

Romantic Expressive Theory and Blake's Idea of the Audience

IN *The Mirror and the Lamp* M. H. Abrams interpreted a vast number of documents to establish the principle that a shift from imitative to expressive theories of art is characteristically romantic. Radical versions of the two theories are of course likely to yield opposing formulas: "artists express themselves in works of art" versus "artists imitate nature in works of art." When art becomes expression, the importance of the artist increases. Artists are the executors as always, and they are now the content as well; as their works are in a sense the creating of themselves, artists and works are thoroughly interinvolved. In an expressive theory of art, one obvious tendency would be for the artist's personality, as it moves toward the center, to displace and even replace the audience. As Abrams puts it, "The poet's audience is reduced to a single member, consisting of the poet himself." He maintains that "There is, in fact, something singularly fatal to the audience in the Romantic point of view" and quotes to good effect Keats, Wordsworth, Carlyle, and, most memorably, Shelley: "A poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds. . . ."¹

The problem of audience, which has always plagued accounts of romanticism, has been reduced to one of attitude: the artists did not appreciate the value of an audience and barraged what few readers they had with private mythologies that resist rather than promote communication. And the problem has been stated moralistically: as artists think more and more of themselves, they think less and less of others. But no one can dwell long on the private and even antisocial tendencies of romanticism without noticing that there is another side to the picture. Wordsworth's profound concern with his audience appears at least as early as the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, which is less an argument against poetic diction, as Coleridge often causes us to recall it, than an argument for the poet's

central place in the "vast empire of human society." Likewise, the conclusion that poets are the "unacknowledged legislators of the world" is not, as it is sometimes regarded, an unanticipated purple patch at the end of Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* but the climax of a complex and passionate meditation on the problem of the poet's audience. To these arguments Byron adds *The Prophecy of Dante*, a monologue that uses the mask of a dying Dante, the old exile who yet loved the society that refused him, to dramatize the troubled relations of poets with their societies. And finally Keats, in his letters, worries about the threat of the public to his identity while asserting that as a poet he lacks identity; admires Shakespeare, the great public poet, while regarding the public as his enemy; claims to write with no thought of the public while aiming to reach it somehow with his poetry.

The most successful attempts to show the public side of romantic concerns have taken a social and historical approach to reconstruct the cultural context in which the writers worked. Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society 1780-1950* leaves no room for doubting the depth of those writers' interest in public issues and in the public role of poets and poetry.² Williams' argument assumes that the interest in public issues is primary and thus that the antisocial tendencies of romantic aesthetic theory are often psychological "compensations" for difficulties in public practice. Abrams' more literary interpretation would seem to imply that difficulties in public practice are to some extent the consequence of privatism in the theory itself. At any rate, the special power of interpretations such as Abrams' is in giving a theoretical basis to the romantic disregard for an audience that finds its extreme statement in Shelley's avian metaphor or in J. S. Mill's definition of "all poetry" as "soliloquy, . . . confessing itself to itself" and reducing the audience "to a single member, consisting of the poet himself" (Abrams, p. 25).

Such statements have a purity that is no doubt one cause of the common misconception that they are the natural products of an expressive theory at its most radical and that the acknowledgment of an audience will signify a less radical version. But the logic that produces the solitary singers of Shelley and Mill characterizes an expressive theory at one phase only, and that a phase of radical withdrawal by the artist.³ There is evidence to suggest that the phase of withdrawal finds its opposite extreme in a phase of fulfillment. To say that an expressive theory is singularly fatal to the audience is no truer than to say that a mimetic theory is singularly fatal to the artist. Both assertions are true of their respective theories at one phase only, and for each phase there is an opposite extreme. Whatever difficulties the English romantics had with their audience were not a necessary product of their theories about art. My aim here is to show, first, that romantic expressive theories may, without self-contradiction, generate an idea of an audience for art. Then, because a theory of an audience is often a latent social theory, I show how an expressive theory may generate the idea of a social order.

The argument begins, however, not with romantic ideas of the audience or the social order but with William Blake's idea of artists and their work. Blake's unusual access to aesthetic traditions is a major advantage that has been, however, a persistent source of confusion as well. His issues are typically those raised by the history of painting and printmaking rather than by literary history, and the basic metaphors of his theory come from the visual arts. A reader coming to Blake from the literary side will have more difficulty figuring out Blake's objections to "generalization" than someone who thinks of it as Blake did: as a blurred line unable to decide its own identity. The complication is that Blake, who did not think of his principles as visual rather than literary, applied them to both arts and implicitly to all arts. Because art historians have a clear view of one aspect of the history behind Blake's theory, they have tended to conclude that the theory is simpler than it is. Because literary historians see it in a distorted context, they have tended to conclude that it is more bizarre than it is, or no proper theory at all.⁴ I attempt to show the basis for the broader

view that Blake, although working most of the time with critical oppositions from the history of art, molds an expressive theory that brings him finally into the orbit of English romanticism in a phase opposed to withdrawal.

Blake's second advantage has to do with my approach, which is to scrutinize the root metaphors in the theory. I put Blake at the ostensible center because he tends to mold definitions in the form of metaphors of identity. If the subject is imagination, Coleridge prefers the grammar of process that tells what the imagination does, Blake the grammar of identity that tells what the imagination is: $x = y$, god = true man, true man = imagination. Root metaphors are radical by definition, and Blake is thus essential to any account of romantic expressive theory that aims to formulate sine qua non theoretical extremes rather than eclectic moderate positions.⁵ In defining those positions here, I am aware that I select from the other romantic poets only what fits the context provided by Blake and that a more complex description of their views is possible. My aim is to follow one line of thought to its terminal point.

I. Expression: The Artist's Identity and the Work of Art

Blake begins by putting the human mind at the center of "reality": "Mental Things are alone Real."⁶ To do so he enacts the basic romantic strategy of internalization. Ultimately external reality becomes a projection that must be recovered.⁷ *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* tells one version of a common romantic story: how "men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast" (*MHH*, E, 37). All mental acts thus start with the individual and move "outward." Nature, like God, is a mental projection that for various reasons has been given special cultural status and authority, so much so that it has often been used as a measure of other mental acts, like imagination. Nature is simply one potent combination of mental acts tyrannizing over its competitors. Wordsworth's fear of the tyranny of the corporeal eye is in part a fear of this aspect of nature, which he struggled but failed to understand, at least according to Blake.

If the mind is central, its most immediate ex-

pression is the individual personality. Recovering projection is recovering imagination, and thus the prominence of the romantic theme of the loss and restoration of imagination, which is, among other things, the loss and restoration of identity, or personal integrity. (Wordsworth could not find his imagination, because, in Blake's terms, he did not know where he had lost it.) For Blake the imagination is not a processor of external images but the very shape of identity. He says so early—and repeatedly—in his career, as in the aphoristic Laocoön engraving (c. 1820), where the full series of identifications internalizes both art and religion: "The Eternal Body of Man" = "The IMAGINATION" = "God himself" = "The Divine Body" = "JESUS we are his Members" (E, 271).

With the individual imagination restored to its central place, art can again be, Blake intimates, what it once was (before "men forgot . . ."), not the imitation of nature, but the expression of identity. The tendency of an expressive theory is of course to identify the work with the artist, the poet with the poem, resulting in a claim such as Coleridge's, that "What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other."⁸ "Sincerity" and the "true voice of feeling" are evaluative terms that describe this kind of integrity, since they evaluate the work of art with criteria that can also be used to evaluate the character of the artist who made it, as when T. S. Eliot finds Blake's artistic genius a "peculiar honesty."⁹ Blake's advocacy of line—of drawing—is a part of this pattern that has been widely misunderstood. For Blake the line indicates the presence of artistic integrity, which is personal integrity, in a work of art; thus his remark about the line as a standard of both good art and personal rectitude: "What is it that distinguishes honesty from knavery, but the hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty in the actions and intentions" (DC, E, 540). Artistic line expresses personal identity. This is of course what Blake means by saying that "Protogenes and Apelles *knew each other* by this line" (DC, E, 540; *my italics*).

The blurring or the absence of line is a sign of "plagiarism," or a composite identity. The plagiarized identity makes harmony; the "true Man" (E, 2–3), the coherent identity that is the

direct expression of imagination, makes melody, for example, the couplet that bursts out of the "Public Address": "And in Melodious Accents I / Will sit me down & Cry. I. I." (PA, E, 569). This is the romantic ego—"self-devoting genius" (DC, E, 520)—in its melancholy aesthetic phase, crying "I. I." (in identical rhymes) instead of "we. we." The composite identity is an identity "possessed," as Blake describes himself at one point in his artistic development, by the "demons" of other painters. The same conception of the relationship between personal identity and artistic line is the basis of his jokes about painters who are not people but the trademarks of corporations and the basis of his claim that Macpherson and Chatterton were not plagiarists or forgers. The line is what the organized imagination characteristically makes: "Nature has no Outline: but Imagination has" (*The Ghost of Abel*, E, 268). Artists who can make lines are in possession of their faculties. Artists who cover up their inability to make lines with the harmony of tone and color are artistically, and literally, out of their minds.¹⁰ A culture that fears art (that fears the expression of individual personality) often turns this interpretation around, as Blake noticed, to say that true artists are drunk, insane, or possessed because they insist on acting directly from imagination.

The idea that drawing is primary and coloring secondary is thoroughly commonplace in Blake's time. In fact, it becomes a standard doctrine of academic art.¹¹ Put in that context, Blake's principle may be made to look a good deal more common than it is; at worst he may seem to agree with his enemies. The basic distinction is between a classical doctrine that associates line with the rational intellect and a romantic doctrine (Blake's) that associates line with imagination. Both agree with Blake's remark that lines are "receptacles of intellect" (DC, E, 535), but the agreement is superficial. The difference is in the definition of "intellect." Briefly, the classical and neoclassical doctrine is easily adapted to scientific ends because of the strong associations of classical line with numerical and geometrical systems, the rational intellect, and the external world: drawing is primary in art because it is best suited to the imitation of (Lockean) primary qualities in nature perceived by the human intellect. In Blake's view, line is primary for

quite a different reason: it is the direct expression of imagination.

Blake's way of reestablishing a standard Enlightenment idea on romantic grounds reappears in his use of the term "expression." In literary criticism it seldom meant more than "style," as distinguished from substance: "It *gilds* all Objects, but it *alters* none. / Expression is the *Dress of Thought . . .*" (Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 317–18). But in the fine arts "expression" is a term used throughout the eighteenth century (and, for that matter, today) with more weight and precision. Conventionally defined, "expression" in a painting corresponds approximately to "character" in a literary work. Faces in a painting are "expressive" when they display the emotions of the characters whose faces they are.¹² The standard Enlightenment example of an expressive painter is Raphael, in whose work execution (or technique) is said to express exactly conception (or idea) in the figures and faces of his characters. A painter's expressive talents are usually attributed directly to imaginative genius rather than to technical skill.¹³

Blake turns expression into a romantic concept by internalizing it. In a typical romantic extension of the standard principle, he identifies the expression of the characters in a work of art with the feelings of the artist: "Character & Expression can only be Expressed by those who Feel Them" (PA, E, 568). Thus expression, conventionally the specialized power of "exhibiting in the face the several passions proper to the figures,"¹⁴ is made the center of a theory of art in which artists attempt to exhibit in the face of their work, so to speak, the passions appropriate to their identity. A theory of artistic coherence suggests itself: the work of art is coherent when it is "physiognomic." Strongly organized identities express themselves in strongly organized works by drawing, which is "Physiognomic Strength & Power" (PA, E, 560), the power of defining the "true Man" of imagination.

The work of art as the precise expression of the artist's imagination accounts for the artist, for the work, and for a relation between the two that tends toward identification. But the result of the identification would seem to be a closed circle—"confessing itself to itself"—from which the public is excluded. By making the recovery of projection the grounds of a radical expressive

theory of art, Blake would seem to be following a common line of romantic thought to its extreme of subjectivity. From this angle he may seem to represent more completely than any of his English romantic contemporaries the artist in the phase of withdrawal.

II. The Audience Feared

One train of thought makes the romantic dilemma seem inevitable. If art is self-expression, then something is bound to be lost in the process. The expression will be inferior to the thing expressed. The artist *is* the thing expressed, and the sense of artistic loss is always present. As Shelley says in his *Defence*, by the time poets put pens to paper their inspired conceptions are already fading. A view of art like Shelley's is thus ripe for expression in platonic and neoplatonic metaphors of ideas or souls taking a material form that is defective at best. Just as naturally there is a painful new awareness of the artistic damage that can be done by publishers, producers, actors, reviewers, and the rest of an unsympathetic, obstructionist social world. When personal integrity is identified with artistic integrity, the artist suddenly seems thin-skinned and irascible, and stories of the vulnerable young artist killed by criticism begin to be taken seriously. Shelley's argument in *Adonais* that Keats died young because the reviewers attacked his poetry is true, if not to the facts, then to one anxious romantic vision of the audience for art; and of course we recognize the Keats of *Adonais* as only one of many variations on the myth of Chatterton. Believing that art is expression makes it difficult for the artist to believe any advice about not "taking" criticism "personally."

One radical conclusion to be drawn from the expressive metaphor of art is that, because the true home of the work of art is the artist's mind, any form of publication is a dangerous and unnecessary gamble apt to end in disappointment, humiliation, or even tragedy. This idea contributes considerably to the image of the romantic artist as an eccentric who has withdrawn from society, whether by choice or by force, and who loathes publicity; or at least, like Byron, as a person with two faces, one facing the public, the other obsessively facing some private source of

poetic inspiration, who appears to the public therefore as someone in society without being of it, like Hamlet at a ball; or like Beddoes, wildly drunk with friends while contemplating suicide or more revisions for *Death's Jest-Book*, a play meant for production only in the reader's mind and, in the opinion of his friends in England, unpublishable. Sometimes the blame is put on society, sometimes on the poet for inordinate sensitivity and antisocial behavior. Genius and imagination are at any rate conceived of, even by so congenial a poet as Keats or so impressive a monologist as Coleridge, as quite different from anything that helps one get along in public. Shelley's and Byron's and Beddoes' exiles from England can be taken as metaphors of their alienation from their audiences, and, in another way, so can Wordsworth's isolation in the North and his imaginative devotion to rural solitaries, "the wanderers of the earth," "strolling Bedlamites." Blake becomes part of this pattern—and characteristically takes it to an extreme—in his dedication to himself as a "self-devoting genius," in his "Cry. I. I.," and in his protest at his isolation and abandonment, put (also characteristically) in terms of self-knowledge and identity:

I found them blind, I taught them how to see;
And, now, they know me not, nor yet themselves.
(*DC*, E, 531)

The contrast between these romantic attitudes and the attitudes of an earlier generation is sharp. For an Enlightenment artist like Joshua Reynolds, the public provides essential verification for the artist:

. . . we can never be sure that our own sensations are true and right, till they are confirmed by more extensive observation. One man opposing another determines nothing; but a general union of minds, like a general combination of the forces of all mankind, makes a strength that is irresistible. . . . A man who thinks he is guarding himself against prejudices by resisting the authority of others, leaves open every avenue to singularity, vanity, self-conceit, obstinacy, and many other vices, all tending to warp the judgement, and prevent the natural operation of his faculties. . . .¹⁵

The public offers a "union of minds" that authenticates the perceptions of its members, in-

cluding its artists, who are thus warned when they verge on singularity. The "authority of others" represented by consensus is primary; the artist's sensations must fall within its limits. But when, as for Wordsworth, "each man's Mind is to herself / Witness and judge" (1850 *Prelude* XIII.366–67), the artist's fear of the audience's judgment is a fear of self-betrayal. Keats fears that "If I write a Preface" of the sort expected by the public, "it will not be in character with me. . . ." Reynolds' admiration for the "general union of minds" becomes Keats's "contempt for public opinion" and a "solitary indifference" to "applause even from the finest Spirits." If, as Keats asserts, "That which is creative must create itself," the "authority of others" to which Reynolds would have young artists defer is nothing more than external hindrance. When "The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man," all artists must join Keats in saying "I will write independantly."¹⁶

In his Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says he must be wary of making revisions on the basis of readers' reactions:

. . . it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support, and if he sets them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind loses all confidence in itself, and becomes utterly debilitated.¹⁷

Blake's complaint in the *Descriptive Catalogue* of similar debilitation—"his power of imagination weakened so much, and darkened" (*DC*, E, 538)—while possessed by the demons of Titian, Rubens, and Correggio shows how the fear of a reader's influence may take the form of a fear of artistic tradition, to the extent that "audience" is a name for the identities of other artists embodied in a tradition that the audience enforces through its collective "taste," the prejudice it brings to the work. Coleridge's poem "The Nightingale" is one common kind of romantic protest against such traditions. The audience, acting as agent for the tradition, is regarded as an obstacle between artists and something they

desire a direct relation to—here, nature. The literary tradition of the nightingale gets in the way of the poet's ability to perceive and represent, and the audience's ability to appreciate, the real nightingale in the forest. Part of Wordsworth's argument against poetic diction falls into the same category. To "bring my language near to the language of men," he says, it is necessary to cut himself off "from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Zall, p. 45) and as the expectation of their readers. Thus artistic traditions, especially recent Enlightenment ones, are a burdensome inheritance, a potential source of interference instead of continuity, and poets, in order to align themselves with their subject matter, seem forced to liberate themselves from their own audiences.

Metaphors of relationship again point to the difference. Wordsworth and Coleridge readily describe "man and nature as *essentially adapted* to each other, and the mind of man as *naturally* the *mirror* of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Zall, p. 52; my italics). Art is the agent and product of that adaptation, or, in Coleridge's words, "the *union and reconciliation* of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human." Art is the "*translation* of man into nature." Ultimately the adaptation, the reconciliation, union, and translation are artistic acts of remembering that "[man's] own spirit" has "the same ground with nature," that human beings are the intellectual life of nature ("On Poesy and Art," Shawcross, II, 254–55, 253, 258; my italics).

By contrast, when the issue is the relation of the poet to the audience rather than to the subject matter, nature, the same metaphors become negative and are used to suggest cheap compromises with the reader—"adaptation," as Wordsworth says, "more or less skilful, to the changing humours of the majority of those who are most at leisure to regard poetical works when they first solicit their attention." Such poets "solicit" the attention by *adapting* their poems to the capricious and depraved tastes of the audience, which pursues the false pleasures of this "vicious poetry"—"as if urged by an appetite" for such features as "the glaring hues of

diction by which such Readers are caught and excited" (Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815, Zall, pp. 186, 186, 185, 162). Even a jaded age can sense Wordsworth's moral outrage in the imagery that makes the poet a pimp, the poem a whore, and the audience a mob, like the men of Sodom at Lot's door. Byron, with equal force, imagines the audience as a tyrant for whom art is a woman kept in luxury: "Art's mistaken gratitude shall . . . / . . . prostitute her charms to pontiffs proud. . . ." For themselves Byron and Wordsworth fear a loss of identity to mobs or tyrants, "who but employ / The man of genius as the meanest brute / . . . / To sell his labours, and his soul to boot."¹⁸ In his subject matter Wordsworth seems to see a woman to marry, marriage with her promising a re-integrated identity for him. The poems he writes are in a sense written to her (radically, "with" her or "in" her), inspired by her; they anticipate "union" with her, "reconciliation," and so on. Wandering "through" her—through nature—he searches for himself. His audience only threatens this potential union. The audience dwells not in nature but in the "close and overcrowded human haunts / Of cities, where the human heart is sick . . ." (1850 *Prelude* XIII.203–04). Poets who adapt to such an audience are its slaves. Wordsworth describes them in figures of misdirection and alienation:

—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,
How books mislead us, seeking their reward
From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
By artificial lights; how they debase
The Many for the pleasure of those Few;
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions, for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the heads
That framed them; flattering self-conceit with
words,
That, while they most ambitiously set forth
Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
Whereby society has parted man
From man, neglect the universal heart.
(1850 *Prelude* XII.206–20)

III. The Audience Redeemed

When Byron's Dante asserts "They made an Exile—not a slave of me" (*Prophecy of Dante*

1.178), he implies that exile and slave were his only choices, as in fact they are when relations between artists and audiences are at the abysmally low level envisioned by Wordsworth in the passage just quoted: An audience consisting of a small but powerful wealthy class in love with itself buys pleasure and the lies it wants to hear from poets. His criticism of artists who flatter the "Few" at the expense of the "Many" cannot, however, be taken as implicit praise of the artists we call "popular," defining them by reference to their audience. The artist-audience relationship that comes from widespread "popularity"—the kind that Byron experienced as culture hero of Europe—is not one that a romantic artist finds easy to treasure. An expressive theory of art has no place for the artist's expression of the public taste. If the few become, in Byron's terms, tyrants, the many become the mob.

To define an audience an expressive theory starts not externally, with the choices offered by opposing social theories, autocratic or democratic, but internally, with a distinction between a real and an artificial public. When Wordsworth, in the last paragraph of his *Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815*, raises questions about the nature of artistic popularity, he intimates that readers may after all be something better than intrusive strangers: "Is it the result of the whole [argument of this essay] that, in the opinion of the Writer, the judgment of the People is not to be respected? The thought is most injurious. . . ." He distinguishes "the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community . . . which, under the name of the PUBLIC, passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE" from "that Vox populi which the Deity inspires," the voice of "the great Spirit of human knowledge" (Zall, pp. 186–87). A number of remarks by Blake show that he agrees with Wordsworth's distinction between a real and an artificial public. The aim of the artist cannot be "pleasing Every Body," as he blames Reynolds for doing; an "Eye . . . on the Many" is really an eye "on the Money" (AR, E, 644–45). But he also rails at the "connoisseurs," the few who would have it their way. In the *Preface to the Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 and again in the "Public Address" he distinguishes "the English Public" itself from its enemies (PA, E, 567). These are the "Imposters" who under-

mine the audience's confidence in the judgment of its own imagination and who claim that "The English Public have no Taste for Painting" (PA, E, 570) when actually the public have no taste for bad painting. The technique of the enemies of true art is commercial and political; it is to "Call that the Public Voice which is their Error" (PA, E, 567). The object is to obliterate the audience's sense of itself. The audience faces the same danger as the artist: a loss of identity to external forces that reduce the mind to such a weakened state, as Wordsworth says of himself, that it will accept anything imposed on it.

In their conceptions of the proper subject for art, Wordsworth and Blake differ sharply, Blake rejecting nature and aligning it with the cultural status quo, not with the artist. For him the "ground of being" is not nature but imagination, and the two are opposed. But Wordsworth and Blake agree that the artist's fidelity to the subject almost assures alienation from the audience at large. The basis for their agreement lies, of course, in the expressive theories of art that they share. Appeals to vox populi and the English public are themselves vague enough to find a place in almost any theory. But the image of the true romantic audience is sharpened by the logic of the theory behind it. The inversion that makes Blake and Wordsworth more alike than different in their ideas of an audience is the natural tendency of an expressive theory to define the artist-audience relationship from the artist's side. An artist-centered idea of an audience may be, as Abrams says, a simple solipsism, circling endlessly from the artist to the work back to the artist. But there is an alternative logic that accommodates distinctions between true and false audiences. It follows the work of art outward toward the audience by extending the metaphor of expression itself: if the artist expresses the work of art, then the work of art also expresses its audience. To speak of a poem expressing its own audience makes no sense until we remember that the radically expressive poem carries the identity of the poet. Thus we are left with a reversal of the usual notion of an audience that exercises its tastes by selecting the books it likes from the shelves, or, historically, by compiling lists of masterpieces. Finally it makes no less sense to think of artists who select their own audiences than of audiences that select their own

artists, though the former are considerably more difficult to fit into a marketplace economy.

No romantic manifesto with which I am acquainted actually uses the metaphor of “expression” to describe the relationship between the artist and the audience. What we find instead are metaphors of personal relationship. In other words, in an expressive theory the focus is not on the artist as a skillful craftsman but on the whole personality, which the skills of the craft serve to express. The natural consequence of personalizing the work of art is personalizing the audience in turn. This pattern seems to be the natural one in expressive theories of whatever period. When Keats claims “I never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought” he does not mean that he has no thought of an audience but that the only legitimate audience is his group of friends: “I wo^d be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me,” but “the Public” is “an Enemy, . . . which I cannot address without feelings of Hostility” (Gittings, p. 85). It is immediately clear that an expressive theory is present when a modern commentator like Lewis Mumford begins to draw sharp distinctions between art and technology in terms of personal feeling: “. . . art springs spontaneously, even in infancy, from the desire for individuation and self-expression—a desire that needs for its fullest satisfaction the warm-hearted attention and loving cooperation of others.”¹⁹

Alexander Pope does not envision the audience as properly “warm-hearted” or “loving.” He sees that the public interest in poetic matters is entrusted to the critic, as the public interest in legal matters is entrusted to legislators and judges: “Thus long succeeding Critics justly reign’d, / *Licence* repress’d, and *useful Laws* ordain’d; / *Learning* and *Rome* alike in Empire grew” (*Essay on Criticism*, ll. 681–83). The ideal is social; the ability to act properly in the public interest requires not love but decency, fairness, and detachment, a freedom from personal prejudice:

Careless of *Censure*, nor too fond of *Fame*,
Still pleas’d to *praise*, yet not afraid to *blame*,
Averse alike to *Flatter*, or *Offend*,
Not *free* from *Faults*, nor yet too vain to *mend*.

(ll. 741–44)

In romantic terms, the ideal reader is not a judge with social responsibilities but an intimate personal relation. Wordsworth says that the poet is “an upholder and preserver [of human nature], carrying every where with him relationship and love” (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Zall, p. 52). Shelley identifies imagination with “love; or a going out of our own nature.” The good man is the man of intense and comprehensive imagination, who can “put himself in the place of another and of many others. . . .”²⁰ Dante, in Byron’s poem, imagines his audience as a woman and himself as one “who *for* that country would expire, / But did not merit to expire *by* her, / And loves her, loves her even in her ire!” (*Prophecy of Dante* 1.70–72; Byron’s italics). The idea that the poet in any sense “loves” the audience or the audience the poet is alien to fundamental tendencies in Enlightenment neo-classicism.

Thus the powerful association of expression with emotion extends beyond the work to the audience, suggesting a relationship not of entertainer to public, performer to judge, thoughtful person to thoughtful person, or teacher to student but something closer to the relationship of lover to beloved, a deep, sympathetic communion that requires sexual, religious, or sometimes, for Blake, chemical metaphors to describe it. Love is the feeling that governs the relationship, which will necessarily include, however, other feelings and other relationships as well; lovers who love each other profoundly will not fail to entertain, teach, inspire, and even debate each other. Ultimately, in theories as radical as Blake’s, metaphors of personal relationship move toward metaphors of identity.

IV. The Audience of Jesus and of Blake’s *Jerusalem*

The themes of Blake’s illuminated works can be divided into two, which are ultimately one: the battle to reintegrate the disintegrating identity of the artist and thus reunite “the artist” with “the work”—one of the subjects of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—under the constant threat of interruption from such externals as the demons of Titian and Rubens, and the battle to reunite the artist and the work with the audience of art.²¹

Blake begins *Jerusalem* with an address "To the Public" that immediately asserts an intimate personal relationship with the reader:

After my three years slumber on the banks of the Ocean, I again display my Giant forms to the Public: My former Giants & Fairies having recieved the highest reward possible: the love and friendship of those with whom to be connected, is to be blessed: I cannot doubt that this more consolidated & extended Work, will be as kindly recieved²²

(*Jerusalem* 3, E, 143)

The reader and the artist are friends; they love each other, and their friendship is a blessing to both. But the embrace of beloved friends is intended to be read with the words that bracket the title:

SHEEP

To the Public

GOATS

There are some "with whom to be connected, is to be blessed"; there are other connections less beneficial. *Jerusalem* is the agent of a Last Judgment. Blake is thinking of his art as a way of finding the true "Public Voice" of his audience as opposed to "their Error," very much as the Gospels are a way of finding the true form of the Christian community. The Bible as a whole, in fact, offers a model of the artist's relationship to the audience that Blake could modify to the requirements of his expressive theory.²³

Everyone recognizes the tendency among romantic poets to favor comparisons between themselves and the Old Testament prophets and, for that matter, between themselves and God, insofar as they are creators. It has not been noticed, I think, that prophets are particularly well suited to romantic expressive theories in search of an audience. For Blake, the Bible is "the Great Code of Art" (Laocoön, E, 271) in that respect even more obviously than in others. He uses prophets as artists as early as *The Marriage* (c. 1793), where Isaiah and Ezekiel are interviewed by the narrator at dinner (*MHH* 12–13, E, 37–38). He quizzes them on their belief in God, on the Jews as a chosen people, and on the shocking behavior of prophets. Isaiah answers that he "saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception." With his senses he "discover'd the infinite in every thing," a discovery

that gave him the authority of "firm perswasion," that is, artistic certainty, which issued in "the voice of honest indignation" that he identifies with "the voice of God." The special status of the Jews as the chosen people of God is merely an error of interpretation by "the vulgar," who, mistaking fanatical art for fanatical militaristic religion, "came to think that all nations would at last be subject to the jews." King David was an artist, "our great poet," whose mission in life was to organize individuals and nations around "the Poetic Genius . . . the first principle." But when he described his mission imaginatively, saying "by this he conquers enemies & governs kingdoms," the cunning and the foolish took up weapons. As for the bizarre antisocial behavior of prophets, who call attention to themselves by eating dung and lying in odd positions when by all ordinary standards they should be performing useful work to support their families, Ezekiel explains that his actions were the result of "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite."

Blake's satire turns Old Testament prophets into models for the romantic poets by making a few minor adjustments and a single major one. The prophets are ripe for such adjustment in the first place because they are in society without being part of the status quo. They do not operate by consensus, that is, they do not get their values from the audience that they address. Thus Isaiah says, "I cared not for consequences but wrote." (Neither do they derive their values from nature—a fact more important to Blake than to Wordsworth, who describes himself and Coleridge as "Prophets of Nature" who "will speak / A lasting inspiration" [1850 *Prelude* xiv.444–51].) The source of their values is not nature, the audience, or tradition but God, with whom they profess a direct connection. They do not speak about God, they speak with the voice of God: "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds . . ." (Ezek. xxxiv.1–2). (Or, as Blake says at the beginning of *Jerusalem*, "When this Verse was first dictated to me . . ." [3, E, 144].)

One major change—call God the "Imagination"—will turn a prophet into a poet, with two results: religious becomes artistic, and external

internal. The biblical formula for the relation of poet to audience becomes artist-centered when "God," standing behind and above and speaking through the prophet, becomes the "Poetic Genius" speaking from within. The Old Testament prophets show poets how to have an audience without being subjugated to it. They also demonstrate the expressive relation of subject matter (God, or the poetic genius) to the work (prophecy). In *The Marriage Ezekiel*, by eating dung and lying on his right and left side, is his work; likewise, the voice of Isaiah is the voice of God. But the Old Testament prophets are not complete; they are fulfilled in the New Testament version of a prophet, Jesus, who is for Blake the radical exemplar of the self-expressive artist. While the Old Testament prophets claim to speak with the voice of God, Jesus claims to be God. While they know that their subject matter is in the human breast, he knows that the audience itself is in the human breast. They show the way to the artist's internalization of the subject matter; Jesus shows the way to the artist's internalization of the audience itself. The most informative example of the uses of Jesus for the artist who wants to express a vision of the audience in its true form is, again, Blake's address "To the Public" at the beginning of *Jerusalem*.

A public with no imagination that it can call its own is a public asleep. In a letter to Lady Beaumont in 1807, Wordsworth says of his potential audience that its "imagination has slept; and the voice which is the voice of my Poetry without Imagination cannot be heard" (Zall, p. 79). The underlying metaphor is biblical: "Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph. v.14) is the cry of the prophets to an audience whose spirits have been hypnotized by the world. In the Preface to *Milton* Blake had called on the "Young Men of the New Age"—who seem to be the younger generation of artists—to "Rouze up" (E, 94). But he begins *Jerusalem* with the admission that he himself has spent three years slumbering on the banks of the ocean. His admission is a call for a reciprocal admission from the public. He begins Chapter i of *Jerusalem* with the epic announcement of his subject: "Of the Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through / Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal Life" (4.1–2, E, 145). Presumably the sleep is both the narrator's and the audience's. Recipro-

cality is a theme of "To the Public": "The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of Sin. . . . I am perhaps the most sinful of men! I pretend not to holiness! yet I pretend to love, to see, to converse with daily, as man with man. . . . Therefore Dear Reader, forgive what you do not approve, & love me for this energetic exertion of my talent."

The assumption is that acts of imagination, to be complete, must be mutual; and the conditions for them are the same as for any profound human relationship, the forgiveness and love that assure mutual commitment and engagement, because complete human relationships are also imaginative acts. In other words, a work of art is one kind of profound human relationship, and in essential ways a model for all others. Wordsworth recognizes this as early as the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where he calls for the reader to resist the judgments of others and to "decide by his own feelings genuinely," to "abide independently by his own feelings . . ." (Zall, p. 61). Wordsworth is not merely calling for unprejudiced reviewers. He is asking the reader to react to poems as persons, with the emphasis on "feelings." In his extensive analysis of the relationship between poets and their audiences, the Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815, he spends considerable effort categorizing bad readers much as a father might categorize bad prospective husbands for his daughter: they may be young with strong but undependable enthusiasms, older but jaded and in search of strong stimulation, religious but cold and doctrinaire, and so on. The basis for an imaginative relationship between poet and reader must be mutual love. Thus he warns of the religious reader whose interest is less in the poet expressed in the poem than in the search for erroneous doctrines, with the result that "Love, if it before existed, is converted into dislike; and the heart of the Reader is set against the Author and his book" (Zall, p. 162). This is the line of thought leading to the requirement that the audience give works of art the "warm-hearted attention and loving cooperation" of which Mumford speaks and to Blake's request that the audience love him for the energy it took to turn his talent into a work of art.

The ideal reader for both Blake and Wordsworth is someone with a fully developed mind

and heart whose powers of intellect and passion are equal to those of the poet. The reader is not a passive receptacle or an impassive judge; the poem is not an instrument of stimulation or an object to be judged by a set of external standards. To judge a poem, the reader must enter into an intimate relationship with it.²⁴ Thus Wordsworth arrives at the idea of “a corresponding energy [of imagination],” “the exertion of a co-operating *power* in the mind of the Reader . . . without this auxiliari impulse elevated or profound passion cannot exist.” The poet initiates the action, but the reader must reciprocate: “Passion, it must be observed, is derived from a word which signifies, *suffering*: but the connection which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and *action*, is immediate and inseparable.” The number of readers capable of responding in kind to an original poet, however, is very small; profound friendships are rare. “. . . [T]he Poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers” because original poets are not only strangers but strangers demanding acceptance on their own terms. “Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe,” and that introduction represents “a conquest, made by the soul of the Poet.” Original poets are in a difficult position. Rather than conform to the preestablished artistic taste of their audiences, they must, Wordsworth says, “create taste” (Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815, Zall, pp. 184–86). They must express their own audiences. When, in the advertisement for his 1809 exhibition, Blake quotes Milton’s “Fit . . . tho’ few,” he indicates that, like Wordsworth, he understands the unusual demands of expressive art on the reader.

Blake uses Christian metaphors to carry the logic of expression even further. If the artist expresses his identity in his work—if artistic integrity is an expression of personal integrity—then the relationships between the work of art and its audience will be expressions of personal relationships. The closest personal relationships are the ones named by Blake in the introduction to *Jerusalem*, “love and friendship.” The profoundest form of love and friendship is identity: as the artist *is* the work, the artist is also the audience. We are most familiar with such extreme forms of love in religious contexts that

require the believer’s absolute love, which is said to be returned by a God who “is” love. In *Jerusalem*, therefore, Blake goes to the New Testament for his appeal to the reader: “I also hope the Reader will be with me, wholly One in Jesus our Lord . . .” (E, 144). Blake’s model for the relationship between artist and audience is Jesus and his followers: “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you . . .” (John xv.15–16).

If, as Blake claims, Jesus was an artist (Laocoön, E, 271), he was an unusually demanding one. Considering Jesus as an artist with an audience is a good way of discerning Blake’s own artistic purposes. To begin with, we can eliminate the following three conceptions of the relation between artist and audience: that the audience, no matter how well informed and discriminating in its tastes, determines the values of the artist (“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you”); that the artist manipulates the audience with rhetoric; and that the artist must withdraw to become a solitary singer. In the New Testament the Pharisees and Sadducees are appointed to represent the dangers of the first two points of view—with the Essenes perhaps offstage representing the third—while Jesus speaks for a new relation between the Word and the receivers of the Word. “Now ye are clean,” he says, “through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. . . . If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John xv.3–4, 7). We can interpret Jesus’ remarks by the light of Blake’s Preface to *Milton*, which identifies “those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord” as “our own Imaginations” (1, E, 94). In the world we may be denied what we want most; we deny others what they want, and we may even deny ourselves. But in the imagination is the gratification of all desire: “If ye abide in me, . . . ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” The ultimate gratification is imaginative identity. Jesus prays for his disciples, “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves,” “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . I in

them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one . . ." (John xvii.13, 21–23). "The meaning is this," as Jesus would say: the Father is the poetic genius, I am the artist, and you are the audience. The relation between us is love, and persons who love each other are "in" each other.

The idea that the poet and audience are "in" each other, are in fact each other, stands behind the startling assertions in the Laocoön: that Christ is an artist, his disciples are artists, and all true Christians are artists (E, 271, 272). That is, expressive theories like Blake's tend to carry the logic of their root metaphors toward absolute identification, beginning with the personal identity of the artist, extended to the identity of the work and finally to the audience of the work. Thus the "Apostles & Disciples" were "Artists" because they "were" Jesus. All true artists, like "the Ancients [who] entrusted their love to their Writing" (*Jerusalem* 3, E, 144; transcription uncertain), by making their works themselves—entrusting themselves to their works—make their works the agents by which artist and audience coalesce in a single identity, a single "body" of imagination that is the furthest expression of physiognomic form, to become one in "the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body" (*Jerusalem* 3, E, 144).

V. The Society of Imagination

At this point, with paradoxical force to match Jacobean wit, a theory of art capable of producing artists utterly self-enclosed becomes a social theory. In Christian terms, Christ creates a church in his image, because what we have been calling his audience, when it finally takes its true form, becomes a community of believers "in" him rather than a crowd of spectators gathered around the artist at the center. If they grant him what Jesus usually calls "faith," or what Blake calls "love and friendship," he then creates coherence from the center outward until a community forms in his image or imagination, until finally the distinction between the artist at the center and the audience on the circumference becomes irrelevant. In the New Testament the works of art responsible for the organization of

a crowd into some kind of social order are the miracles and the parables. Finally we recognize that the miracles and parables "are" Christ and that he is the organizing force. The question implicit in his curious actions and difficult parables is usually "Who am I?" and the correct answer is usually "Christ." Most of his actions are parables and miracles of identity rather than rehearsals of morals and doctrines; the fundamental doctrine of Christianity simply recognizes the identity of Christ. This is an emphasis well suited to an expressive theory of art such as Blake's, in which the fundamental artistic act, drawing a line, establishes the identity of the artist, who is "known" by his lines.

In the New Testament the term for the social order expressed by the identity of Jesus is "the body of Christ," as we hear of it from Paul: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Rom. xii.5). Blake applies this pattern to get the most radical version of artistic expression. Christ is internalized as imagination, the source of personal identity; Christ's words and deeds are the work of imagination; and the church, the body of Christ, is the community created and sustained by such works, "wholly One in Jesus our Lord." As a social theory this formula (as Blake interprets it) has the advantage of starting at the individual, where many romantic social contracts start in their search for a social order capable of embodying the expression of individual desires. In theories that generate a social order from the individual, "public" is an expression of "private," in contrast to a theory like Marxism, in which the true form of the individual is an expression of social need. By defining the individual in terms of imagination, the theory produces a social order of imagination, just as, by defining the individual in terms of economic needs, other theories produce an economic order for "economic man." Under the social contract generated from economic values, individuals are bound one to another by the cash nexus; in the religious and artistic versions the nexus is love or some other strong emotion that conditions all other relationships.

In the societies of "economic man," imagination is a faculty that the clever use to make more money, and art is a commodity to be bought and sold with other commodities. What is called

"art" is a specialized activity that has its place in a structure of "economies." When artistic values are subsidiary to economic values, the mythical pattern of social and cultural development is the one that Reynolds outlines at the beginning of the *Discourses*, in his Dedication "To the King" (1778): "The regular progress of cultivated life is from necessities to accommodations, from accommodations to ornaments." Art is ornament, the superficial decoration of economic essentials, or, in Reynolds' words, "the arts of elegance, those arts by which manufactures are embellished, and science is refined . . ." (Malone, 1, 2; Wark, p. ix). A chair is a manufactured accommodation; a beautiful chair is ornamental. Ornament is something that a privileged class can afford but that a less privileged class can do without. People who try to reverse this order by eating luxuriously when they can afford only to eat plainly end up in the poorhouse. The "regular progress of cultivated life" is a pattern of economic improvement. "Cultivated" thus has strong associations with "rich." In such a culture, the audience for art is simply the group of consumers who decide that they want to "cultivate" their lives by purchasing the services of a class of workers called artists to "embellish" their "manufactures" with "ornaments." In this context a painting is an ornament that embellishes an accommodation—a house or palace—that has evolved from a necessity—a shelter. Since Reynolds' formula describes the societies we live in, we are habituated to it. But unhabituated Blake, on the basis of assumptions he finds in the Bible, comes back hard: "The Bible says That Cultivated Life. Existed First—Uncultivated Life. comes afterwards from Satans Hirelings" (AR, E, 626). Adam and Eve do not begin life as savages on the lookout for their daily bread, and Christ does not come to urge humanity to solve its economic problems before turning to refinements like the life of the spirit. The Bible begins with a vision of a complete life: "Necessaries Accommodations & Ornaments are the whole of Life" (AR, E, 626). And it ends with the same: a vision of life restored to wholeness.

"Art is the First in Intellectuals & Ought to be First in Nations" (AR, E, 626). If the life of the spirit is the essence of human life rather than a late and superficial refinement or improvement

of life, then the imagination organizes the identity of the individual and should organize the community: "The Foundation of Empire is Art & Science Remove them or Degrade them & the Empire is No More—Empire follows Art & Not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose" (AR, E, 625–26). By "Empire" Blake of course means the true form of society, as Shelley does when he claims that "The true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions." Shelley makes similar claims for the social forms of ancient Athens and, for that matter, of Christian Europe: "Whatever of evil their agencies may have contained sprang from the extinction of the poetical principle . . ." (*Defence of Poetry*, McElderry, pp. 20, 21). The true social order is poetical in the sense that it is a projection of the imagination. Thus art and civil life rise together: "The drama at Athens, or wheresoever else it may have approached to its perfection, ever co-existed with the moral and intellectual greatness of the age" (p. 16). Thus the "kindred expressions of the poetical faculty" include "architecture, painting, music, the dance, sculpture, philosophy, and, we may add, the forms of civil life" (p. 13). Shelley is implicitly contradicting Peacock's proposal in "The Four Ages of Poetry" that poetry declines as real civilization, characterized by useful knowledge, rises. Blake, Shelley, and Wordsworth see the pattern of evolution that Peacock sees but deplore it. Shelley speaks well for them all: "The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave" (p. 29). Shelley's idea that "the creative faculty . . . is the basis of all knowledge" (p. 29) agrees with Wordsworth's that "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," in fact "the first and last of all knowledge" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Zall, p. 52).

VI. The Phases of Expression

In English romanticism, where there is no school and no program, deep commitments to individual identity and artistic originality do not

encourage the search for representative poets or ideas. The center is likely to be no more representative than the extremes. Accounts of romantic ideas are tested for adequacy by their ability to accommodate Wordsworth and Coleridge comfortably without cramping Blake and Shelley. With that in mind, we are now in a position to arrange romantic attitudes toward the audience along a scale of possibility whose poles are self-centered withdrawal, or soliloquy, and imagination-centered fulfillment, or community, and whose midpoint is occupied by a poet of the sort described by Wordsworth as “a man speaking to men.”

The picture of the romantic artist as a solitary singer or as a social outcast, raging in the wilds, as Blake says in *The Marriage* (Pl. 2), derives from the logic of an expressive theory of art at one phase. The logic is natural but incomplete and should not be mistaken for the whole. Perhaps its ultimate extreme appears in *The Prophecy of Dante*, in the picture of an entire class of poets—“perchance the best,” Byron says—who have never written at all. Here, romantic internalization may take the form of complete suppression: “they compress’d / the god within them” (*Prophecy of Dante* iv.4–5). At the same phase but from the opposite angle, this view becomes the “realistic” one taken by the status quo: Jesus, say, as seen by Roman officials or the young artist as seen by Reynolds. Internalizing this view of himself, Jesus doubts his own mission. In artistic terms, he takes the point of view and the preestablished tastes of the audience and wonders if perhaps they are not correct in thinking him a charlatan or, in Reynolds’ terms, a creature of “singularity, vanity . . . and many other vices.”

One phase further he might quote Blake: “I taught them how to see, and now they know me not, nor yet themselves.” Artists are doubting the audience but maintaining faith in themselves. They may fear what Byron calls “the harlotry of genius” that will please the public but sacrifice “self-reverence” (*Prophecy of Dante* iii.77, 78). When the choice seems to be isolation with integrity or popularity without it, the question becomes the one that Byron has Dante ask: how is it that poets “Must pass their days in penury or pain, / Or step to grandeur through the paths of shame . . .” (*Prophecy of Dante* iv.104–05).

At such a phase the center of activity is between the artist and the work. The accompanying aesthetic principle will resemble the one that Wasserman has attributed to Shelley: “Denied the purpose of communicating explicit ethical ideals, the poem attains its final cause . . . simply by coming into existence; and the poetic transaction involves only the poet and his poem, not the audience.”²⁵ The principle legitimizes an audience of auditors only, who may be privileged to overhear the poet’s song but who are in no position to contribute anything of their own.

Yet another phase and the artist is distinguishing the true audience from the false, the public from its error, and hoping for fit audience while understanding that it will be few: “Prometheus,” as Shelley says, “was never intended for more than 5 or 6 persons.”²⁶ Here artists freely acknowledge what Blake calls their “Public Duty” (PA, E, 571). They realize that their role is not that of self-protective exemplar of integrity (always on guard against “selling out” to the audience) nor that of sacrificial victim. Suspending their hostility toward the public, artists cease to cling to a friendly inner circle. They no longer perceive the public as a foreign enemy that threatens domestic peace—“the crowds of Shadows in the Shape of Man and women that inhabit a kingdom” in opposition to “The Soul [of the poet, which] is a world of itself and has enough to do in its own home.” They learn instead to recognize in the unknown public the potential bond of identity that Keats recognizes in “Those whom I know already and who have grown as it were a part of myself” (Gittings, p. 282).

They see that they are the agent of a Last Judgment on the audience, in the mode of Blake’s statement to Dr. Trusler: “You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care” (23 Aug. 1799, E, 676). Such assertions sound arrogant and intolerant only when read out of their true context, which is an idea of art that requires equality between artist and audience as the only basis of mutual love. An art that assumes a worthy audience of equals is the only authentically democratic art. Its opposites are the arts of flattery and condescension described

by Wordsworth and Byron, with the poet "bound to *please*,— / . . . To smooth the verse to suit his sovereign's ease" (*Prophecy of Dante* III.86, 88). This art is the kind that follows empire. It begins not inside the mind but outside, with "Extrinsic differences, the outward marks / Whereby society has parted man / From man, . . ." not creating a new order based on imaginative equality but enforcing an old one based on external inequality.

Finally the vision of the artist as assertive judge between sheep and goats recedes in favor of the world of imagination that the vision produces, in biblical terms the Kingdom of God, the Divine Body, the society in which artist and audience become one. Previously the poet has had to recognize that the only chance of achieving identity with the community is to die into it: "We can have but one country, and even yet / Thou'rt mine—my bones shall be within thy breast, / My soul within thy language" (*Prophecy of Dante* II.19–21). But now he is able to envision a society built on the premises stated by Blake—"Art is the glory of a Nation, . . . Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society" (*DC*, E, 518)—and glimpsed in Wordsworth's visionary claim that "the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Zall, p. 52).²⁷ The artist moves into the center.

When fully imagined, the idea of artists at the center of a society for whose coherence they are responsible becomes the physiognomic vision of human life offered in *Jerusalem* 98–99, which begins with the artist's imagination, organized by the senses, at the center. The senses are not passive instruments of reception but aggressive arrows of intellect that move ever outward,

Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious
Husk & Covering into Vacuum evaporating revealing
the lineaments of Man
Driving outward the Body of Death in an Eternal
Death & Resurrection
Awaking it to Life among the Flowers of Beulah
rejoicing in Unity
In the Four Senses in the Outline the Circumference
& Form, for ever

In Forgiveness of Sins which is Self Annihilation. it
is the Covenant of Jehovah

(*Jerusalem* 98.18–23, E, 255)

The vision is generated from the imaginative center relentlessly, flowing, driving outward, expanding, "going forward forward irresistible from Eternity to Eternity" (*Jerusalem* 98.27, E, 255) until, in our terms, the individual identity expresses its social form and the center identifies with—"loves"—the circumference. The result is not the nightmare of selfishness that the audience has been led to fear, the ever-enlarging romantic ego imposing its tyrannical form on everything in its path, subsuming all differences under its sameness until finally there is only silence. Humanity wholly one in the Divine Body of Jesus is Blake's version of that favorite romantic ideal of multitude in unity, of a community that in imagination expresses the collective shape of individuality.²⁸ This is the body of Christ that Paul describes as "one" that "hath many members." "If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? . . . And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. . . . Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii.12, 17–27). Amalgamated with aspects of visions from Ezekiel and Revelation, Paul's metaphor of a body of Christ in which all Christians may dwell becomes Blake's "One Man" fourfold. Blake's vision illustrates the meaning of what Isaiah in *The Marriage* calls "a firm persuasion." Nothing more complicated underlies the vision than Wordsworth's simple dictum that the "original poet" must "create taste" for original work. Taken seriously—or, as philosophers say, carried far enough—such principles assume their ultimate imaginative shapes in visions of individual, social, and universal coherence such as this one:

And they conversed together in Visionary forms
dramatic which bright
Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous
majesty, in Visions
In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory
and of Intellect
Creating Space, Creating Time according to the
wonders Divine

Of Human Imagination, throughout all the Three
Regions immense
Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age[;] & the all
tremendous unfathomable Non Ens
Of Death was seen in regenerations terrific or
complacent varying
According to the subject of discourse & every Word
& Every Character
Was Human according to the Expansion or
Contraction, the Translucence or

Opakeness of Nervous fibres such was the variation
of Time & Space
Which vary according as the Organs of Perception
vary & they walked
To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in
each & clearly seen
And seeing: according to fitness & order.
(*Jerusalem* 97.28–40, E, 255)²⁹

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Notes

¹ Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), p. 25. Frank Kermode discusses the romantic origins of the postromantic separation between the artist and society in "The Artist in Isolation," Ch. i of *Romantic Image* (New York: Random, 1957): "These two beliefs—in the Image as a radiant truth out of space and time, and in the necessary isolation of men who can perceive it—are inextricably associated . . ." (p. 2). "The 'difference' of some of the English Romantic poets is almost too well known; they were outcast because they had to pay for their joy and their vision. Sometimes they attributed their condition to some malady in themselves, but they also blamed the age in which they lived . . ." (p. 7).

² Almost any study of politics and the arts during the romantic period will have something to say about the audience of the romantic artist. Besides Williams' book (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), I think especially of the work of David V. Erdman, E. P. Thompson, and Carl Woodring.

³ Here and elsewhere in the essay, "phase" is the term of convenience used to designate parts of a dynamic theory—but not chronological stages in some scheme of historical development.

⁴ No proper theory—as in the observation that Blake's "apocalyptic humanism . . ." can hardly be pressed into literary or even general aesthetic service. Blake connects less with the literary tradition than with cabalistic and visionary theories of knowledge" (W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* [New York: Random, 1957], p. 424).

⁵ In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams warned against making Blake or Shelley the center of a theory of romanticism (p. 313). Blake has been given an essential role in a number of more recent accounts. Perhaps the first was Northrop Frye's "The Drunken Boat: The Revolutionary Element in Romanticism," *Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. Frye (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 1–25; expanded later as "The Romantic Myth," in Frye, *A Study of English Roman-*

ticism (New York: Random, 1968), pp. 3–49. In his discussion Frye does not develop any characteristically romantic idea of an audience, but he does conclude broadly that "It seems as though Romanticism finds it difficult to absorb the social perspective . . ." (p. 38). If I understand him on this point, his conclusion seems true enough, though I think the opposite may be said of, say, Enlightenment mimesis.

⁶ Blake, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," in David V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, 4th ed., rev. (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 555. The abbreviations used in the essay are E for the Erdman edition, AR for Blake's annotations to Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses*, DC for *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures*, MHH for *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, PA for the "Public Address," and VLJ for "A Vision of the Last Judgment."

⁷ The "recovery of projection" is Frye's phrase and the theme of his essays on English romanticism, especially "The Drunken Boat." "Internalization" is the term adopted by Harold Bloom in, for example, his essay "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 3–24. Morse Peckham has discussed similar changes in all versions of, and additions to, his theory of romanticism, beginning with "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," *PMLA*, 66 (1951), 5–23. The extent to which romantic internalization is taken into account may profoundly affect the interpretation of romantic manifestos. A good example is Earl R. Wasserman's "Shelley's Last Poetics: A Reconsideration," *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 487–511. Wasserman argues that Shelley's "platonism" in the *Defence* is put in the service of internalization (or, as Wasserman calls it, "intuition").

⁸ *Biographia Literaria*, ed. John Shawcross, rev. ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), II, 12. This edition also includes Coleridge's "On Poesy or Art," quoted below.

⁹ Eliot, "William Blake," in *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt, 1932), p. 275.

¹⁰ I discuss the Enlightenment idea of "harmony" versus Blake's idea of "line" in various contexts, including Blake's ideas about art, in "Blake and the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum and Technology," *PMLA*, 92 (1977), 903-27.

¹¹ See, for instance, the brief discussion in Wylie Sypher, *Literature and Technology: The Alien Vision* (New York: Random, 1968), p. 119, especially the remark that "What could be drawn seemed real; what was lighted or colored was a transient impression."

¹² For instance, the anonymous reviewer in *The Bee; or, The Exhibition* [of paintings at the Royal Academy] *Exhibited in a New Light . . .* (London, 1788) defines expression as "that wondrous power of Painting which conveys the ideas of Characters and Passions of the Person represented . . ." (p. 7).

¹³ As in *The Bee*, p. 7: "Expression seems to be the immediate gift of Heaven. . . . for although the skill . . . may be wanting, the original Genius is displayed. . . ."

¹⁴ Rev. Matthew Pilkington, *A Dictionary of Painters from the Revival of Art to the Present Period*, rev. Henry Fuseli (London, 1805), p. xviii.

¹⁵ Joshua Reynolds, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds . . .*, ed. Edmond Malone, 2nd ed. corrected (London, 1798), I, Discourse 7, 221-22. This is the volume that Blake annotated. The most accessible modern edition is Robert Wark, ed., *Discourses on Art* (London: Collier, 1966), p. 118.

¹⁶ *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 85, 216, 158, and 156.

¹⁷ Version of 1802, from *The Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth*, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 59.

¹⁸ *The Prophecy of Dante* iv.85-90, in the Oxford Standard Authors edition of Byron's *Poetical Works*, ed. Frederick Page, new ed. corrected by John Jump (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 370-79.

¹⁹ Mumford, *Art and Technics* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1952), p. 33.

²⁰ *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Shelley's Critical Prose*, ed. Bruce R. McElderry, Jr. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1967), pp. 12-13.

²¹ I discuss the reunion of artist with work in more detail in the *PMLA* essay cited in n. 10 and in "What Is the History of Publishing?" *Publishing History*, No. 2 (1977), pp. 57-77.

²² At some point after etching "To the Public," Blake made a series of relevant but puzzling deletions of virtually every reference to his or the audience's "love," "friendship," and so on. Thus, for instance, the italics in the following quotation represent deletions on the copper plate: "the love and friendship of those with whom to be connected, is to be blessed" (E, 143). Yet he left intact his "hope" that "the Reader will be with me, wholly One in Jesus our Lord" (E, 144). Obviously Blake was not completely satisfied with the relation of artist to audience described in the etched

text of "To the Public" and intended to compose substitutions for at least some of the deleted words and passages. But he never did, not even in the only copy of *Jerusalem* that is elaborately colored (copy E). A number of the sentences on Plate 3 thus remain nonsensical unless the deleted words are reinstated (as they are in all modern editions). If related to Blake's suppression of the Preface to *Milton* in the two later copies, the excisions in the address "To the Public" may be part of a pattern of evidence suggesting a withdrawal of faith in the audience.

²³ Some recent studies have defined Blake's idea of the audience in a biblical context. In Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., *Angel of Apocalypse* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1975), the discussions of Blake as a prophet, and of his works as part of a prophetic strain in English literature, sometimes turn on a conception of the prophetic audience: "The real dialectic of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* occurs not in the prophecy itself but in the antagonism Blake establishes between it and its prospective audience" (p. 195). A romantic context can lead to comparable conclusions. For example, in *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), W. J. T. Mitchell interprets the illuminated books as episodes in a romantic "epic of consciousness" that makes the reader a participant rather than a judge. Essentially, Mitchell's argument extends Frye's notion of literary anagogy to the audience, so that the "ultimate effect" of Blake's narrative invention "is to draw the reader into it, or what is the same thing, invite the reader to incorporate the pictures into himself" (p. 140). I discuss Mitchell's audience-centered approach to Blake's "antinarrative" in a review in the *Wordsworth Circle*, 10 (1979), 275-78.

²⁴ In "The Ideal Reader: A Critical Fiction," *PMLA*, 93 (1978), 463-74, Robert DeMaria, Jr., rightly contrasts the "profoundly judgmental" reader implicit in Johnson's criticism with Coleridge's ideal reader, who "enters into a kind of collaboration with the poet" (p. 468). DeMaria also points out that, while Johnson's reader is part of an "external tribunal" (p. 467), Coleridge's is a reflection of himself.

²⁵ Wasserman, p. 504. Wasserman, however, concentrates on the poetics outlined in Shelley's *Defence*. There is a larger picture. Cf., e.g., the discussion of Shelley's desire and his attempts to find a poetic mode that will allow him to address a mass audience, in Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis: The Maturing of an Epic Vision* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1975).

²⁶ *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), II, 388.

²⁷ See also Byron, *Prophecy of Dante* II.23-34 and the conclusion, IV.146-54.

²⁸ Thomas R. Frosch discusses Blake's idea of the body, and its romantic and modern contexts, in *The Awakening Albion: The Renovation of the Body in the Poetry of William Blake* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974). Although Frosch seldom mentions the artist's audience, the final chapter, "The Body of Imag-

ination," considers the question of a renewed community capable of accommodating renewed bodies—i.e., the community "beyond the dualism of the community and the individual" (p. 154).

²⁹ Parts of earlier versions of this paper found forgiving and vigorous audiences at Mills College, Arizona

State University, and Louisiana State University. Meanwhile, Michael Fischer and Hugh Witemeyer of the University of New Mexico and Marvin Morillo of Tulane University offered a number of indisputable suggestions for revision—gratefully accepted.