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The Shape of Limitation:
A Visual Pattern in the Illuminated Works of William Blake

by MINNA DOSKOW

Virtually all the critics who have considered Blake's illustrations have noted the recurrence of the same figures or objects representing similar clusters of meaning throughout the illuminated works. In addition, some recent critics have noted that the same positions and gestures also recur throughout the illustrations with consistent significance. These recurrences establish a visual pattern of meaning in the illustrations analogous to the verbal pattern established in the poetic text by the repetition of verbal images, characters, events, and symbols. Blake, however, goes beyond the repetition of individual figures, such as the bearded old man or the curly haired youth, or the repetition of identical positions and common gestures, such as head clutching or huddled self-embrace, in establishing a visual pattern of meaning in the illustrations to his poems. He also repeats entire configurations throughout his works using a particular shape or outline to convey meaning and significance. One such oft repeated configuration consists of a strong vertical line acting as a medial axis from which two identical symmetrical arches expand and descend meeting in a single heavy horizontal line below and enclosing a space within their bounds. This


2. Janet A. Warner, "Blake's Use of Gesture," in Erdman and Grant, pp. 174–195, traces the use of the outstretched arms gesture and provides a summary of numerous other gestures listing their various appearances in Blake's illustrations. Also Janet A. Warner, "Blake: Figures of Despair: Man in his Spectre's Power," in Paley and Phillips, pp. 208–224, traces the hunched figure, the bent over kneeling figure, and the head clutching falling figure in Blake's illustrations. Erdman hints at a consistent symbolism of position and gesture in the introduction to his The Illuminated Blake (pp. 19–20) and in the systematic listings of his comprehensive index.

3. In their analysis of the Arlington Court picture, Robert Simmons and Janet Warner, "Blake's Arlington Court Picture: The Moment of Truth," in Essick, op. cit., pp. 453–482, show the significance of geometrical shapes by pointing out the repeated circular and triangular outlines which convey images of eternity and generation respectively. Although not a regular geometric form, the outline which I trace across the corpus of Blake's illuminated works is employed just as consistently to convey a particular restrictive meaning.

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strongly symmetrical outline presents a static, heavy, self-enclosed image and represents restrictive and self-enclosed values wherever it occurs in its pure form unaltered and unmodified by visual variations. Most easily seen in, although not limited to, the double tablet form, the traditional representation of the Mosaic stone tablets of the ten commandments, it also occurs in slight variation when a semicircle is superimposed at the top center of the tablet form nailing it down more securely, but leaving the basic form unchanged.

As the double stone tablets of the Mosaic law, this form is Blake's consistent symbol of false oppressive religion which substitutes a sky-dwelling lawgiver for a merciful immanent God, and of stifling moral codes which distort man's imaginative potential and full humanity through laws of exclusion and denial, proclaiming "thou shalt not" rather than opening man up in energetic action, in "liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination" (J. 77), which is, according to Blake, the only Gospel and true religion. As he says in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, "no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments" (pl. 23) and Jesus being "all virtue" broke them all. The double tablet form of the ten commandments, thus, becomes a visual symbol of restrictive law blocking man's exercise of virtue.

Although epitomizing this meaning in their own right, however, the double stone tablets also lend their form to other content that conveys the same meaning. Using the tablet form as a bounding shape or outline, Blake fills it with a variety of figures or objects which all express some aspect of limitation, denial, repression, and restriction. The tablets themselves are often associated with the figure of Urizen, the restrictive vengeful God of orthodox religion who promulgates codes of moral virtue. In addition, their shape is used to outline Urizen or various urizenic figures who stand for similar restrictive values and include fallen females, who restrict man to material nature, and fallen males, who restrict him to bare rationality. Blake uses the shape first tentatively, occasionally, and sporadically; then, as his mythic vision develops and is refined, this visual pattern which symbolizes archetypal restriction gains greater use and emerges more forcefully, definitively, and variously.

By tracing this symmetrical double arched and self-enclosed outline in

4. Robert E. Simmons, "Urizen: The Symmetry of Fear," in Erdman and Grant, op. cit., pp. 146-173, notes Blake's general use of symmetry in poem and design of The Book of Urizen as a symbol of the finite and fixed which reflects Urizen's efforts to create a finite and material world. Simmons further characterizes symmetry as an abstracting and generalizing habit which reduces the world to uniform pairings that are predictable, universal, fixed, and "an illusion" (p. 166). He concludes, "Thus symmetry—the obsession with conceptual and fragmented phenomena at the expense of a unified and sensory experience—is equated with power and stupidity—quantity and mass—rather than with quality and energy" (p. 167). What Simmons says of the use of symmetry in The Book of Urizen may also be applied to Blake's symmetrical double arched outline and its use.

its minute particulars throughout Blake’s illuminated works, we may follow the development of its meaning and the extension of its content. We see the pattern originally (1788) in the actual Mosaic stone tablets which enclose the title of “All Religions Are One” (pl. 2; fig. 1). The symmetry of the form gives it a static quality while the arching lines lead the eye down to a heavy horizontal line, triply underscored by the stone steps beneath it, which closes the figure and supplies a heavy and solid quality to the whole. Even here this shape does not occur alone, but is echoed in slightly varied form by the angel standing behind it and the bearded priest with open book sitting beside it. Repressive religion is thus triply enunciated: in the law itself, its angelic protector or originator, and its priestly proponent. The angel’s open wings which arch over and enclose both tablets and priest drop down along the edges of the plate to form the double arched outline. The angel’s centrally positioned head supplies the one variant in outline as the semicircle rising between the symmetrical arches but does nothing to alter its enclosed static quality which is echoed within itself by the curving angelic arms and the arched brows divided by the vertical line of the angel’s nose. The repressive character of the angel which is expressed in its form is more clearly explained in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where angelic wisdom based on exclusive reason and restrictive morality is shown to distort human life by limiting man in precisely the way the negative decalogue does. The seated figure who becomes increasingly familiar to us in later illustrations as Urizen is presented here as the priestly proponent of that religion which the tablets represent. Looking at his hands which rest on the open book of the law, we note the symmetrical division of fingers in the typical Levite position of prayer and blessing. His form, too, expresses his restrictive function for his shoulders and arms repeat the double arched outline in narrower confines than the angel’s, since his sphere is narrower, while the semicircle of his head rises above just as the angel’s does. This illustration of tablet, angel, and priest reveals in the inert, self-enclosed, and static forms of its outlines all the elements of restrictive religion into which poetic genius, the basis of all true religions according to the text, has been constricted.

The stone tablets reappear once in *All Religions Are One* (pl. 9) illustrating principle six of the text. They here represent both Jewish and Christian Testaments when fallen from the original poetic genius rather than simply the ten commandments. Their restrictive quality is evident from the cloud which surrounds them and the figure groping blindly in the darkened forest or cavern beneath them as well as from their outline.

The heavy static quality of this strongly symmetrical form with its en-

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6. My discussion of Blake’s illustrations is based on, and follows the order of plates in, the copies reproduced in David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake*, except for *Jerusalem* in which I note the coloring of copy E, or where otherwise noted.
Fig. 1. Blake, *All Religions are One*, 2, Victoria and Albert Museum.
closing arches carrying the eye downward becomes clearer when it is contrasted with Blake’s images of the gothic arch in his next work, *There is No Natural Religion* (pls. 1 and 2). In these images the eye instead of moving downward is led upward by the curving gothic arches in an aspiring movement. As Christ raises Lazarus in front of a double gothic panel (pl. 1) and various tiny figures rise within small gothic arches inscribed within a single large one which also encloses the title (pl. 2), the viewer gets a feeling of upward movement, lightness, and progression from the rising gothic forms that is reiterated in the implied action of Christ and Lazarus in the first and the numerous small figures in the second. The rising and joining lines which form the gothic arch imply active aspiration which contrasts with the static solidity of the tablet form based on the rounded falling lines of the romanesque arch. These implications of the gothic outline may underlie Blake’s well known predilection for that form, which he characterizes as “‘Living Form” and “‘Eternal Existence” (“On Virgil,” p. 267) and as “true Art” (*V.L.J.*, p. 549), while he reserves the tablet form or double romanesque arch to symbolize denial, limitation, and restriction.

While the double stone tablets disappear temporarily in Blake’s next engraved works (*The Book of Thel, Songs of Innocence and of Experience*), the tablet configuration reappears in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 10 (fig. 2), outlining new content and again depicts an angel, the figure at the left. Wingless, with his head imposing a semicircle at the top of the outline, bent over his writing, and with the lower part of his legs draped by his gown forming a replica of the stone tablets, which are absent from this illustration in their own form, this figure seems more solid and rocklike than his predecessors, thus defining his repressive role visually as the text does verbally. The strong vertical line which serves as the medial axis and divides the seated figure in half continues from the line of his nose and the dark shadow beneath it to the single midpoint symmetrically flanked by the lightened semicircles of the two hands, one writing and the other holding the page smooth, then follows the medial division of the drapery which covers the figure between the rounded and balanced semicircles of the knees upon which the forearms rest. The arches of his shoulders and arms in the upper torso, repeated in those of the knees and legs of the lower torso, continue downward enclosed in golden orange drapery and meet in the strong, straight horizontal lines of lap and ground respectively with the larger and heavier outline of the lower torso underscoring that of the upper in double iteration of the same fundamental form.

The rocklike solidity and self-enclosed, static symmetry of the angel emerge most clearly in contrast to the other figures in the illustration,

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7. For other instances of Blake’s pictorial use of Gothic form as a symbol of aspiring liberty and imagination, see *Jerusalem*, plates 1, 46, and 57.
Proverbs of Hell.

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty
the hands & feet Proportion.
As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt
to the contemptible.
The crow wished every thing was black, the owl, that every thing was white.
Exuberance is Beauty.
If the lion was advised by the fox, he would be cunning.
Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads
without Improvement are roads of Genius.
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unact-
ed desires
Where man is not nature is barren.
Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and
not be believed.

Enough, or Too much.
the winged devil and disciple poet whose matching profiles regard the angel. 8 The diagonal orientation of these two figures which contrasts with the pronounced vertical axis of the angel, the graceful limbs, peering faces, dynamic swirls of wings, scrolls, flame-like vegetation which all imply energetic movement in the diagonal and asymmetrical appearances isolate the heavy, static quality of the angel by contrast. As the representative of orthodox religion who extols restriction, passivity, bounding and devouring reason, and the moral virtue of denial, against whom the proverbs of Hell have been written and whose vision the imaginative poet comes to oppose and alter in the poem, the angel is appropriately shaped. Although Christian in name, the restrictive and vengeful nature of the religion which the angel represents is precisely that of the Mosaic tablets whose continuation he represents and whose outline he forms.

Blake also employs the double arched outline to encompass a group of figures in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 16, thereby expanding its meaning (see fig. 3). Declaring in the text that the enforcement of Mosaic laws restricts man’s sensual life and energies, Blake pictures “Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains” at the top of the page where an elderly bearded figure crouches with four younger curly headed figures huddled against him in a stone dungeon. 9 According to the text, these figures representing man’s gigantic energies (the Prolific) shape the world he lives in and produce his civilization but are bound and imprisoned by restrictive religious codes. Therefore, the illustration depicts them crouching in a stone dungeon with their composite configuration forming that same symmetrical, enclosed, double arched outline of restrictive religion. The symmetrical division of the group occurs along the central vertical axis of the elderly figure, along his nose, parted moustache, beard parting, and the dark valley between his upraised knees. One younger figure leans on each side of the elder within the semicircle of his arms, and one outside it like a giant curved bookend at each side. Meanwhile, the heads of the two inner leaning figures begin the arching curve that is continued out and downward by the elder’s elongated arms and hands and the figures’ drapery descending to the strong horizontal line of the stone floor and setting a primary inner definition of the outline. The bent backs of the outer figures and the drooping folds of their garments define a second outer outline which also comes to rest on the same horizontal floor line, extending the sides of the original shape. The

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9. David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake*, p. 113, identifies these figures as Ugolino and family and notes their recurrence in a different grouping but still representing the perversity of restrictive religious laws in *The Gates of Paradise*, 12. All further citations from this book are indicated by the abbreviation E. and included with page numbers within parentheses in the text of my essay.
The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity, but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds, which have power to resist energy, according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning.

Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other the Devouring; to the devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights.

Some will say, Is not God alone the Prolific? I answer, God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men.

These two classes of men are always upon guard & they should be enemies; whoever tries
central figure’s head rises above the central axis in a semicircle at the top just like the angel’s in the earlier plate (MHH, 10), while the curves of his upraised knees repeat those above formed by the younger figures’ heads within the larger outline. The elder’s extended right foot emerging from below his gown, balancing in form the semicircular outline of his head above, adds a new element to the configuration which is also demonstrated by Theotormon in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, plate 4 (fig. 4), and Urizen in The Book of Urizen, plate 1 (fig. 7), but which leaves the basic outline undisturbed. The figures’ restriction within that outline depicts in visual form, in the static symmetry of their huddled self-enclosed form, the imprisonment of the senses which the text describes. The double arched outline first used for the Mosaic tablets to represent the stony law of restrictive religion, later used to outline the angel who promulgates that law, here demonstrates the law’s consequences in the resultant restriction of man’s senses and energies.

Its consequences in the restriction of love to the false value of chastity appears as Theotormon also forms the same double arched configuration in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, plate 4 (fig. 4). Resembling the angel in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, plate 10, whom Erdman characterizes as “Theotormon-like” (E., p. 107) as he sits in a slightly different pose within the same general outline, Theotormon represents the same attitudes of restrictive, vindictive religion in relation to Oothoon which the angel preached before. Again, heavy drapery enfolds the figure, and his torso is divided in two parts by the horizontal plane of his lap forming two smaller outlines within the larger single configuration. Theotormon’s upper torso is much more compressed, however, than the angel’s; his hands are idle and do not write but rest with down turned palms on his knees, one on each side of his completely sunken head which sees nothing. Thus Theotormon, still blind like the angel to the alternatives around him, seems to have contracted to a still more restrictive state than the angel’s while forming the same symmetrical outline. Within that outline, the vertical axis is formed by a long sharply defined part in Theotormon’s hair which descends to an equally well defined valley in the drapery between his drawn up lower legs. Once more, the semicircular arches of the shoulders continued downward by the lowered arms are echoed by the knees and the straight hanging column-like drapery around the legs. Self-enclosed in night and pain because of his restrictive religion of chastity, sin, and punishment, Theotormon cannot see or hear hovering Oothoon, his lover, with her message of love, freedom, and forgiveness, who appears chained by his jealousy and morality in the flames above his unseeing head, and who might redeem them both if he would only look and listen.10

10. Blake presents the same basic outline three more times in Visions of the Daughters of Albion but with certain significant and disruptive departures each time, thereby indicating a mitigating condition or opposing force at work counteracting restriction. For example, on the title page (VDA, ii), the outline...
Wave shadows of discontent, and in what houses dwell the wretched.
Drunk-en with woe forgotten, and shut up from cold despair.

Tell me where dwell the thoughts forgotten till thou call them forth.
Tell me where dwell the joys of old, and where the ancient loves.
And when will they renew again the night of oblivion past?

That I might traverse times and spaces far remote and bring
Comforts into a present sorrow and a night of pain.
Where goest thou, O thought, to what remote land is thy flight?
If thou returnest to the present moment of affliction,
Will thou bring comforts on thy wings and dew and honey and balms;
Or poison from the desert wilds, from the eyes of the envious.

Then Brian said: and shook the cavern with his lamentation.

Thou knowest that the ancient trees, seen by thine eyes have fruit;
But hasten thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
To satisfy senses unknown; trees beauty and birds unknown;
Unknown, not surveyed, spread in the infinite microscope,
In places yet unvisited by the voyager, and in worlds
Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown.

Ah, are there other wars, beside the wars of sword and fire?
And are there other sorrows, beside the sorrows of poverty?
And are there other joys, beside the joys of riches and ease?
And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox;
And is there not eternal fire, and eternal chains;
To bind the phantoms of existence from eternal life.

Then Oceanus was silent all the day, and all the night.
In Blake's primarily historical works, *America A Prophecy* and *Europe A Prophecy*, the double arched configuration appears modified to such an extent that the shape itself is transformed. While the angel Orc in the breach of the city's wall after battle (A, 1) demonstrates that outline in his head and body, his huge wings disrupt the outline raising the viewer's eye and indicating Orc's ultimate rise at the end of the poem. Similarly, the new born pictured within the amnion at the lower right in *Europe*, plate 3, embodies the restrictive outline but also shows the coming dawn of an "eternal day" (E, 3:3) in the flames that rise on either side of him and in his encircling amnion which both transform the outline. One exception occurs in an early title page of *Europe* which Blake subsequently altered (pl. iia, E., p. 396) in which Urizen is represented writing with pen in hand grasping the double tablets within the coils of the serpent. In the final title page (pl. ii¹, E., p. 157), however, the figure and tablet disappear and only the serpent remains coiled differently and facing in the opposite direction. Urizen is transported meanwhile to the famous frontispiece, also called "Ancient of Days" (pl. i¹), where compasses replace tablets and mathematics and science, stony law.

The unaltered outline reappears, however, in the next group of works: *The Song of Los*, *The [First] Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los* (1794–5) in which Blake attempts to give the archetypal meaning of mythological, cosmic, and historical events from creation forward into history. In these works, the outline becomes associated with the figure of Urizen, that archetypal giant-god whose fallen form so completely symbolizes all restrictive religion and reason in Blake's cosmic myth. The association of the restrictive religious code, which the tablet form originally represents, with other restrictions of sensuality, love, and intellect introduced in *The Marriage of Heaven and
Hell and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is further explored in *The Book of Urizen*. Like Urizen himself, the tablet outline comes to stand for the restrictive principle which distorts man’s imaginative exercise of his creative energies in the world throughout time and space no matter what particular form or system that restriction takes, e.g., religious, rational, scientific, libidinous, etc. As *The Book of Urizen* unfolds, then, the double tablet outline symbolizes equally the restrictive mathematical science and empirical rationality which Urizen employs, which secret wisdom he writes in his book, and the restrictive religious code he promulgates to which single universal principle he attempts to restrict the world. It is therefore used to outline Urizen as he performs both these functions in the frontispiece and last textual plate of *The Song of Los* and in plates 1, 9, 22, and 28 of *The Book of Urizen*.

In addition, the printing of the text itself in *The Book of Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los* is symmetrically divided in double columns resembling the medial division of the double tablet. In *The Book of Urizen*, a central vining line dividing the columns of the text is further added. Since this double column printing does not consistently occur elsewhere in Blake’s illuminated works, its use in the description of Urizen’s genesis and action is suggestive and further underscores the meaning of the double arched outline by its presence.\(^{12}\)

The outline’s meaning is more minutely revealed in the particular illustrations of the works mentioned above. In the frontispiece to *The Song of Los* (pl. 1; fig. 5), the poem which presents the history of Urizen in the world, the basic double tablet configuration appears in the kneeling figure of Urizen who bends over an altar or open book either praying in his mistaken religion while giving “his Laws to the Nations” (*SL*, 3:8) or reading his “Books of brass iron & gold” (*SL*, 7:15). In both interpretations his vision is limited to his restrictive religion and equally restrictive knowledge. He does not even see the mysterious sun darkened by illegible hieroglyphics which floats in the sky above him although his own counterproductive efforts have distorted the sun of imagination through rationalistic mystifications.\(^{13}\) The symmetrical arches of the figure’s rounded shoulders which are topped by the just visible semicircle of the bent head continue downward in the line of his drapery which enfolds the figure and disguises its limbs in symmetrical folds on either side of a just visible central backbone which acts as the

\(^{12}\) We see the same double column vined text again in the dedicatory poems of *Jerusalem*, chapters 2, 3, and 4 (pls. 27, 52, and 77) which outline Albion’s three basic restrictive errors of religion, reason, and affection respectively with their consequences and imaginative alternatives. A full discussion of these errors and their alternatives in relation to the structure of *Jerusalem* is contained in my forthcoming book, *William Blake’s Jerusalem: Structure and Meaning in Poetry and Picture* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press).

\(^{13}\) W. J. T. Mitchell, "Poetic and Pictorial Imagination in Blake’s *The Book of Urizen,*" in Essick, pp. 337–380, notes various darkened versions of this plate and *Urizen*, plate 5 (fig. 8), which shows a book filled with hieroglyphics. Whether the sun shows illegible markings, spots, or simply a uniform murky darkness is, however, immaterial for my purpose here. For whether Urizen’s wisdom makes imagination illegible, darkens, or blots it, does not change its basic restrictive meaning and function.
Fig. 5. Blake, *The Song of Los*, 1, Library of Congress.
vertical axis of the entire configuration. Only the soles of the figure’s bare feet emerge from the bottom of his robe, reiterating in their arched symmetry a miniature double tablet form and continuing the vertical axis in the darkened shadow between them. Both feet and robe rest on the horizontal plane of the green earth, which forms the bottom of the illustration. Although completely different in position and attitude from the angel previously described (*MHH*, 10), this figure also exhibits the same outline and is also bent over his writing as that angel was, for he too is limited to his own version of knowledge and law which excludes imagination. The illustration of Urizen bent over his law, restricted to it, and darkening the sun of imagination with it, summarizes the sense of the entire text which describes Urizen’s initial and historically restrictive role in Law, Philosophy, and Religion throughout time and space, while his inclusion within the double arched outline in the illustration provides the visual symbol of that summary.

*The Song of Los* ends its poetic text with the same visual outline describing a different content (pl. 7; fig. 6). A small naked figure falling headlong triply repeats the configuration, first in its topmost bent knees, second in the suggestion of its thoracic musculature, and third in its head-clutching bent arms. The triple reiteration of the form is appropriate to Urizen’s triply oppressive function throughout the poem in Laws, Religions, and Philosophy (4:13–17) through King, Priest, and Councillor [sic] (6:9–16), and the headlong falling posture indicates his displacement as the accompanying text describing Orc’s imminent overthrow of Urizen also suggests. The figure in the double arched configuration is here represented for the first time in an undraped, naked, human form, suggesting thereby the naked revelation of Urizenic oppression that the poem details and which is necessary prior to its overthrow by Orc, the historical descendant of imagination (Los).

*The Book of Urizen* also begins with the figure of Urizen forming the same double tablet outline. On the title page, Urizen sits crouched and unseeing, yet writing his blind wisdom with both hands in double effort, both religious and scientific (*U*, 1; fig. 7). He is backed by the double stone tablets and in the foreground is his own large book of secret wisdom, which is also the book of nature, his creation, on which his beard and right foot rest. The oppressive religion which Urizen carries with him in the form of the Mosaic tablets is continued by him in the new form of his own book scribbled with hieroglyphics (like the sun in *SL*, 1) which contains empirical science as well as religion, and in which he

14. Ibid., p. 340. Mitchell suggests that Urizen’s hands hold pen and burin and that Blake is hereby suggesting through the symmetry of Urizen’s action that art and poetry have become rigid copies of each other and “mere indistinguishable appendages of Urizen’s monolithic world.” Mitchell’s suggestion would expand the significance of Urizenic restriction into still another sphere, from religion and science to the arts as well. Morris Eaves, “The Title Page of *The Book of Urizen*,” in Paley and Phillips, pp. 225–230, sees what Mitchell calls a burin as an etching needle instead, but also sees the title page as Blake’s report on the state of the arts as well as of the nation in 1794.
Fig. 6. Blake, *The Song of Los*, 7, Library of Congress.
writes the iron law he knows “no flesh nor spirit could keep” (U, 23:25). Its consequences appear in the changes he wreaks upon Eternity, creating the merely natural man and material universe which the poem describes, and in the aged constricted blindness of his own form which we see here.

The unity of all restrictive principles is presented visually as the three shapes of tablets, figure, and book come together in one outline reflecting in their double arched form their ideological unity. The central axis of the double arched configuration which these three shapes form together descends from the straight line between the tablets through the line of Urizen’s nose and parted beard and the central dividing spine of the book. The rounded arches of the Mosaic tablets turn downward ending behind Urizen. The form is then taken up by Urizen’s figure in the rounded arches of shoulders and knees coming down in drapery and locks of hair to the horizontal plane of his book. These larger outlines are echoed internally by the curves of Urizen’s eyebrows, eyelids, nostrils, moustache, and beard which all turn downward in the same way. The repetition of form unites the separate objects in the illustration through visual pattern as the values they stand for are united by their common restrictive effects. The balanced, closed, downward thrust in the lines of tablets, hair, beard, robe, book, fingers, and writing implements closed by the horizontal plane of Urizen’s book which enroots in the world below visualizes the self-enclosed quality that Urizen presents in the text when he is called “Self-clos’d” (3:3), “self-containing” (3:22), “clos’d” (3:24), and produces self-begotten armies (5:16). Indeed, the heavy, static, symmetrical and closed outline suggests that very “solid without fluctuation” (4:11) for which Urizen searches in vain through Eternity.

Only Urizen’s hands and bare right foot emerge from and interrupt the generally symmetrical configuration. While the position of the hands disrupts the outline itself, suggesting perhaps that restriction may finally be overthrown by writing and drawing, the right foot emerges onto his book from beneath the bottom of the beard and alters the symmetry only slightly, moving the otherwise equal balance to the right, but does not in itself imply movement or upset the stasis of the whole. It rather points out the abysmal wisdom of Urizen’s book, for we know his “feet stampd the nether Abyss” (U, 13:16). The book is thus characterized by the foot’s position, and we may see it as the chaotic abyss which Urizen shapes in his own restrictive way during the poem, the book of nature written according to Urizenic principles.15

The location of the composite outline within the single arch of a cave-

15. If we wish to see a variation on the basic configuration which does imply movement and upsets the static quality of the form we have been discussing, we may look at the illustration for The Book of Urizen, plate 5 (fig. 8). Here the usually strong vertical axis is set slightly askew, for the vertical division of the face is slightly to the left of the central division of Urizen’s book and that of the text itself. Thus there is no longer a single continuous vertical axis unifying the whole configuration. In addition, Urizen’s


de living creations appeared
in the flames of eternal fury.

Landing, darkning, thundering
they away with a terrible crash,
very roll wide apart;
side asunder rolling
mountains all around.

Departing; departing; departing;
leaving monstrous fragments of the
mounting flaming eddies as all between
a column of mountains unapproachable.

1. The roaring fires ran o'er the heavens
in whirlwinds & cataclysms of blood.
And o'er the dark deserts of Urizen fires pour thro' the void on all sides
on Urizen's self-begetten armies.

2. But no light from the fires, all was
darkness
in the flames of Eternal Fury.
3. In fierce anguish & quenchless flames

To the deserts and rocks he ran;
To hide, but he could not; combining
the dog mountains to hurl in vast strides
he piled them in incessant labour.

In howlings & pangs & fierce madness;
Long periods in burning fires labouring
Till weary, and age-broke, and aged
In despair and the shadows of death.

And a vast perennial around
on all sides he trudged: like a wand
where thousands of rivers in veins

Of blood, pour down the mountains to cool
the eternal fires' beating without
From Eternals, & like a black globe
Wound by sons of Eternity, standing
On the shore of the infinite ocean
Like a human heart, struggling & beating.
The vast world of Urizen appared.

8. And last round the dark globe of
Urizen,
kept watch for Eternals to continue.
The obscure separation alone;
for Eternity stood wide apart.
like opening which is echoed by the overarching barren branches of the tree of mystery in the background further underscores the shape and values of the double arched outline. Splitting the double tablet form into single arches one above the other, Blake nevertheless demonstrates identical values in these curves. They present the natural forms of the restrictive principle which Urizen displays in carved and written forms below them. The overarching tree of mystery represents as fully as the double stone tablets do the restrictive religious codes. In addition, the cave or cavern of the natural senses to which man is limited by Urizen and which may also be seen as Plato’s cave of the Republic, the unreal world of evanescent Urizenic natural appearances rather than imaginative eternal forms, represents the limited natural universe which Urizen’s book of nature stamped by his toes also delineates.

In the last plate of this book (U, 28; fig. 9), Urizen forms the same double tablet outline with his body as he did initially, but the bare toes of his left foot emerge from the hem of his gown rather than those of his right like a “mirror image” (E., p. 210) of his first appearance. The bearded figure with knees drawn up of plate 1 blindly producing his works, however, is transformed into the watchful figure of plate 28 who beholds what he has wrought, a seeing tyrant who binds the world and himself with the Net of Religion which hangs in rope-like strands from his arms. As in the first plate, a strong central vertical axis is formed by Urizen’s nose and the parting of his beard which extends down to his toes. Furthermore, the arches of his arms are also echoed by his knees, eyebrows, eyelids, and nostrils in this plate as in the first. The downward thrust of beard and drapery is here further emphasized by the downward pointing hands, hanging ropes of Religion’s Net, and the back of Urizen’s chair or throne. Although the figure’s pose is different from that of the frontispiece—he sits rather than crouches, has open rather than closed eyes, lets his hands hang loose rather than writing with them, supports his arms at shoulder level on the back of his stony seat rather than at waist level upon the horizontal coffin-like extension—his outline is the same as in the frontispiece. This is, of course, appropriate since Urizen’s restrictive function has not changed during the course of the poem. He has simply become more self-conscious in his actions; and instead of acting blindly, he complacently regards his handiwork.

beard, instead of hanging straight down and reinforcing the vertical symmetry as it does in plate 1, streams from right to left. This diagonal movement is reinforced by Urizen’s single raised left knee which appears to the right of his beard and of the open book’s central spine. In addition to the diagonal movement implied in beard, knee, and book, the lower edges of the book rise in sharp diagonals from the midpoint, and a rising spiky halo surrounds Urizen’s head leading the eye upward. Urizen’s horizontally streaming hair furthermore leads the eye outward rather than down as the hanging hair in plate 1 does. The impression is thus altered from stasis to movement and from self-enclosure to a thrust up and out.

16. Erdman, p. 210, identifies the back of Urizen’s stony seat as the tombstones of natural law, but they might more easily be taken as the split halves of the original Mosaic tablets pictured in the frontispiece.
1 Urizen C. IX.

And their children went & built temples in the desolate places.
And found laws of prudence,
And called them the eternal laws of God.

8. So Vezan called all together,
The remaining children of Urizen,
And they left the pendulous earth.
They called it Egypt & left it.

9. And the salt ocean rolled around

The remaining sons of Urizen
Refused their brethren, stuck together
Beneath the Not of Urizen:
Their existence was in pain.

For the eyes of the inhabitants
Were withered & deadened & cold;
And their eyes could not discern
Their brethren of other cities.

They lived a period of years
From left a noisome body
In the jaws of devouring darkness.

And the thirty cities remain
Surrounded by salt floods, now called Africa: its name was then Egypt.

The End of the first book of Vezan.
As Blake's use of the double tablet outline for Urizen's figure demonstrates, he who spreads the restrictive religious code of the Mosaic tablets within the universe is in turn restricted and shaped by what he spreads. Urizen is therefore bound by the net of religion as he binds the world with it (U, 28). The same notion of imposing limitations upon oneself by imposing them upon others reappears in various other representations of Urizen's double arched form within The Book of Urizen. In plate 9 (fig. 10), for example, Urizen crouches naked, blind, and constricted pressing down with his hands upon the stony ground as large stone shapes above his back press down upon him. Again, we see the familiar outline with its strong central vertical axis formed by Urizen's nose and parted beard, the double arches of his shoulders (echoed within the outline by the eyebrows) turning downward along the arms ending in the slightly curved horizontal of the stony earth. Only the knees change position from the first plate, varying the symmetry but not destroying it; for the right knee is raised while the left is kneeling on the stony ground, but the upper ball of the right balances the lower ball of the left, and both leave the bounding outline unchanged. As Urizen seeks to oppress the earth beneath him with his restrictive "changes" (8:12) which the text details (pls. 8-13), so too is he crushed and oppressed by the stony cave around him which like the cave in the frontispiece represents Urizen's restriction of man's imagination by the roof of the skull (10:33-4) and cave of the senses (12:14; 13:5) which he imposes. The stony cave restricts him physically on all sides as his idea of man and nature based on empirical science and his religious law restrict his creations.

Another plate which pictures the self-rebounding consequences of oppressing others, plate 22 (fig. 11), also depicts Urizen blind and naked crouched in a similar position forming the same outline as in plate 9. Here manacles bind Urizen's ankles and wrists, for he is "In chains of the mind locked up" (10:25), but the chains are of his own making. Blake's title for this plate in his Large Book of Designs, "Frozen doors to mock the World: While they within torments uplock" (E., p. 204), emphasizes the inner consequences of outer repression. Since it follows the description of Urizen's cosmic changes in most copies of The Book of Urizen, this picture, like plate 9, is closely associated with the universe created according to Urizenic principles. Here too, Urizen dis-

17. Although numbered as plate 4 in copy G and plate 21 in copy A, this plate usually appears as plate 9 with the others in chapter iv that describe Urizen's changes (pls. 8-13) Since this last is by far the most frequent order, and since the plate is captioned "Eternally I labour on" in the Small Book of Designs (E., p. 191), we may justifiably assume that this plate shows the process and effect of Urizen's labors. Erdman further identifies this plate as one of a quadruple series in The Book of Urizen meant to represent the four elements; plate 9—Earth, plate 12—Water, plate 14—Air, and plate 16—Fire (E., p. 196). Representing earth, that solid which he is forever seeking and which he paradoxically attempts to create in both microcosm and macrocosm through his changes by imposing his values upon his creation (pl. 10), Urizen is seen here oppressing himself by what he creates.

18. Plate 22 follows plate 13 in copies CFEB and displaces plate 9 between 8 and 10 in copy G in
Fig. 11. Blake, *The Book of Urizen*, 22, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.
plays the same symmetrical outline with the same strong vertical division and symmetrical arches of eyebrows, shoulders, and knees (both of which are drawn up here as in plate 1), and the same downward movement formed by lowered arms. The bounding horizontal line of the stony ground upon which Urizen’s hands and feet rest is repeated in the dark, thick band formed by the manacles on his wrists and ankles which form a broken horizontal line directly above the ground. The double tablet outline in both plates 9 and 22 visually reveals the repressive religion and limitations of sense and intellect instituted by Urizen’s cosmic labors in microcosm and macrocosm which the intervening text of chapter iv describes. In addition, the cavern image which accompanies this outline in plates 1 and 9 is also visible in plate 22, in Urizen’s open mouth which is given a central prominent position within the blankness of his full length beard. Only the glowing halo behind Urizen’s head is new in plate 22, implying perhaps what is yet to be poetically described, the countervailing actions of Los and his son Orc going on behind Urizen’s unseeing figure.

When Los gives birth to Enitharmon out of pity for Urizen’s blind, enchained condition (14:51 ff.), he is pictured forming an outline almost identical to the one we have been describing (U, 17; fig. 12). Here for the first time in The Book of Urizen, the outline is used for a character other than Urizen, and for the only time in the illuminated works used for Los. Its use reflects the action described in the poetry of chapter iv where Los binds Urizen’s changes (8:7-11) and in chapter v where Los, regarding Urizen’s restrictive actions, is terrified and temporarily imitates Urizen, dividing in pity “Before the death-image of Urizen” (15:2). By giving way to pity, he divides his eternal prophetic self and temporarily cooperates with Urizen. Los engenders jealousy and possessiveness as well as pity in Enitharmon who is the globe of nerves and veins pictured in the illustration and is Urizen’s restricted and simply material universe cut off from Eternity and nailed down by the eternals with the web of science. It is therefore appropriate that Los’ lapse should be pictured within the restrictive outline discussed above. The fact that it is not used again for Los indicates that his lapse is temporary, and the main thrust of Los’ imaginative efforts as the spirit of eternity within time which liberates rather than restricts subsequently prevails in this and later poems. Even here the outline is somewhat transformed to indicate the underlying difference between Los in his temporary lapse and Urizen in his ongoing fallen position. The central vertical division, symmetrical form, and double arched upper outline falling downward in drapery and along the sides of the back and upper arms are readily apparent. Los’ spine which symmetrically divides his

which 9 then replaces the missing plate 4. In copy A, however, it is replaced by 9 between 20 and 23. Only in copy D where it follows 21 in an ironic comment on Los’ chains there (as Erdman points out, p. 204) is it not associated with plate 9.
Fig. 12. Blake, The Book of Urizen, 17, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.
figure in two is continued in the division of his garment's folds around his waist and the scarcely visible part in his hair which hangs down hiding the front of his head and turns into veins or fibres to form the globe of blood he creates. In addition, his garment falls from numerous semicircular arches at the top of the picture as his hair does from the top of his head in the middle of the picture. These downward curves are continued by a shadowy line of legs covered by drapery, lowered upper arms, and finally the curve of the engendered globe itself. The top and sides of the restrictive outline thus readily appear as head and hair echoing back and legs to form a smaller outline within the larger one. The outline is, however, interrupted by the figure's extended elbows, lifted forearms and raised hands covering his ears which lead the eye suddenly outward and then upward instead of down, and by the final termination of the outline in the curved lower edge of the globe instead of the usually straight horizontal line. Los, by covering his ears, indicates his temporarily restrictive position, for as Thomas Frosch amply demonstrates, "the sense of hearing suggests liberation of imagination," and by cutting off his hearing in addition to bending his head forward and limiting his sight to the restrictive world he creates, Los limits his senses as much as Urizen does man's in chapter iv, suggesting the same self-enclosed static quality as Urizen. But the upward direction of Los' fingers and outward thrust of his elbows visibly indicate an important difference. Centrally placed in the illustration, they draw the attention of the viewer and counteract the oppressive usually self-enclosed form of the outline by visibly taking another direction and thereby indicating other forces at work within restriction and other directions for human life.

Since the same double arched outline forms the figure of Eno in the frontispiece to *The Book of Los* (pl. 1; fig. 13), we see even before she speaks what Eno represents. This "aged Mother" (*BL*, 3:1) is identical to Enion the aged mother of *The Four Zoas*, pictured in *Jerusalem*, plate 87, in another pose, and serves as the tutelary female spirit of generation limiting man to fallen time and space. As such she symbolizes that form of nature which Blake calls fallen and which attempts to limit man to his merely material existence. Although Eno is the first female to be shown in this configuration, she is not the only one. As Blake expands his myth to show the connections between various restrictive forces in the universe, rational and religious as well as natural, he expands the use of his restrictive outline to include female as well as male characters. Eno recounts the story of genesis in terms of Los and Urizen and ends with the creation of that limited man which orthodox religion sees, the Urizenic human with "finite inflexible organs" (*BL*, 4:45) or earthbound senses who is "a Human Illusion" (*BL*, 5:56) in Blake's eternal view: natural man cut off from his indwelling divinity and bound

Fig. 13. Blake, *The Book of Los*, I, The British Museum.
and restricted in his merely natural form. Her costume resembles that of other cowled and draped female figures in the illustrations: the cowled teacher of orthodoxy in *America*, plate 14, the sibyl in *The Gates of Paradise*, plate 16, and Vala in *Jerusalem*, plate 4, and associates her further with limited fallen nature while her general outline, which corresponds to the one we have been tracing above, shows her connection to that religious orthodoxy which also regards mankind as similarly limited. The strong vertical division of her figure runs along her nose, continues between her upraised knees, and ends in the horizontal ground beneath her bare feet. The arches of her knees, eyebrows, and shoulders are emphasized by the curve of her long hair which outlines the top part of her body and square stone seat. Open mouthed to relate the history that follows her picture, and crouching within a dark cavern, she, like Urizen in *The Book of Urizen*, is accompanied by images of caves and for the same reasons. Although female, she is as heavy, solid, static, and self-enclosed as her male predecessors in this visual configuration.

Whatever form it appears in, all restriction is interrelated. While Blake’s poetry describes these interrelations, his illustrations also point them out by using the double arched form to outline them all at least once. In *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, Blake’s most complete mythic vision, restriction is thoroughly explored. The outline is therefore used repeatedly for various restrictive content taking both male and female forms. In *Jerusalem*, plate 25 (fig. 14), for example, the Daughter of Albion, or Vala, who presides over the sacrifice and evisceration of Albion, the universal man, forms the same symmetrical double arched outline discussed throughout this paper. Her shape indicates her restrictive role as she limits man according to nature rather than reason or orthodox religion and sacrifices his Human Form Divine or imaginative potentiality by defining him as his merely natural body. The identical function of her restrictive action and Urizen’s is visually declared in this illustration as she forms the same double arched outline he did formerly. The medial vertical line of the hovering daughter’s parted hair which is continued in the line of her nose divides her form into symmetrical halves. From that central line, her hair arches out and down as does the line of her arms and wrists which continues downward as her fingers degenerate into fibres or veins ending on the horizontal line of the stone of sacrifice over which Albion’s heart and throat ex-

20. Although the same symmetrical pattern outlines the crouching figure of Vala (*J, 4*), it is altered significantly by the figure’s hands and the surrounding smaller figures. Instead of turning down to complete the self-enclosed outline, her hands turn up and open out repeating their outline in the black shadow of the overhanging clouds. Similarly, the head of the naked male whom she grasps, and the line of figures emerging from the one who escapes her grasp, also lead upward. The limitation implied by the outline is thus counteracted, and Albion’s ongoing imaginative potential for breaking through Vala’s limitations which the text of *Jerusalem* describes at length is thereby indicated visually as well.

21. For the full story of the females’ sacrificial activities see *Jerusalem*, chapter iii, especially 65:56–68:70.
And there was heard a great lamenting in Beulah: all the Regions Of Beulah were moved: & the tender bowels are moved: & they said, Why did you take Vengeance O ye Sons of the mighty Albion? Sharpen these Ocketh Groves: Erectual these Dwight Temples, Fyce the Lord heart, but Vengeance cannot be healed. Of the Suffer of Albion have done to Lewis: so they have in him, Gone to the Divine Lord & Saviour, who suffer with those that suffer. For not one spear of steel, & the whole Universe not suffer also, In all its Regions, & its Father, Saviour yet pity and weep. But Vengeance is the destruction of Grace & Repentance, in the bosom. Of the Bringer in which the Divine Lamb is cruelly slain. Descend O Lamb of God & take away the imputation of Sin. By the Creation of States & the deliverance of Individuals forevermore. Thus went they in Beulah over the Four Regions of Albion. But many doubted & despaired: & impuert Sin & Righteousness To Individuals, & not to States: & these slept in Ulro.

Fig. 14. Blake, Jerusalem, 25, from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.
tend. Other arched lines of hair, fibres, or branches echo these outer curves within their outline forming a kind of cavern beneath the daughter’s extended arms which is reminiscent of earlier caves pictured with the male forms of restriction in *The Book of Urizen*. As the text describes Vala presiding over the sacrifice of mankind in war and oppression borne aloft within the “golden Ark” (*J, 22:4*), the illustration depicts her presiding over the identical sacrifice, bodily forming the outline of the ten commandments kept within that ark.

Since in *Jerusalem* the spectre represents the fallen rational principle divided and cut off from imagination like Urizen and evident in distorted religion and reason, he too forms the same double arched outline in several illustrations. When we first see Los’ spectre in plate 6 (fig. 15), for example, he hovers head downwards above Los and his forge attempting to enclose the flames of prophecy with his bat wings. The strong vertical line of his backbone, parted hair, and pointed nose establish the vertical axis of his form. The double arch formed by his upper back muscles is echoed within the outline of his body by the wing supporting muscles which enclose an arched space on each side of his neck. Both come down to the horizontal line formed by his forearms. The single descending arch of his wings encompasses the double arched outlines and forms a cave-like outline at the top. Certain elements of the upside down spectre, however, disturb the self-enclosing regularity of the outline. His protruding elbows which lead the spectator’s eye outward and his raised hands which cover his ears pointing upward like Los’ hands in *The Book of Urizen*, plate 17 (fig. 12) and serve the same imagination blocking function oppose the inwardness and downward thrust of the general outline. These opposing lines echo other elements in the illustration that counteract spectrous restriction as well, e.g., Los’ rising leg, arm, and face, and the flames from Los’ forge which swirl upward surrounding the spectre. Since this is Los’ spectre who is pictured here, not Albion’s, spectrous control is visibly limited by the power of eternal imagination (Los) evident in Los’ flames, his calm, and his binding chain attaching the spectre to his bellows as well as the slight deviations from the usual restrictive, Urizenic outline. As the spectre is ultimately controlled by Los throughout and finally altered by him, so the spectrous vision is here counteracted by Los’ prophetic or imaginative one and visibly altered by it.

Since Albion is not pure eternal imagination as Los is, but a fall-prone human, his spectre has a greater power over him and his emanation, Jerusalem, than Los’ spectre can have over Los. This becomes visible in *Jerusalem*, plate 33 (fig. 16). Here, in the lower part of the plate, Albion’s spectre hovers over Jerusalem as Los’ did over him (*J, 6*); but while Los can calmly contemplate his hovering spectre, Jerusalem lies stretched out in stony sleep or death beneath Albion’s, for her spirit of liberty is completely oppressed by his restrictions. The greater extent of
His Spectre drove by the Starry Wheels of Albion's sons, black and opaque divided from his back, he laboured and he mourned.

For as his Emanation divided, his Spectre also divided.
In terror of these Starry Wheels, and the Spectre stood overLos, howling in pain, a blackening Shadow, blackening dark & opaque.
Gangly the terrible Los! Eternally cursing him for his friendship to Albion, suggesting murderous thoughts against Albion.

Los' rod and stamped the earth in his might & terrible wrath! He stood and stamped the earth! then he threw down his hammer in rage & in fury; then he sat down and wept: tormented! Then arose
And exclaimed his song, labouring with the tongs and hammer:
But still the Spectre divided, and still his pain increased!

In pain the Spectre divided, in pain of hunger and thirst:
To devour Los's Human Perfection, but when he saw that Los
And One stood forth from the Divine Jovial's seat
And heard my Spectre plead when the Albion arose to tell
Why that most thunderous Spectre's wrath against us
The Spectre is, in Gadre Nirvana, and most dread
And he, who he called the Albion, and the Albion's power
He has a Squinted head and one eye, somked red
And a Death, of Eights thousand years, forever
Aye, judge of his Deeds! if they perswaded to forbid with pain
Our Emotions, and to attach our secret supreme delight
So Leo spoke. But when he saw this death in Albion's feet
Again he joined the Divine Jovial, following, mercifully
While Albion fled more indigested, revolting, suff'ring
the spectre's influence is also apparent in his more complete fulfillment of the symmetrical double arched outline. The vertical axis is more marked than previously in the bony spine divided into apparent verte­brae and continues between the eyes down to the very pointed beak or nose of a non-human bird or bat-like head. The pointed tips of his leathern wings come below the strongly arched upper wing outline above and repeat it in multiple small rounded arches between the bony points in each wing. Furthermore, the wings spread completely across the page enclosing moon, sun, and sleeping Jerusalem from the vision of Christ comforting Albion in the world above. The oppressive power of the spectre is, therefore, conveyed not only by his ravenous non-human vis­age and his full page wing spread, but also by his completely symmet­rical and arched enclosing outline.

The same double arched outline also pictures the oppressive effect of this spectrous restrictive reason and religion on England's population, or mankind in general. The inhabitants of Albion pictured on plate 23 (fig. 17) are spiritually and physically oppressed by Albion's devotion to restrictive moral law and an inhuman void-inhabiting abstract God, to Deistic reason and a purely material nature as their crushed positions in the illustration demonstrate. Three of these figures, moreover, the prominent ones in the middle tableau of plate 23, form that same re­strictive double arched outline. They are imprisoned and constricted by the stony caves and branching roots which visibly symbolize restrictive doctrines and which press upon each cutting him off from all others just as restrictive religion and reason cut man off from unity with divinity and brotherhood with other men imprisoning each man in his isolated selfhood. Both outline and posture of the two large figures in the tab­leau resemble that of Urizen (U, 9) seen here from the front and back re­spectively and supply visible proof of what is causing their oppression.

In addition, Albion himself is pictured in the same posture while he is involved in the same restrictive errors (J, 37; fig. 18). Hunched like Theotormon (VDA, 4), but naked and with long flowing, Urizenic hair, Albion sits upon a rock with his head lowered on his updrawn knees and his long hair tumbling over his hidden face to the ground below him. If we examine the figure himself (leaving aside the rest of the picture for the moment), we see a strong vertical line dividing him in symmetrical halves along the part in the flowing hair between the halves of the book on his lap and continuing down between his upraised knees and bare feet. The arches of the shoulders which form the upper boundary of the outline are echoed by those of hair, book, and knees. The drooping line of the upper arms which continues the outline downward enclosing its top part at the book and lap is repeated by that of the lower legs coming down from the arches of the knees and ending at the horizontal line of the ground which encloses the bottom half of his body. Here two ver­sions of the same outline are established. Albion's position, unseeing
Fig. 17. Blake, *Jerusalem*, 23, from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.
Fig. 18. Blake, **Jerusalem**, 37 [41], from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.
and sunk in despair, results from the religious restriction which chapter ii of Jerusalem, in which this plate occurs, describes at length as the Mosaic error of the Jews continued also by Christian orthodoxy in the established Church of England. Cutting himself off from the indwelling God, Albion cannot see the message of hope beside him on the scroll which is the imaginative alternative to the Urizenic book on his lap that contains laws of limitation, negation, sin and punishment. He is, therefore, "in his Spectre's power," as the scroll indicates, and forms his spectre's outline, too, visibly revealing his inner state.

We again see Albion in the same configuration of despair in the frontispiece to chapter iii of Jerusalem (pl. 51; fig. 19). This chapter which is dedicated to the Deists explores Blake's view of their restrictive rationalism, another aspect of Urizenic error, which sees reason as all of human potential thereby limiting man to its exclusive practice and denying imagination and inspiration. This practice results in Deistic philosophy and Natural Religion which, according to Blake, restrict man as much as orthodox religion does and for basically the same reasons, but which also adds the restriction or iron necessity or unalterable natural law. The meaning of the outline under discussion is thus expanded to include yet another restrictive doctrine when Albion is here pictured forming it with his body (J, 51). Naked Albion sits with his knees drawn up, his arms wrapped around his shins, and his head sunk even lower than before. In his double tablet shaped, unseeing, self-enclosed, and static posture, we note the visible signs of restrictive principles. The strong vertical line of his backbone which is continued in the part of his face-hiding hair (in copy D) divides his body symmetrically. From his central backbone, his dorsal muscles rise in slight arches which are continued by the semicircles of his raised kneecaps and drawn downwards and inwards by the line of his enclosing arms. His hands (only the left is actually visible hiding the right behind it) dangle between his bare feet emphasizing the medial symmetry, and all rest of the flame reflecting ground. Only the slight indentation at the backbone and the curve of the figure's knees keep the outline from degenerating still further to an absolutely square stone block, unhewn and unshaped. The tablet shape thus functions as a mitigating influence here, preventing the unshaped chaotic state just as the natural restrictions of Deism prevent the chaotic indefinite which would prevail without them. This, however, does not deny their overwhelmingly negative and restrictive influence.

When Blake turns toward the consolidation of error and the movement toward awakening in the final chapter of Jerusalem, the double arched outline which had been used throughout the first three chapters disappears. As the text emphasizes the reversal rather than the revelation of the restrictive principles of religion, reason, and nature which have been graphically illustrated by the symmetrical, static, and self-enclosed double arched outline, the pictures turn from static symmetry
and enclosure to curvilinear images, asymmetry, and movement up or out, from straight central static vertical axes to diagonal ones reflecting the progression in the text.

On the other hand, when Blake wants to depict the annihilation of restriction, he again uses the double arched outline but shows its destruction to make his point. In *Milton: A Poem*, for example, when Blake wishes to depict Milton's annihilation of the restrictions his life and thought imposed on his work and show Milton's posthumous acceptance of the prophetic poet's imaginative role in renewed liberty, he shows a newly youthful Milton shattering the double arched outline (*M*, 18; fig. 20). Not only does Milton grasp the bearded Urizen dividing in two the stone tablets the latter holds and setting them askew, but he also upsets the symmetry of Urizen's figure itself. As a result of Milton's onslaught, Urizen's head is moved aslant, the shoulders lean toward the right, and although the arms still go straight out and the hands point downward clutching the separated halves of the Mosaic law (as in *U*, 28), the legs show the figure knocked off balance with his right foot immersed up to the knee in the river Jordan that Milton is crossing, while his left kneels on the shore beyond. The diagonal axis of the figure slants from left to right rather than maintaining the previous vertical line, and the outline remains opened rather than self-enclosed. Milton rising up from his former fallen generative position in selfhood tramples and divides with his right foot the actual word “Selfhood” in the caption below the illustration as his action shatters the restrictive outline of Urizen's selfhood. He grasps Urizen “To Annihilate the Selfhood of Deceit and False Forgiveness” (*M*, 18), which are both his own former restrictive doctrines and the principles symbolized by the double stone tablets.

Reviewing Blake's use of the symmetrical, self-enclosed, double arched outline, we can trace its development from its beginning as the actual Mosaic double tablet form to its extension as the bounding outline for various characters or characteristics in Blake's myth. Representing first the negative decalogue and restrictive moral code of orthodox religion which limit man's energies, Blake expands the outline's significance by varying its content as he further explores the restrictive forces operating in the universe. Religious restriction then appears in the moral law itself, but also in the creator of that law, Urizen, whose actions restrict man and who, therefore, forms the same outline with his body. As we see the effects of his limitations upon man in the restriction of the senses (*MHH*) and distortion of love (*VDA*), we also see the same restrictive outline shaping still other figures. When Urizen further appears

22. In both the Keynes and the Erdman and Bloom editions of Blake's works, this plate is numbered 16. Erdman, however, in *The Illuminated Blake* consistently follows copy D throughout *Milton* and numbers it plate 18. I have followed that pagination although the illustration reproduced in figure 20 is plate 15 from copy B in the Huntington Library Collection.
Fig. 20. Blake, *Milton*, 18, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
as the creator of the natural world which is defined by science and mathematics and ruled by natural law with man limited to his simply material form therein, and when Los cooperates in this restriction, they each appear executing the same outline. This restrictive vision is first fully described in *The Book of Urizen*, and the visual outline corresponding to it is also widely used for the first time in that book. When the outline is next applied to Eno in *The Book of Los*, its meaning extends to include the restrictive idea of nature as well as that of religion and reason. The content bounded by this outline is further expanded in *Jerusalem* where Blake’s investigation of restriction is most fully presented. There the outline is also applied to the fallen female who sacrifices man’s potential divinity to his merely natural form, limiting him to his “atomic origins” (*J*, 67:12) and denying his eternal imagination. The other restrictive principles, which are called the spectre in the text of *Jerusalem* and associated with the Satanic view of God, with the rational principle run amok, with the effort to annihilate imagination and oppress mankind, also conform to the same restrictive double arched outline. As Albion both accepts and promulgates the various doctrines of restriction and is oppressed by them, he and his inhabitants appear within the same outline, for repression becomes universal.

As we see figures as diverse as angels, giants, and humans, as Urizen, fallen Los, Eno, Vala, Theotormon, the Daughters of Albion, the Spectres of Los and Albion, and Albion himself all forming the same double arched outline in its absolute or slightly varied form (with imposed central semicircle), we are visually alerted to the underlying similarities among various characters. In an artist for whom all meaning depends on outline as his annotations to Reynolds and his own art amply demonstrate, the repeated appearance of a single configuration or outline throughout his work cannot be ignored. It must be seen as the wiry visual expression of meaning which grows in importance along with the concepts it symbolizes. Blake’s expanding use of the symmetrical, static, double arched outline to include all the interrelated aspects of the restriction of man’s imaginative energies thus creates a visual pattern of meaning in his illuminated works alerting our eyes through their perception of shape to the restrictive function of a figure or object so pictured as our ears are alerted by words in the transcendent imaginative perception of appearances.

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