience: the act of copulation with a man. *To Tirzah* is a redemption for the prudish character, who finally rejects her teasing ways and the union with her harlot mother, and agrees to find union with man. The sexes referred to in the stanza represent Adam and Eve, granted sex through their sins, but spared from death by the mercy of God. In Blake’s eyes, woman is responsible for the fall of man, but may also be responsible for man’s redemption once she, as Tirzah, has shed her prudish nature. In Blake’s eyes, it is woman’s duty to be in union with man, for in union with another woman results in “a Double Female” whose sole purpose is to lead men astray and


restrict them. As Blake’s sexes exist in harmony with one another, the unnatural union of
the “Double Female” is a hermaphrodite of sorts to Blake, as he labels them in a later
poem, whose unnatural union results in disruption.

The art of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is thematically similar: largely
vegetal swirls of trees and vines, interspersed through the poems with flowers, and
predominately accompanied by human figures. These human figures are largely shown in
maternal scenes and pastoral scenes featuring males, with few instances of males and females
frolicking together. Instances of chains can be found throughout the illustrated poems, either
metal or vegetal, as several figures are suppressed by them. These suppressed figures could
be inspired by the abolitionistic views that Blake favored, or in terms of the poems being
about man’s fall from innocence, could be man chained to the material, and therefore mortal,
body.

The title plate of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, with the subtitle *Shewing the
Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*, utilizes chained imagery with two figures possibly
representing Adam and Eve, as seen in [Fig. 7]. Both figures, a presumed male and female,
are shown hunched over in the mouth of flames, with a garland of leaves around their waists
as if to preserve their modesty. However, the “Eve” figure lacks vegetation on her chest,
which is common in imagery of Eve in the preservation of the reading of her sex, and both
figures are in profile so that their genitals would not be easily perceived. It can therefore be
surmised that the vegetation is not for the sole purpose of preserving their modesty, but also

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acts as chains, as being chained to sexuality plays a large part in the interpretation of these poems - that the separation into separate sexes was man’s original fall from innocence.

“Innocence” in this image is shown as a bird-like figure, free and soaring, possibly representing the Holy Spirit and the union of Blake’s sexes simultaneously, as Blake’s God is the perfect union of male and female spirits. “Experience” is the sexes separated, chained by their genders, forever in an act to attempt to return to innocence. The image of the male figure bent over the female also represents Blake’s views on the state of the human soul and the role of genders: that the complete and innocent soul is the combination of both male and female spirits, but the ideal sex results in the male presiding over the female. This is Blake’s contrary-state of the human soul: this is the innocence that Satan cannot return to because of their inner genders warring and not uniting.
Blake’s pastoral works gave way to turmoil with the impact of the French Revolution and the later American Revolution and their impacts in Britain, as seen in his Book of Thel - one of his earliest prophetic works - of 1789 and Marriage of Heaven and Hell of 1790, and continuing on into his later writings. The Book of Thel contains eight plates: a plate headed “Thel’s Motto,” the title plate, and then the poem spread across twenty-seven stanzas of
varying size. In *The Book of Thel*, Thel is a young woman who yearns for experience, yet fears sexual maturity. This poem introduces a motif common in Blake’s early work: a worm, representing a newborn, a penis, and death. The imagery for this poem seems very maternal, between mother and child, but could be seen as a woman nurturing man through life, and also as a version of Death and the Maiden. It speaks to Blake’s assertion of the role of woman as being with man, and sexual maturity is a kind of regained innocence, or a return to Paradise. Female figures in this poem are illustrated in clothes where male figures are nude and found flying through the air, perhaps to visualize the journey Blake’s female must endure to reach sexuality maturity, and therefore return to innocence. Thel is introduced with the possibilities of being a wife and mother in this poem, which is assured as natural roles for her, but before this, she inquires a Lily of the Valley as to her purpose in life. The lily is subservient to the creation for God for which she was intended, but the lily is also death, as the plant is highly poisonous. Pairing Thel with the one female entity that she encounters in the poem would result in death and destruction, aligning with Blake’s roles of the sexes and the nature of Satan’s own sex as being warring sexes within. Perhaps this is Blake’s encouragement for a sexual journey, as long as it results in the union of man and woman.

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142 William Blake, *The Book of Thel*. *The Book of Thel* sees Thel in a melancholy state, seeming to question the reason behind the transience of life. She asks a Lily of the Valley, who responds that she is happy with her lot in life. She suggests that Thel asks a cloud, who suggests a union with Thel. Thel next asks a worm and a clod of clay, whose answer seems to terrify Thel to the point that she flees back “into the vales of Har”.

143 Ibid., Part III.
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell was Blake’s rejection of Swedenborgianism\textsuperscript{144} and a satire on Swedenborg’s Heaven and Hell.\textsuperscript{145} The Marriage of Heaven and Hell contains twenty-seven plates: the title plate, and then the poem split between the headings “The Argument,” “The Voice of the Devil,” “A Memorable Fancy,” “Proverbs of Hell,” and concluded with “A Song of Liberty.” Each plate has text that varies in size and length. The poem begins by calling up Rintrah, who was one of the four sons of Los - another Zoa - and represents wrath. Rintrah, not only a being, but also state and aspect of another son of Los’s, Orc, is found both in the Prophet - a title occupied by many, one of which was Blake himself - and in Satan,\textsuperscript{146} so the fires referenced in the poem are both the wrathful flames of prophecy and the flames of Hell. Blake’s Heaven, in this poem, is orthodoxy, where hell is filled with the revolutionaries who questioned orthodoxy, and therefore in Hell is where Blake finds his idols, such as Milton. The poem states that contraries are essential, and where, according to Swedenborg, evil springs from the body and good from the soul, “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul.”\textsuperscript{147} On top of this, “Good is the passive that obeys Reason / [and] Evil is the active springing from Energy,”\textsuperscript{148} and Reason is Blake’s Urizen, his representation of Satan, who is mistaken largely by the world as God and appears in a number of Blake’s writings as

\textsuperscript{144} “Emanuel Swedenborg.” Encyclopædia Britannica (March 25, 2020) https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emanuel-Swedenborg. Swedenborgianism was founded on the principles of Emanuel Swedenborg (born 1688, death 1772), who was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, and theologian that interpreted the “word of God.” Swedenborg was against sexuality and the physical body, and his theology is based on the “absolute unity of God in both essence and being.” Swedenborg’s interpretations also led to the assumption that man’s free will and ego diverted love from God, and that redemption was only the “deliverance from the domination of evil.”


\textsuperscript{146} “Rintrah,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 349.

\textsuperscript{147} William Blake, \textit{The Marriage of Heaven and Hell}, Plate 4: The voice of the Devil, Line 1.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., Plate 3, Stanza 2, Lines 5-6.
a part of his overarching mythos.\textsuperscript{149} Another baiting line is: “Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.”\textsuperscript{150} This line emphasizes Blake’s relationship with perceived established religion and restrained sexuality, which is reiterated later in the poem when Blake equates priesthood with slave-driving.\textsuperscript{151} Blake equates beauty with genitals and exuberance,\textsuperscript{152} emphasizing his adoration of physical sex and sexuality. Angels, Blake finds vain due to their self-proclaimed wisdom,\textsuperscript{153} which leaves them subject to Satan as Reason, and therefore angels become devils.\textsuperscript{154} In the conclusion of the poem, the Eternal Female, or Enitharmon,\textsuperscript{155} groans and gives birth to revolution, Orc,\textsuperscript{156} who is hurled by the “starry king”, Urizen. Enitharmon was created alongside Urizen, or Satan, and represents repressed sex, which leads to war.\textsuperscript{157} Although created alongside Urizen, Enitharmon is not his emanation, although subjugation is often represented by Urizen. In the poem, Enitharmon takes Orc into her hands, but Urizen is the one who hurls, therefore Enitharmon and Urizen blur and Satan, in the first stanza, is represented as both a male and a female.

\textsuperscript{149} “Urizen,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 419.

\textsuperscript{150} William Blake, \textit{The Marriage of Heaven and Hell}, Plate 8, Lines 1-2.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., Plate 11, Lines 8-11.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., Plate 10, Lines 1 and 7.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., Plate 21, Lines 1-2.

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., Plate 24, Stanza 2, Line 1.

\textsuperscript{155} “Enitharmon,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 124-125. Enitharmon, modeled after Blake’s wife, was the emanation of Los, and together they were originally the Zoa Urthona. Enitharmon “brought forth” Satan in the list of her offspring, but again, Satan is understood by Blake to be a state, one which Blake finds in Urizen.

\textsuperscript{156} “Orc,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 309-311. Orc was understood to be Revolution in the material world, and therefore embodied the French and American revolutions. Orc himself became the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and was therefore also in the state of Satan. That one state of Satan should war against another, Urizen, emphasizes the contrary nature of Satan, and therefore also the contrary state of Blake’s hermaphrodite.

The art of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is mostly of human figures in fiery scapes, although these scapes do not necessarily mean hell, given Rintrah’s introduction in the beginning of the poem. On the page speaking of the essentialness of contraries, Blake’s illustrations are of a male with their genitals on fire, and of a woman giving birth, seen in [Fig. 8]. The figure at the top appears male when reading their chest, yet their genitals are aflame, denying the viewer further reading. However, as the youth’s hair is longer than most male figures drawn by Blake, it could be argued that the figure is actually intersexed, given that longer hair is usually seen on Blake’s feminine figures or the intersexed older figure of Urizen. This figure is likely Rintrah from the previous plate, who, according to Damon, “is the just wrath of the Prophet, except once, when he is flames high in Satan.”158 This would indeed render the figure as intersexed, and given the flames, the Satanic hermaphrodite. There is a feminine figure at the bottom of the plate, read by the chest and in the act of giving birth. From her flit two children: the Good and Evil contraries of which Blake speaks. To Blake, and in his art, they are the same, running along side-by-side, inseparable in spite of Swedenborg’s beliefs.

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On the page equating beauty with genitals and exuberance, Blake illustrated a familiar Devil figure, identified by their bat-like wings, in between two writers, as seen in [Fig. 9]. From plate 3, this figure can be identified as Swedenborg,\(^{159}\) yet instead of being an

\(^{159}\) William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 3, Lines 3-5. “Swedenborg is the Angel sitting / at the tomb: his writings are the linen clothes folded / up.” See [Fig. 9]
angel as he is identified, he is depicted as a Devil. Swedenborg dictates to two figures on his side, yet his perceived devilish-nature is apparently disguised, just as Urizen is disguised as the God of the material world. The viewer relies on Blake to make the truth seen. On this page, Blake spoke of the beauty of the body, yet illustrates his two human figures as clothed and the Devil figure with parchment covering their genitals, denying their sex. Indeed, the source of their dictation appears to be their sex, revealing Swedenborg’s emphasis on the body.

Figure 9: William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Plate 10, 1790, relief etching with pen and watercolor.
1792 saw the death of Blake’s mother and the spread of radicalism by Tom Paine’s
*Rights of Man*, followed by Blake’s *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* of 1793, offering the first truly direct look at Blake’s Satan, mainly in the explanatory verses of 1818. The poem contains an image plate headed “What is Man”, a title plate, and sixteen image plates with inscriptions. At a later date, Blake returned to this poem and expanded it with three plates dedicated to the textual poem, titled *The Keyes of the Gates* with the poem in sixteen points, and *To The Accuser who is The God of This World*. The poem begins with Albion in repose, and his female emanation rises from him. This separation from Albion resulted in the four Zoas, who are essentially demigods and aspects of the larger Albion, one of which was Urizen, who in the state of Satan:

Naked in Air in Shame & Fear
Blind in Fire with shield & spear
Two horn’d Reasoning Cloven Fiction
In Doubt which is Self contradiction
A dark Hermaphrodite We stood

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161 “The Gates of Paradise,” S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, 149-150. The foretitle for *The Gates of Paradise* was initially *For Children*, but was changed to *For the Sexes* in 1818. The image-dominated plates tell the story of man’s life from infancy to death. The expansion of the poem, *The Keys of the Gates*, briefly tell Blake’s mythology, and this is where we find a description of Blake’s hermaphrodite.

162 Ibid., 149.

163 “Zoa,” S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, 458-459. Blake’s four Zoas, who are the four demigods created from the separation of Albion, are also “the four fundemental aspects of Man: his body (Tharmas - west); his reason (Urizen - south); his emotions (Luvah - east); and his imagination (Urthona - north). Tharmas, the shepherd, mirrors God, Luvah mirrors Christ, Urthona mirrors the Holy Ghost, and Urizen mirrors Satan. Urizen seek to usurp the north.

The presence of a shield and spear mirror Milton’s Satan, who was ready to war, and who would have largely influenced Blake. Horns and cloven “fiction” are a nod to the more classic representations of Satan that have been popular since early depictions of the character. Naked and in “Self contradiction” relates to the state of Satan’s sex, given their rejection of their emanation and pleasure itself. It is a body that cannot accept itself, and in contradiction, is Blake’s hermaphrodite. The conclusion of the poem addresses Satan directly, calling him a “dunce” for not being able to separate sex from the soul.

The art for *The Gates of Paradise* features mostly people, with worms making a few appearances. *Plate 7: Fire* [Fig. 10] features Satan standing confrontationally, spear and shield in hand, surrounded by a blazing fire that mirrors the texture on their groin. Given the open pose, the choice Blake made to render the groin as scaly and apparently sexless is intentional - it denies the figure clothing to hide the sex, and denies the figure’s sex outright. Given that the figure is in flames, it is possible that this is again Rintrah, in the hermaphroditic state. Their wrath at oppression is manifested in their battle garb. There is a scales-like texture seen in the flames that is echoed on the figure’s groin, possibly to suggest that the source of wrath comes from their hermaphroditic state.

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Ethereal temper, massy, large and round

Behind him cast; the broad circumference

Hung on his shoulders like the Moon […]

His spear, to equal which the tallest Pine

Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast

Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,

He walkt with to support uneasy [steps.]”
Visions of the Daughters of Albion of 1793 was a spiritual successor to The Book of Thel,\textsuperscript{166} in that it follows a woman through sexual endeavors and crisis, and her longing to return to innocence. The poem contains eleven plates: the title plate, an image plate, a plate headed “The Argument,” and the poem in forty-two stanzas of varying length. The poem begins with the Daughters of Albion, enslaved and sighing towards America. The heroine of

\footnote{\textsuperscript{166} “Visions of the Daughters of Albion,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 437.}
the poem, Oothoon, denounces her marriage to her rapist, Bromion, and continues to long for her love, Theotormon, who laments and refuses her due to her deflowered state. Oothoon represents thwarted love and the ideal of physical freedom, doubling as the “soft soul of America,” where Theotormon represents desire and ultimately jealousy, and Bromion represents reason. As Urizen also represents reason, this can be interpreted as a story of Satan raping Eve and becoming chained to her in consequence. The denied union between Oothoon and Theotormon mirrors the fall from innocence of Adam and Eve, and they are expelled from Paradise, or England, and will eventually set out to America together, once Oothoon, or Eve, breaks her chains with Bromion, or Satan. As Bromion and Oothoon are chained together, yet spiritually reject each other, they are essentially Blake’s hermaphrodite: the two states of male and female sex reject each other, yet are essentially bound to one body. Bromion also claims their future children as slaves, so that he again mirrors Urizen as a slave-owner of the human race, yet is himself chained. It is a tale that mirrors Blake’s abolitionist endeavors and his positive views on the developing American Revolution. These radical views drew threats from the nervous English government.

Oothoon wishes to be freed not only of Bromion, but of her seemingly sullied flesh itself in order to please and be united with Theotormon. To achieve this, she entreats eagles, symbols of God, to rend her flesh, and this pleases Theotormon, as his jealousy is sated with

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her suffering. Convention is sated with the rending of sexual freedom, which is chained to reason. The sexual nature of the chaining of sexual freedom to reason - of joining these two bodies - and the ensuing impregnation results in orthodoxy, as Blake states, “Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church yard?”

The art of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* consists largely of stretched and huddled figures mostly in states of undress, save for one instance of Theotormon and the daughters of Albion. The title plate features Bromion chasing down Oothoon as many female figures flit about. The most detailed art of the poem features Bromion and Oothoon chained back-to-back while Theotormon weeps behind Oothoon, as seen in [Fig. 11]. The scene takes place in a cove overlooking the ocean, representing not only the distance physically and spiritually between America and England, but also the emotional strife that now separates Oothoon from Theotormon. Oothoon is depicted between the two men, but she is chained to Bromion and Theotormon looks away from her, denying her. This could also represent Urizen, or Reason, being chained to Ahania, his emanation of Pleasure, but he must be chained to her because he rejects her and dubs her Sin, resulting in their enslaved state as Jealousy drives them apart.

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172William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Plate 8, final line. The worm is both a babe and penis, as was seen in *The Book of Thel*, and is simultaneously the baby resulting from Oothoon’s rape and Bromion’s manhood. This baby, seen as a cementing factor in the union of Oothoon and Bromion, further drives Theotormon from Oothoon. Together, Oothoon and Theotormon would represent sexual freedom, but Bromion, as reason, intervenes and places convention on sexual exploration. The chaining of the physical body to convention is an unhappy marriage, according to Blake, and is perpetuated by the Church. Hence, the worm maintains an unhappy and festering establishment.
Figure 11: William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* frontispiece, 1793, etching with watercolor.

*America a Prophecy* of 1793, his first fully-prophetical work, only further drew ire from the government given the political and social upheaval surrounding Blake, especially since the government had passed an act against seditious writings.\(^\text{173}\) It contains nineteen plates: an image plate, the title plate, two plates dedicated to the poetic “Preludium,” and the

poem throughout the remaining plates with varying amounts of text per plate. *America a
Prophecy* told of the revolutionary push of America, or of the insurgent Orc against the
tyrrannical Urizen,\(^{174}\) both of whom were seen in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. In the
beginning of the poem, a woman stood before Orc - whose red visage might recall the image
of Dante’s Satan,\(^{175}\) as Orc also embodies Satan - who would one day be freed of his chains
and he would join with her sexually.\(^{176}\) Orc is inspired by the French Revolution at its most
turbulent. In the beginning of the poem, Orc’s spirit is illustrated as an eagle, a lion, a whale,
and a serpent.\(^{177}\) The first two animals historically represented God whereas the later two the
Devil.\(^{178}\) Albion’s “Guardian Prince” is Urizen - who is also Satan - also described as having
a dragon form. Urizen accuses Orc of being the dragon of Revelation, whereas Orc claims
that he was instead the serpent in the garden of Eden, a subversive force that sought to end
the reign of tyranny of the supposed Divine.\(^{179}\) In this poem, Orc stands for the American
Revolution, spreading fires throughout the world, and Urizen represents King George III and
England’s reign,\(^{180}\) but the narrative also reflects that of *Paradise Lost* where Satan rebelled
against a perceived-oppressive Heaven, therefore Orc could represent the Satan of *Paradise


\(^{175}\) Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Canto XXXIV, Lines 38-39. “When I beheld three faces on his head! / The one in front, and that vermillion [was…]”

\(^{176}\) William Blake, *America a Prophecy*, Plate 3.

\(^{177}\) Ibid., Plates 3-4. “Rivets my tenfold chains while still on high my spirit soars; Sometimes an eagle […] sometimes a lion […] sometimes a whale […] anon a serpent folding around the pillars of Urthona.”

\(^{178}\) Michael J. Curley, *Physiologus*, Chicago (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3-4, 12-13, 16-19, and 45-46. The concept of associating animals with divinity or damnation harkens back to early Christendom. The *Physiologus* was especially known for these associations, acting as as early bestiary with parables. The symbolism and importance of specific animals began in ancient legends before being absorbed by Christianity.


\(^{180}\) Ibid.
Lost and Urizen the absolute rule of Heaven, especially given Orc’s comparison to the “Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities.”¹ This poem features two Satans: one, Urizen, is disguised as the ultimate Divinity, and the second, Orc, is Milton’s revolutionary hero. That two states of Satan should be at war with each other reflects the contrary state of the hermaphrodite, echoed in that both Urizen and Orc have not unified with their feminine emanations.

The art of America a Prophecy consists largely of unclothed figures in fiery scapes. Unlike the more ambiguous drawings of Blake in his earlier illustrated works, male genitalia is present in the art of America a Prophecy, with cleaner drawn figures in etched relief without washes of watercolor, such as in his depiction of Orc [Fig. 12].¹ This leaves his figures with distinct sex, proving that Blake often chose, with purpose, to obscure the sexes of many of his figures. Sexes obviously play a large role in how Blake interprets the human condition, thus illustrating Orc with male genitalia was essential to the character himself, but only when Orc was not in his contrary, Satanic-hermaphroditic state. As this Orc is in an unfallen state, he does not recognize the skull, or death, beside him, but the presence of the skull foretells of his fallen state of Satan. The two more obvious depictions of Urizen in this poem have him clothed, just as he is clothed in deceit, denying his sex - denying Satan, in his fallen state, sex. Orc, however, is obviously physically male and stokes the revolutionary fires of war. This could also depict Lucifer, in his unfallen state, as being definitely male before the fall rent that identify from him. The act of breaking free from his chains and

¹ William Blake, America a Prophecy, Plate 9.

¹Ibid., Plates 3-4 and 9-10. I identify this figure as Orc as the page relates his freeing from being chained to stone, where his father Los had imprisoned him in the Preludium of the poem. The figure in the poem is asked if they are Orc by Urizen on the next plate, and answer in affirmation on the subsequent plate.
beginning the revolution was Orc’s fall, but he can be redeemed and the fires of war doused once Orc unites with his emanation, at which point he will return to being male instead of Blake’s hermaphrodite.

Figure 12: William Blake, *America a Prophecy* folio, 1793, relief etching.

*Milton a Poem* of 1804 came after Blake was acquitted of a sedition charge the year prior,\(^{183}\) and was an attempt by Blake to correct Milton’s perceived failings while he related

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to the poet. Some of the faults that Blake perceived were the apparent falsehood that man’s fall from Paradise resulted in the discovery of carnal pleasure, and that Milton had mistaken Urizen for God and the Messiah, where his Satan was actually the redeemer. The poem contains forty-nine plates: the title plate, and then the poem split between two books, interrupted with eight image plates. The poem begins with Milton unhappy in Heaven, beseeching Blake to correct his wrongs as he carries out his divine purpose as the last son of Los. As Milton wars with Urizen, the representation of Satan is twofold: both Milton and Urizen. Just as Milton’s Satan had rebelled against the establishment of Heaven, Milton himself rebelled against the government of his time. As Satan, Milton’s emanation was separated from him, damning him, and as she was redeemed, Milton was rendered non-man, and therefore the hermaphrodite that was Satan.

Milton introduced Blake’s most direct ideas on sex: “[…] the Mundane Shell /
Here the Three Classes of Men take their Sexual texture Woven / The Sexual is Threefold:
the Human is Fourfold.” Blake’s “sexual textures” are male, female, and the two-parted intersexed: one of which is a man who has accepted their feminine emanation within, and the other of which whose sex is in chaos. Blake’s God, or Albion, was of the first intersexed, and whom Blake endeavored to reflect, and Satan was of the latter: the hermaphrodite. Of the three sexes that reflect “classes” of men formed by the hammer of Los, there are: “The first,

187 Ibid., Plate 3, Stanza 1, Lines 3-5.
The Elect from before the foundation of the World: / The second, The Redeemed. The Third. The Reprobate & Form’d / To destruction from the mothers [womb.]”¹⁸⁹ Satan belonged to the third “class,” and because Milton was equally misled, so was he. The Elect were the first class of intersexed, the Redeemed were mankind - typically the first two of the “sexual textures,” which posed a problem for the classification of the intersexed amongst mankind that Victorian science would seek to resolve- and the Reprobate were hermaphrodites, which “symbolized a sterile state of unreconciled and warring opposites.”¹⁹⁰ Blake would go on to list several hermaphroditic characters in his poem Jerusalem of 1804, yet would seem to reserve “the female hid within a male” characters as those of the apocalypse, such as Babylon, the Great Red Dragon, and the Harlot.¹⁹¹ The “reprobate and Form’d to destruction” could be “redeemed” into the male and female sexual textures, but were otherwise considered separate from mankind.

A few years later, in 1807, Blake would see the ban of slave-trading finally being achieved in England,¹⁹² and Blake would continue working on his illustrations until his death on August 12th, 1827, those illustrations primarily inspired by the works of Dante,¹⁹³ especially the Commedia.¹⁹⁴ However, between the late 18th century and early 19th century,

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¹⁸⁹ William Blake, Milton, Book the First, Plate 5, Stanza 1, Lines 1-3.


¹⁹¹ William Blake, Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion, Plate 75, Stanza 3.


¹⁹³ Ibid., 16.

¹⁹⁴ Silvia De Santis, “William Blake and The Divine Comedy,” Digital Dante (Columbia University Libraries, 2018), https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/image/desantis-blake/. Blake’s interest in Dante began at least in 1780-1785, with The Gates of Paradise. In the art of The Gates of Paradise, on plate 12, Blake’s illustration is of Dante’s Ugolino with his sons in the tower in which they starved. Another illustration of Ugolino and his sons is found on plate 16 of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. In 1824-1827, Blake made watercolors of the Commedia, including his own interpretation of Dante’s work.
Blake produced a series of images of Satan based on his own mythos and the works of Milton, including *Paradise Lost*.  

Belief in the Devil had largely dissipated among literate society in England by the end of the 18th century, yet the figure assumed prominence in ironic and satirical literary works of the period as a rebellious symbol in terms of politics, morals, and religion. The Devil re-emerged in popular imagery in the early 1790’s, which coincided with the rise of the French Revolution. Blake rendered Satan not as a grotesque creature, but rather as a charming, yet apparently-sexless male: Blake’s interpretation of a hermaphrodite.

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197 Ibid., 442.
ABOUT BLAKE'S INFLUENCES

Looking to Blake’s inspirations, Blake was largely inspired by the Bible and art of biblical subjects before him. Of Dante Alighieri, Damon said, “Blake ranked him with Shakespeare” as one of the “greatest poets,” but “as always, Blake was the severest critic of those he admired most.”198 Blake may have found camaraderie with Dante, in that Dante’s political ambitions were thwarted by the Black Guelphs.199200 Blake admired Dante for being inspired by the Bible, and for being a fellow visionary, yet found fault in Dante’s siding with the Empire over the Church, possibly believing that Dante had been unknowingly worshipping not the true God,201 but rather an imposter, similar to that found in Blake’s own mythos.202 Near the end of his life, Blake embarked on an endeavor to illustrate the entirety of the Divine Comedy, resulting in 102 mostly uncompleted watercolors at his death.203

In describing the Devil, Dante said:

O, what a marvel it appeared to me,
When I beheld three faces on his head!


199 Peter Stanford, The Devil: A Biography, 189.

200 Barbara Barclay Carter, “Dante’s Political Ideas,” The Review of Politics 5, no. 3 (July 1943): 339–341, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1404096. Dante, born in 1265, was a nobleman and Guildsman in Florence and was a member of the White Guelph party, who mainly sought for pacification. The Whites were pitted against the Black Guelph party, who were pledged to Pope Boniface VIII, whom the Whites refused, and the Black party was known for their violence, where the White sought legal measures. Upon the Blacks defeating the Whites, Dante was chased out of Florence. Three principles that Dante upheld were justice, freedom, and peace, emulating the White party’s stance, and believed in unifying all of Christendom.

201 Silvia De Santis, “William Blake and The Divine Comedy.” In his plate depicting Dante’s Ugolino in The Gates of Paradise, Blake included the inscription: “Does thy God O Priest take such vengeance as this?” This emphasized Blake’s belief that the Divine worshipped by the Church was not the true Divine.


203 Ibid., 96.
The one in front, and that vermilion was;
Two were the others, that were joined with this
Above the middle part of wither shoulder,
And they were joined together at the crest;
And the right-hand one seemed ‘twixt white and yellow;
The left was such to look upon as those
Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward.
Underneath each came forth two mighty wings,
Such as befitting were so great a bird,
Sails of the sea I never saw so large.
No feathers had they, but as of a bat
Their fashion was […]204

Dante’s Satan is truly monstrous. When looking at artwork of the Divine Comedy, Blake may have happened upon illustrations such as Dante’s Inferno by an unknown Florentine artist from 1470-1480 [Fig. 13], especially given his studious history of medieval art. The scene depicts Satan in the bowels of Hell, surrounded by tormented souls and legions of the damned performing tortures upon those souls, layered as Dante described his inferno. In this illustration, the artist included an aspect of the Devil not mentioned or described by Dante: the Devil’s genitals. The Devil’s genitals in this image are a fourth face on the Devil’s body, similarly consuming a damned soul like the faces on the head - a vagina dentata, if you will. Perhaps this imagery, along with the Victorian medical and social confrontation with those of ambiguous sex, fueled Blake’s understanding of not only the Devil’s sex and gender, but his understanding of the sexes and genders assumed by celestial and mortal bodies as a whole.

Blake was obviously familiar with Dante’s Satan, given that he had done a number of illustrations for the Divine Comedy in his final years. Blake had drawn his own interpretation of Dante’s Satan in a watercolor between 1825 and 1827, titled *Hell Canto 34* in the bottom right corner [Fig. 14]. Blake’s has a number of similarities to the Florentine Satan, including the three faces and the throne composed of suffering souls, but Blake notably obscured the genitalia, leaving barely-there lines to insinuate some sex to this Satan. What genitals lie there, however, are left too obscured to determine exactly what they might be. Dante’s *The Divine Comedy* neglects to describe Satan’s genitals, although the Florentine artist obviously had a clear-cut image of what they could be, given the detailed rendering of

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the sinful soul being devoured by the *vagina dentata*. Blake was not ignorant to depicting male figures and their genitalia, but implicitly denied the male sex to his Satan, obscuring the unknown with wafting vapors. In denying Satan a phallus, Blake continued a tradition of assigning Satan with doubtful sex.
Blake also found inspiration in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, but if only to question Swedenborg’s beliefs. Swedenborg believed that the body reflected the soul, where Blake believed that the soul was too complicated and multi-layered for such.206 Swedenborg’s followers found sexuality scandalous, and thus some of Swedenborg’s more eroticized dream writings were translated and printed in Latin, as if to preserve his character, or that of his readers.207 Blake had no such compunctions against sexuality. Swedenborg himself found religious-appeal in the act of sex, which Blake seems to mirror, but Swedenborg ultimately finds the act of sex corruptible. According to Swedenborg’s *Conjugal Love*, promiscuous love, or lust of the flesh, is an energy that springs from Hell, and conjugal love, or spiritual love, is an energy that springs from Heaven, and promiscuous love “nauseates” conjugal love.208 As they are love of the body and love of the spirit respectively, they are opposites, like how Hell and Heaven are opposites.209 However, Blake states his own beliefs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* where Heaven and Hell could almost be interchangeable, and are not quite opposites.210 Where Swedenborg finds


207 Richard Lines, “The Erotic Dreams of Emanuel Swedenborg,” The Public Domain Review, January 24, 2013, https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/the-erotic-dreams-of-emanuel-swedenborg. Swedenborg himself thought that erotic love was an act of the Divine, but thought that humanity perverted it into evil means. The erotic dreams that Swedenborg had were translated by him into messages and interactions with the Divine, and he therefore thought they safe from that perversion. He recorded these dreams in his personal dream journal, which was published posthumously. The journal was originally published on a small scale and sent to “enlightened thinkers and those interested in the subject” nearly a century after Swedenborg’s death. Given its “crude” language, Swedenborg’s dream journal is often downplayed by followers of his works.


209 Ibid., 461.

210 William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 24, Stanza 2, Lines 1-2. “This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is / my particular [friend.]”
promiscuous love and conjugal love contraries and promiscuous love should be avoided.\textsuperscript{211} Blake finds contraries essential and the philosophy of love, and of the body, are not so black-and-white. In attacking Swedenborg, Blake says:

Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth: Now hear another: he has written all the old falsehoods.
And now hear the reason. He conversed with Angels who are all religious, \& conversed not with Devils who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro’ his conceited notions.
Thus Swedenborgs writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further.\textsuperscript{212}
Blake was very much challenging established beliefs about not only Heaven and Hell, but also about the body and its role in the universe, and the role of dichotomy itself. Blake prided himself on listening to “the Devil’s party.” According to Damon, Blake believed Swedenborg’s visions to be the same caliber as Dante’s.\textsuperscript{213}

Blake also found inspiration in \textit{The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come}, written by John Bunyan in 1678.\textsuperscript{214} According to Damon, it “is an analysis

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{211} Emanuel Swedenborg, \textit{The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugal Love : After Which Follow the Pleasures of Insanity Pertaining to Promiscuous Love}, 464.
\item \textsuperscript{212} William Blake, \textit{The Marriage of Heaven and Hell}, Plate 22, Lines 2-11.
\item \textsuperscript{213} “Swedenborg,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 393.
\item \textsuperscript{214} Margaret Soenser Breen, “The Sexed Pilgrim’s Progress,” \textit{Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900} 32, no. 3 (1992): 443–446. \textit{The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come} is split between two parts. In the first part, the protagonist Christian sets out on a pilgrimage, and is tested by social bodies, and in the second, his wife Christiana finds similar social bodies essential for her own pilgrimage. Bunyan believed that humanity was naturally sinful, and denying the self was an act that brought one closer to the Divine. As Christ was male, men could directly seek salvation, whereas as women, created as an afterthought to man, must utilize men to seek their own salvation. Christiana must think of her husband’s pilgrimage to model her won.
\end{itemize}
of salvation which is so widely true that it has been edited to fit all leading religions,” which would have suited Blake’s earlier beliefs stated in his *All Religions are One* and *There is No Natural Religion*. Blake, in his later years, endeavored to create twenty-eight watercolors inspired by the work, and the work’s description of Earthly Paradise may have inspired Blake’s understanding of his own paradise. Blake praised *The Pilgrim’s Progress* for being full of vision. In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, the main character is confronted by a Devil-like creature who was “cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride),” which may have inspired the scaly-texture found on some of Blake’s depictions of Satan. Outside of *Paradise Lost*, the figure of Satan, along with the demonic, was mocked in the 18th century and utilized in satirical works. The fear of damnation associated with demonic pacts drained away as Satan became repurposed. Tales like that of Faust gave way to mockery, and fear of Satan became criticism. Goethe was already not so much an influence as *Paradise Lost* due to the relative isolationism of England at the time, thus the emphasis on the Miltonic-lens. Satan became synonymous with repressed desires, and Hell

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218 Peter Stanford, *The Devil: A Biography*, 188.


220 Ibid.

221 Ibid., 26.
became a state of mind. Thomas Paine, another member of the groups Blake associated with, wrote *The Age of Reason* in 1794 to further deconstruct the myth of Satan, following Voltaire’s critical theory of Christianity’s reappropriation of pagan myths, and Creation and the Fall became reimagined as “an arm of the state.”

Blake did not seem to have much to say regarding his contemporaries, at least outside of his personal letters. Blake never made mention of him in his works, but Shelley was largely believed to have been Blake’s “Bard of Oxford” mentioned in his poem *Jerusalem*, as Shelley’s revolutionary fervor was comparable to Blake’s and he would have been within Blake’s social circle. However, where Shelley was an atheist, Blake was a stark believer in his own mythos based on Abrahamic religion, including Satan. The sensational Lord Byron, Blake hailed as a fellow true poet, and was the only poet contemporary to Blake that he named in his publications. According to Stanford:

> Byron portrays Lucifer as a complex character […] showing him standing apart from and even enjoying human suffering […] and claiming] that humankind’s suffering comes from within. […] What distinguishes Lucifer from [God…] is his coldness, distance, and lack of love.”

Blake differs from Byron’s views on Satan in that Blake saw humankind’s suffering a result of warring contraries and the enslaving rule of Urizen, who was also defined by those warring contraries.

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223 Ibid., 42. Blake was regularly commissioned for engravings from Joseph Johnson, and was known to attend his weekly dinners that included William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Henry Fuseli, and Thomas Paine.

224 Ibid., 15-16.


There does not seem to be record of Blake saying anything in regards to his contemporary Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), but there may be instances of Mephistopheles, Goethe’s stand-in for the Devil, which Blake might have agreed with, and given that the book was distributed across Europe, it is not outlandish to say that Blake may have been familiar with the work of his contemporary.\textsuperscript{228} According to Standford, Mephistopheles:

\[\ldots\] casts his critical eye on himself, observing his own emasculation. His horns and his tail have gone. All that remains of his traditional armor is his cloven hoof \[\ldots\]. Goethe appears to be charting the Devil’s own decline in the age of Enlightenment.”\textsuperscript{229}

Blake rarely employs the traditional garb of the devil with horns and tail, choosing instead either a statuesque, fair figure, often equipped with spear from their time as an angel, or as an aged, wizened figure appearing like the traditional stand-in for God, in the case of Urizen. Goethe’s own more appealing Devil, especially appearing as a contemporary scholar, may have made more sense to Blake as opposed to the traditional horror of the Devil, such as seen in the Florentine Satan of Dante’s \textit{The Divine Comedy} [Fig. 13].

The epitome of inspiration for Blake lied in John Milton, whom Blake assigned as not only England’s greatest poet, but also as the last son of Los in Blake's mythos: basically, as the last incarnation of creation itself.\textsuperscript{230} Milton was born on December 9, 1608, and would

\textsuperscript{228} Peter Stanford, \textit{The Devil: A Biography}, 202.
\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{230} “Milton,” S. Foster Damon, \textit{A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake}, 274.
die in 1674\textsuperscript{231} amidst the Restoration.\textsuperscript{232,233} Milton had favored Protestantism over his father’s Catholicism, and had been destined for a career in the Protestant Church with rigid education,\textsuperscript{234} but found his own views to be unorthodox and therefore turned his future from the Church and instead became a poet.\textsuperscript{235} The English Civil War\textsuperscript{236} came to a head, and Milton found himself siding with the idea of a Republican government and free and open debate. His early pamphlets argued for a church without bishops, but were not necessarily against kingship, but by the 1650’s, his writings became pro-tyrannicide and anti-king.\textsuperscript{237} Milton was imprisoned at the beginning of the Restoration, briefly, and then moved to the countryside to avoid further scrutiny, where he eventually became blind. Without sight and living with the failure of his causes, Milton wrote \textit{Paradise Lost} in 1667, in the tradition of Homer and Virgil, and would follow with \textit{Paradise Regained} four years later.\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., vii.
\textsuperscript{233} Tom Richey, “Charles II and the English Restoration (The Stuarts: Part Three),” Video, 16:27, Henry Clay Highschool, Lexington, KY, Posted by “Tom Richey,” January 1, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPMaJGs6K-Q&t=3s. Protestants, who vastly numbered the Parliament, were vying for ultimate authority in England over Catholics, who had sway over the Monarchy. Europe was experiencing a Catholic-resurgence, which the English monarchy trended towards, but Parliament kept Catholic privileges in check.
\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., ix.
\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., x.
\textsuperscript{236} Tom Richey, “Charles I and the English Civil War (The Stuarts: Part Two),” Video, 23:49, Henry Clay Highschool, Lexington, KY, Posted by “Tom Richey,” December 31, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWtnHWG48Bg. Started when Charles I tried to dismiss Long Parliament and Parliament refused. Cavaliers, supporters of the monarchy and their absolute rule, versus the Roundheads, who supported Parliament and were largely Puritanical. The Roundheads mobilized the New Model Army, who were highly mobile, Protestant-radical, and did not hold political offices, and eventually beheaded Charles I. This led to a military dictatorship that was highly Puritanical until the establishment of Charles II.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., xi.
Although Blake found fault in Milton, which he expanded upon in his composition *Milton, a Poem* of 1810, Blake admired his questioning of the Church and of his own views. Blake found a soul similar to his in Milton, challenging established norms of the government and relishing in artistic delights, yet Milton was still metaphorically blinded by established faith. Blake would seek to correct Milton’s failings in his writings, but would first be enthralled in the account of *Paradise Lost*, finding there a Satan who was not as any Church had dictated.

According to Stanford:

John Milton’s psychological portrait of the Devil has had the most profound impact on succeeding generations. His view eclipsed all previous images, turning them on their heads and fashioning in their place a picture so compelling and credible that it remains the standard account of Satan, and the yardstick by which all other impressions must be judged.239

The root of much of Blake’s understanding of his own mythos can be find in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, including the roles of gender and how gender came to influence the being Satan, who was already in a tumultuous chaos of gender-roles and sex.

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PARADISE LOST

*Paradise Lost* was the most widely published long poem in the 18th century.\(^{240}\) It is about Satan and the rebel angels after their war with Heaven, and Satan tempting Eve into sin. The poem is rife with gendered imagery, and Milton describes Eve at first glance as doomed to sin, as if she had no agency of her own. Satan is a complex character, an earthly monarch according to the Bible and a hero according to Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822).\(^{241}\) This hero, however, is still subject to Milton’s gendering rhetoric.

*Paradise Lost* begins with a quick synopsis of its own scope: the fruit of the forbidden tree bringing Death into the world until the Son of God saves mankind. The poem then moves to the Fall of Satan, using language like “seduced” to explain how Satan led the rebel angels to war and their subsequent fall. Interestingly, the flames of Hell cast darkness, not light, mirroring how the rebel angels dimmed after their fall, no longer “cloth’d with transcendent brightness”, now nude with their fall, foreshadowing the discovered nudity of Adam and Eve.

Satan reveals to the fallen rebel angels that all is not lost: that they still have their free will, hatred, and the courage to never submit. Beelzebub also refers to the “tyranny of Heaven”, and Satan agrees that it is better to rule in Hell than to serve in Heaven, mirroring the sentiments of Milton during the English Civil War. Satan, according to Milton, is associated with the cardinal direction North, and the North is described as pouring invaders “from her frozen loins.”

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When it comes to the sexes of angels, Milton says, “For Spirits when they please Can either Sex assume, or both; so soft And un compounded is their essence pure, Not ti’d or manacl’d with joint or limb, Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones, Like cumbersome flesh; but in what shape they choose Dilated or condens’t, bright or obscure, Can execute their airy purposes, And works of love or enmity fulfill.” Satan has a spear that acts as a substitute phallus and is described with a womb. In describing Satan, Milton says, “his form had not yet lost All her original brightness,” referring to Satan as both masculine and feminine. In describing the landscape of Hell itself, Milton refers to “his womb,” and Satan later contemplates that he is Hell itself.

Interestingly, in describing Satan’s garb, Milton reveals a bit more about the character. Satan misuses their equipment of a spear and shield as crutches. The shield and spear were Classical weapons, calling to mind heroes of ancient lore and statuesque effigies to warriors, but were no longer viewed as viable options in Milton’s time. Instead, the shield had taken on the connotation of cowardice and poor leadership, subtly casting the Classical-esque figure of Satan into doubt as the leader of the rebel army. Given the description of Satan’s spear as both “the tallest pine” and a “wand,” it has been suggested that Satan’s spear grows smaller the further they are from Heaven. If Satan’s spear is looked at as a substitute phallus, given their history of ambiguous sex, then Satan possess a

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243 Ibid., 495.

244 Ibid., 490.
phallus that grows smaller after their Fall, and perhaps even grows so small that its very existence is called into question.

In his journey to Earth, Satan encounters their daughter that they bore, Sin, and the son that they begot with her, Death, where Satan was able to both bear a child and impregnate. The landscape of Hell, which Satan claims is themself, is referred to with both masculine and feminine terms, and the landscape of Earth is referred to with feminine terms. Elements of the sky are referred to with feminine terms, save for the masculine sun, and Heaven is noted as masculine.

Satan makes it to Paradise and beholds Adam and Eve. Milton says ,”though both Not equal, as their sex not equal seem’d,,” and describes Adam as more authoritative an Eve as more meek and subservient, saying, “Hee for God only, shee for God in Him,” as if Eve cannot worship God directly, but must do so through her devotions to her husband. In describing Eve, Milton mentions her “wanton ringlets,” noting them as prophetic, sexually shaming her pure form for her future transgression, or victim to trickery. Eve is described as fairer than Adam, so much so that she initially almost rejected him for her own image, and in observing her, Satan laments that they could have loved man were it not for their mission, and plans that they will be seeking league with man in the future. Satan even notes that they are jealous of Eve’s love.

At night, Satan sneaks next to Eve and crouches down by her ear “Assaying by his Devilish art to reach The Organs of her fancy,” which Miltons notes is intentionally sexual imagery for her seduction, as she shares fruit and flies with Satan in her dream. Adam is directly warned about coming danger, and he must relay this information to Eve: Adam is
often directly corresponded with by celestial beings while Eve must listen to the side or be later relayed the information by Adam.

Raphael, the one who warned Adam about the coming danger from Satan, recounts the War in Heaven and Creation, and then describes Eve’s creation as her being inferior in the mind, and perfect on the outside where she was not on the inside, and warns Adam against pursuing carnal pleasure. Satan enters the garden by night and possesses a snake, and finds Eve separated from Adam the next day. Before her encounter with Satan as a snake, Eve is repeatedly described as a virgin, and is a pleasure to Satan to behold. Satan convinces Eve to partake in the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, and one of her first realizations is that she desires to be equal to Adam, “for inferior who is free?”

Eve seeks Adam out to share the fruit with him, and he calls her deflowered, as if she and Satan had truly copulated. Adam agrees to eat the fruit, and the two passionately copulate after, as if knowledge brought about their first experience with carnal desire. When they awake, they are described to have “darkened innocence”, similar to the darkening of the rebel angels with their fall, and Eve is referred to with harlot-imagery. Adam accuses women of perpetuating evil.

Satan is described of having perverted Eve, and she her husband, referring to not only their falls, but also to their copulation. God curses Adam and Eve with various ailments, chiefly Death, who had followed his father into Paradise. In their triumph, Satan appears brighter and star-like, but is then cursed with the other rebel angels into the forms of snakes. Adam resumes accusing Eve, calling her a snake, saying that it was fitting that she be formed from such a crooked bone from his body (his rib), and that it was fitting that she came from
his left side, the “sinister” side. Adam then describes Angels as being without feminine, which suggests that there are no truly female celestial spirits, which leaves masculine and intersexed. The angel Michael is then charged with escorting the two from Paradise, but first tells them the future of mankind.

Dr. Susanne Woods contemplates that the Son of God is the hero instead,\(^{245}\) who agrees to die for the forgiveness of man. If *Paradise Lost* is read as a complement to the Bible, this could be the case. However, as stand-alone literature, the Son does not act enough to be considered a main character, and although his words and actions are noble, because not much of him is seen, he is not one of the most relatable characters, and therefore he does not invoke as much emotion as Adam, Eve, or Satan. If one were impassioned by the Bible, they might view the Son as the hero, but as Blake followed much of his own mythos, Blake may have instead viewed Satan as the protagonist, but the forgiving and wise Adam as the ultimate hero. Satan’s motives and rhetoric become less appealing as the poem progresses, leaving room for argument that Adam is instead the hero, as Adam increasingly interacts with heavenly messengers later in the poem. However, Adam enters the story as more of a complement to Eve and does not act out much on his own, so he appears as more of a supporting character, but ultimately one of the more redeeming characters. Still, Blake viewed Satan as the pinnacle character to *Paradise Lost*, as he was ultimately a reflection of Milton himself, according to Blake’s *Milton* poem.

In Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, angels are more human-like, sensuous and prone to folly. They war; they fall; they lust. They seem to embody man, yet are expected by a higher power

to serve without questioning, which Satan and the fallen angels refused to do. It is in this that 
Blake finds fault: that some noble, higher power would expect absolute obedience where 
some contraries are essential. If Satan were made by this higher power, then they were made 
to fall, just as Eve’s “wanton ringlets” predestined her to sin. Together, Adam and Eve were 
incorrigible, but separated, prone to folly. Satan proved themselves to be capable of his their 
folly - of a vice against Heaven that would condemn them - but they had once been the 
brightest star: a glorified angel. Could Satan have been weakened by their own division? At 
some point, they had given birth to Sin: was this separation the marking point of their 
dissent? Blake saw these parallels and thought, yes, Satan was the incomplete portion of 
some union that had once made them the brightest, now the darkest.

And what of the God that sought absolute obedience? Blake saw that as sign of 
further corruption: that, perhaps, Milton was worshipping what was assumed God, but not 
truly God. Blake’s true God lies in perfect union, and Milton’s God seemed to him to be an 
imposter: a slave-driver. To Blake, Urizen was the name of Milton’s God: a false deity 
separated from a perfect union. An over-assertion of male dominance in the face of imperfect 
harmony.

Political theorist and anarchist William Godwin (1756-1836), who was a part of the 
non-conformist group of liberals that included Blake, praised Milton’s Satan as being “an 
embodiment of the fully autonomous intellect that discerns and rejects the radical injustice of 
a ‘despotic’ and ‘assumed’ power analogous to the arbitrary authority of prescription and

precedent that governed England in the 1790’s,” mirroring the assumed sentiments that Milton held against the government in his time and reflecting those sentiments on the English government of the Romantic Era. According to Doctor Peter A. Schock:

By the early 1790’s, the sublime and humanized figure of Milton’s epic antagonist, which had already gained heroic stature earlier in the eighteenth century, was further reshaped by Romantic writers into a vehicle of artistic and ideological freight, much of it iconoclastic or at best only marginally acceptable to polite readers. Satan has already been transformed into a hero by Blake’s time, despite arguments as to who the true hero of *Paradise Lost* was. Blake was not the only writer of his time to take the figure of Satan, heavily inspired by Milton’s adaptation, and use it to fuel his vision of a revolution of the English government, already nervous from the waves made by the French Revolution. The English government itself propagandized the French Revolution as the Beast of Revelation. As Satan had become a hero of the Romantic Era, they could no longer be intersexed: they had to be definitively male in the age of reason, lest there be consequences to the character and the roles that they portrayed. Blake, however, did not follow this convention.

According to Stanton, “by a strange irony, just as Milton produced the most impressive, credible, seductive, and memorable portrait of the Devil in the Christian religion, Satan was increasingly dismissed as an incarnate reality in urban and intellectual circles [… *Paradise Lost*] may have even have reversed [the dismissal of the Devil]

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248 Ibid.
249 Ibid., 19.
250 Here, the Devil and Satan are synonymous.
temporarily.” That Blake should have read the account and found it compelling fell within the mode of other artists of his time, but to have allowed it to influence his own mythos was fortunate against the failing belief in Satan. Again, Stanford says that Shelley, a contemporary of Blake’s who was opposed to organized religion and a dis-believer of Satan, “respected the need for a satanic figure to act as a symbol for evil. At the same time and with typical Romantic ambivalence, he saw the Devil as a rebel and thereby as a symbol for anyone who wished to overthrow the established order.” Blake was somewhat against this belief in that he saw Milton’s Satan as a misidentified redeemer and Messiah, but still incorporated some of the same struggles in his own Satan, Urizen in his fallen state. In this fallen state, Blake’s Satan dominated without a female emanation to keep them balanced, and this defined their state.

There were a number of artists contemporary to Blake that had also illustrated *Paradise Lost*. John Martin (1789-1854) was a London-based artist who had also endeavored to illustrate *Paradise Lost*. Martin’s works, as a whole, seem to focus more on the sublime nature of the landscapes that his images take place in, with his human figures appearing minuscule and powerless. For an example of this, and for an example of how he depicted Satan, look to his mezzotint *Satan Addressing his Legions* of Book 1, line 311 of *Paradise Lost*, of 1825 [Fig. 15].

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252 Ibid., 207.

253 Ibid., 208.
Figure 15: John Martin, *Satan Addressing His Legions*, 1825, Mezzotint.

The cavern in which this image takes place is immense, craggy and textile, yet at the same time swirling around the page like the flames towards the bottom, in which Satan’s legions reside. The legions, save for one lone example that lies prone on a rock in the middle,
are white smears in the flames, mixing with the cresting waves of fire like foam on the ocean. The scene elicits the image of a stormy sea, tumultuous and raging as these rebel souls are flung about, completely at mercy. The sea of flames and souls recedes far back into the cavernous abode, calm like a lazy tide towards the back, only raging in the front because Satan is there to rouse it. Satan teeters over the chasm, yet his pose entices the image that he commands the swirling cavern and raging sea. The scene, as large as it is, is thus directed to reveal their own magnosity of power and charisma in this scene.

Satan stands proud and tall upon a rocky ledge that teeters over the fiery melee, arms stretched above their head like their wings unfurled behind them, towering over the figure as they command the tempest below. Their shield is equipped to their back, and their spear is a stark white line that points almost to the sole discernible figure in the tempest, every bit the warrior that they were when they challenged the hierarchy of Heaven. They are lightly draped with cloth, but that cloth is pushed aside and pulled back, as if the cape of a ruler, oddly quelled in the presence of the swirling vastness before Satan, stilted as if barely feeling the rising heat of the storm before it. The cloth is perhaps the remnants of the ‘transcendent light’ that clothed Satan before their fall, now all but discarded. Satan’s hair - or the plume of their helmet, the minuscule size of the figure makes it difficult to determine - rises like the flames beneath them, as if to imitate the rousing speech that Satan gave to the rebel angels to encourage their revile against Heaven, rather than wallowing in their misery.

Because their cloth is pushed back, Satan is nude to the viewer’s eye, yet because the figure is so small, not much information can be gleaned. The figure standing behind Satan appears to have some cloth at least around their hips, yet Satan is bared to the viewer’s eye.
The appears to be a mound in the ‘v’ of Satan’s hips, but just what that entails cannot be discerned. Perhaps because Satan’s role in this image is so “masculine,” commanding an army, their pelvis might be read as containing a phallus. Or perhaps, with the figure being so small in the scheme of the image, the reading of the sex there is intentionally muddled by the artist.

Most other appearances of Satan by Martin have him with cloth obscuring his pelvis just so, so that his sex cannot be observed. Perhaps Martin used the sizes of his plates to his advantage for this, but overall in Martin’s works, Satan’s sex cannot be observed, and the figure itself is dwarfed by the immensity of the landscape surrounding. Blake has a very different approach to his imagery, in that the figures for Blake are the central aspect to the image, and nature is more of an accent found in the borders and accompanying text. Gustave Doré (1832-1883) was another well-established artist that took on the artistic challenge of *Paradise Lost* in a series of prints, if a bit after the time of Blake. Most of Doré’s depictions of Satan have them clothed, but one image stands out as an outlier: the engraving illustrating *Paradise Lost*’s Book IX, Lines 182 and 183, of 1866 [Fig. 16], in which Satan, nude, sits back and observes a snake.
Satan’s wings are lightly spread aloft as they balance on their perch on a rock. The landscape seems a bit unusual, for the scene takes place within Paradise, but the scene is bleak, with the occasional dried bramble. The sky is clear, save for some clouds smattered near the horizon. There are no lush bushes, fruitful trees, or ravenous wilds that are usually
found in depictions of Paradise: just a quaint, almost desert-like scene in which Satan finds themselves contemplating the snake.

The snake is a swirling mass of coils, and is easily the darkest thing in the image. The snake is in quiet repose, and this image is just the moment before Satan enters its mouth to possess it. Satan sits back, nude, but with their leg obscuring their genitals just so. The figure, save for the wings, is simple with nothing to suggest an alien-like otherness to their sex. Most other of Doré’s illustrations of Satan have them garbed in armor, or at least with some cloth around their hips.

None of these other artists addressed the sex of Satan quite like Blake did. For although there are had been a history of assigning Satan doubtful sex, they seemed to approach his illustrations as a male, even though Satan, at least in Paradise Lost, was now naked of the “transcendent light” that garbed them as an angel. Blake seemed to be the only one who directly addressed the history of doubtful sex for the character in his illustrations. Perhaps the Martin, Fuseli, and Doré had their own writings regarding the matter, but their writings are not nearly as prolific as Blake’s.
GENDER: THE BINARY

The roles of gender and sexuality were central concepts to Blake’s works. As Schotz states in her study "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover":

The complicated passions and intricate relations of human sexuality provide Blake with the subject matter for much of his work, and with the patterns in which to perceive and portray other relations […]. The opposition between male and female is 'not only a paradigm on which [he] bases a large number of his beliefs about life,' but also […] 'fundamental to all creativeness.254 This means that sexuality defined much of Blake’s work, from roles to relationships to each other. As seen in his Book of Thel, with a woman nurturing man through life and reaching maturity through her relationships to man, Blake’s views of life itself are very dependent on his roles of the sexes and how they nurture each other throughout. To be without relationship to sexes is to be severely hampered, according to Blake. There exists, for Blake, a balance in the existence of man and woman, and a stilted life and possible damnation for all others outside of those two roles.

Of Blake’s sexes and understanding their roles, power and self-efficacy play a major part in their organization; the Divine, the first of the intersexed, held the pinnacle of power, and all other of Blake’s sexes would seek to emulate this version of perfection. Psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm said, “For the authoritarian character there exist, so to

254 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover”,” 17.
speak, two sexes: the powerful one and the powerless one.” The authoritarian character, according to Fromm, is a sadomasochistic figure in a normalized society, as opposed to a society where such a figure sticks out. This figure admires the authority above them, but tends to desire to be that authority themselves. This is both Milton’s and Blake’s Satan, who desires to be their own authority, but ultimately adores that of the Divine. For the sexes associated with the authoritarian character, it assumes that the male has power, and the female is without, as Fromm refers to his authoritarian character as a male, but such calls into question the gender of some of Blake’s characters. Oothoon, victim as she was to the vices of Bromion, was without power, but in his state bound to Oothoon, so is Bromion. Beings of power are often also powerless in Blake’s mythos: Albion was the creator of all, yet lies powerless and divided without Jerusalem, his emanation. Urizen is God of the material world, yet is often depicted bound and stewing in his own helplessness. Satan, of such fabled power, is incomplete without their feminine emanation, and thus cannot be completely a man.

255 Camille Paglia, Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1991), 272. In her book Sexual Personae, Camille Paglia utilizes this quote to emphasize Blake’s uses of age and innocence deflowered, and even uses it to suggest that Blake makes his male chimney-sweep child from Songs of Innocence the precursor for a powerless male in a relationship with a “cruel woman” that emasculates him. However, it is the father that sells his son into the chimney sweep business after the mother had passed, and it is the Catholic Church and the Crown that perpetuates this misery in Songs of Experience. The child, closer to the Divine due to their lack of experience (both worldly and sexually), indeed emasculated, is done so by the paternal and masculine in the world around him. Woman is a nurturing force that is denied him early on, and this separation from the feminine foretells his demise, which shall result in the reunion of that innocent masculinity with femininity, the mother. This is the worm returned to woman, and this perfect unity reflects the Divine. I use this quote to emphasize Blake’s sexes: that the Divine, that masculine that has accepted the feminine within, is the penultimate power, and all other of Blake’s sexes seek to imitate this perfection. Specifically for this quote, the “authoritarian character” is the Catholic Church that enslaves, metaphorically, the rest of mankind, and Satan, who literally enslaves mankind.


257 Ibid.
According to Dr. Camille Paglia, “[as] his poetry develops, Blake’s principal combat is between male and female, metaphors for the tension between humanity and nature.”\textsuperscript{258} The male is humanity, God’s championed race, and female is nature, something to be admired, yet ultimately controlled. Blake’s understanding of sex ultimately lies in the binary, including his understanding of the intersexed. Satan is Blake’s hermaphrodite not because their sex does not conform to the binary, but rather because they are an imperfect union of male and female, with the feminine rejected. Satan is the wilderness beyond mankind without God’s temperance - something wild and unruly, fearsome and awesome in power, yet ultimately demanding God’s hand to cut it down. The essentialness of this balance and ultimate battle betwixt leads Paglia to say that “Blake makes sex war the first theatrical conflict of English Romanticism.”\textsuperscript{259} The hallmark battle of Blake’s romanticism is not English, American, or French, but is rather of the sexes.

Blake’s views of sexes as being opposing forces finds root in Darwinistic studies, where it is said that the more “advanced” a species is, the more differences can be found between male and female “types”,\textsuperscript{260} and in the Renaissance, where the popularity of the theories of various dichotomies rendered males and females at the opposite ends of the gender spectrum.\textsuperscript{261} Despite human males and females as being biblically defined as being derivative of each other - more so of the female being a lesser form of male - Blake finds the union of the sexes as a return to perfection, but the sexes separate as the source of war and

\textsuperscript{258} Camille Paglia, \textit{Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson}, 271.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 270.
\textsuperscript{260} Alice Domurat Dreger, \textit{Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex}, 26.
\textsuperscript{261} Ruth Gilbert, \textit{Early Modern Hermaphrodites : Sex and Other Stories}, 14.
slavery. Blake believed in sexes beyond the binary, but his construction of genders was reinforced by the binary.
GENDER: BEYOND THE BINARY

“[…All] sexuality is complicated, and intersexuality is no exception.” Male and female were not the only sexes recognized by Blake, although the dynamics of his understanding of the intersexed revolved around the binary. When it came to the concept of the intersexed, Blake referred to two separate classifications: the androgyne and the hermaphrodite. He understood the hermaphrodite as a being neither wholly male nor wholly female, insofar as they possess only partial attributes of both sexes. As neither one nor the other, Blake’s hermaphrodite does not participate in the vitalizing struggle of contraries essential to human life. According to Schotz, as a state of mind, the hermaphrodite functions as the 'Reasoning Negative,' or the 'Abstract objecting power that negates everything.' Blake’s hermaphrodite straddles a between-ness that negates the creativeness mentioned by Schotz, as one opposition of the binary-sex dynamic is suppressed. In terms of representing Satan as a hermaphrodite, Blake’s concept reflects the early modern classification of the hermaphrodite as a “monster,” according to Jenny C. Mann.

The androgyne had existed before in discourse, dating back to prehistory. The first notable appearance of the androgyne in Western Philosophy came from Plato’s *Symposium*. The androgyne was interpreted to have been a third sex at the creation of love, being a union of the masculine and the feminine. The masculine originated from the sun, the feminine from

262 Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 4.

263 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover"," 18.

the earth, and the androgyne from the moon, as a marriage of the two, later split by the gods.265

Later, in Neoplatonic texts and images of the 15th to 16th centuries, the androgynous ideal of humanity would emerge, such as likening the marriage between man and woman as being a return to an androgynous state, merging the masculine and feminine lawfully, and in the terms of procreation, physically, such as seen in Barthélemy Aneau’s *Matrimonii Typus* of 1552 [Fig. 17]266 In this print, the central figure appears to be a hermaphrodite, but is actually the physical representation of the androgynous union of man and woman in marriage. A cord binds their bodies together, knotted in front of their pelvis to deny the reading of their sex, and their hands cover their breasts to denying the reading there. The cord is the law which binds them, and also the cloth which clothes them, granting them some modesty and symbolizing them as a civilized pair. The figure has two heads, one presumably male and the other presumably female, interlocked in a kiss. Having two separate heads, the androgynous figure still has a separate masculine and feminine identities, but in this lawful and spiritual union, they are one. From their heads sprouts a tree bearing birds: three pairs, symbolizing the union of man and woman, and two separate larger birds feeding chicks, symbolizing each of the binary’s duties to their offspring from their union. To the right, on the masculine side, stands a male figure likely representing the Divine, blessing the union. This figure is clothed, and behind him there appears to be a farmer working with his cattle to plow a field, both symbolizing civilization, the Divine and man’s conquest over nature. To the left, on the


feminine side, stands a Pan-like figure, likely representing Satan, pointing to the union, accompanied only by the rolling hills of the countryside behind them. This Satan stands slightly behind the Divine figure in terms of the picture-plane, showing that the Divine stands closer with man, yet is shown on the side of woman, suggesting her more unruly nature that man must contend with. The androgynous figure also represents Adam and Eve, the tree the Tree of Knowledge from which Eve took the forbidden fruit at the behest of Satan, and the farmer in the background mankind after having been expelled from Paradise. The Divine figure points not only at the knot binding the androgynous figure, blessing the union, but also at their genitals, whereas the Satan figure points to their heads. Perhaps, being on the masculine side, the Divine points to the phallus as the signifier of power within the union, or to the vagina which became “cursed” with the pains of childbirth, whereas Satan, on the feminine side, points to the locust of passions and wiles within woman. This androgynous figure represents the closest that man can get to returning to Paradise, sanctioned by the Divine and law.
The androgyne, to Blake, was a positive counter to the hermaphrodite. Blake’s androgyne was a man who had accepted and made peace with the feminine within as a union, which would cease to exist should the union cease to create, at which point the

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267 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover""," 18.

268 Ibid.
feminine would depart, “like Eve.” According to Damon, “the opposite of the
hermaphrodite is the androgyne, in which man’s bisexual nature is perfectly harmonized.
This was his original state.” Damon then went on to cite the Bible as an inspiration to
Blake’s androgyne, given that man was first created in the image of God, and then had the
feminine separated into Eve. As Adam was first both Adam and Eve before they were
separated, a man at peace with the feminine within was the closest to perfection that man
could achieve, in Blake’s eyes, as such a form was the closest reflection to the Divine.

According to Dr. Thaïs E. Morgan, “[the androgyne was where] the masculine and feminine
categories overlap, [and] suited to an aesthetic minoritizing discourse which specifically
seeks to reconfigure masculinity […] perverse if judged in moral terms but transcendentally
beautiful if judged by the standards of art.” The androgyne was both masculine and
feminine in terms of a male subject, their beauty only recognized in the instance of the
androgyne being theoretical.

According to Dreger, in terms of Victorian medicine:

Although these two terms, “intersexual” and “hermaphroditic,” are used to refer to
the same sorts of anatomical conditions, they do signal different ways of thinking
about the sexually “ambiguous” body. “Intersexed” literally means that an individual
is between the sexes - that s/he slips between and blends maleness and femaleness.
By contrast the term “hermaphroditic” implies that a person has both male and
female attributes, that s/he is not a third sex or a blended sex, but instead that s/he is

269 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover","19.
271 Ibid.
272 Thaïs E. Morgan, "Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Criticism: Swinburne and Pater." Victorian Studies
a sort of double sex, that is, in possession of a body which juxtaposes essentially “male” and essentially “female” parts.\textsuperscript{273} Blake’s androgyne is the combination of the binary into a singular being, but is definitively still a male, and is thus safe from the scalpel of modern medicine. Blake’s hermaphrodite may perform as either male or female, but will still be in the wrong in that they are perpetually performing the wrong gender, and thus must be rectified. Blake illustrates this by choosing to, for the most part, represent the hermaphrodite with Satan.

According to Schotz, Blake’s understanding of the androgyne was represented by the figure of Albion, who was, “an emblem of a humanity embracing the discoveries of imagination as truth,”\textsuperscript{274} such as depicted in his watercolor, \textit{Albion Rose} (1794-1796) [Fig. 18]. Albion is a figure found in Blake’s personal mythology as a God-like figure, whose name, the first recorded name for the island of Britain, was revived by 19th century Romantic poets.\textsuperscript{275} Blake used the figure of Albion to place his personal mythos and interpretation of biblical Israel in England.\textsuperscript{276} In \textit{Albion Rose}, the figure stands triumphant and unashamed with a visible male sex, yet is meant to represent a spiritual union of masculinity and femininity, seen as a dawn-like burst of color and light over darkness. The colors and separation of those colors in the dawn-light surrounding Albion reflect a chart drawn by Blake in his poem \textit{Milton}, seen in [Fig. 19]. The chart represents the divided

\textsuperscript{273} Alice Domurat Dreger, \textit{Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex}, 31.

\textsuperscript{274} Myra Glazer Schotz, “For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in “Lady Chatterley's Lover”,” 18.

\textsuperscript{275} Footnote from William Graham Sumner’s \textit{Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Manners, Customs, Moves and Morals} in David Hackett Fischer, \textit{Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6-7.

\textsuperscript{276} William Blake, \textit{Milton}, Preface, Stanza 5, lines 3-4. “Till we have built Jerusalem, / In England’s green & pleasant [Land.]”
Albion, which occurs when Albion sleeps and separates from his Emanation, Jerusalem. In their fallen state, Albion separates into the Zoas Urthona, Tharmas, Luvah, and Urizen, who assumes the mantle of God in Albion’s stead. The Milton chart shows that, just as Satan is a state, so too is Adam: Adam as an androgyne, before his separation from Eve. If Albion Rose were seen as a compliment to the Milton chart, then Albion encompasses both Adam and Satan: a unity in the mind, and a division in the sex. In Albion Rose, there is a softness and welcoming nature to the figure, perhaps to represent the androgyne as an exploration of gender in the face of a masculine sex, as opposed to overtly performing the male gender. In art, and in Blake’s mythos, this androgyne was almost divine in terms of beauty, representing a wholesomeness to a man defying gender-constructions, and is limited to only men.

Figure 18: William Blake, *Albion Rose*, 1794-1796, etching with ink and watercolor.
But to say that the androgyne “defies” gender-constructions is perhaps too aggressive of a term: the androgyne is wholesome and unified, at peace with themselves despite the gender-constructions that define the world around them. It is the hermaphrodite that defies, not only those constructs, but also the essences of gender within themselves, only in Blake’s terms in gender being a twofold construct rather than the multifaceted splendor that it is
modernly recognized to be. In terms of Victorian medicine, according to Dreger, sex was
determined by the sum of parts, thus Blake’s androgyne would not suffer the fate of the
hermaphrodite in being incongruous and unharmonious in their gender-identifiers, but would
rather be definitively labeled as male.278 Blake took an ungendered form - the landmass of
England itself - and sexed it, and offered it a “perfect” design as a male with feminine and
masculine qualities, but definitively male sex.279

To Blake, where the androgyne represents a healthy spiritual union between the
feminine and the masculine in a male form, the hermaphrodite represents an unhealthy union
in the face of doubtful sex. According to Schotz, “If the awakened Albion represents the male
psyche who allows his [feminine] expression, the hermaphrodite represents male fears of
impotence, birth, and female power.”280 Prior to illustrating Paradise Lost, Blake had created
a mythology seen in his earlier poems to analyze the dynamics between characters of
different sexes and genders, and in this mythology was a hermaphrodite who gave birth to a
son: Satan.281282 Rather than existing in a union between the feminine and the masculine

278 Alice Domurat Dreger, Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex, 3.
279 Kenneth Robert Olwig, Landscape, Nature and the Body Politic : From Britain’s Renaissance to America’s New World, 126-136. Land had long been a metaphorical female in Western culture, but also male. The land itself was referred to a feminine, whereas the more cultured aspect of land was masculinized, where the King was the “head” and Parliament the “body.” Air itself was also masculinized, as it was the dwelling place of the Divine, placing the masculine air over the feminine land. Blake echoes this celestial father / terrestrial mother with his great Albion and his emanation Jerusalem.
280 Quoted in Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover"," 19.
281 “Tiriel,” S. Foster Damon, A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake, 405-407. Blake’s mythology was introduced to readers first from his first prophetic book Tiriel, from 1789. Evidently dissatisfied with it, Blake did not engrave Tiriel, and it went unpublished until 1874. Several characters in Tiriel acted as precursors to characters developed in Blake’s later mythos, such as the titular character foreshadowing Urizen. Characters in Tiriel were referenced to in The Book of Thel. The Gates of Paradise, which follow man from birth to grave, introduced elements of Blake’s mythos, and directly reference the more traditional version of Satan. Blake would continue to develop his mythos and its characters until his first full-scale prophecy America a Prophecy, which featured Orc and Urizen.
within, Blake not only suggested that Satan denied and hid the feminine within, but also suggested that the son of the hermaphrodite contained a vagina, rendering Satan as a more masculine hermaphroditic counterpart to their more feminine parent, or as a non-classical hermaphrodite. According to Dr. Anna Maerker:

In early modern poetry and fiction, the image of the hermaphrodite continued to draw on the Greek concept of an ideal combination of male and female features. Those fictional hermaphrodites possessed both fully formed and fully functional female breasts and a male penis. However, actual hermaphrodites encountered in early modern medical writing and in popular accounts differed markedly. Such hermaphrodites were considered monsters, usually portrayed as ugly and deformed, or, in the words of a contemporary encyclopedia, ‘weak and incomplete.’

Even as far back as the Roman era, hermaphrodites were labeled as “monsters,” and were even put to death for being the portents to an ill fate to come. Even as beautifully as Blake renders Satan, according to Maerker, the non-standardized nature of Satan’s hermaphroditism only further marks their monstrosity. Blake viewed Satan, or Urizen, as they are identified in several of Blake’s myths, as an imperfect portion of Albion. Albion, as the androgyne, represented the union of Passion, Reason, and Imagination, yet Albion’s fall and the subsequent Apocalypse were due to their own indecision, leading to Albion’s separation as

283 Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories*, 3. Doctor Gilbert stated in her book *Early Modern Hermaphrodites* that the “perfect” hermaphrodite, such as that described in mythology and seen in art, has likely never existed. In rendering Satan as an overly masculine body but without a phallus, Blake continues this absence of the “perfect” hermaphrodite in the material world.

284 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover",” 22. In Blake’s *The Four Zoas*, it is hermaphroditic Terrible Devouring Mother that gives birth to the son Satan. Given that Blake depicts Satan as overtly male, but without a phallus, it is assumed that Satan’s mother was overtly female, but with masculine genitals. Satan as being “mostly masculine” would explain their masculine pronouns.


286 Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 32.


288 Ibid., 420.
sovereign entities, the Zoas,\textsuperscript{289} with Satan ruling as Reason without intellectual desire.\textsuperscript{290} In the same terms applied to Albion, as union and as separation into complementary entities, Blake represents Milton’s failings, specifically blind obedience, in the form of Satan in his poem *Milton* (1810).\textsuperscript{291} Blake writes that Milton, "[viewed] his Sixfold Emanation scatter’d thro’ the deep / In torment: to go into the deep her to redeem [and] himself perish."\textsuperscript{292} This reflects the warring binary that defines Satan as a hermaphrodite, and of the departing of intellectual desire, as a sovereign entity, from Satan, leading to their fall.

One of Blake’s depictions of a hermaphrodite is found in his print, *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, Plate 7, "Fire" (1826) [Fig. 10]. In the poem, Blake identified the depicted figure as a “dark hermaphrodite,” the “root of Evil and Good,” which he associates with feminine pronouns, apparently due to their lack of an obvious male sex. The figure stands similarly to the figure of *Albion Rose*, but in a more confrontational pose, ready to do battle, their face almost a grimace. Should the pelvis of both figures be covered, *Albion Rose* and *For the Sexes* could be mistaken as the same character, each with short curly hair, wide eyes, a similar physique, and similarly positioned on the pictorial plane. But the androgyne Albion is defined as a man at peace and in union with the feminine within. He is triumphant and welcoming, radiating like the dawn or Phoebus Apollo, while Blake’s hermaphrodite is in a state of conflict with themselves given their ambiguous state, neither physically male nor

\textsuperscript{289} E.L. Risden, "William Blake and the Personal Epic Fantastic," 421.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 419.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., 422.
\textsuperscript{292} William Blake, *Milton*, Book the First, Plate 1, stanza 2, Lines 4-5. This passage relates Milton to Lucifer during his time in Heaven, unhappy and silent. This line reveals the warring binary within Satan, thus source of their discontent.
female. They thus suppress and hide the feminine within, both spiritually and physically, here rendered in a confrontational manner. The hermaphrodite is depicted with a scaly texture over their groin, suggesting an animal or alien nature to their sex, or perhaps a reference to the snake in the Garden of Eden that tempted and tricked Eve. Referring to this ambiguity of genitalia, Maerker writes:

While [the hermaphrodite’s] ambiguity was considered enjoyable and central to [artistic] appeal, [in its ambiguous status, it was] not between sexes but another kind of sexual ambiguity between monstrosity and [normality].

Between male and female; creation and destruction; the constructions of normality and monstrosity. This is where Blake’s hermaphrodite stands, posed for confrontation with their own nature of between-ness. Blake’s hermaphrodite did not only stand between the binary, but also challenged it as an established norm, and was therefore to be viewed as a monster.

The scaled hermaphrodite is seen in several depictions of Satan in Blake’s work, including his 1805 watercolor, *Lucifer and the Pope in Hell (The King of Babylon)* [Fig. 2]. In this image, Satan bears the scales not only on their pelvis, but also on their chest, the two bodily areas that determine the reading of sex. Again, Blake’s hermaphrodite is imposing and confrontational, towering and rigid over huddled figures in the corner, and commanding a captured Pope, who looks back upon a figure that is hoisted up and tortured by a serpent in the upper corner of the image. This rendering of Satan is closer to the depiction of Albion in terms of their fair-colored hair, yet is harsher in appearance, shrouded in darkness and rigid,

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like stone, in their erect posture. This is not only Lucifer, but also Urizen, emulating the youthful beauty of Albion and commanding over the kingly of Earth.

Despite the appearance of the intersexed in Blake’s works, he still places emphasis on the male figure; the androgyne may only be a male, God is still a male figure, the fallen Albion portends the rise and fall of the world, and the four Zoas that rule the world in his place are all male. This might stem from a tradition that stretches back to Aristotle: that women were simply underdeveloped men,295 as if placing the female even further under the standing of male by simply thinking of them as ‘underdeveloped.’ If such were still viewed as the case by Blake, then the hermaphrodite truly blurred the gender-lines, being simultaneously too developed and not developed enough - not their own category of sex, but being a monster in-between. Now, of course, sex is understood as a series of alleles on chromosomes, but even those chromosomes follow the science of the gonads referred to in Dreger’s book *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, where instead of studying aspects of areas that determine the reading of sex, we now look to infinitely minuscule chromosomes to determine a large aspect of our identities, as if those alleles are the absolute. But while we no longer look to the myth of “females being underdeveloped men,” such a view still influenced Blake, where ‘underdeveloped’ female Zoas were underpowered and less ambitious than their male counterparts, and the intersexed were redeemable only if they were determinably masculine.

295 Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 34.

296 Robert Mayhew, *The Female in Aristotle's Biology: Reason or Rationalization*. Chicago (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 54-60. Aristotle, in his *Generation of Animals*, specifically refers to females as mutilated males, as if males are the norm. He also refers to eunuchs as “becoming females,” as if the loss of the testes and the resulting changes to the male body render them as with a different sex, and therefore a different gender. He even says that the total loss of the “originative part” totally obliterates the concept of sex for a being. Satan, lacking the male “originative part,” would be sexless according to Aristotle.
CONCLUSION

According to Reis, "Our gendered world forces us to put all people into one of two
categories when, in fact, as the Harvard University biologist Anne Fausto- has suggested, we
need to consider "the less frequent middle spaces as natural, although statistically
unusual." Blake appeared to have been one of the few men just before the time of
Victorian medicine to acknowledge the existence of the intersexed, but his understanding of
the intersexed still revolved around his understanding of the established gender binary that
Victorian medicine would endeavor to prove as the only existing genders. The
hermaphrodite, in Blake’s time, despite his lauding of the androgynous, was still viewed as
monstrous and deformed, only acceptable in terms of theory and art, but repulsive if accepted
as fact. The hermaphrodite was so repulsive, in fact, that modern medicine would seek to
destroy their existence. The hermaphrodite stood in a status of in-between, and that status
was damning, especially when seen in the case of Blake’s Satan.

Incapable of creation and peace with themselves, Blake’s Satan stands as a
bastardization of the Divine, definitively not masculine and unyielding. The body of Satan
questions the boundaries of sex, which was an unwelcome thing in Blake’s time. Although
Blake had created many figures in his work that appear gender-ambiguous, the artist still
believed hermaphroditism led to an unflattering and contradictory nature. Blake’s Satan
continued the trend of depicting those of doubtful sex with “fear of powerlessness, […]
thwarted sexual energy, and [the] rejection of the feminine”, and stood deemed a monster

298 Myra Glazer Schotz, "For the Sexes: Blake's Hermaphrodite in "Lady Chatterley's Lover"," 20.
for straddling the sex-binary rather than submitting to it. Blake’s Satan stood as the
hermaphrodite in contrast to the perfection of the feminine and masculine unity of the
androgynous Divine, where that “unity” still signified a subordination of the feminine to the
masculine. Blake’s understanding of sex and gender still assigned to the construct of the
binary and the feminine’s submission to it, and the hermaphrodite was the consequence of
non-conformity; Satan was the monster in between.
References Cited


