TESE DE DOUTORAMENTO

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S ILLUMINATED BOOKS AND ALAN MOORE'S GRAPHIC NOVELS

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Comparative Study of William Blake's illuminated books and Alan Moore's graphic novels

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II. ABSTRACT

Comparative Study of William Blake's illuminated books
and Alan Moore's graphic novels

Blake and Moore have a similar idea of visionary imagination as the power that divinises the self and expands it beyond social convention. The aim of this thesis is to situate the authors in the different moments they occupy in the process of secularisation.

The second objective of this thesis is to define the characteristics of the natural supernatural in Blake and Moore and the differences between their attitudes towards the cultural, philosophical and social circumstances in which they propose their versions of re-enchantment.

The third objective of this thesis is to explore the notion of nature in the work of Blake and Moore to show that there is a discursive aspect of nature that fits into rational structures and another excluded aspect. This thesis analyses how these two authors present the possibility of the regeneration and show that it depends on the transformation of the excluded aspect of nature into positive energies, rather than on a transcendent agency. The comparative analysis reveals the ideas of transformation of nature and of the mind both authors propose, and the imaginative and visionary modes of perceptions that would lead to this change.

Finally, this thesis discovers the particular interpretation of Blake Moore creates and its key elements. For this purpose, the thesis explores the Fall in Blake and Moore as a) a disfunction of the faculties (embodied in mythical figures), b) the conventional discourses of religion, science, philosophy and c) a mixture of these.

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III. NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS FOR BLAKE'S ILLUMINATED BOOKS

All quotations from Blake's works are taken from David V. Erdman's *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (1988), and are referred to in the text by plate and line number followed by E and a page number.

Am America, a Prophecy
BU The [first] Book of Urizen
J Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion
M Milton, a Poem
MHH The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
SE Songs of Experience
SI Songs of Innocence
SIE Songs of Innocence and of Experience
VDA Visions of the Daughters of Albion
VLJ Visions of the Last Judgement

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IV. RESUMO EN GALEGO

A presente tese de doutoramento consiste nun traballo comparativo entre William Blake (1757-1827), o poeta visionario, pintor e gravador inglés, e Alan Moore (1953-), guionista de banda deseñada e escritor contemporáneo inglés. A idea principal na que se basea a comparación é a concepción da imaxinación en ambos autores. Blake e Moore conciben a imaxinación como unha dimensión espiritual da realidade capaz de liberar á humanidade dos límites impostos polas convencións e polos modos hexemónicos de vivir. Esta conexión motivou a Moore a realizar numerosas alusións, citas e referencias intertextuais a Blake, a súa poesía e a súa arte e mesmo a convertelo en personaxe na novela gráfica *From Hell* (publicada orixinalmente entre 1989 e 1996). Outro punto en común importante entre os dous autores é a combinación de medios verbais e visuais. Os libros iluminados de Blake érguense como antecesores temperáns da novela gráfica, eido no que Blake é a miúdo unha fonte de inspiración.

Blake e Moore teñen unha idea similar de imaxinación visionaria coma o poder que diviniza o ser e o expande máis alá das convencións sociais. Hai paralelismos importantes entre as ideas de Blake e as de Moore. Os dous autores tentan unir as realidades físicas e mentais separadas pola convención, os dous afirman a inmanencia do divino como unha forza creativa e transgresora, e as técnicas de representación tanto de Blake (loita mítica) como de Moore (realismo máxico) responden á crenza na necesidade de transformación das percepcións para liberar os poderes creativos; Blake atribúe o poder creativo e transgresor divino ao ser humano no seu aspecto material e espiritual, Moore atribúe un significado divino a toda a vida material. A liberación das forzas creativas posibilitaría percibir como realmente son aquelas enerxías naturais (como as que manifestan o corpo e a sexualidade) que a moralidade relixiosa convencional considera impuros, malignos e unha limitación do espírito.

Blake tendeu cara a un maior idealismo na última parte da súa obra, pasando de centrarse na idea de enerxía (corporal, sexual e creativa) a centrarse no concepto de imaxinación para a transformación das percepcións. Moore mudou na súa idea de utilizar a linguaxe como medio de transformación da percepción creando nalgúns casos representacións positivas e utópicas desta transformación, e noutros, representacións distópicas ou imbuídas de terror.

Esta tese contribúe ao estudo da relevancia contemporánea dos estudos de Blake na cultura popular. Poucos estudos se centraron na análise comparativa de Blake con Moore e da recepción de Blake por Moore. Entre estes últimos destácase o artigo "Panelling Parallax: The Fearful Symmetry of William Blake and Alan Moore" (2006), por Roger Whitson, que analiza os paradoxos e os significados políticos da relación entre os autores. Tamén compre mencionar "*From Hell*: Blake and Evil in Popular Culture" (2007), un capítulo de Jason Whittaker onde se estudan as nocións románticas do mal nos dous autores, e "'She Brings Apocalypse': Sex, Imagination and Redemptive Transgression in William Blake and the Graphic Novels of Alan Moore" (2011), un artigo de Matthew J. A. Green. Nel, Green céntrase nos aspectos proféticos e feministas de ambos autores. Nun capítulo de libro posterior, "'The End of the World. That's

a Bad Thing, right?': Form and Function from William Blake to Alan Moore" (2012), Green estuda a relación entre as ideas de Blake e de Moore sobre a percepción e as súas técnicas formais. Nesta tese expándese e afóndase nesta liña de investigación aplicando a un corpus máis amplo perspectivas semellantes e usando os resultados dunha análise comparativa para trazar a evolución en Moore da influencia de Blake. Ademais, inspírome en estudos previos sobre Moore, tales como *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* (2009), por Annalisa Di Lido; o volume *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore: Critical Essays on the Graphic Novels* (2012), editado por Todd A. Comer e Joseph Michael Sommers; e a colección *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* (2013), editada por Green.

Para poder analizar as obras de Blake e de Moore e comparalas para defender a tese de que teñen unha idea similar de imaxinación visionaria coma o poder que diviniza o ser e o expande máis alá das convencións sociais, a comparación enmarcouse no proceso moderno de secularización. Tentouse definir en que momento de dito proceso se atopaban Blake e Moore. Tanto Blake coma Moore desenrolaron as súas actividades literarias e artísticas ca idea de contrarrestar certos efectos do proceso de secularización tratando de reencantar o mundo, pero ao mesmo tempo sendo moi críticos co encantamento feito pola relixión institucionalizada. Blake tentou, entre a Ilustración e o Romanticismo, emancipar aos seres humanos da relixión convencional utilizando as estratexias da propia relixión, aproveitando o mito e seu potencial utópico. Moore, escribe nunha época de crecente secularismo, pero unha que ao mesmo tempo estimulou certo reencantamento, máis que un maior desencanto (Partridge 1-2). Mentres Blake loitaba por rexeitar a opresión da relixión estatal sen desencantar o mundo no proceso, Moore intenta tamén reencantar o mundo sen caer nos fanatismos violentos e convencións castradoras que agroman de novo na sociedade a finais do século XX e principios do XXI.

No estudo de Blake, téñense en conta o contexto e a filosofía dos séculos XVIII e XIX. Na liña de moitos pensadores ilustrados, Blake criticou a relixión institucionalizada, a adopción supersticiosa de crenzas relixiosas e o uso ideolóxico destas crenzas para a enxeñería social. Ao mesmo tempo, en contra de ditos filósofos ilustrados e racionalistas, para Blake non se seguía desta crítica que o mito relixioso fose en si malo ou tivese que ser erradicado; de feito, defendeu que a esencia do Cristianismo (e de tódalas relixións) non reside na repetición da doutrina ou no cumprimento de normas, senón na capacidade imaxinativa que reside no amor, no perdón e na cooperación de toda a humanidade para a creación mediante a arte e a ciencia.

No caso de Moore, a idea de reencantamento deriva das nocións contraculturais neorrománticas de relixión e da espiritualidade xurdidas nos anos sesenta do século XX. Destes movementos toma unha actitude politicamente crítica, ao mesmo tempo que defende espiritualidades alternativas baseadas na creatividade contra a imposición da formas relixiosas tradicionais e convencionais. Neste eido contracultural, Blake xa era unha icona de revolución profética e liberdade artística, imaxinativa e mesmo sexual. Malia a súa formación nestes ideais, Moore desenvolveu unha mirada crítica e cauta fronte á superficialidade, simpleza e inxenuidade que ocasionalmente se atopa nas ideas utópicas desta época.

Xunto con este obxectivo máis xeneral de situar os reencantamentos que propoñen Blake e Moore nos diferentes momentos do proceso de secularización, o segundo obxectivo é explorar a noción da natureza nas obras de Blake e Moore; en particular, o seu interese polos aspectos da natureza que a razón abstracta non pode conter e polo tanto exclúe. O terceiro obxectivo é analizar os termos artísticos e poéticos nos que os autores presentan a posibilidade de rexenerar o mundo mediante a transformación dos aspectos da natureza convertidos en negativos ao ser

excluídos pola convención, en forzas positivas. O cuarto e último obxectivo é explicar as particularidades da interpretación de Moore das ideas de Blake.

A metodoloxía aplicada na análise deste estudo comparativo incluíu: 1) a comparación das ideas de natureza, visión e mal en ambos autores; 2) o estudo de literatura crítica sobre estes temas; 3) a exploración dos contextos culturais que inflúen na comprensión destas ideas polos autores 4) o estudo das súas críticas da moralidade convencional, en particular das normas de xénero e sexuais; 5) a análise da representación da transgresión e da alienación das percepcións mediante a técnica gótica de distorsións e transformacións de personaxes en ambos autores; 5) o estudo comparativo de pasaxes de Moore con pasaxes de Blake nas que directa ou indirectamente se inspira.

En canto ao corpus, seleccionouse primeiro en base a criterios formais: escolléronse libros iluminados nos que a mestura e o equilibrio entre o visual e o verbal é maior, para poder contar con suficientes datos tanto acerca do texto escrito por Blake como do aspecto visual, é dicir, os gravados que tamén compoñen estes libros. Deste xeito facilítase a súa comparación coas novelas gráficas. O segundo criterio de selección é temático: escollín as obras que tratan os temas da percepción, o mal e a sexualidade que hai que entender en relación coa crenza de Blake e de Moore na imaxinación como medio para superar as convencións. No tratamento destes temas pode verse con claridade a influencia da heterodoxia relixiosa, artística e política Blakeana en Moore.

O primeiro tema que se analiza é a percepción, xa que en ambos autores se ve a necesidade de transformar os modos habituais de percepción dun modo que responda á imaxinación máis que a modos de percibir habituais desenrolados para a autopreservación.

O segundo tema é o mal. En Blake o mal procede nun nivel antropolóxico dunha disfunción da facultade da razón e nun nivel social da opresión que o opresor xustifica cun uso distorsionado da razón. A crítica Blakeana á idea de razón que se enarbola para xustificar a explotación leuse en tempos Posmodernos frecuentemente como un rexeitamento da razón que Blake en realidade sostivo durante un corto período de tempo e posiblemente de forma un tanto irónica (como ocorre por exemplo en *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, impreso en 1790). Para Blake, en realidade, o mal procede dunha razón caída, abstracta, que domina ao resto de facultades, separando ao ser humano do principio divino do xenio poético e a imaxinación. Esta razón condena como pecado as manifestacións do xenio creador. Blake, sen embargo, pasa pouco a pouco de poñer o énfase na representación desta forza maligna a poñelo, nos libros iluminados máis tardíos, no perigo dunha liberación descontrolada de enerxías naturais. Isto implica que contra os abusos do poder e as xerarquías políticas e relixiosas Blake oporá formas de revolución imaxinativas máis que literais e violentas.

O terceiro tema é a sexualidade. A convención reprime as manifestacións eróticas da imaxinación. Blake inicialmente chama a estas enerxías "Evil" ou "Hell," (*MHH* 3-4; E34) empregando de modo irónico a terminoloxía do moralismo hipócrita que condena a expresión do desexo que provén da imaxinación e rompe a orde estabelecida.

As obras onde estes temas aparecen reflectidos con máis frecuencia e profundidade son os libros iluminados Blakeanos *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Book of Thel* (composto en 1789), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *America, a Prophecy* (1793), *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794), e *Milton, a Poem* (impreso c. 1811); e en canto a novelas gráficas de Moore, analicei *V for Vendetta* (1982-1989), *Swamp Thing* (1984-1987), *From Hell*, *Promethea* (1999-2005), *Neonomicon* (2010-2011) e *Providence* (2015-2017).

A tese ten unha estrutura bipartita. A primeira parte consta dos capítulos do 1 ao 3, que tratan o contexto e a teoría. A segunda trata as análises de cada un dos tres temas arriba mencionados, ás que corresponden os capítulos do 4 ao 6.

No capítulo 1, situouse a Blake e Moore no proceso de secularización, e estudáronse os movementos culturais do Romanticismo e o Posmodernismo nos que se enmarcan a miúdo e nos que a secularización adquire diferentes formas. A exploración das actitudes dos dous autores fronte ás culturas dominantes dos seus respectivos contextos axuda a evitar malinterpretacións e adquirimos unha base para explorar o contexto cultural en máis detalle. Neste capítulo vemos a diferencia entre o reencantamento de Blake e o de outros autores románticos, a pesar de que Blake se estuda comunmente como parte deste movemento literario. Vemos tamén que o reencantamento que propón Moore ten tanto herdanza romántica como Posmoderna. Blake respondeu á Revolución Industrial e ao proceso de secularización divinizando ao ser humano e uníndoo a enerxías creativas e instintos tradicionalmente considerados malos. Criticou a distorsión producida pola abstracción da ciencia e polo interese egoísta que reprimen o auténtico poder visionario humano. Con mitos e lendas, desafiou a noción ilustrada de realidade e traballou por superar a división entre suxeito e obxecto. Cría no carácter sagrado da natureza, pero sen seguir a noción de natureza e da unión con ela que encomendaban outros románticos coma William Wordsworth. En Wordsworth a natureza é esencialmente boa, non está afectada pola caída, mentres que en Blake hai unha duplicidade na idea de natureza, xa que está dividida entre os aspectos aceptados nos discursos da ciencia e da relixión e os que non teñen cabida neles. Estes últimos quedan relegados, resultando hostís e alleos ao ser humano, que queda incapacitado para comprendelos. Moore responde ao mundo secularizado Posmoderno e aos seus cambios tecnolóxicos cunha divinización das capacidades creativas do ser humano, recuperando unha noción do ser humano como divino na que o corpo non é un elemento negativo. Na liña romántica, Moore pon ao Eros e ao inconsciente como fonte das capacidades visionarias e oponse á explotación da natureza; pero estas ideas adquiren nel rasgos Posmodernos: unha maior énfase no individualismo, unha noción non tradicional de xénero e un materialismo que explora aspectos do corpo, como a súa animalidade ou calidade de estrañeza, que non exploraba o romanticismo. Como Blake, Moore rexeitou a relixión institucional e, como outros Posmodernos, explorou unha espiritualidade ecléctica e multicultural. A posición complexa de Blake, que criticaba o rexeitamento ilustrado do mito ao tempo que combatía, como os ilustrados, o poder e a opresión, favoreceu o interese Posmoderno nel. Mais Blake, a diferenza dos Posmodernos, tiña fe en ideas universais fóra destes ámbito. Moitos autores Posmodernos identificáronse coa repulsa de Blake das convencións e institucións que presentaban o seu discurso como universalmente válido. Moore, que desafía o Posmodernismo cómplice das formas culturais do capitalismo tardío e recoñece a banalidade, superficialidade e comercialismo que forman parte do panorama cultural e social, aproveitou recursos desta mesma cultura dominante para achegarse ao transcendentalismo romántico mediante a ironía do Posmodernismo.

O capítulo 2 trata os contextos socioculturais dos que xorde a cosmovisión particular de Blake e os discursos que afectan á interpretación de Moore da obra de Blake. Entre eles destacan a contracultura dos anos sesenta nos países de fala inglesa e os novos movementos relixiosos, tendencias psicanalíticas e escolas esotéricas. Estes marcos condicionaron a aproximación de Moore ao antinomismo e á heterodoxia Blakeanos e centraron a súa atención nos aspectos de rebelión e de misticismo de Blake. A cultura popular dos sesenta mitificou a Blake. Moitas

correntes de pensamento e círculos culturais que inflúen en Moore son anti-ilustrados e propoñen, para ir máis alá de formas estabelecidas de ser e de vivir, procesos de liberación de enerxías internas. Isto determina que se lese a Blake como máis anti-ilustrado do que realmente era. A exploración de estas influencias facilita distinguir onde Moore se separa das ideas de Blake e cando é máis fiel ao Blake histórico.

O capítulo 3 explica os conceptos teóricos de influencia (Harold Bloom), *structures of feeling* (Raymond Williams) e razón instrumental (Theodor Adorno e Max Horkheimer), e explica a relación entre razón, lei, poder e exceso seguindo a Terry Eagleton. Máis especificamente, dentro da noción de influencia de Bloom, exploráronse os termos "misprision," "clinamen" e "tessera." Escolléronse algúns conceptos dos estudos do Gótico para explorar a transgresión e a alienación con respecto ao mal, e os conceptos de diabolismo, satanismo e *kategoros* que utiliza Whittaker en "*From Hell*" para falar do mal en Blake e Moore. Das teorías de Bloom, empregáronse os conceptos de "misprision,", "clinamen" e "tessera" para explicar omisións deliberadas ou accidentais, distorsións e engadidos que conforman o Blake de Moore. Os conceptos de Adorno e Horkheimer e Eagleton axudan a traballar os aspectos específicos do racionalismo que Blake e Moore critican. Tendo en conta estas teorías de Adorno e Horkheimer e Eagleton defínese o concepto de mal co que se traballa nas análises. En canto a Eagleton, utilízase a noción de "holy terror" e a súa visión do problema da liberdade para encadrar os aspectos controvertidos da idea de enerxía Blakeana, así como o uso de Moore do tema da liberdade e do sublime. Tamén se ten en conta a explicación psicanalítica do mal en Eagleton como imposición dunha fantasía na realidade allea para traballar nos conceptos de mal satánico e negación como formas deste tipo de fantasía que se impón. A continuación preséntanse aqueles conceptos dos estudos do Gótico a ter en conta na análise dos conceptos opostos que engloban a idea do mal nos dous autores: a transgresión e a alienación. É dicir, as ferramentas para analizar cando símbolos tradicionais do mal encarnan a rebelión fronte á opresión ou a opresión mesma; cando encarnan resistencia ao poder, ou o poder e o dominio mesmo. Do Gótico tómanse os conceptos de transgresión e de monstruosidade como formas de transformación cultural e de diverxencia das normas culturais. Por último, incorpóranse os conceptos de diabolismo, satanismo e *kategoros* para falar de figuras que representan nocións positivas ou negativas do mal.

Nas análises dos textos compáranse elementos narrativos, personaxes, imaxes visuais, imaxinería literaria e artística, e ideas das obras de Blake e de Moore. Analízanse tanto puntos de influencia directa de Blake sobre Moore (por exemplo, citas, alusións ou imaxes tiradas dos libros iluminados nas novelas gráficas) como puntos de influencia indirecta, como poden ser pasaxes das novelas gráficas que inclúen ideas Blakeanas recibidas a través de outros autores como Aldous Huxley. Tamén se analizan as diferenzas entre os autores e se sinalan os puntos de converxencia de ambos autores no uso que fan de mitoloxías e tradicións.

Estas análises amosan que en ambos autores a natureza aparece como un poder interno, visionario e inmanente, moitas veces conectado a arquetipos femininos. En Blake, a natureza é inseparable da idea do divino, unha forza interior, que, anque corrompida e denigrada polas convencións sociais, debe ser recoñecida tal como é. A noción de natureza en Moore tamén é visionaria e, como en Blake, pode amosarse monstruosa, vista a través do utilitarismo e de estruturas convencionais. Tras ler a Blake máis a fondo, a idea da natureza en Moore pasa de ser panteísta e primordial a conectar con ideas de arte e creatividade humana. A diferenza é que, mentres Blake acentúa máis o elemento divino do humano, Moore fai ao humano máis

continxente, estraño e perturbador. A unión de natureza e mente humana en Moore baséase na confusión dos límites entre un e outro ámbitos, reflectindo un universo caótico que asolaga as vellas ideas de dominio humano. O neorromanticismo das novelas gráficas é interrompido por dúbidas Posmodernas sobre o individuo que levan a perspectivas posthumanas.

O capítulo 4 sobre a percepción e a visión amosa que en ambos autores a imaxinación permite experimentar a natureza tal como é, non distorsionada polo interese e pola razón instrumental. O modo visionario de percepción que tratan ambos autores implica un modo de vida e de habitar no mundo baseado na interconexión con outros seres, cos elementos naturais e cos universos internos e externos, os cales se entende que están constituídos á vez pola natureza e pola imaxinación, entre as cales o límite faise impreciso. En ambos a imaxinación e a razón concíbense como capacidades que deberían estar nunha contrariedade positiva, confrontándose dialecticamente a unha á outra e sostendo así a existencia. Moore emprega a Blake para rexeitar o materialismo que privilexia a razón por riba da imaxinación. Non obstante, elementos como a referencia á psicodelia das drogas, unha imaxe menos sublimada das forzas inconscientes e a representación metaficcional da revelación, distíngueno de Blake.

O capítulo 5 estuda o tema do ben e o mal, con particular énfase no mal, comezando co diabolismo inicial de Blake e a súa influencia nas representacións transgresoras de Moore. Analízase a dinámica de opostos de Blake, na que se distingue entre contrarios (opostos complementarios que coexisten e se recoñecen como mutuamente necesarios) e negacións (opostos nos que unha parte é dominante e excluínte da outra). Blake centra esta crítica no interese egoísta, mentres que Moore a centra na intolerancia. Blake reaccionaba á utilización dos discursos ilustrados para lexitimar a explotación; Moore reaccionou aos discursos do anti-terrorismo utilizados para fomentar a xenofobia. Nos dous casos, a negación é unha fantasía de poder que exclúe outras, entrando nunha relación con elas oposta á de contrariedade positiva. Hai continuidades entre o diabolismo de Blake e a rebeldía contracultural de Moore, pero tamén características máis Posmodernas no xogo con puntos de vista satánicos en Moore e crítica Posmoderna ás contradicións da Modernidade. Nas novelas gráficas de Moore, personaxes coma William Gull, o obispo Lilliman e Robert Suydam son *kategoroi* Blakeanos que representan unha incapacidade para entender as enerxías instintivas, especialmente as sexuais. Estes personaxes parécense a Urizen, que anticipa a negación hiper-racionalista e o seu descenso á loucura á que supostamente pretende opoñerse. No capítulo descríbese a evolución do diabolismo en Blake cara o rexeitamento de Satán, un cambio que corresponde en Moore cunha visión máis complexa da liberación das enerxías instintivas e a imaxinación; a transgresión xa non só aparece asociada ao diabolismo romántico senón tamén á negación, e a imaxinación non só aparece como dimensión de realidades utópicas senón tamén terroríficas e violentas.

O capítulo 6, sobre o erotismo e a sexualidade en Blake a Moore tendo en conta a perspectiva de xénero. Fronte á visión negativa do corpo dende posturas relixiosas convencionais ou doutrinas filosóficas o corpo para ambos é positivo. As representacións do corpo en ambos autores como a parte tanxible da alma inflúen en todos estes conceptos. En Moore, o corpo pode ser o núcleo de resistencia última fronte a imposicións, e está representado de xeitos grotescos e abxectos que se diferencian das ideas tradicionais de beleza e de normas de xénero. O capítulo reflexiona sobre a posición críticas de ambos autores diante do patriarcado, especialmente en relación ca relixión. O capítulo confirma as críticas de ambos autores aos puntos de vista mecanicistas e naturalistas do ser humano, do corpo e da

sexualidade. Os dous conectan estes temas ca imaxinación e amosan como a ideoloxía afecta a estes aspectos negativamente. O desexo sexual é bo en si nun principio en ambos autores, pero está suxeito a manipulacións perversas que impulsan a posuír a un outro deshumanizado. Esta visión está determinada polas ideas Blakeanas de independencia de sistemas impostos e de "sensual enjoyment" (Blake, *MHH* 14; E39), en parte transmitida indirectamente por outros autores a Moore. Este reproduce na súa lectura de Blake elementos da contracultura dos 60 e a súa liberación sexual, se ben tamén reflicte críticas e dúbidas que recordan ás de Blake cando dixo que as técnicas místico-sexuais do visionario Emmanuel Swedenborg podían ser prexudiciais (véxase Schuchard, Introduction). Analízanse as concepcións místicas da sexualidade nos dous autores en relación co tema da expansión e a liberación da consciencia, así como as relacións de xénero segundo o patrón de contrariedade ou negación, e sinálanse as contradicións que en ambos autores aparecen en relación co seu tratamento da muller. É importante sinalar que malia estas críticas ao patriarcado, Blake tamén representou actitudes e accións en conflito coa defensa da muller. Nas súas obras máis tardías, utiliza figuras femininas de poder dun xeito negativo para representar o aspecto terrible da natureza caída. Ademais, os Zoas aparecen como personaxes masculinos orixinarios dos cais as Emanacións femininas só son derivacións. En canto a Moore, representa ás mulleres como vítimas do patriarcado, que en última instancia non poden evitar a súa opresión; noutros casos, utiliza arquetipos femininos que se arriscan á universalización. A denigración e a destitución de figuras femininas aparece moito en Moore como forma de dar significado poético ao sufrimento sen sentido experimentado polas mulleres, máis non en tódolos casos en que se trata o tema do abuso sexual é posible estabelecer dita interpretación. Ambos producen representacións que poderían potencialmente xustificar normas sexistas. Mentres que Blake limita a liberación ás veces á esfera sexual, en Moore os requirimentos dos modos do gótico, da parodia ou da transgresión toman prioridade por riba da mensaxe feminista que lanza noutros lugares.

Ca axuda destas análises, respónderonse as preguntas da tese satisfactoriamente. Comezando polo tema da natureza, vemos que en Blake e Moore o concepto expándese para incluír capacidades humanas convencionalmente opostas ao non humano, sendo a máis importante a imaxinación. Blake usa o antropomorfismo para favorecer a empatía do ser humano ca natureza e menoscabar a oposición entre eles, mentres que Moore fai o humano monstruoso, animal, sagrado, estraño e diabólico para desestabilizar as definicións que opoñen o humano ao natural. En ambos o desexo e a visión conectan o corpo e a mente.

As conclusións da tese aportan elementos que poden axudar a comprender mellor a recepción e evolución de ideas derivadas do Romanticismo e de Blake, e presentan suxestións para futuras investigacións.

O estudo dos temas da percepción e a visión amosa semellanzas e diferenzas entre ambos autores sobre a relación entre as facultades. Imaxinación e razón deben entrar nunha relación de contrariedade para a expansión da mente. Moore emprega a Blake para defender esta contrariedade positiva. Dito uso de Blake podería ser de relevancia no estudo da súa influencia noutros autores e contextos.

Os resultados con respecto ao rexeitamento dos conceptos tradicionais de moralidade demostran que tanto Blake como Moore critican a imposición das fantasías de poder. Nos dous casos, dita fantasía é unha negación no sentido que Blake lle daba á palabra. Este é outro patrón que suxire a pregunta de se está presente noutros autores influenciados por Blake, e se aparece en combinación coa preocupación que Moore amosou pola intolerancia que se agocha detrás

de moitos discursos hexemónicos actuais. As continuidades entre o diabolismo de Blake e a rebeldía contracultural de Moore, así como o foco no punto de vista satánico en Moore como crítica Posmoderna ás contradicións do suxeito moderno tamén son elementos que poden aportar ferramentas de comparación entre o Romanticismo e a cultura popular actual, especialmente no que se refire á contracultura e tendencias alternativas nos medios. Por exemplo, moitas personaxes poden ser analizados como *kategoroi* Blakeanos e explorar se as súas características responden a interpretacións similares ás que fixo Moore ou non.

As críticas de ambos autores a ideoloxías mecanicistas e naturalistas e a como estas afectan á sexualidade, así como as súas estratexias para superar estes puntos de vista mediante concepcións místicas e imaxinativas da sexualidade permítennos entender mellor a xénese, a recepción e a evolución de ideas derivadas do Romanticismo, e tamén exploralas con precisión noutras épocas e autores. O impacto das ideas Blakeanas de independencia de sistemas impostos e de "sensual enjoyment" (Blake, *MHH* 14; E39) en xeracións posteriores coma as de Allen Ginsberg ou Moore transformou a visión da sexualidade en xeral e da interpretación do tema da sexualidade en Blake en particular. As ambivalencias presentes nos elementos derivados da contracultura dos 60 en Moore e as súas críticas e dúbidas indican que autores actuais continúan preocupados por estas ideas. Moore tenta resolver un problema básico: a revolución sexual non saíu como tiña que saír, polo que hai que volver a Blake, o pioneiro da liberdade sexual, para atopar respostas. Ao estudalo, atópase con que non era unha figura tan heroica como na mitoloxía contracultural se entende a Blake: tiña inmensos problemas e preocupacións con respecto á sexualidade e que facer con ela unha vez que a imaxinación recobra o seu lugar primordial entre as facultades mentais. Este problema esténdese en ambos autores no conflito coa defensa da muller e o seu papel nun escenario post-apocalíptico utópico. Estes achados poden ser útiles para explicar por que Blake aparece a miúdo na literatura contemporánea para abordar os problemas da sexualidade e a opresión patriarcal.

En resumo, a influencia de Blake sobre Moore e outros autores Posmodernos pode explicarse polo interese nas súas ideas de rexeneración e reencantamento, así como na súa defensa do mito en tempos anti-míticos, entendidos como intentos radicais de devolver poder aos mulleres e homes comúns, máis que como un impulso de retroceso cara á seguridade dun universo relixioso convencional. A arte, a mitopoeia e a narración liberan a imaxinación e permiten estabelecer relación ca natureza, xa non considerada allea, inerte ou externa. Mentres que Blake anima a ver a natureza como humana como modo de xerar empatía con ela, Moore chega ao mesmo fin resaltando o animal, natural e estraño no humano. Pódese tentar empregar este esquema para investigar como intentos neorrománticos de reencantamento reflicten de novo estas similitudes e diferenzas con respecto a épocas anteriores. Tomar o relevo da "Human Form Divine" (*SI* 18.11, 18.15; E12-13) de Blake é en sí unha crenza radical na igualdade de tódolos homes e mulleres máis alá de formas hexemónicas de xerarquía e poder. Sen embargo convén continuar investigando se sempre foi ou é así, e preguntarse por outras posibilidades.

En canto a suxestións para futuras investigacións, esta tese relaciona dous proxectos diferentes de reunión entre o suxeito e o obxecto en diferentes momentos culturais, o cal é útil para estudos actuais sobre o Romanticismo e o Posmodernismo, sobre influencia na cultura popular, novos movementos relixiosos ou espiritualidades alternativas na literatura e os medios e tendencias neorrománticas na literatura contemporánea en inglés. Podemos incluír tamén como suxestións para investigacións futuras, o estudo das referencias a Blake en outros autores de novela gráfica como pode ser Grant Morrison. Ademais podería ser de interese explorar o

impacto das personaxes de Blake a súa representación visual no mundo da banda deseñada e o cine, especialmente de terror, ciencia ficción e fantasía, e incluso o estudo dun corpus que comprenda as novelas en prosa de Moore, como a recente *Jerusalem* (2016) e outras obras de Blake tales como *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (comezado c. 1796 e inacabado).

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0. INTRODUCTION

William Blake's imagination has had an enormous impact on contemporary literature and popular culture. His idea of imagination presents it as a capacity to create a spiritual dimension of reality that liberates humanity from the limits of convention and from the imposition of hegemonic modes of living, thinking and being that impoverish existence. This thesis explores the relationship between Blake and Alan Moore, a contemporary comic book writer who invokes Blake as a crucial predecessor, to investigate whether he shares with Blake this idea of imagination. The comparison between Blake's and Moore's ideas of perception, morality, and sexuality helps to define these artists' strategies before the crisis of meaning that came as a consequence of the modern process of secularisation. The comparison between the authors will also characterise their attempts at re-enchantment of nature and discover the continuities and discontinuities between the Romantic and contemporary countercultural currents of thought.

Blake is often considered and studied as an early representative of the Romantic tradition. Although Blake engaged with Enlightened philosophy and science in many critical ways, this thesis will necessarily consider ideas of Blake in later periods of history while maintaining real, historical Blake as a frame of reference. This includes exploring the emphasis on Blake's aspects that have been studied as part of the Romantic tradition. I will work with a combination of definitions of Romanticism. According to M. H. Abrams, Romanticism was a literary reaction to the growing scientific explanation (and exploitation) of the world consisting in the "displacement from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference" (Abrams 13). Robert Langbaum speaks of a relocation of the old concept of God in the Self (Langbaum 241), and Edward Larrissy, taking Jean-François Lyotard's theory as a basis, centres Romanticism around the mission of "present[ing] the unpresentable" (Larrissy, *Romanticism* 4-5).[1]

Moore's countercultural re-enchantment is part of a Neo-Romantic tendency in contemporary pop culture that began around the 1960s when the first alternative youth movements began to emerge as an autonomous social group. This tendency continues practically until the present day, completely independently from previous Neo-Romantic movements such as Late Victorian Neo-Romanticism and the Neo-Romantic reaction to early Modernism. Contemporary popular Neo-Romanticism often manifests in a set of ideas on religion and spirituality that are present in Moore's works. Among these ideas are the rejection of authority and of universal truths, the blurring of the fiction / reality opposition, and the inclusion of sexuality in spiritual practices. Although some of such Postmodern ideas developed independently, they often evolved from the Romantic tradition and, more particularly, from Blake, who was considered a prophet of rebellion, artistic imagination, and sexual liberation.

[1] See chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of the definitions and characteristics of Romanticism that will be used in this thesis.

Through the course of this thesis I will use Lyotard's and David Harvey's theories of Postmodernism to provide a cultural backdrop to Moore and his Neo-Romantic and Blakean inspiration. Lyotard's Postmodern critique of discourses (that of science among them) that can become totalising and determine the whole of reality (3-4) opens the way to consider reality in a more imaginative way. According to Harvey, this enabled theological attempts to "reaffirm God's truth without abandoning the powers of reason" (41). This cultural condition also gave way to shifts in literature: from one reality seen from multiple perspectives to multiple realities that collide (41); and a shift towards suspension of belief, but also of disbelief (McHale qtd. in Harvey 56). The new Postmodern power of images, signs and fiction also has darker implications: society and desire become dominated and manipulated by the masters of images and signs (Harvey 287). This power manifests in the tyranny of the supreme fiction, money (101). Simulacra allow "escape, fantasy and distraction", emphasising other realities (302). Larrissy, again using Lyotard's theory, links Modernism (with Romanticism as its critical moment) and Postmodernism through their ideas of the sublime and the unpresentable (*Romanticism*, 6). Transcendent and utopian in Romanticism and Gothic and dystopian in Postmodernism, the sublime takes different forms but still organises poetics and narratives (7). These concepts of Postmodernism support the notion that, as well as a disenchanting effect, there are in Postmodernism tendencies that favour a re-enchantment of the world that in some aspects is similar and in others diverges from the Romantic re-enchantment. Both similarities and differences will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Both Romanticism and Postmodernism respond to the modern process of secularisation by sacralising nature. The Romantic version of this sacralisation was poetic and idealistic. The Postmodern re-enchantment of nature is also poetic, but it rejects the idealistic concept of re-enchantment as a heroic great narrative in favour of *pétit recits* that do not aspire to establish higher truths, but only to create new realities in constant flux. Another way in which Romanticism and Postmodernism responded to secularisation was by focusing on individual desire as the basis to think about truth and imagination. Romanticism proposed the return to an inner Edenic state consisting in the restoration of the fragmented mind into unity; this would also enable the recovery of the original unity with others and with the great self of nature (Abrams 145). Rather than a return to an original Edenic state, Postmodernism proposes a journey through which the nomadic individual overcomes the illusion of Edenic fulfilment, although the illusory goal serves to motivate the journey itself. Inherently fluid, decentred, and free from identitarian or national definitions, the Postmodern individual sometimes experiences this freedom as a darker version of the Romantic sublime.

Moore's participation in a contemporary Neo-Romanticism can be seen in his interaction with Blake. Moore not only declares his fascination for the eighteenth century poet, but also explicitly uses Blake's works in his own graphic novels in multiple ways: through direct quotations, allusions, formal arrangements that express themes derived from Blake, references to Blake and Blake-inspired works by other authors, and even the use of Blake as a character.

Moore's reception of Blake took place in the aftermath of the changes caused by the popularisation of alternative spiritualities. The Postmodern re-enchantment started in the 1960s – more precisely, after 1965 – with the decline of Christian belief, the surge of political idealism of various movements (May '68 protests, pacifism, feminism, racial equality) and the flourishing of alternative spiritualities favoured by the arrival to America and Britain of Indian gurus (such as Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada) and other Eastern teachers (Partridge 97). Moore's

version of Blake draws from all these Postmodern social, political, and cultural movements and changes. These discourses promoted the importance of individual experience over received notions, encouraged acceptance of the body and worldly life (as is the case with some adaptations of Tantrism) as opposed to the asceticism and renunciations imposed by other religious traditions, and allowed the person seeking for spiritual knowledge to mix and match beliefs and practises freely from different origins to construct a syncretic pantheon or set of individual beliefs. Influenced by these ideas, Moore equally opposes concrete experiences to great received notions and emphasises materialism, embodied selves, and eclecticism.

0.1. THESIS STATEMENT

Blake and Moore have a similar idea of visionary imagination as the power that divinises the self and expands it beyond social conventions.

0.2. EXPLANATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE THESIS STATEMENT

Blake and Moore believe the source of divine vision and imagination is inside the human self, due to which they have similar characteristics. Blake focused on the importance of individual men and women as the only beings through which the divine exists and of physical energy and the senses. Similarly, Moore focuses on the materiality of life, placing sacred meaning in particular human situations, creations and gestures as opposed to general ideals. In order to express the significance of material life and its particulars, Blake invented mythical figures such as the Zoas to represent human capacities and feelings. Moore uses magical realism[2] to elevate the mundane to myth. Blake stressed embodiment through his own powerful references to birth, sexuality and material creation. Moore stresses the materiality of bodily life through continuous references to the power of the flesh in aspects like birth, sexuality and material creation. I will analyse the similarities of Blake and Moore's ideas of imagination, the human divine and art, and also a series of differences and their implications for the relationship between the authors.

Similarities reside in Blake and Moore's concept of imagination as the capacity that elevates humanity to the divine and of artistic creativity as the expression of divinity. Both identify the need to transform perceptions to liberate this divine human power; for both, the human self thus liberated from conventions can see the world as a significant animated entity and thus become creative. Moreover, they redefine evil against conventional religious morality, which often rejects what the authors consider the most precious human faculty: the imagination. Finally, they see the body and sexuality as sacred aspects of the self.

The differences between Blake and Moore reside in their dissimilar perspectives on the self. Blake has a more idealist concept of divine human self than Moore. Blake tries to overcome the division of soul and body by relocating the site of divinity in the human capacity to imagine and to love, love itself being an imaginative activity to perceive the unfallen form of what is loved. Moore's concept of human divinity has more to do with the materiality of poetic language that can rescue from abjection physical reality and the body, even its repulsive fluids.

[2] I am referring here to magical realism in a broad sense, as a literary style present in writers from Europe like Nikolai Gogol and Franz Kafka, in Latin American *realismo mágico* authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges, and also in Postmodern feminist writers like Angela Carter (see Faris and Parkinson Zamora, especially D'haen 193). The common characteristic is the combination of a highly detailed realistic setting with the presence of fantastic elements.

The distinction between fallen and unfallen forms takes Blake back to transcendentalist and idealist positions: thus, in his mythopoetics, fallen nature and the body come to be opposed to imagination, which becomes independent from them. Thus, Albion is seduced by Vala, the Emanation that personifies fallen nature (Abrams 263). In Romanticism, the divine is immanent to the self. In Postmodernism, on the contrary, neither a transcendent nor an immanent divinity is relevant to elevate the human self, divinised by his own vision, creative potential and capacity for transformation. The idea itself of the divine human is also different in Blake and in Moore. Blake's notion of the divine human is influenced by the notion of creation in the book of Genesis and often conceived as collective humanity as well as an individual person. Albion, the primal man, for example, is not merely an individual hero; he also personifies all humanity. Blake therefore interprets the fall from a traditional Christian perspective, as an event that affects all humanity. Moore, on the contrary, focuses on the individual, and interprets the fall in secular forms. For instance, as humanity's loss of harmony with nature, as the Kabbalistic abyss between god (a mixture of the god of Hebrew mysticism and a Postmodern *Aleph* that is all beings and nothing simultaneously) and creation or as a tragic emotional loss or trauma. The Biblical account is just one more of the possible ways to formulate this problem for Moore.

It would be simplistic to classify Blake as a typical Romantic or Moore as a typical Postmodern; both have particularities, complexities and individual attitudes towards their cultural contexts. Blake's Christianity was deeply critical of conventional and traditional religion; Moore avoids the superficial, simplistic and sometimes namby-pamby utopian ideas found in Postmodern alternative spiritualities that ignore the problems and difficulties of both the material world and spiritual enlightenment. Moore often makes more serious use of mythical patterns, including Biblical ones, like the messianic redemption or the Annunciation, that his contemporary Postmodern artists often use more ironically, reject or substitute by other kinds of narrative patterns. Blake portrayed the divine as immanent and very often (although not always, especially in later works) promoted a world-embracing spirituality that diverged from contemporary transcendentalist and idealist tendencies in literature, where tragic heroes are sacrificed or suffer ordeals and renunciation in order to attain a higher unity with nature (think here of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Werther* or Friedrich Hölderlin's *Hyperion*). Moore, as Blake did, promotes a world-embracing spirituality, but by no means easy or complacent ways to spiritual achievement, like Postmodern popular discourses suggest; even if symbolic there is always struggle and even Blakean self-annihilation in the fictional journey of the heroes.

0.3. ARGUMENTS AND CRITERIA

Other authors might also be chosen to represent the Romantic and Postmodernist ways of thinking about perception, good and evil, and sexuality. The first reason why I chose Blake is that he is a kind of exception in the history of British Romantic literature. Based on various traditions (the Bible, John Milton, the Eddas, Italian Neoplatonists, occult authors like Emmanuel Swedenborg, Paracelsus and Jakob Böhme, etc.), his works are usually classified as forerunners of Romanticism in a period when literary manifestations were still highly determined by Neoclassical forms. His ideas of imagination and nature, though, are different from those of authors like William Wordsworth. Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge believed in pantheism, in the intrinsic goodness of nature and in inspiration as condition for the spontaneous unity of matter and mind. For Blake nature is also holy, but it has been divided by

the fall and only through a process of transformation of perception can nature and mind be reconciled, and the frontier between human and non human overcome. This transformation needs both inspiration to start and a continuous criticism of the discourses that set limits to inspiration and resist transformation. Through the transformation of perception, those elements excluded by conventional ideas of matter and mind are acknowledged and those conventional ideas are banished as illusions.

The second reason to choose Blake over other authors is that he developed his own printing method, illuminated printing, which allowed him freedom to turn words into visual images and to include visual images between paragraphs, lines and words. This combination of the verbal and the visual is akin to the way in which words and images are combined in graphic novels today. Blake's complex technical devices are still innovative to the eye of Moore, who has also favoured similar experiments with the verbal and the visual in his graphic novels.

The third reason for my choice is Blake's apocalyptic understanding of revolution as both a spiritual and historical event. His reputation as rebel and his open position against state religion, patriarchy, slavery, and social oppression appeal to Postmodern political non-conformists. Twentieth and twenty-first century counterculture looked back at him as a precedent of political protest.

Finally, another reason that motivated my selection is the complexity of the concept of evil in Blake's work. For Blake, the source of evil lies in the disfunction of the faculty of reason and, at a social level, in the oppression justified by the distorted use of reason. This criticism of the traditional association of evil with unreason and good with reason invites a comparison with Postmodern relativism. Contemporary writers like Michael Dibdin and Thomas Harris often read Blake's antinomianism and early diabolism as precedents of their characters' relativistic positions. For Blake, evil consists in the "satanic" (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 192) forces of fallen reason that dominate the rest of faculties and justify exploitation, separate the human from the divine principle of the poetic genius, and condemn as sinful its manifestations. One of the most important of these manifestations is the erotic; Blake calls this erotic energy "Evil" or "Hell" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (printed c. 1790) (3-4, E34)[3], but in the ironic sense. The erotic is only sinful from the conventional religious point of view, because it disrupts the established order, precisely the source of satanic evil. Although Blake's celebration of energy is toned down or absent in his later works due to his growing fear of the dangers of an uncontrolled release of natural energies; in pop culture, especially New Age discourses, these dangers are often neglected or remain unconfronted. Blake's acknowledgment of the dangers of unrestrained energy, does not mean that he no longer praises energy, or that he ceases to support radical politics; but that, rather than literal violent revolution, he proposes imaginative forms of spirituality to oppose the ossified hierarchy of institutionalised religion at the service of the powerful and their values.

Moore is the most acclaimed of British graphic novel writers and often credited for having developed the sequential art, specifically the genre of superhero comics, to a new level.[4] Moore

[3] All quotations from Blake's works are taken from David V. Erdman's *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (1988), and are referred to in the text by plate and line number followed by E and a page number.

[4] It should be noted, though, that his achievements were made possible by previous developments in the medium and the genre, like Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *Fantastic Four* (1961-1970), which had already inaugurated the crisis narratives in superhero comics and the humanisation of a flat and idealised character type during the Cold War (Gavaler 150-151). During the World Wars, superheroes were established as morally superior and triumphant through vigilantism and authoritarian violence, whereas the Cold War tempered their hubris (Gavaler 101-102, 126). In contrast with most of the previous superhero comics, their superhuman powers do not entail a transcendence of the human condition. Lee and Kirby's *Fantastic Four* team,

shares with Blake the popular reputation of unorthodox, mad artist, rebel and anti-establishment icon. His public persona is also singular due to his involvement in occultism, his popularisation of magic in its modern variants and his anarchist ideas.

A fundamental factor in my choice of Moore were his ideas about the relationship between literature and the visual arts. Blake believed that the mixture of visual images and text in his illuminated books was the optimal medium for his prophetic messages, since it translated into sensible material the union between reason (text) and energy (images).[5] Moore argues that the combination of visual images and text in comics and graphic novels makes them the ideal medium to promote higher consciousness and stimulate imagination because reading these texts requires the simultaneous use of rational understanding and sense perception.

0.4. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The theme of imagination in Blake and is an essential part of the re-enchantment that they oppose to the negative effects of the process of secularisation. Though imagination in Blake maintains religious notes, it also has a secular aspect, as it centres spirituality around artistic creativity. Imagination in Moore similarly possesses a sacred quality, but it is a yet more secular capacity than in Blake, as it is not in his case identified with religion or with a particular tradition (as Blake does with Christianity), but is rather the source of all stories and myths.

The most general aim of this thesis is to situate Blake and Moore's versions of re-enchantment in the context of different moments of the process of secularisation. Secularisation normally entails the idea that rational critical thought precludes religion (Jager 9), but Blake believed as much in religious myths as products of a divinised human imagination as in Enlightened critical thinking. I will take into account secularisation as a historical process that motivates Blake's and Moore's strategies for re-enchantment through the divine human imagination and against the negative effects of secularisation such as dehumanisation and exploitation of nature.

Romantic secularism was a process of transformation in which many religious forms were rejected while others were transformed. Abrams referred to secularisation in the Romantic age as the "passage from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference" (Abrams qtd. in Jager 13), and his idea of natural supernaturalism implied the displacement of poetic language from a religious framework to a secular one, that will, however, fulfil the same function of reintegrating the mind with itself and with nature. This idea of natural supernaturalism has been criticised by more recent Romanticist scholars such as Jerome McGann and Colin Jager. Abrams saw Romanticism as a cure for the maladies of Modernity; in *The Romantic Ideology* (1983), McGann explained it as a movement that could rather be characterised by, as Jager paraphrases, "difference and ideological contestation " (Jager 5). Although Abrams paid attention to the political revolutionary aspects associated with the apocalyptic theme in poetry,

already on issue 1, makes mistakes and eventually fails in their mission (Gavaler 126). Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) and Miller's and Bill Sienkiewicz's *Elektra Assassin* (1986-1987) are often credited as well as having contributed to greater depth in the genre and are also celebrated as high-quality and formally experimental graphic novels. Moore's first famous works *V for Vendetta* and *Marvelman* began to be published in 1982, and *Watchmen*, the work that consolidated him began publication in 1986 as well. Even if Lee and Kirby's developments gradually prepared the way for Moore's and Miller's further exploration of superheroes in crisis and the satire and parody of the genre, the level of Moore's achievements in terms of literary quality, complexity, experimentation and inventiveness were unprecedented, and carried Lee and Kirby and Miller and Sienkiewicz's innovative elements to another creative level.

[5] See plates 3 and 14 of *Marriage* especially.

this apocalypse by imagination seems a reconciliatory or conformist solution to critics such as McGann and Jager.

The view of modernisation that dominated at the time Abrams developed his theory assumes that modernity implies a progressive decline or disappearance of religion (Jager 15). As a consequence, religious elements in Romanticism are seen as backward-looking, when they are actually not necessarily so. A more nuanced understanding of secularisation shows that it is not simply a process of disappearance of religion, but of management of religion (15), that is to say, of the confinement of religion to the specific sphere that the transformed culture judges appropriate for it, namely, art.

This criticism of Abrams thesis helps me define secularisation in more flexible terms. Romantic secularism not always tries to heal the Modern the self from its fragmentation through a poetic-mystical reunion with a re-sacralised nature; it also approaches alienation as the effect of historical conditions rather than as unavoidable consequence of modernity.

Jager's reflections are useful to destabilise attempts at cataloguing Blake either solely as a healer that recreates religious comfort under the secular forms of art, poetry, creativity, love or contemplation, or as only a rebellious nonconformist that rejects religion altogether in favour of ideological protest. Nonetheless, Jager discusses secularisation at a level that is not relevant to the Blakean distinction between religion and spirituality, and between conventional religion and heterodox mysticism. I will argue that, in the case of Blake, the apocalypse by imagination did not temper Blake's political radicalism. Blake is a good example of how a linear model of secularisation does not work, as he grapples with religious patterns at the same time that he transforms the concept of religion and transitions from religious tradition into a more secular yet highly mythical world of imagination.

Blake's concept of religion is too slippery to fit a clear-cut religion / secularism model, since he began his illuminated books by registering his belief that all religions are one because they share their origin in the poetic genius of humanity (*All Religions Are One*, c. 1788), and ended his creative life exalting art as true Christianity (*Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion* printed c. 1820), implying that no religion is true if it is not art. Blake's re-enchantment can be seen as secularised insofar as he started to identify divinity with imagination, rather than with a transcendent source of inspiration, as he so often did by identifying Jesus with the human imagination in *Milton, a Poem* (printed c. 1811), *Jerusalem*, and his description of *A Vision of the Last Judgment* (1810): "All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour the True Vine of Eternity The Human Imagination" (*VLJ* 69-70; E555). However, it is important to remember that he never substituted a totally secular version imagination for the divine; he made the divine immanent and identified imagination with it.

Blake rescued what he considered valuable in religion: its imaginative dimension as creation of poetic stories that reveal the atemporal dimension of beings and things. He rejected conventional religion as authoritarian and oppressive and took on board conceptions of religion inspired by studies about the origins of religion carried out by Enlightened intellectuals. Strong religious and Christian patterns coexist in Blake with rational criticism, which he used to distinguish the imaginative elements of religion from its forms of social control. While Enlightened philosophers rejected religious myths as superstition, Blake believed they were good if their link with creative imagination was maintained.

Both Blake and Moore move away from a rationalist approach to the divine and, instead, they formulate the spiritual in artistic and poetic terms. Both oppose the dehumanisation and

the exploitation of nature, which they see as caused by the desacralisation entailed by secularisation. Both Blake and Moore's re-enchantment pivots on two aspects: distancing from conventional religion and use of religious mythical and mystical elements.

Like Blake's, Moore's re-enchantment is partly derived from alternative religions and revivals of heterodox traditions that formed part of Blake's initial interests, Swedenborg, Paracelsus and Böhme being the main ones. But Moore's re-enchantment is influenced by a historical moment of greater scepticism than Blake's, and for this reason it contains less explicitly religious elements, in contrast with Blake who identified Christ with imagination.

In sum, although religion is not substituted by secular imagination in Blake and Moore, it is deeply transformed and partly secularised by its identification with it. Against secularisation, imagination and inspiration are divinised, they are not a simple synthesis of sense perception. However, the influence of secularisation allows the authors to discern the poetic aspects of religion from its coercive components. Blake and Moore's re-enchantment opposes aspects of religion that repress poetic genius, which becomes the original source of spirituality. This independence of the poetic genius from a transcendent entity stems from the influence of secularisation.

My second aim is to explore the notion of nature in the work of Blake and Moore, and their concern with those aspects of nature that abstract reason excludes because it cannot contain them. Blake and Moore see nature not only as an external entity, but also and most importantly internal to the human being. For Blake and Moore, nature is the living universe as well as our own bodily and mental powers, which become inert when detached from the living whole. The result of our interactions with nature, be them a building or a poem, are also considered natural. For Blake and Moore, nature is not only the sphere of science, the physical universe, but also our imagination and its capacity to connect with nature and interact with it. In both Blake and Moore, nature includes ecological aspects that are excluded from hegemonic discourses. References to the scientific approach to nature appear in both Blake and Moore. Blake often uses the scientific view of nature, for example, to characterise Urizen's fallen creation and the abstract Deist idea of nature. Moore denounces those scientific discourses used for the exploitation and objectification of nature and uses the scientific discourse to suggest that existence can be vaster than diminished modes of perception can show.

Blake's idea of imagination as the distinctive capacity of humankind is an example of his conception of nature as inherent in humanity. Nature in Blake is not opposed to imagination, or a prison for the human spirit, as some traditional criticism stated. The opposition is between the scientific reduction of nature to a mechanism ruled by blind and abstract laws and forces and the poetic idea that "Nature is Imagination itself" (E702) and that "Truth is Nature" (E609 [see also Hutchings, *Reimagining* 37-39]). Imagining is the way in which humans are part of nature. Traditional criticism such as Northrop Frye's works with a single definition of nature as passive raw matter. In this view, nature is a prison to the freedom of spirit and imagination is the only escape from it. Consequently, according to these critics, some aspects of human nature are not wholly human, which leads them to ignore the interrelations and exchanges that Blake defends. For Blake, nature is only a prison if conceived as mere raw matter; imaginatively conceived, it is our creative force. In this sense, like other Romantic poets, Blake challenged the opposition between art and nature, as art is created by imagination. Conversely, he thought that whatever denied, repressed or sought to destroy the impulses of imagination was an unnatural product of oppression and social control. When the artificial is the product of creative activity (strictly

artistic or of any another kind), it enters into continuity with the natural; however when the artificial is the product of economic or selfish interest, it is considered unnatural.

Moore often questions the divide between the natural and the artificial and understands both as part of the same natural whole. The artificial also expresses the creative power of nature: "All things are precipitated by the nature of existence. Nothing, therefore, is unnatural, be it bee-hive or termite mound or all our shining, poisoned cities. Everything is universe. Everything is holy, life and consciousness creation's rarest embers" (Moore et al., *Promethea* vol. 5; ch. 6). This does not mean that harmful elements in creation (such as the poison created by cities) are "holy" in the sense that they are good; it means that the universe is not evil in itself, and although there is evil that must be acknowledged, the vision is redemptive and "holy" because good and evil are necessary parts of existence; without experience of both, there is no process of development and renewal, no life. As Moore character's Promethea says to a dying young man sent to fight at Ypres, "God's universe is not itself unkind. There is love, and there is comfort …." (1.5)

Blake questions the absolute divide between culture and nature and understands both of them as "human", as animate and conscious. In the vision of nature described in the poem he included in the letter "[To] M r [Thomas] Butts, Great Marlborough Street", dated on the 2nd October 1800, everything is conscious and responsive:

> In particles bright
> The jewels of Light
> Distinct shone & clear—
> Amazd & in fear
> I each particle gazed
> Astonishd Amazed
> For each was a Man
> Human formd. Swift I ran
> For they beckond to me
> Remote by the Sea
> Saying. Each grain of Sand
> Every Stone on the Land
> Each rock & each hill
> Each fountain & rill
> Each herb & each tree
> Mountain hill Earth & Sea
> Cloud Meteor & Star
> Are Men Seen Afar (15-32; E712).

This kind of vision reappears in *Jerusalem*, where "Every thing is Human" (34.48, E180). Here, Blake's poem presents the artificial (the cities) as expressions of imagination, like works of art. According to some surrealist interpretations, Blake treated the tiger as a machine in the poem "The Tyger" (Jennings qtd. in Hopkins 312), a suggestion prompted by the language of the poem, which presents the tiger as artificially produced by a demiurge with hammers, anvils, chains and furnaces. Technological imagery like this has Urizenic and satanic connotations and applies to the fallen materialistic world. Artifice in Blake is ambiguous. It can be part of imaginative nature, constantly creating through us; but it can also be the result of destructive forces in the service of egoistic interests.

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Blake's humanising vision entails the transformation of the human, the expansion of consciousness to include everything. This anticipates Moore's posthuman vision of a living universe in everything. Blake went beyond the classical humanist notion of the human; only through a visionary state the truly human essence is revealed. In the letter to Thomas Butts, Blake's Felpham vision suspends ordinary perception:

> My Eyes did Expand
> Into regions of air
> Away from all Care
> Into regions of fire
> Remote from Desire (8-12, E712).

Visionary consciousness is not reduced to human individuals. On the contrary, in the letter to Butts, Blake describes his poem as the "verses such as Felpham produces by me" (E712): the creative subject is not an individual, and humanity is not simply the sum of human individuals as we commonly conceive it. However, Blake still needs the term "human" to refer to a higher form of consciousness, and the male human body (Albion's or Jesus') is still the paradigmatic form to represent a higher, imaginative consciousness. Moore does not privilege human form. His visionary passages show oppressive elements as part of a larger universal whole that introduces a problematic aspect that does not exist in Blake. In order to make sense of the evil in the world, he adopts a cosmic, rather mystical posthuman perspective that, because it is independent from ethics, risks accepting oppression. From this posthuman perspective, however, forces that tend to liberation and good are ultimately stronger than evil. As quoted above, Promethea says: "the universe is not itself unkind" and "Everything is universe. Everything is holy, life and consciousness creation's rarest embers."

The exploration of ideas of nature will allow me to proceed to the next objective: to analyse the secular terms in which these two authors present the possibility of regeneration of the world. For both Blake and Moore regeneration depends on the transformation of the excluded negative aspects of nature into positive energies. Nature as conceived by the discourses criticised by Blake is a product of instrumental reason and its Cartesian notion of self. When Blake treats natural energies as problematic it is because he fears the annihilating violence of these unleashed forces in the fallen world. But this is not because he thinks they are essentially evil; on the contrary, if they appear as monstrous from the perspective of the established system it is because they threaten its oppressive structures. To the rational control of nature by the established system, Blake opposes the liberation of perception and sexuality as the basis of a positive approach to it. This objective serves as another step to provide a specific focus to the comparison.

Finally, this thesis will explain the particularities of Moore's interpretation of Blake's ideas. This interpretation will be based on a comparative analysis of those texts by Moore and Blake that deal with the causes of the fall (in the mythical sphere) and of oppression (in the historical sphere). In Blake, the causes are expressed in mythical terms on one hand, and in poetic but nonetheless historical terms on the other. In the mythical plane, the fall is caused by a disfunction of the faculties. In the historical plane, it is caused by the conventional discourses of religion, science and philosophy that have erected power structures that corrupt human nature. Blake's texts do not always distinguish very sharply these two levels, and the mythical and the historical are very often mixed. Like Blake, Moore vacillates between the idea of evil as a result of the imbalance of faculties and of external oppression. However, whereas in Blake

evil becomes ingrained in human satanic energies and power-thirst, in Moore evil is presented as the product of erroneous ways of seeing and of limits in understanding, an illusion of separateness from the world that, if overcome, leads to the conclusion above that "everything is universe". In other words, a realisation of an underlying, monistic unity with nature.

0.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

For descriptions and elaboration on Blake's works, I have used a combination of traditional Blake criticism, including Frye's *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (1947) and S. Foster Damon's *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (1965) and other works by Harold Bloom, David V. Erdman, Robert N. Essick, Anne K. Mellor, Alicia Ostriker, Jean H. Hagstrum and many others. E. P. Thompson's *Witness against the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law* (1993), where Thompson balances out the tensions between the Frye-like focus on poetic archetypes and symbols and more historical and political perspectives derived from Erdman by digging up Blake's working class opposition to gentility and exploring the politically subversive aspects of his heterodox spiritual beliefs. These authors provide authoritative and comprehensive perspectives on Blake that are fundamental to understanding the author from a traditional critical perspective. I have complemented these critical sources with more up to date studies that reveal new discoveries, avoid some biases inherent to traditional types of study and explore more unaccustomed angles from which Blake can be read. Among these works, I followed Jason Whittaker's *William Blake and the Myths of Britain* (1999), which provided a detailed account of the historical national myths that Blake developed in his poetry and interpretations of the most difficult prophecies. Kevin Hutchings' *Imagining Nature: Blake's Environmental Poetics* (2002), for example, was fundamental in rethinking the role of nature in traditional Blake criticism, which often fell into the habit of limiting nature in Blake to a series of tropes that reinforced anthropocentrism and favoured a reading of Blake as a proponent of the exploitation of nature by man. A third set of works has helped me to enquire into more specific topics in the area of Blake Studies: Helen P. Bruder's *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion* (1997) is a historically and contextually rich feminist analysis of Blake's works. Chris Bundock and Elizabeth Effinger's *William Blake's Gothic Imagination: Bodies of Horror* (2018) is a valuable collection of essays that allow to address specifically questions like horror the grotesque, and the different types of metamorphosis in Blake from the point of view of Gothic Studies. For biographical information, I have used G. E. Bentley Jr's *Blake Records* (1969), which contains all events of Blakes' life along with documental evidence from catalogues, letters and notes from Blake's notebooks, and Leopold Damrosch's *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake* (2015), which is a critical account that combines Blake's life events and his works.

To inform the interpretation of Moore that will be developed in this thesis, there were not as many sources to choose from, considering that Moore has only been recently begun to be studied in academic contexts. There are, however, a few scholarly volumes dedicated specifically to Moore, namely Analisa Di Liddo's *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* (2008), which covers Moore's comics and graphic novels since his beginnings to *Lost Girls* (2007). Most other volumes dedicated to Moore are collections of articles and essays, such as *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore* (2012), edited by Todd A. Comer and Joseph M. Sommers, which I have used to draw critical support for the topic of

sexuality and for the general debates around the interpretation of *From Hell* (1989-1996). Maggie Gray's recent study, *Alan Moore: Out from the Underground: Cartooning, Performance and Dissent* (2017) delves into the unexplored field of Moore's first stages in the underground cartooning and comics circuits. Most of the scientific production concerning Moore can be found in collected essays, book chapters or journal articles, such as "London (and the Mind) as Sacred-Desecrated Place in Alan Moore's *From Hell*" (2010), by Emily Taylor Merriman, "'The Magic Circus of the Mind': Alan Moore's *Promethea* and the Transformation of Consciousness through Comics" (2010), by Christine Hoff Kraemer and J. Lawton Winslade, and Matthew J. A. Green's "'Everything's interconnected': Anarchy, ecology and sexuality in *Swamp Thing* and *Lost Girls*" (2016). For biographic information I have consulted *The Extraordinary Works of Alan Moore* (2008), an extended interview by George Khoury, and other interviews from a variety of media. I have drawn also from Kraemer's "The Undying Fire: Erotic Love as Divine Grace in *Promethea*" (2012) and Green's collection of essays *Alan Moore and the Gothic Tradition* (2013) to explore the same themes they study (alternative spiritualities and the Gothic respectively) not in Moore in general, as they do, but, more specifically, in Moore's reading of Blake.

Few studies have performed a comparative analysis of Blake and Moore and of Moore's reception of Blake. Roger Whitson's "Panelling Parallax: The Fearful Symmetry of William Blake and Alan Moore" (2006) was the first of a series of book chapters and articles that paved the way for this thesis. These studies have analysed the paradoxes and political significance of the relationship between Blake and Moore (as is the case of Whitson's article), the Romantic notions of evil in Blake and Moore (Whittaker's "*From Hell*: Blake and Evil in Popular Culture", 2007), the prophetic and feminist aspects of both authors (Green's "'She Brings Apocalypse': Sex, Imagination and Redemptive Transgression in William Blake and the Graphic Novels of Alan Moore", 2011) and the relationship between Blake and Moore's views on perception and their formal techniques (Green's "'The End of the World: That's a Bad Thing, right?': Form and Function from William Blake to Alan Moore", 2012). My contribution to this line of research is to expand and deepen it by applying similar views on a larger corpus, thus using the new results to build a picture of the evolution in Moore's works of the influence of Blake.

0.6 METHODOLOGY

The methodological procedures applied in the analyses of this comparative study involved:

1. An exploration of the cultural contexts that affect the authors' understanding of nature, vision, and evil and their criticism of conventional morality, gender, and sexual norms. In the case of Blake, I have focused on the confluence of eighteenth century Enlightened radical criticism and popular antinomian religious movements. In the case of Moore, I have focused on the countercultural atmosphere of the last third of the twentieth century in Britain, including ecologism and Postmodern alternative spiritualities and radical attitudes towards gender and sexuality. The study of the influence of countercultural discourses of nature, vision, and evil on Moore allowed me to identify patterns such as Contraries and Negations that derive from Romanticism and Blake and show how Moore adopted Blake's criticism of his culture and society for similar purposes.

2. Analysis of the Gothic distortions and transformations of figures, such as Blake's Urizen, Orc, and Ololon and Moore's William Gull, Promethea, and Asmodeus, to explore the implications of transgression or of oppression. For example, Urizen transforms into a cadaverous form when he divides himself from eternity and tries to reduce the universe to laws, and Gull transforms into Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819-1820), which signals his oppressive nature at the same time that his incapacity to open his perception. Ololon and Promethea take the form of little girls, signifying the irruption in the world of an innocence that comes to balance a corrupt order. The analysis reveals the empowering potential in Blake's and Moore's imagery, but also the contradictions or problems between the intended message and the implications of the works.
3. Comparative study of selected passages from Moore either directly or indirectly inspired by Blake. Some passages contain striking similarities in the treatment of the same topics; others, despite the parallels, show their different positions as regards the topics that this thesis concentrates upon. Although in general I have focused on passages where the written and the visual interact, I have often focused on written passages relevant for my argument where there is no corresponding visual image, and on visual images that lack a written correlative. After the description and interpretation of each authors' passage, I point out the similarities and differences in both text and visual imagery, and I elaborate on the reasons for these similarities and differences, and on their cultural implications.

0.7. CORPUS SELECTION CRITERIA

0.7.1. Formal criteria

The analysis of the combination of words and images in Blake's illuminated books and Moore's graphic novels shows the authors' ideas about the union of intellect and perception, and their beliefs about the relation between mind and matter. They thought the relationship between mind and matter should be collaborative, rather than oppositional. This is also the case of the related oppositions between body and soul, good and evil, ordinary sense perceptions and vision, reason and imagination, and between the genders. I have selected those illuminated books in which the mixture and balance between the visual and the verbal is greater. For this reason, books such as Blake's *The Song of Los* (1795) or *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (commenced in 1796 and unfinished; published posthumously in 1893) have not been analysed, apart from a few examples. Likewise, works by Moore which consist solely of written text, such as the novel *Voice of the Fire* (1996) or recorded performance works such as *Angel Passage* (2001), have been discarded.

0.7.2 Thematic and organising criteria

Among the illuminated books and graphic novels, I chose the works that treat the topics of perception, evil and gender, sexuality and eroticism because the study of these themes illumines the collaborative relationship between mind and matter, reason and imagination and between the genders. The study of these themes also reveals the negative consequences of their opposition, when instead of collaboration there is imposition. The relationship of collaboration is proposed by the authors in response to the idea that one faculty or one entity is superior to

the other and therefore must dominate. Such has been the case in Western culture with the superiority of mind over matter, of reason over imagination and of the masculine over the feminine, to the point of the deprecation of the material, the imaginative and the feminine. The establishment of this relationship is fundamental for the process of re-enchantment the authors aspire to promote, although the authors sometimes fail to produce a totally consistent representation of re-enchantment according to these terms they defend.

This thesis explores the topic of perception and vision in my whole corpus: Blake's *Marriage, The Book of Thel* (composed 1789), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *America, a Prophecy* (1793), *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794), and *Milton*; and in Moore's *V for Vendetta* (1982-1989), *Swamp Thing* (1984-1987), *From Hell*, *Promethea* (1999-2005), *Neonomicon* (2010-2011) and *Providence* (2015-2017).

According to Blake and Moore, the transformation of perception and the attainment of imaginative vision liberate the mind from social and religious conventions and entail concepts of good and evil beyond them.[6] In order to explore this angle of the argument, we will look, among Moore's works, at *V for Vendetta.*

The analysis of *Marriage* will explore many ideas that would later permeate Moore's notion of perception: the mental conditions of bondage and of liberation from conventions, the idea that visionary experience is achieved through the senses and the idea that mental heavens and hells depend on the modes of thinking. Moore's *Swamp Thing* is connected to Blake's *Marriage* through the theme of perception as capable of creating mental heavens and hells. Moore's *Promethea* contains crucial references to Blake with respect to the topics of imagination, vision and perception that follow Blake's notions of liberation from conventions in *Marriage*. The question of the basic visionary origin of religion suffocated by religious power, present in *Marriage*, reappears in *Promethea* under the form of imaginative creation as the most sacred capacity of the human. The human form divine is Blake's immanent divinity. I will analyse these elements using *Marriage,* and *Thel* will be used to illustrate the idea of interconnectedness that characterises the human divine in Blake. I will also analyse *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* to show how Bromion's perception is determined by the patriarchal domination of nature and by his use of scientific knowledge for power and exploitation. In contrast to Bromion, *Vision*'s main character, Oothoon, represents visionary consciousness.

Blake's *Urizen* constitutes, together with *America*, an exploration of the dangerous side of the vision resulting from the separation of reason from the other faculties (represented by the imposition of Urizen's laws on nature) and from oppressive religion. Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence* develop darker reflections on vision that result from the effects of materialist and oppressive domination, the madness this oppression breeds, and the failure of a world constricted by convention to assimilate the radical change brought about in reality by imagination. These allusions to an overly materialistic faculty that dominates and prevents the

[6] Both authors also suggest (although perhaps with less frequency) that a previous liberation from conventions can lead to a transformation in perception, such as happens in *Marriage* when the poet rejects the Angelic conventional perspective and instead of Leviathan in the Abyss he sees a placid riverbank. In Moore's *Promethea*, the characters, already in a magical journey that implies transformed perceptions, realise they still have conventional perspectives clouding their understanding of the demon Asmodeus. When they have rejected these conventions, Asmodeus transforms into a less frightening form. This indicates that the authors view the transformation of perception and the liberation from convention as circular processes. In general, however, a mental change or liberation must occur before breaking down conventions, such as the changes in characters occasioned by previous psychedelic experiences in *Swamp Thing*, and the imaginative state of inspiration that precedes the rejection of conventions in *Marriage* (the book starts with Rintrah's prophetic wrath and finished with Orc enacting the revolution).

redeeming effects of imagination allow us to compare *Neonomicon* and *Providence* to Blake's *Urizen*.

The study of *Milton* will show the way in which instrumental reason distorts knowledge and explain the use of Druidic symbolism to characterise the oppressive institutions of Church and State. The distortions caused by the domination of instrumental reason appear in *Milton* often as monstrous allegories of the natural world as empty mechanism; the imaginative liberation from the domination from instrumental reason causes instead other transformations more akin to transfigurations of things into their divine human form. Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence* use imagery in a similar way (as indicated above) and have echoes of *Milton*.

The topic of evil in Blake's and Moore's selected works forms a significant part of this thesis. In *Swamp Thing*, evil is treated through the focus on the monster from a Neo-Romantic perspective, in which there is a tendency to rethink evil and monstrosity. *Marriage* will be used to analyse the influence of Blake's early Romantic diabolism on Moore. *Thel* provides some interesting visual examples of evil conquered by innocence to which *Swamp Thing* and *Promethea* can be related.

From Hell offers a fictional in-depth study of evil related to various misreadings of Blake. In *From Hell*, Moore chooses to allude to *Visions* to underscore the intimate association between patriarchy, the domination of energy and the will to power of reason.

Milton contains passages that are fundamental to understand Blake's changes in his conception of evil, natural energies and the satanic. I will focus on the figure of Satan and the qualities he represents. These satanic energies are opposed through self-annihilation, i.e. a refusal to dominate the other and establish one's superiority. Parallels with this topic in *Milton* can be found in Moore's *Promethea*.

America will be dealt with to study Blake's depictions of the dangerous aspect of natural energies manifested in violent revolution, and how they are encapsulated in the Gothic language of the monstrous. *Urizen* was selected for the analysis of the topic of evil due to the importance of the depiction of Urizen, one of the most archetypal figures representing Blakean satanic evil. Both *America* and *Urizen* will be compared to passages from *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, where the horror elements also contain reminiscences of Blake's darker depictions of vision and dangerous energy.

Another important theme is that of gender and sexuality in Blake's and Moore's works. The utopian visions offered by both authors consist in a more equal relationship between the sexes that results from the changes in perception and in conventions. These visions, however, do not always find a perfect realisation in the representations created by the authors, giving way to many inconsistencies.

I will discuss desire and transgressive forms of sexuality in *Swamp Thing* and how these find an important antecedent in Blake's early illuminated books, such as *Marriage*. These positive and emancipatory views continue in some ways in Milton's union with Ololon (*Milton*), a Romantic gender union utopia, as well as in other female figures such as Enitharmon, the Nameless Shadowy Female, the Daughters of Albion and the doubleness of Babylon and Jerusalem. The positive and negative connotations of these figures are contrasted to similar ones in Moore's *Promethea*. Another aspect that I have analysed in *Milton* is the unusual sexual connotations of some of the illuminations, which underscore a psychosexual angle to the relationship between consciousness and imagination also present in Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence*.

I will deal with cases in which the authors' feminist positions are compromised. The idea of purification of the male characters in *Visions* became part of characters in Moore's graphic novels, especially *From Hell*. In both Blake and Moore, the topic of gender and sexuality requires discussing the representations of rape, as on one hand they seek to denounce patriarchal violence, but on the other, it is also used as an allegory of the violence and transgression of the primal revolutionary impulse that should precisely end with oppression.

America will also be used to analyse the problematic relationship between revolutionary liberation and sexual liberation. I will also show the specific effect on sexuality of the narrow perceptions dominated by instrumental reason, apparent in the relationship between Los and Enitharmon in *Urizen*. In Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, his points of view on sexuality, art and magic still show the influence of the Blakean importance of the human as the source of imagination and emotions that can change reality. The comparison between *Neonomicon* and *Providence* and *America* and *Urizen* will be used to study Blake's and Moore's beliefs about the thread that connects the transformation of perceptions through art and magic and the topic of sexuality.

The works selected for all the topics will be supplemented with specific passages from other Blakean illuminated texts, such as *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (composed 1789, 1794) and *Jerusalem* or other material from Blake's annotations, paintings and engravings when the analysis requires additional data and evidence.

Some of Moore's famous graphic novels have been left out for several reasons. Moore's *The Ballad of Halo Jones* (1984-1986) is excluded because it does not discuss the topics studied in this dissertation. As the philosophical, religious, and spiritual angle of the topics here analysed is more prominent than the political in this thesis, I have decided to focus on works that develop the topics of magic, imagination and art. I have also decided to leave out *Watchmen* (1986-1987), because the graphic novel is much more connected to the criticism of the genre of superhero comics than to the topics that will be analysed in this thesis. [7] Another work of less relevance for the topics explored in this thesis is *Lost Girls* (2006) which, despite being dedicated to the topic of sex, does not treat this topic in light of Moore's ideas about magic and spirituality, but it is rather an attempt to create an artistic and liberating type of pornography away from the clichés, sexism and objectifications of the sex industry.

0.8 STRUCTURE

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part contains two background and one theoretical chapters. The second part contains three chapters dedicated to analyse the topic of perceptions and vision (chapter 4), the topic of good and evil (chapter 5), and the topic of gender and sexuality (chapter 6). Chapter 7 develops the final conclusions.

The chapters of the first part follow the notions that affect the argument from the most general to the particular. First, the introductory chapters consider secularisation, Romanticism and Postmodernism to frame Blake's and Moore's ideas of the divine power of imagination and re-enchantment. Then, these ideas will be explored in the specific countercultural and radical contexts in which Blake and Moore worked. Finally, with this context designed, I will explain the theoretical tools that will be used in the second part.

[7] Among other studies and articles, there is a monograph on Watchmen written by Sara J. Van Ness, *Watchmen as Literature* (2010). Watchmen was also discussed by Di Liddo in *Alan Moore*. Lastly, Watchmen has already been discussed in connection to Blake by Whitson in "Panelling Parallax".

The structure of the second part is determined by the same thematic and organisation criteria used for the selection of the corpus. As outlined in the previous section, there is a thread that connects the visionary transformation of perceptions, leading to the rejection of conventional morality and the gender and sexual liberation that would follow the freedom from conventional religious prejudices. For this reason, I have divided the analysis into three parts: one for perception and vision, a second one for good and evil and a third for gender and sexuality.

In chapter 1, I will focus on Romanticism and Postmodernism and how Blake and Moore relate to them. This will allow to locate Blake and Moore in the secularisation process that bereft nature of spiritual meaning and in the Romantic and Postmodernist attempt at re-enchantment by newly investing nature with poetic meaning. It is equally important to contrast the authors' attitudes towards their respective cultural, philosophical and social contexts. This chapter deals with Blake's complex position as regards Romanticism, which favours Postmodern interest in him, and shows Moore's project of re-enchantment of reality, the world and culture as shaped by both Romantic inheritance and Postmodernism. Abram's notion of natural supernaturalism and Larrissy's views on Romanticism and Postmodernism will guide this exploration.

Chapter 2 will deal with Blake's and Moore's attitudes towards their contexts by using Raymond Williams notion of structures of feeling and present an overview of the main discourses that frame Moore's understanding of Blake. The internal approach to emancipation and the ideas about the liberation of imagination connect Moore's countercultural structure of feeling to Blake's radical antinomianism and heterodox interests. This chapter elaborates on Blake's antinomianism and his opinions about politics and spirituality, which led to him being perceived as both rebellious and mystical by late twentieth century writers.

Chapter 3 explains the theoretical concepts I employed in the treatment of the association between Blake and Moore: Harold Bloom's theory of influence, Williams' theory of structures of feeling, the notion of instrumental reason, and Terry Eagleton's concept of the excessive and perverse dimension of power, sometimes hidden behind pretences of rationality and law (see Eagleton 118). I have also made use of Eagleton's psychoanalytic explanation of evil as a stubborn imposition of fantasy over an evidently independent reality (11), David Punter and Fred Botting's treatment of the Gothic in terms of excess, transgression, and monstrosity. With respect to the analysis of Blake's approach to the topic of evil, I explain diabolism, satanism and *kategoros* (accuser) as key terms that differentiate positive and negative uses of the notion of evil.

The chapters of the second part compare characters, figures, imagery and ideas in Moore's and Blake's works. These chapters include a detailed analysis and interpretation of both the points of direct influence of Blake on Moore (quotations, allusions, similar imagery, and ideas) and examples of more indirect influence, such as passages presenting Romantic ideas passed down through contemporary Neo-Romantic cultural tendencies. Moreover, the chapters examine the divergences between Blake and Moore. Finally, the authors' convergence in their use of mythology and tradition and their reflections on mythopoeia will also be discussed.

Chapter 4 focuses on Blake's and Moore's notions of nature, imagination, and reason, and compares their treatment of the themes of perception and vision. The chapter deals with the authors' faith that imagination enables the individual to see nature as it is, undistorted by self-

interest and instrumental reason, and that the visionary mode of perception entails an interconnected way of living and of being in the world.

Chapter 5 analyses the topic of good and evil, focusing, on the one hand, on Blake's early diabolism and its influence on Moore's representations of transgression. Good and evil are analysed in terms of Blake's dynamics of contrariety (a relationship where both are mutually necessary) and negation (a relationship where one part dominates or excludes the other). On the other hand, the chapter explains Blake's change from early diabolism to the rejection of satanism, and Moore's corresponding turn towards more complex representations of energy, imagination and freedom. In these later representations, transgression can be intertwined with negation, and the expansion of imagination can lead to horror.

Chapter 6 develops the comparison of the topics of gender, sexuality and eroticism. Blake and Moore show the injustices women suffer in patriarchy, especially the ones inflicted by the religious establishment. Both authors are influenced by mystical conceptions of sex that promise liberation and expansion of consciousness. The analysis of the passages will focus on how Blake applied the notion of contrariety to gender relationships, and how this inspired Moore's anti-patriarchal vindications and representations of gender oppression. The chapter also explores the contradictions Blake and Moore incur in their attempt to overcome ideological assumptions about gender and sexuality, and to what extent they succeeded in their struggle to escape such modes of thought.

Chapter 7 summarises the main conclusions from the different analysis chapters and their implications for the broader issues discussed in chapters 1 and 2, and suggestions for further research are put forth.

0.9. RESULTS

The results will show that Blake's and Moore's natural supernatural follows from the diverse and specific range of influences and discourses of which each of the two authors participated.

In the conclusions section of this thesis I will synthesise the results of the analysis and answer in full the questions generated by the objectives here presented. I will contrast the initial ideas of this thesis with the final analysis results and show the contributions they can offer. After that, I will assess the fulfilment of the objectives presented in this introduction, reflect on the effectiveness of the theoretical framework and the methodology here described and suggest future research on Blake, Moore, and Blake reception in Postmodern popular culture, especially countercultural and alternative circles.

1. BLAKE, MOORE AND THE ROMANTIC TRADITION

In the following pages, I will deal with the mythical narratives, the focuses, and the topics inherited by the Romantics that shape, on one hand, Blake's work, and on the other hand, Moore's reception of Blake's work. Moore's affinity with the Romantic sensibility and with Blake in particular results from the fact that both the Romantics and Moore perceived themselves as writing during a "time of profound cultural crisis" (Abrams 12). Some of the similarities cannot always be attributed to Moore's conscious knowledge or reference to a specific text by Blake, but to the structures of feeling (Williams, *Marxism* 131) in which Blake and Moore were immersed and to which they contribute. The passage from a supernatural to a natural interpretation of the universe provoked a crucial change in these structures of feeling. Said changes call for analysis to determine what are the parallels and the divergences between these two different turn-of-the-century cultural crises. I will therefore elaborate on the similarities and dissimilarities between the preoccupations and attitudes emerging from the turn of the eighteenth and the turn of the twentieth century contexts.

The cultural crisis experienced at the turn of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth was caused by an intensification of the process of secularisation and the profound transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The response of the Romantic poets to the process of secularisation was the creation of a new poetic language in which a "displacement from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference" took place (Abrams 13). This response was a reaction against other agents of the secularising process such as the scientific explanation and industrial exploitation of nature.

Abrams's phrase "displacement from a supernatural to a natural frame of reference" alludes to the Romantic project of resignification of the world, which they took on when they saw that science was depriving nature of any spiritual meaning. In a sense, this resignification entailed a re-enchantment, the quality of which must be carefully defined in order to show the difference between the Romantic and the traditional enchantment. In Wordsworth's mythology, it took the form of the divinisation of nature, a kind of pantheism that could be at odds with the secular aspects of his notion of imagination (Paul de Man, *Rhetoric* 51-3). In Blake's language, the re-enchantment can be seen in his notion of the "human form divine" (*SIE* 18.11, 18.15; E13). In an attempt to bridge the gap between consciousness and the external world, Blake resituated the concept of God in the Self, under the figure of "Man" (Langbaum 241). I will return to the complex issue of nature in Blake and in Wordsworth on section x of this chapter. In order to provide a framework for contrasting Blake and Moore it is necessary to explore the parallels between the Romantic preoccupations resulting from the eighteenth and nineteenth century cultural crises and the Postmodern concerns reflected in Moore's literary context at the turn of the twentieth century. The source for this aspect of the comparison will be Larrissy's critical views on Romanticism and Postmodernism. Larrissy bases his theories mainly on Lyotard, who sees Modernism and Postmodernism as linked by the idea of the sublime, the unpresentable (Larrissy, *Romanticism* 6), and differentiated by the presence of nostalgia for transcendence

(7). Larrissy suggests that this nostalgia does exist in Postmodernism, but in a negative way, often expressed through Gothic forms. Postmodern Gothic tends to foretell how the legacy of Enlightenment degenerates into "an obscure Satanic narrative" (7), a tendency that Angus Fletcher analyses as a convergence between Gothic and dystopia caused by the concern with a return of a repressed dark past under the form of a dark future (Fletcher qtd. in Larrissy, *Romanticism* 7). He points out at fantasies of the return of fascism through the failure of a naïve modernity (7). The difference, says Larrissy, is that this catastrophe matters less to the sceptic Postmodern individual, as we now enjoy apocalypse in aestheticised and banalised formats and contexts (Larrissy, *Romanticism* 7-8). In sum, "Gothic erosion of enlightened value" is the surviving element of Romanticism in Postmodernity (8). Blake is an author among those we consider Romantic today, that easily lends himself to Postmodern readings for his consciousness of the constructedness of myth (*Blake* 12), his "Gothic imagery of spectres and dark sublimity" (14), and his "oppositional stance" (15). Perhaps for these qualities, Blake resists the uncertainty and relativism of Postmodernism, as he is still considered a "sage in possession of insights that are still relevant" (88). These considerations will complement my adoption of Abrams natural supernaturalism and Langbaum's concept of the Romantic reappraisal of "dark" instincts. This combination of perspectives will allow for a portrayal of Moore's Postmodern re-enchantment and provide the framework for the contrast between Blake and Moore.

At the turn of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first, Western culture underwent a fourth Industrial Revolution. Its effects produced attitudes that have some relevant parallels with the Romantic preoccupations in response to the first Industrial Revolution:

a. The Romantics reacted against the mechanicist vision of nature – its reduction to physical laws and mathematical formulations – and against the dehumanisation brought about by the restructuring of labour, economy and society on the basis of self-interest and technological advance. The Postmoderns reacted against "positivistic, technocentric and rationalistic" modernism (Harvey 9) and against Enlightenment, specifically its aim of attaining emancipation through "technology, science and reason" (41). They accused the Enlightenment of a reduction of nature (*qua* space) to "rationalized configurations" that allowed "surveillance and control" (253).
b. Efficiency started to become a guiding principle in production and labour since the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution, and its effects expanded to the rest of areas of life. The Romantics reacted by opposing to these human values such as beauty, justice, and truth (Lyotard 44). The pre-eminence of efficiency for economic profit is even more acute in the twentieth century. It was caused by an increase of mass production and consumption generated after the crisis of Fordism, the monopolisation of information technologies held by the market in the last decades of the century, and the intensification and destabilisation of labour developed to satisfy the global market. The Postmoderns reacted against this by criticising the hegemonic discourses that promoted efficiency over the human individual overtly or under the appearance of Enlightened great narratives of progress. They also defended a more plurivocal idea of culture and encouraged discourses no longer based on great narratives directed by beauty, justice or truth, but on more ephemeral, provisional narratives. Blake is an author that even in contemporary times is often regarded by Postmodern authors as similarly producing a discourse that is not easily reducible to a

single grand myth, but rather escapes that kind of interpretation (Larissey, *Blake* 92). Blake's tendency to print multiple copies and different versions of his own works contributes to this Postmodern interest (156).

c. For the Romantics the scientific discourse made humanity subservient to self-interest. Romantics criticised both the Newtonian explanation of reality and Lockean empiricism. On one hand, the Newtonian approach produced an arid picture of the world and caused imaginative sterility. On the other hand, empiricism produced a claustrophobic idea of the mind and conceived a world of individuals isolated in their private impressions. Blake thought "science … attempt[s] to manipulate the laws of nature for man's purposes" (Frye 33). Even critics who analyse Blake's interest in sciences state that he saw in scientific discourse the danger of mistaking the map for the territory, and thus distorting our ideas about physical reality (White 110). Other studies emphasise how the language of new sciences like anatomy, when taken as the whole of reality, could turn the human body into a source of horrors (see Lucy Cogan's "William Blake's Monstrous Progeny"). Postmodernism exposed science as discourse (Lyotard 3-4) and conceived reality as the arena of the language games[8]. The discourse of science might be used to justify hegemonic discourse and become or constitute itself into a metaprescriptive. In this sense, it threatens to become dangerous and dominate all the rest, in which case it would completely determine reality.

d. Both Romantics and Postmoderns rejected the scientific ambition of objectivity and universality. The Romantic attempt to prevent the imposition of the scientific and technological discourse upon the relation between human beings and nature implied mythical narratives and legends whose notion of reality was rejected by the Enlightenment as obscure and uncivilised. In their attempt to counteract intolerant eurocentrism, Postmodernists argued that there is no single universal truth. Instead they put forward that all discourses have the same value and that science cannot judge language games outside its own (Lyotard 40). Furthermore they argued that the rules of Western scientific and technological discourses excluded other cultures' narrative knowledge, thus becoming an instrument of imperialism and discrimination (Lyotard 27).

e. The Romantics emphasized individualism, and the notions of originality, genius, and inner experience. The Romantics were individualistic, and though it is true they thought the mind can create realities by investing them imaginatively, they also reflected often on the unbearable solitude this implies, the solitude of being enclosed in one's own skull. Like the ancient Mariner after killing the albatross (Langbaum 6), the "tie with nature" is lost (7). Although Postmodern individualism acquires different meanings and functions that associate artistic expressivity with the mechanisms of consumerism, Postmodernists also emphasised individualism.

f. The Romantic concepts of originality, genius and inspiration opposed academicism, classicism, and mechanisation. Postmodernism, however, embraces mechanical reproduction techniques to criticise the idea of genius (Lyotard 74).

[8] Lyotard uses Wittgenstein's notion of language games (performative acts of language, denotative statements, prescriptions, etc.) to support the notion that discourse entails a struggle for power, a competition governed by certain rules where the interplay of diverse language games occurs (Lyotard 11).

g. Romanticism reacted against the naturalistic notion of reality. Postmodernism also rejected its later literary expression (realism), although it may go back to it for effects of mockery, irony and destabilisation (Lyotard 73-74). A destabilising irony is often attributed to Blake, one that is not applied against a particular narrative but rather against many, which is another factor that favours his popularity in Postmodernism (Larrissy, *Blake* 81).
h. Both Romantics and Postmodernists privilege the sublime over the beautiful, with a difference: Postmodernism relinquishes the desire for a unity or synthesis that might become a totalising terror (Lyotard 81). According to Edward Larrissy, Lyotard also sparked the debate about the mission of Romantic art and literature being to "present the unpresentable" (*Romanticism* 4-5) and this topic leads to the idea of the artist as the hero who attempts to do it (5). The way this is present in Postmodernism, without as much metaphysical certitude, with more irony and disbelief, makes it difficult to argue for a continuity with Romanticism (5).

Postmodern criticism saw capitalist ideas of rationalisation and efficiency as a development of the mechanistic worldview of the project of modernity via high modernism. From their point of view, the crisis of capitalism evidences the problems of following the Enlightened values of progress and human emancipation in a materialistic way. Many intellectuals and artists today even think that the two World Wars confirmed the failure of the Enlightened project (Harvey 13) and that the 2007-2008 global financial crisis confirms the failure of the flexible accumulation[9] mode of capitalism (when not the entire capitalist system). Other thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Eagleton or Christopher Norris are less inclined to see capitalism as the result of the development of Enlightened notions of progress. They rightly show that not all aspects of the Enlightenment are to be done with or abandoned. For them, Postmodernism does pose the possibility of certain inherent contradictions, such as the commercialisation, domestication and reduction of its opposition to metanarratives to "market eclecticism" (Harvey 42). They also point out at the coincidences between Postmodernism, neoconservatism and capitalism (42). These coincidences are undeniable regardless of the other aspects in which Postmodernism identifies Enlightenment as the source of capitalist reliance on technology and efficiency.

The contemporary context favours the system efficiency over the individual, small communities or the natural space. Nonetheless, at the same time, Postmodern relativism and constructionism are potentially arming people intellectually to reject aspiration narratives[10] aimed at making individuals want what the system needs (Lyotard 62). There is a liberating aspect of Postmodernism, whereby the relativistic, constructionist, and anti-essentialist view of reality has stimulated a new re-enchantment of the West.

Neither the Romantic nor the Post-modern re-enchantment can return to the supernatural as it was conceived before the Enlightenment; rather, both are based on a kind of "natural

[9] I refer here to the processes of "deregulation", dispersion, mobility and flexibility by which capitalism made itself more efficient after the Fordist era (Harvey 158-159). These include, for instance, less regular work and more part-time positions, temporary or subcontracted arrangements, forcing labourers to be able to change their functions if necessary, more lower quality positions with less benefits and rights than full-time members of the workplace (150). Longer working hours, lower wages or relocation of factories to regions with lower wages (186) are also measures that characterise this mode of capitalism.

[10] This is Lyotard's term to refer to the narratives generated when the system guides individual decision making, determines it through the manipulation of individual aspirations: "The decisions do not have to respect individuals' aspirations: the aspirations have to aspire to the decisions, or at least to their effects. Administrative procedures should make individuals 'want' what the system needs in order to perform well" (62).

supernaturalism." The Romantic poets needed to find a different "embodiment of the spirit of religion" (Abrams 68), much as Moore or other writers working during the 1980s and 90s tried to articulate new discourses about spirituality. This often implies, as it did in Blake's times and works, the tendency to "naturalize the supernatural and to humanize the divine" (68). I will first explain the Romantic re-enchantment and then show to what extent a Postmodern kind of natural supernaturalism is indebted to Romanticism.

The Romantic re-enchantment was deeply intertwined with the natural supernaturalism of poetry. This was a poetic re-enchantment: poets were trying to develop a mode of seeing nature different from the ordinary religious and materialist worldviews that were dominant at the time. Natural supernaturalism was a secular version of traditional religious patterns (Abrams 65-66, 68). Poets evoked these patterns (such as fall, redemption, and apocalypse) because they thought that in some sense they still configured reality and helped to understand it. Postmodern contemporary re-enchantment goes back to Romanticism insofar as religious convention is again rejected and the supernatural is reformulated in natural terms. According to Langbaum, instead of creative forces coming down from above, forces that were previously considered negative were valued as creative by Romantics (9). It is in this sense that the divine was naturalised, and nature was rendered divine. The human became divine, not because God incarnated as a human being, but to the extent that he or she possessed and was possessed by these creative forces. This creative relation with nature is what Romantics opposed to the imaginative sterility of the Newtonian picture of the world.

The post-Romantic re-enchantment has particular characteristics. In this re-enchantment, a vast array of discourses about spirituality (institutionalised or alternative, traditional or innovative) thrive alongside each other (Partridge 4). It could be argued that our contemporary re-enchantment, due to the eclecticism of Postmodern spirituality, the sensorial overload created and promoted by the media and the instability of institutions, is not theologically or philosophically as profound as the Romantic.

Christopher Partridge takes the term "re-enchantment" from sociology, from Weber's disenchantment thesis, which he opposes. According to Partridge, Weber and other sociologists base their interpretations upon analysis of traditional religions while disregarding "new ways of believing" (1). The Postmodern re-enchantment is "entwined with popular culture and urban myths" (1). The author warns against the risk of deeming it for these reasons "superficial" (1). He says "alternative spirituality *may* [author's emphasis] not require its adherents to sit in pews and believe systematic theologies" (2). He adds that "new ways of believing are not allied to the state or located in large buildings next to the village green" (2). Postmodern re-enchantment is "not one [model] of Christian revivalist optimism" (3). It is a "sacralization" that not only differs but is also built in opposition to traditional forms (4). Instead, it is a syncretic mix of ideas and practices from "Eastern spirituality, Paganism, Spiritualism, Theosophy, alternative science and medicine, popular psychology and a range of beliefs emanating out of a general interest in the paranormal" (4). This plurality of sometimes contradictory esoteric ideas present in popular culture forms is termed by Partridge "occulture" (4). The effect of popular culture, Partridge argues, is transformative, be the outcome positive (as Walter Benjamin thought) or negative (as Theodor Adorno argued) (4-5); the specific effect of occulture is sacralising (5).

Any comparison between Blake and Moore must consider that, despite their common interest in a poetic resignification of reality, the same theological profundity is not necessary anymore in the case of Moore. In his criticism of institutional religion, Blake relied on the Bible

and on discourses of dissent existing in Protestant culture to defend his views in a historical moment where traditional religious conventions were still strong. Recent discourses about spirituality do not have a project of institutionalisation that requires a solid theology; in fact, they struggle both against the imposition of institutionalised religion and traditional creeds, as Partridge says (2). Even though groups such as Wiccans or Satanists strive for institutionalisation, most groups are critical of institutional religion. They promote a return to a supposedly instinctive and spontaneous experience of spirituality, in which vague ideas of immanence, the world and the body play an important role.

In my comparison of Blake and Moore I will follow Langbaum's theory that "romantic intuition that man's highest nature derives from his lowest, that religion and art are erotic and unconscious in origin" (9). This intuition is behind both Blake's rejection of the old paradigm of conventional religion and Moore's ideas about spirituality. In fact, Larrissy maintains Blake transmitted a "sensuous kind of natural supernaturalism" (*Blake* 120) to Postmodern authors such as Allen Ginsberg, through principles like "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul" or "Energy is the only life and is from the Body" (*MHH* 4; E34).

In Blake's mythology, the natural world is only barren when apprehended through ordinary perception, dominated as it is both by conventional religion and the Enlightened explanation of reality. Deep reality and the sources of creativity are revealed and realised in the poet's vision. For Blake, vision is the innate original spontaneous way of seeing, which is thwarted by ordinary perception. The visionary perception of reality enables human beings to break the subject-object distinction established by abstract reason and thus live according to their divine being. Moreover, as Abrams explained, the figure of Los embodies imagination and the idea of human divinity, which necessarily rejects institutional religion: "William Blake's archetypal poet, Los, labouring at the construction of the imaginative city of Golgonooza, declared that he must 'create a System' or be enslaved by the ready-made system of the current Christian creed, institutions and morality (*Jerusalem* I.10)" (Abrams 67). Blake rejected religious convention and focused on the visionary aspects of perception that allow the discovery inside the human being of a dimension that used to be associated with the supernatural. This tendency often appears in Moore's work and favours his use of Romantic forms and imagery.

In order to show the Blakean influence on Moore I will situate Blake in the panorama of Romantic culture and identify the specific Blakean elements. I will first establish the commonalities and the differences between Blake and Wordsworth, in whom Abrams exemplifies many Romantic motifs and attitudes, contrasting him often with Blake. Moreover, I will consider interpretations of Blake that differ from the traditional idea of a radically anti-naturalist poet, and show the contrast between Blake and Wordsworth in a light different from Abrams's. Larrissy's analysis supports the idea that Blake became a popular canonical Romantic figure to a great extent for the characteristics in him the deviate from the rest of Romantic authors (*Blake* 1). In fact, the focus on these characteristics influenced the development of an understanding of Romanticism that is more attractive for Postmodernism (1), including, for example, the idea of Blake as a devil's advocate promoted by decadents and aesthetes like Swinburne (2).

According to Abrams, Wordsworth believed in a benevolent universe, whereas for Blake this was "the illusory result of the fall of man" (25). Abrams's interpretations of Blake are based mainly on Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, which reads Blake in radical opposition to Wordsworth. Frye interpreted Blake as a detractor of nature. This is a traditional interpretation of Blake that

is being challenged at present. According to Frye, Blake conceives nature as inherently barren, unresponsive, lifeless and hostile entity that must be conquered and shaped by man's imagination and art in order to be rendered hospitable (Frye 39-42). In Wordsworth, nature is already a "goodly" (Wordsworth qtd. in Abrams 25), beautiful place, even a paradise just a step away if the mind is willing to fuse with it (Abrams 26-27). These debatable views on Blake conditioned the frequent comparisons between Blake and Wordsworth.

For Blake, Wordsworth's idea of nature and of the union of mind and nature was too idyllic and simple, as his note to lines 63-68 of *The Recluse* (1880) indicates: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting & fitted" (Blake, *Annotations* E666-67). This "fitting & fitted" ignored the negative aspects of nature that resulted from the fall of man into ordinary ways of thinking, living and being. Both Blake and Wordsworth agreed that the human being needed to get rid of the prison house of conventions, as a condition to live a true life. The difference between them was that for Wordsworth nature remained intact, while for Blake it had been affected by the fall.

Recent studies affirm that Blake's notion of nature is not as monolithically negative as Frye's interpretation suggested. As Hutchings states, "[i]n much of Blake's visionary poetry, representations of nature and natural objects embody a sense of doubleness" (*Imagining* 14). There is, on one hand, the nature that is "unbounded and uncontaminated by human intervention" (14) and on the other, the Nature (usually with a capital *N* in Blake's texts) that results from our social and cultural discourses. These discourses shape our understanding of nature; they make up its "discursivity" (14). The scientific construct or the idea of nature promoted by conventional religious doctrines are part of this discursivity. In other words, Blake's nature, like Wordsworth's, lies beyond social conventions. The difference is that for Blake there is an aspect of nature produced by the fall; religion and science are the discourses of the fall. Nature in Blake is divided between its fallen and its unfallen aspects and Blake's vision reveals this division rather than the union between mind and nature that Wordsworth aspires to.

Fallen nature is present in different female figures in Blake's works. In *Jerusalem*, Albion is seduced by Vala, the illusory beauty of fallen nature (Abrams 263). Vala's beauty is not the intrinsic beauty of the earth but that which man bestows on nature through reason. Fallen nature is the one that fits into our categories and conventions. Only some parts of nature are acknowledged by discourse because they fit religious conventions or rational structures and forms. The rest is excluded and when this happens, these excluded parts of nature turn hostile. The mind divides nature in this way, turning our energies destructive (see Eagleton, *Holy Terror* and the mythical narrative of Pan and Pentheus). This division of nature, with a part of it turning hostile and the mythical figures embodying it, finds no counterparts in Wordsworth.

This means a certain idea of nature – one that is the product of reason – seduced the eternal man and led him to exclude the part of nature that did not fit into this idea. For Blake, this Nature, with capital *N*, constitutes "the illusory result of the fall of man" (Abrams 25). For the idea of the world to be complete, a "regenerate" (263) Vala ("Nature") must be reintegrated into Jerusalem; this will turn her negative energies into positive ones. This implies there is a form of nature with which humanity must interact and cooperate even if from a conventional perspective it seems to be negative. This entails a return of humanity to a nature, which is both external and internal, that cannot be contained in conventional categories, whether these are religious or scientific. Blake attributes the same problem to religion and science: dependence

on conventions and rejection of imagination, the tendency to be guided only by ideas adopted from others, making creation and changes in the way of seeing impossible. The way towards the full experience of the aspects of Vala that were, since the Fall, left in the shadows, is imagination, the faculty that can take the human mind beyond established ways of seeing, thinking, living, and being.

Hutching's argument that Blake's anti-naturalism is not as radical as Frye thought allows a better understanding of the difference between Blake's apocalyptic marriage of reason and energy, of the eternal man and regenerated nature, and Wordsworth's marriage of nature and mind. In Blake's view, Wordsworth's idea that the struggle to free oneself from conventions could lead to the union with pure nature ignored that nature is fallen. An apocalypse was necessary to regenerate nature by integrating the excluded and transforming the negative into positive forces. Both Blake (Hutchings, "Ecocriticism" 175) and Wordsworth (185, 188) reacted against the effects of industrialisation. Blake favoured a notion of the interconnection of all life (177) and Wordsworth understood the concern for nature in a holistic way (188). Blake opposed instrumental notions of value (181), while Wordsworth was also conscious of the inherent value of the natural world beyond the growing centrality of exchange value (185). But for Blake this interconnection necessarily required the integration of the excluded. His emphasis on the inherent value of humble beings such as "earwigs, maggots, fleas, tape-worms and slugs" (*M* 27.11-24; E124) involves an approach to nature that is quite different form the kind of conventional Romanticism that leaves out the unpleasant and apparently irrelevant parts of nature (Hutchings, "Ecocriticism" 182).

Wordsworth certainly values humble beings ignored by the conventional eye, like the reaper, the blind beggar, or the discarded soldier. Even so, in Blake's vermin and bugs we may see contrast with Wordsworth's clouds, peaks and crags. This is an aspect of Blake that resonates in early Moore. In *Swamp Thing*, for instance, the poetic language of issue 34, "Rite of Spring" (vol. 2; ch. 8), attempts to remove the conventional discourses that clothe nature and accept those parts of it that are usually considered unpleasant, frightening or even repulsive. Like Blake's illuminations, Stephen Bissette's, John Totleben's and Tatjana Wood's accompanying designs show worms, rodents, maggots and insects that dwell on depredation and violence (Moore et al. *Swamp Thing* vol. 2; p. 217).

2. MOORE'S ANARCHIST MAGIC AND BLAKE'S RADICAL ANTINOMIANISM

2.0. INTRODUCTION

To understand Moore's attitude towards Postmodern re-enchantment, it is necessary to delve into the importance of countercultural circles, which, in Britain and America in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, adopted elements from Blake's biographical persona and characters, events, images or quotes from Blake's poems, pictures and illuminated books. This adoption of Blake is a mixture of "Modernism, surrealism, symbolism and the influence of popular culture" (Larrissy, *Blake* 91). Among the reasons for countercultural proponents to do this was the need to legitimise their claims by connecting them to a figure that had been regarded as an outcast and a rebel, but that had also become a canonical figure. In this way, on one hand, the countercultural ideas could be given more credit, and, on the other hand, countercultural authors would set themselves apart from the establishment. I would like to find out Moore's particular reasons to rewrite Blake within this general framework.

Many of the countercultural movements that inspired and even directly formed Moore's sensitivity were the hippie movement and the beatniks, punk anarchism and other youth subcultures and Postmodern Western esotericism, especially the tendencies that could be called magic. The topic of magic will be dealt with in this chapter, as it is vital to understand Moore's own particular version of Postmodern re-enchantment and his view of Blake's attitude towards system, which he summarised in the motto "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (*J* 8.20; E153).

This chapter will explore Moore's background as a means to explain those concerns that lead to Moore's interest in Blake. Moore receives Blake through the popular culture of which he is a part and its countercultural channels. In this chapter, I will briefly study the structure of feeling of the comics milieu, of esoteric circles and of other literary influences through which Blake reached Moore. This structure of feeling involves anarchism, ecologism, and the thread of ideas that makes these political and spiritual questions linked in Moore's writing. This network of interconnected areas comprises an idea of sexuality as "interconnectedness and mutuality" (Green, "Everything's" 99), concepts which have a larger, social, environmental and political resonance in Moore's context. Interconnection and mutuality had been the focus of both anarchist and environmental thought, for example, as Green suggests, in Murray Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom*, published in 1982 ("Everything's" 99). Moore combines this type of social and political anarchism with the "hermetic belief in the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm" ("Everything's" 100). Thus he combines the political dimension with the spiritual, and furthermore, reinforces his own brand of natural supernaturalism through an "investment of natural systems with magical meanings" ("Everything's" 100).

I will first explain the links between Blake's radical and antinomian ideas and Moore's countercultural beliefs; secondly, I will explore the different ways in which Blake became mythologised in popular culture, especially in countercultural contexts and authors. Thirdly, I

will explain how Blake is often evoked in certain branches of occultism with which Moore got involved. In the fourth section, I will elaborate about the comics industry and compare Moore with Grant Morrison and comment on their use of Blake. In the fifth, I will focus on Moore's vindications of ecological anarchy and on his struggle against the discrimination of non-normative sexualities, which are understood through the same framework of opposition between convention and freedom. I will show how these vindications can also find an analogue in Blake's works. Finally, I will explore how the mutual implication of these topics in Moore's view is a key factor in his relation with Blake, who also believed in the inherent association between spirituality and politics. Behind the occult readings of Blake, Moore's use of them, and his belief in the interconnectedness between natural energies and spiritual meaning lies the Romantic idea of the "lower" origin of the "highest" aspects of the human self, the movement of dark, negative energies from below to the heavens (Langbaum 9).

2.1. ENLIGHTENMENT RADICALISM, ANTINOMIANISM AND TWENTIETH CENTURY COUNTERCULTURE

Radical counterculture in Britain at the time Moore was writing his first famous graphic novels expressed itself as discontent and dissent over the economic, political, religious, and gender cultural norms of contemporary Western society. These included capitalist market economy with its military and colonial exploitation, religious fanaticisms and indoctrination, and patriarchal domination. In Moore's earlier works, *The Ballad of Halo Jones*, *V for Vendetta* or *Swamp Thing*, Thatcherism was the specific target of social criticism. More specifically, its conservatism, its liberal individualism, its draconian cuts on welfare, the repression of working-class movements, and its legal measures against non-normative sexualities. One example of the latter was Clause 28 (1986), which banned any reference to homosexuality in school curricula (Green, "Everything's" 100). The criticism was also directed at the ruthless exploitation of nature in the name of progress and economic benefit, especially in *Swamp Thing*. Moore also criticised the nostalgia for imperialism he perceived in the political atmosphere in later works like *From Hell*, and later on, in *Promethea*, made a call for religious and cultural tolerance in the face of the American "War on Terror" of the Bush era and the racism and prejudice it allowed to flourish. The apocalyptic theme in *Promethea* captures a millenarian revolutionary zeitgeist that found its expression in some actions of the Anonymous hacker group and later movements like Occupy Wall Street and its global extensions[11], with demonstrators wearing the iconic V mask. In *Providence*, the author reflects on the repressive side of American culture. The graphic novel, initially published as a series from May 2015 to April 2017 registers the worsening of this repressive tendency, exacerbated by the backlash of reactionary, homophobic and racist populism leading to the election of Donald Trump as president.

Moore follows a line similar to Blake's criticism of rationalism, of the excessive reliance on science, of materialism and of the subject-object binary, all of them part of the instrumentalisation of knowledge by the institutions of power. Like Blake, Moore thinks that all these elements are intertwined in the same system of domination and mental slavery (the "mind-forg'd Manacles" in "London" [*SE* 46.8; E27]). Part of Blake's appeal to Moore arises

[11] I refer to Occupy Wall Street as an example of these movements in the English-speaking world, although it should not be forgotten that "Occupy" was inspired by the previous Arab Spring and the Spanish movements Indignados and 15-M, where Moore's iconography was also used.

from the fact that Blake himself was involved in a particular countercultural moment at the end of the eighteenth century, when he also was writing against vested interests in politics, culture and gender.

Blake's ideas regarding politics, religion and gender followed some of the main radical currents of thought in Enlightenment, but in certain aspects Blake had his own interpretation of the social changes espoused in these circles. He questioned the institutions of monarchy, war, colonialism, science and philosophy, religious fanaticism and indoctrination, moral hypocrisy, patriarchy, prudery, virginity and marriage as part of the same system of domination. Blake was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas about the rights of woman; however, he disagreed with the concept of modesty, which Wollstonecraft defended in her works.

Blake saw the American and French Revolutions as opportunities to bring down this system of oppression, and initially supported them with enthusiasm, until the Terror in France changed the perception of the French Revolution all throughout Europe. His later greater focus on mythopoeia, however, rather than radical sceptical critical strategies, is not devoid of political significance (Fallon, *Blake* 16). Blake had been greatly influenced by American radical ideas such as Thomas Paine's and by French deism through Volney, although he gave these lines of thought his own different turn. According to Thompson, unlike radicals, Blake thought political reform was not enough, that there should be a change to a more imaginative consciousness to make a better humanity (Thompson 193); unlike deists, he thought a naturalistic psychology based on self-interest could not be the basis to liberate people (Thompson 221). David Fallon emphasises Blake's more Enlightened literary strategies, especially his adoption of apotheosis as a form of criticism of hegemonic power, but also and very importantly as a way to exalt a popular and communal experience of nationhood beyond the institutional forms (20). He also linked this collective energy intrinsically to mythical forms through which he dramatised human universal renewal in Christian visionary terms (Fallon, *Blake* 20).

For Thompson, the cause of evil in Blake "lies in class-society, in which contraries have become polarised, and the pity of one feeds on the misery of the other"; self-love in an innocent state does not cause any evil (219). In *Jerusalem*, the cause of evil is "*naming*" (Blake qtd. in Thompson 220), in other words, categorising. Love or self-love can't be "rationalised or moralised" (Thompson 220); they are corrupted only in the context of the society where one's misery is another's gain. In short, he disagreed with conventional religious morals derived from a literal interpretation of the scriptures, but he did not totally concur with radicals and deists because they were missing a fundamental aspect of the human in their theories. Fallon suggests a very useful set of theoretical positions that clarify Blake's complex stance. On one hand, Blake participated of the Enlightened culture of critique of superstition and explanation of mysterious narratives (Fallon, *Blake* 14). On the other hand, he was a myth maker, despite believing religion and myth were not as separate as many apologists of conventional religious doctrine liked to state (6). Considering these attitudes, Fallon proposes to understand him through modern Biblical hermeneutics from the twentieth century. They help to clarify Blake's approach by combining criticism and faith. Fallon here uses Rudolf Bultmann's theories, which establish that interpretation should not necessarily entail accepting the supernatural in the way the ancients did, but could entail demythologisation, not in the sense of elimination of myth, but in the sense of reading of its deep meaning (17-18).

Another theoretical perspective that Fallon suggests to illuminate Blake's apparent contradictions is that of Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur's idea of a "conflict of interpretations" between

a "hermeneutics of suspicion" and another of "restoration of meaning" (Ricoeur qtd. in Fallon, *Blake* 2) helps make sense of Blake's ambivalences. Ricoeur thought "extreme iconoclasm" could be a part of a larger "restoration of meaning" (qtd. in Fallon, *Blake* 2). Blake was concerned by the issue of interpretation (Fallon, *Blake* 7), stimulated by his background in certain heterodox Christian traditions. However, he combined these perspectives with an anti-authoritarian critical position (Fallon, *Blake* 7). He interpreted Enlightened physiognomy supporting universal equality among humans as "true Christian philosophy" (Blake qtd. in Fallon, *Blake* 7), but considered the site of this equality was the Poetic Genius (Fallon, *Blake* 7). This basic universalism was also present in Enlightened philosophy like Hume's, although Blake resisted the tendency towards abstraction. Ricoeur also understood myth as a way to give a "worldly form to what is beyond known and tangible reality" (qtd. in Fallon, *Blake* 18) and to "embody the divine as it is experienced by humans" (Fallon, *Blake* 18). He thought Friedrich Nietzsche's, Karl Marx's or Sigmund Freud's atheism was something more than a mere negation of religion, but that it rather opened the way for a "postreligious faith" (Ricoeur qtd. in Fallon, *Blake* 18) that turns away from the obsolete aspects of religion symbolised by God the Father: protection and accusation (18).

As for his ambivalence towards Enlightened radicalism, Blake shared a sceptical attitude with radical writers, and his "spiritual" history draws from Enlightened writers conjectural histories such as David Hume's or Voltaire's, even to the point of incorporating Enlightened atheist elements (Fallon, *Blake* 5-6). But critics who analyse Blake in a more political manner, often forget the other side of Blake as a myth maker, which was actually an integral part of his participation in radicalism. In other words, his mythical aspects are not separate from his social and political. He considered Paine's criticism of priestcraft was true Christianity, strategically adopting Paine's egalitarianism but remaining detached from radical materialism and scepticism by proposing collective emancipation as miraculous (Fallon, *Blake* 16-17). Blake supported the most utopian aspects of Enlightenment.

An erroneous use of reason ultimately pervades the old religious oppression and the seemingly emancipatory postulates of Enlightened radicalism and deism. This sense that spirituality should be politically responsible and tend towards imaginative freedom and that politics alone cannot improve society in the long run without acknowledging the immaterial realm of the mind is a crucial aspect that Moore embraces and vindicates through his works.

A determining influence on Blake's spirituality and politics is seventeenth and eighteenth-century antinomianism, the rejection of the religious moral law based on the belief that after Christ's sacrifice, the faithful were delivered from the law (Thompson 11). The orthodox condemned the antinomian as "the devil's respondent," a phrase used in the anonymous letter *Antinomianism Explained and Exploded; in a Letter to a Friend* (Thompson 13). The antinomian, and among them Blake, thought following the Law meant actually going against Christ's teachings of forgiveness and love (Thompson 13-14). This opposition between Mosaic Law and the Gospel of Jesus became tantamount to the opposition between the abusive authorities and the oppressed (14). In *Milton*, Milton's self-annihilation is Blake's antinomian antidote against Satan's moral law, which is seen as a negation of the other. In order to avoid becoming like Satan, Milton refuses to destroy Satan and sacrifices himself.

Blakean antinomianism entered the 1960s American counterculture, a great influence on Moore, through the work of Ginsberg, Aldous Huxley and Theodor Roszak among others. The American counterculture was deeply inspired by Blake, but not by the historically accurate

Blake, but by its more esoteric aspects associated to Neoplatonism, Kabbalah and "erotic-mystical thought" (Kripal 101). This interest coincided with the momentum of the civil rights movement, radical feminism, gay rights, the sexual revolution and a heightened curiosity for Asian religions "in eroticized or Tantric forms" (101). Jeffrey Kripal argues that counterculture implies at a basic level the same ideas than antinomianism (101).

Through Ginsberg, according to Kripal, a "Blakean possession in 1948 led to the birth of the beatniks" (103). This possession led Ginsberg to his attainment of a sort of understanding of the eternity of poetic consciousness and perception, which made him to experience that remaining in this mode of consciousness for too long was incompatible with everyday life and society (Kripal 102- 103).

Huxley's mescaline experiments were devised by him to understand Blake's states of consciousness and test his theories that the brain selects the information it needs to perceive from the surroundings for the purposes of survival (Kripal 105). He believed this mechanism could be circumvented through psychedelic drugs or mystical states (such as he thought Blake could go into), where reality can be accessed in its entirety (Kripal 105). In this sense he also suggested that this consciousness was too disruptive to be sustained along with an ordinary existence (Kripal 105).

Blake's improvement of sensual enjoyment was often interpreted as a "metaphysically grounded eroticism" (Kripal 108). Roszak argued the counterculture was basically Blakean (Kripal 110) and adopted Blake's voice often to refer to the new age: "Rouze up, O Young Men of the New Age!" (Blake qtd. in Kripal 110), although Blake's expression is more political (Kripal 110). He also referenced him in *The Making of a Counterculture* (1969) in the last chapter, "Eyes of Flesh, Eyes of Fire", where he questions the labels imposed on vision as madness, poetry or the product of religious eccentricity, because it cannot be understood through reductive terms from technocracy and rationalism, and lied beyond "the faith of churches and the instrumental reason of modernity and the universities" (Kripal 110-111).

The countercultural eroticisation of the spiritual and the refusal to pertain to a single tradition are in keeping with the Blakean spirit (Kripal 112). In Moore, eroticism is one of many revolutionary weapons or arts that can bring about changes both at an individual and social level. It is portrayed as magical in the sense that magic is defined as a technique to alter reality, a property that is also attributed to sexual acts. The problem is that these "counter" / anti aspects have become part of the cultural / nomos, and that is for the moment the unresolved problem that will influence debate on these topics (Kripal 112).

Like Blake's, Moore's revolutionary politics also come under the form of a spiritual revelation that shatters the mental constructs imposed on human beings; for both Moore and Blake, it is the imagination that makes liberation possible and both express this through the arts. As in Blake, in Moore this is a process of re-enchantment that involves the divinisation of humanity and a sexual liberation that entails the equality of women and men. This is a controversial aspect in Blake's work, taking into account the contrast between early works like *Thel* or *Visions*, where the social roles of women are questioned and where the legitimacy of female desire is defended at the same time that the role of visionary prophetess is attributed to a female character, and later works like *Jerusalem*, where the *bêtes-noires* of Blake's worldview—deism, tyranny, moral law and chastity—are finally unambiguously identified with the principle of the Female Will and the female figures of Enitharmon, Vala or the daughters of Albion. In the case of Moore, this concern is shared with the counterculture of the

1960s. This counterculture's "sexual revolution" and its derivatives explore freedom from sexual repression. The result is a less changing view, where women as such are never seen as capricious oppressors, but on the contrary either victims that fight oppression bravely or agents of a positive change in gender conflicts and also in the process of human liberation at large. In fact, Moore focuses on early Blake in *From Hell* to raise awareness of gender oppression.

All these beliefs and interpretations of social conflicts hark back, in many cases explicitly, to Blake's influence. In his works Blake defended revolution, freedom, imagination, the arts and sexual revolution. He championed liberation from religious convention in favour of free expression of poetic genius and the humanisation of God and divinisation of humanity. To an extent he defended the equality of women and men, up to a point in his career. Final freedom, according to Blake, would arrive with a collective revelation and transformation of human perception brought about by the event of an Apocalyptic liberation of imaginative, emotional energies, from "the mind-forg'd manacles" (*SE* ["London"] 46.8; E27). As I have so far discussed, Moore's works depict a revolutionary apocalypse, the translation of the freedom of the mind into our everyday world through vision and the overcoming of conventions, the realisation of the status of reality fiction occupies, making gods creations of humanity to be loved and a triumph of desire and vision over ordinary ways of being.

2.2. POPULAR MYTHOLOGISATIONS OF BLAKE

Alexander and Anne Gilchrist's biography of Blake marks the beginning of the mythologisation of the poet-prophet. He began to be conceived as a mystic, solitary figure (Clark and Whittaker 7). This evocative, but sometimes partial biography resulted in a greater popularisation of Blake and informed the reception of Blake by authors and artists like the Pre-Raphaelites and Charles Algernon Swinburne (Clark and Whittaker 8). Swinburne and other late nineteenth century authors created a "decadent reading of Blake" mainly based on *Marriage*, where they saw a celebration of sin (Larrissy, *Blake* 2). The decadent reading of Blake influenced Huxley, who was in turn the source of early Moore's Blake.

After the Second World War there was "a proliferation of Blakes … which could, rather loosely, be termed Postmodern." This means that he was often reinterpreted as a "poststructuralist writer whose complex prophetic works deconstructed any sure ideological meaning" (Clark and Whittaker 7).

Postmodern writers like Angela Carter, or Salman Rushdie "wish to use him as a playful, iconoclastic figure of subversion, yet he must also remain [for them] a writer who retains sufficient individuality and authority to repay more traditional forms of homage" (Clark and Whittaker 7). In Postmodernism, Blake gets immersed in a mixture of high and low culture. There are two tendencies in Postmodernism, the "adoption of Blake as a brand" and the championing of Blake the rebel "by no-logo, anticapitalist adherents" (Lussier 10). The first tendency refers to the fact that Blake has also been subject to commercialisation, and the uniqueness of his style and aesthetics has been often taken advantage of for economic reasons: "The Blakean style is immediately recognisable as a brand name – or even a logo for a certain intimation of visionary (or pseudo-visionary) poetics – and one that thus has a peculiar relationship with the logic of late capitalism" (Clark and Whittaker 7); this is a very interesting argument, as not only has Blake's style been adopted as a brand for its uniqueness, but also as bait for alternative, critical audiences to assimilate them into the mainstream public, disguising

mere products as dark, visionary or revolutionary manifestations. The second tendency was characteristic of the 1960s and 70s, which were the time of greatest popularity of an anti-establishment Blake (10). In order to understand his visions, advocates of counterculture either associated him with hallucinogens or carried out psychiatric speculations about his mental health (10-11). Although they meant to be sympathetic towards Blake, they were returning to the same old prejudices against which Blake fought, seeing madness and "pathology" where for Blake there was only "inspiration" (Clark and Whittaker 11). This was the case for Huxley, who had read and been inspired by Blake by the time *The Doors of Perception* was published in 1954. Huxley's readings of Blake are key to many of the differences between Moore's Blake and the historical Blake (see chapter 4 of this thesis, pp. 114-117).

Iain Sinclair's uses of Blake's mythology were also important for Moore's reception of Blake. Ironically, Sinclair and his friends, part of the Cambridge School of poets from the 1980s, disavowed any status as a "counterculture, alternative or underground, an Albion in place of England" (Crozier and Longville qtd. in Keery 101), in an attempt to distance themselves from the 1960s utopian approximation to Blake. However, they were deeply submerged in the dark aspects of Blakean myth. Sinclair uses mythical figures such as Slayd, Hand and Kotope and other fallen children of Albion from *Jerusalem*, who represent the satanic oppressors of Britain (Keery 102). Sinclair's *Lud Heat* (1975) and *White Chappel, Scarlet Tracings* (1987) were fundamental in inspiring Moore to write *From Hell*, where Moore also puts into practice the psychogeography Sinclair elaborates in his works. In *Lud Heat*, London is presented as haunted by its own monuments, especially Hawksmoor's churches and Egyptian-inspired monuments, which acquire the Blakean meaning of human sacrifice (Larrissy, *Blake* 129). Specifically, the obelisk that overshadows Blake's tomb is presented as a device that contains irrational energies represented by the poet, an element present in *From Hell*: "Lautreamont warns that 'the weight of an obelisk stifles the spread of madness'. Hawksmoor risks an obelisk over the grave of William Blake" (Sinclair qtd. in Keery 102). Sinclair explicitly mentions Blake as an antecedent in the mythical mapping of the urban space (Larrissy, *Blake* 128). Haunted London, Nicholas Hawksmoor and Egyptian monuments also appear in *From Hell*, where they recall, just as in Sinclair, Blake's use of Egypt as evil, based on the Biblical tradition of the Exodus (Larrissy, *Blake* 13). Moore takes other elements of Sinclair's reception of Blake, such as the typically Postmodern parodic references to the occult and the paranoid and lunatic aspects of Sinclair's, Blake's and his own psychogeographic conceptions of the city (Larrissy, *Blake* 13). Sinclair also precedes Moore in the tendency to reflect on the dangerous implications of a misreading of Blake, some of whose descriptions are associated with "a sense of menacing irrationality" (Larrissy, *Blake* 130). Thus, in the following passage, Jack the Ripper's murders are associated with Blakean inspiration: "The sunspot code has been activated, the radio message of the Ripper … With a taste of metal, the iron of Los … malarial blood heat … Blake's 'sulphur sun' … life is a disease" (Sinclair qtd. in Keery 102). There is also in *Lud Heat* an idea of the "sinister interdependence and similarity of good and evil", at least in their conventional definitions (Larrissy, *Blake* 130-131). In Blake, this interdependence comes from the association of evil with poetic genius and of good with reason, rather than from purely moral ideas of good and evil. The theme of the constructedness of myth determines his (as well as Moore's) Postmodern attraction towards Blake's world (Larrissy, *Blake* 132). *Suicide Bridge* (1979) is a story Keery qualifies as a "Blakean family romance" (102) focusing on the children of Albion, and expressing Blake's idea that "A man's worst

Enemies are those / Of his own House and Family" (*J* 27.81-82, E173). The perspective, nonetheless, is totally opposed to Blake's, taking as reference "precisely what appalled and terrified Blake" (Keery 103). The focus in *White Chappel, Scarlet Tracings* is how mythical violence imposes itself on reality (Larrissy, *Blake* 14), a premise that drives *From Hell*. *Downriver* (1991), a satirical novel, is also permeated by Blake's darkest aspects (Keery 103). *Radon Daughters* (1994) also contains several references:

> An intriguingly oxymoronic response – 'Andi trembled for this maggot tenderness' – is illuminated by Blake's image of 'the tender maggot, emblem of immortality' (1998, 167; *Four Zoas*, 136.32, E 404). A painting of 'Blake's Los entering London' is executed by a psychotic with a palette knife; and a 'forerunner of apocalypse' pays 'homage to William Blake' as he awaits a 'revelation' of the meaning of the novel (Keery 104)

The book also includes references to Blake's mythical evocations of London, Cambridge and Oxford in *Milton* and to characters with manifold aspects that recall Blakean figures like Milton's Sixfold emanation (Keery 104-105). In short, Blake's more Gothic aspects are amplified in Sinclair and Moore's works, which showcases the Postmodern transformation of the Romantic sublime into dystopian nightmares (Larrissy, *Blake* 14).

Thomas Harris's[12] version of Blake is also important to analyse Moore's *From Hell* and its use of Blakean themes and motifs. It is a characteristically Postmodern reading of Blake that also emphasises the dark and Gothic angles, although it occasionally falls into the Manichean (Larrissy, *Blake* 92). Harris's works use Blake to "underline … a particular philosophy regarding Good and Evil, namely that the two are intertwined and coexist…" (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 179).

Michelle Gompf offers a full analysis of the Blakean references and subtexts in Harris's trilogy, with special attention to the notion of the coexistence of good and evil inside the human self. The most obvious reference is the title of *Red Dragon* (1981), taken from Blake's picture *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun* (1805-1810), and the tattoo of the dragon sported by the murderer in the book, Francis Dolarhyde (Gompf 179). In *Silence of the Lambs* (1988), connections are more subtle, but the theme of the interrelation of good and evil is sustained, echoing back the Blakean meanings in the first book (Gompf 179). In *Hannibal* (1999), the most conspicuous reference is Verger Mason's reproduction of *The Ancient of Days* (1794), which underlines this character's Urizenic quality (Gompf 179, 187).

In the trilogy, the Blakean theme emphasised is the concept of good and evil as contraries rather than "opposing binaries" (Gompf 179). The basic opposition between the ruthless but highly intelligent psychopath and his conventionally good but hypocritical and vulgar antagonists is well-known thanks to the popular film adaptations. That is the main manifestation of the Blakean philosophy of good and evil in Harris, but there is more. In *Red Dragon*, for instance, the motif of the tiger is recurrent, and symbolises both the vulnerability and terrible power of the killer; there are as well quotations from "A Divine Image" and "The Divine Image" (Gompf 182). Dolahyde's belief that he hears the voice of the dragon in Blake's picture is also heavily significant, especially when he decides to travel to New York and eat the original painting to stop the voice of the Dragon from talking to him further (Gompf 182). Even

[12] Author of *Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* among others.

Dolarhyde's handwriting is described as "a fine copperplate script – not unlike William Blake's" (Harris qtd. in Gompf 182).

In *Silence of the Lambs*, these reflections are conflated with the theme of madness suggested by the character of Hannibal Lecter, which multiplies the Blakean reminiscences (Gompf 183). Lecter's character incarnates the definition of evil proposed by Blake in *Marriage*, equating evil to energy, life and delight, "evil as positive, an active energy" (Gompf 183-184). While, like Blake, Lecter believes God can create both Good and Evil and that God can sometimes relish in killing, unlike Blake, he believes it is ultimately Good to imitate God in his destructive aspect (Gompf 184, 186). The conclusion drawn in the book is that evil is a vaccine against further evil (Gompf 184). Lecter believes that even violence and pain could proceed from an ultimately good source, although he does not develop this premise (like Blake does) to the conclusion that suffering might lead to an improved capacity for vision (Gompf 186), as Blake suggests in *Marriage*: "first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid" (E39). In the imagery, lambs are also present besides tigers under the figure of Clarice Starling, who decides to become an FBI agent (and therefore enter into contact with evil and cruelty) through her childhood experiences with the slaughter of lambs and horses (Gompf 185). Throughout her storyline, she becomes more and more like Lecter, until their relationship of contrariety culminates in union (Gompf 187).

The last volume of the trilogy, *Hannibal*, emphasises Lecter's vulnerability and Clarice's fierceness (Gompf 190), as she tries to counteract Verger's plot to torture and confine Lecter. The marriage of heaven and hell represented by the union of the two characters is not only external, but also internal, as each character develops the quality opposite of that which they represented up to this point in the story (190). Each character starts to represent both innocence and experience (190). According to Gompf, critics who see in this union of the male and female heroes (similar to that of Blake's Zoas and Emanations) a betrayal of feminism are incurring in the mistake of thinking only in binary terms (191).

The popular interpretations of Harris's trilogy reinforced the widespread idea that Blake defended evil (Larrissy, *Blake* 11). Although more sophisticated than these, as I will discuss in the appropriate section, Moore's *From Hell* takes advantage of these readings and also uses Blake as "a means to explain a peculiarly perverse form of evil, an intelligent psychopathy, that also has its real target in the institutional hypocrisy of moral law" (Larrissy, *Blake* 11). These serial-killer narratives that recur to Blakean aphorism on evil seem to do it to underline the persistence of evil in current welfare and even opulent societies (93). They also point at the sinister outcomes of 1960s hippie utopias, the same which relied on Blake so often to convey messages of liberation and peaceful revolution. The implication is that Blake has often been included in well-intentioned Postmodern discourses that relativised morality but rejected traditional rationality, authority and order all too rashly. This left gaps through which senseless violence could enter (93). As we will see in chapter 5, Moore shows considerable understanding of this difficulty with the reception of Blake, seeing him as potentially inspiring an excessively amoral reading on the part of people like Gull or Robert Suydam (in *Providence*) of the concept of energy and freedom in Blake.

But the most important tendency of Blake's reading in Postmodernity, according to Clark et al. (5) is the interrelation between politics and spirituality, the more so when we contrast his

works with Moore's. Blake has been associated in New Age and occulture to shamanism, tantric sexuality and environmental vindications, the three of which are constitutive of Moore's fictional world and the main points of interest for Blake in the works I am going to discuss.

The reception of Blake in Postmodernity is in great measure determined by popular audiences and interpretations outside the literary establishment, as Mark Lussier discusses in "Blake beyond Postmodernity" (2007). These audiences were described by a high-brow opponent as follows:

> … innumerable self-styled eccentrics, disgruntled and unpublished authors, flower children, fans of psychedelia, Jungians, Freudians, alternate lifestyle advocates, occultists, spiritualists, nudists, animal lovers, socialists and teenagers of the sort who read Herman Hesse (Kimmelman qtd. in Lussier 152).

Behind the discriminatory and arrogant tone of this tirade, we get an interesting picture of Blake's Postmodern readership and of Moore's and his readership's background. This is the kind of environment that grew from the beatnik subculture, the 1960s subculture and the hippie subculture, where Blake had already been a notable and omnipresent reference.

Lussier argues that in Ginsberg's musical album *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1969) and his essay *Your Reason and Blake's System* (1988) and his, Blake was a "poetic shorthand for altered states of consciousness, opposition to normative cultural formation and phenomenological views of mind and matter" (Lussier 154). Ginsberg even claimed that "[T]he voice of Blake … is the voice I have now" (Ginsberg qtd. in Otto 27), after an epiphany he achieved when he was living in East Harlem, while masturbating and reading "Ah! Sun-Flower", from *Songs of Experience* (1794) (Larrissy, *Blake* 89). This would determine his subsequent bardic, prophetic stance, his consciousness of the "immanence of eternity" in worldly things, and the use of the figure of Moloch in a position that very much resembles that of Urizen as the personification of human sacrifice in war (Larrissy, *Blake* 90). As in Blake, this entity is at certain moments ambivalent, representing not only cruelty but also a kind of holiness that can be found even in what the poet finds elsewhere repellent (Larrissy, *Blake* 116). Moreover, another theme he adapted from Blake is that of contraries, specifically to signify the presence of beauty in a "damaged, industrial world" through Christian symbolism, or the reconciliation of the opposites of time and eternity (Larrissy, *Blake* 117, 119). The sense of prophecy is also connected specifically to notions of nation and wrath before the social and political state of affairs (120).

American beat counterculture, with all its Blakean apparatus, was not isolated, but had a very strong influence on British poetry via Ginsberg (Larrissy, *Blake* 11). This influence can be attested by works such as Michael Horovitz's anthology *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground in Britain* (1969) (Larrissy, *Blake* 10), from which an outstanding example is Adrian Mitchell's "Lullaby for William Blake". This is the cultural atmosphere and context where Moore began to take interest in literature and probably absorbed a number of ideas and symbols that ultimately went back to Blake. At this time, the Blake allusions and references were part of the libertarian and anti-war emergent discourses (Larrissy, *Blake* 11).

The beat and countercultural adoption of Blake came from a long American tradition of Blakean inspiration. As Linda Freedman notes in her study *William Blake and the Myth of America: From the Abolitionists to Counterculture* (2018), American Trascendentalists were more enthused by Blake than the Victorians, while abolitionists used Blake to try to popularise

their message (26). The next milestone of Blake reception in America was Walt Whitman, who wrote an essay on Blake in 1868 (Freedman 61), and who influenced the later beat poets, especially Ginsberg, as Kripal points out (104). During the twentieth century, other poets continued transmitting this poetic influence, including Marianne Moore and T. S. Eliot (Freedman 76). During this period, the interest in Hebrew poetry reinforced the connection to Blake, who also preferred the Bible to the Classics, and paved the way for Ginsberg (Freedman 76), who also took Hebrew verse as his model of composition.

Freedman contributes with two unusual angles in her account of the relationship between Blake and Ginsberg. First, she emphasises the playful aspect of Ginsberg's approach to Blake (perhaps not unlike Moore's approach in *Promethea*), and second, Ginsberg's awareness of the conflicts of political disillusion Blake went through, and with which he identified his own consciousness and his own times (116). Freedman also explores the poetry of Michael McClure and Gary Snyder, who were among the first writers to challenge the traditional reading of Blake's anti-naturalism in favour of an ecological reading of Blake that may have fertilised the terrain for Moore's reading in *Swamp Thing*. Freedman warns that these poets, however, often read Blake in a "naïve and uncritical" way (141), although they were very different from each other. McClure focused on the diabolic aspects of Blakean energy to defend the body and vitality, whereas Snyder saw Blake as a more meditative poet due to his Buddhist leanings. The mystical branch of counterculture was enriched also by theologians like Thomas Merton, Thomas Altizer and Norman O. Brown, who tried to redefine Christianity away from Pauline authoritarianism and in tune with the mood of the 1960s. They adopted Blakean perspectives such as "an immensely metaphysical approach to reality, an obsession with circularity over linearity, sensual response, and a philosophical commitment to the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*, the union, integration, or interpenetration of opposites" (Freedman 195). While later writers such as Saul Bellow criticised counterculture for adopting what they saw as a false Romanticism (Freedman 214-215), other Postmoderns such as Kurt Vonnegut and Ray Bradbury continued to deploy Blakean tropes and references in the countercultural style, to achieve their goal of securing "a place for the creative imagination in the redemption of modern America" (Freedman 254).

Huxley's *Doors of Perception* and Jim Morrison's band The Doors also emphasised a psychedelic Blake. In the song "End of the Night" (1967), J. Morrison quoted Blake's poem "Auguries of Innocence" (from the Pickering Manuscript, composed c. 1807): "Some are born to sweet delight / Some are born to the endless night" (Morrison qtd. in Lussier 154). Morrison was attracted to the notion of art as prophecy, reimagining himself as a singer-shaman in a way that emulates Blake's status of poet-prophet (Connolly, "He" 233). This multiplied the references to Blake in the world of rock and roll, including the appearance of "And Did those Feet" (Blake's poem in the Preface of *Milton,* "And did those Feet", better known as the hymn "Jerusalem") in the film *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), starring David Bowie as a homeless alien who is mistaken for a Briton when he lands on America.

In the later British music scene, Blake became an icon of "energy and expression" as opposed to the "coherence and regularity" supposed to characterise commodified art (Fallon, "Hear" 258). Punk musicians identified with Blake's ideas about "Exuberance" and the "crooked roads" of Genius. Blake was held up as a monument to an alternative pacifist patriotism, in opposition to prevailing Conservative Party ideologies and neoliberalism (258-259). It will be crucial to understand how different political groups have tried to appropriate

Blake, with the hymn Jerusalem being a paradigmatic example, as Steve Clark et al. have suggested:

> After a relative lull during the 1960s and 1970s, where the hymn became little more than a kitsch throwback to embarrassed memories of failed imperialism (or equally strained socialism), after the rise of Thatcherism and the New Labour, it became increasingly important for political movements on the far left and the far right. Whittaker explores how the relatively mainstream positions of neoliberalism and social democracy were replaced by more extremist positions as "Jerusalem" was adopted first by anarchists and then by the British National Party (Clark et al. 10).

It is essential to understand these fluctuations of meaning when we approach the analysis of the usage of this hymn in *V for Vendetta* and other works by Moore.

Emerson, Lake and Palmer's album *Brain Salad Surgery* (1973) also participates in the idea of including Blake in "rock rebellion" in opposition to a consumerism and the mainstream (Lussier 155). We must not, however, neglect the fact that rock music was already beginning to become a powerful, wealthy industry, no longer just a countercultural, marginal, working-class manifestation; an industry that could determine cultural meanings, as Lussier says of bands like The Doors or Emerson, Lake and Palmer (155). After all, as he argues drawing from Harvey, consumer culture has appropriated counterculture (158); marginal and underground elements are finally watered down and commodified. This analysis distinguishes between the Blake from which the dominant culture and advertising can profit (the Blake brand mentioned above; see pages 54-55) and the Blake that is used to resist economic mandates and defend genuine creativity, such as Ginsberg's or Moore's. These are respectively "light" Blake, and "dangerous and radical" Blake (158).

Lussier here references W. J. T. Mitchell's "dangerous Blake", an iconoclastic critical exercise that entails a reconsideration of mad Blake, obscene Blake and incoherent Blake (Mitchell 411). Mitchell sought to remedy the limitations of formalism when approaching the reading of Blake, and to declare the need to doubt the image of Blake resulting from formalism: a prodigious poet and artist in control of every letter of his works. He proposed a more historically bound and human authorial figure instead, a Blake that has transcended *with* all his rudeness, flaws and mistakes. Writers (or critics) from the counterculture who saw Blake as an enlightened or psychically gifted individual have contributed to the image of an "abnormal Blake" (Lussier 169). On one hand they have added up to the divinised figure of classical Blake studies (Mitchell 410-411), and on the other, they have resuscitated "dangerous" aspects of Blake, such as its pathological interpretation. Among the two alternatives presented by Mitchell to confront the problem of Blake's madness from a contemporary perspective, countercultural authors have chosen the Neo-Romantic idealistic path of R. D. Laing's understanding of schizophrenia (Mitchell 412). They embraced Blake's madness naively as part of the essence of his true artistry and his status of outsider from ordinary society.

Huxley's *Doors of Perception* interpreted Blake's visions as the result of "an unusual neurophysiological condition" (Glausser 164) which Huxley can only emulate through mescaline. Huxley does not only pathologise Blake; but also idealises him by saying "mind's like Blake's 'belong to a different species and inhabit a radically alien universe'" (Glausser 170). At the same time, he banalised Blake's world-changing idea of vision:

> [Huxley] takes mescaline as an experiment to see whether the drug 'would admit me, at least for a few hours, into the kind of inner world described by Blake'. … Huxley implies that Blake's genius is something freakish that can be put on like a mask for a few hours by a credentialled intellectual, evaluated, then set aside for the normal business of life. (Glausser 170-171)

This was a general tendency in Huxley's times. Other intellectuals of psychedelia, like Humphrey Osmond, "saw a new humanity moving towards 'fourfold vision'" (Glausser 171); Gordon Wasson, ethnomycologist, when speculating about the psilocybic origin of religious consciousness, cited Blake's allusion to "seeing infinity in a grain of sand" (Blake qtd. in Glausser 171). Later on, this tendency would live on in people such as Timothy Leary, a 1960s psychologist and writer who advocated LSD and psilocybin and advised to "leave LBJ and Bob Hope" and "join Lao-Tse, Christ, Blake" (Leary qtd. in Otto 27). Leary's *Politics of Ecstasy* (1968) was one of Moore's early influences, leading him to an interest in psychedelic experiences (Khoury 19).

Huxley had submerged himself so much into Blake's world that the visions he received with mescaline were shaped by the ideas from Blake he had assimilated (Glausser 171). Nonetheless, the concepts of mystery and vision are different in both writers. Mystery was positive for Huxley, but negative for Blake, who understood it as the deliberate obscurity of religious knowledge encouraged by priesthood to augment their power and their distance from common people. Huxley thought vision impaired the subject's capacity for action (Glausser 172), just the opposite of Blake's distrust of passive contemplation, from which he believed humanity should move on to spiritual action under the form of art. This is reflected in *Milton* in the depictions of the pleasant but childish lunar realm of Beulah as opposed to the more visionary heaven in Eden, where the human soul is not limited to passivity but engages in divine creative activity. Huxley also misuses Blake's principles of "heaven" and "hell", identifying pleasant "trips" with Heaven and the bad ones with Hell, and speculating on the possibility of eliminating the latter (Glausser 173), falling into the error Blake mentions in *Marriage*, namely adopting an angelic metaphysics of reason that renders overwhelming experiences terrifying. Furthermore, Huxley establishes an analogy between the mescaline experience and schizophrenia, thus pathologising the capacity of vision. Huxley compares a psychedelic consciousness to Blake's vision of "… a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower" ("Auguries of Innocence" 1-2; [The Pickering Manuscript] E490). However, both Huxley's and other psychedelic authors' references are misquotations or taken out of their context and manipulated (Glausser 178).

In sum, the psychedelic literature of the 1960s presupposes that "cleansing the doors" is easy, and that visionary experience can be communicable and reducible to a recipe or formula anyone can repeat safely at any moment without compromising his ordinary everyday frame of mind[13] (Glausser 178). We can conclude that Moore came to Blake influenced by the psychedelic subculture of the 1960s and by Postmodern authors who considered Blake to be an iconoclastic figure. Moore was particularly influenced by Huxley among the psychedelic authors, as we will see in the analysis of *Swamp Thing*. This is a Blake who was employed to

[13] Jim Morrison's version at least implies difficulty and "struggle", as he sings about "breaking on through, not opening up" the doors of perception (Glausser 178).

emphasise a tolerant, alternative notion of Englishness but also co-opted by consumer culture as a brand. Still, as we will see, Moore's understanding of Blake evolves from a more superficial treatment to a deeper understanding not only of Blake, but of the concept of vision.

2.3. ESOTERICISM, OCCULTURE AND MOORE'S RECEPTION OF BLAKE

Long before Moore, one of the most renowned admirers of Blake was William Butler Yeats. Yeats is famous for his initial Romantic interest and study of Irish mythology, folklore and traditional esoteric doctrines. He explored the occult by joining the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an organisation based on ritual and psychodrama and devoted to an eclectic and romanticised version of ancient Greek and Egyptian mysteries. Romanticism entailed a re-enchantment inspired by traditional sources like the *Corpus Hermeticum*[14], the Kabbalistic teachings or medieval alchemy, as was the case of Coleridge's poetics. Yeats's reading of Blake was initially heavily inspired by occultism, which led him to focus especially on mythology and archetypal symbolism (Larrissy, *Blake* 3-4), to attribute to Blake more systematicity than he used (Langbaum 365 n. 11), and to structure much of his poetic work in terms of contrariety (Larrissy, *Blake* 2-3).

Yeats was also aware of Blake's interest in Swedenborg and became himself a reader of the Swedish author. The Swedenborgian element that Yeats focused the most on when editing and publishing with Edwin J. Ellis *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical* (1893) was the way he analysed the relationship between material creation and the spiritual world of imagination (Antonielli 14). According to Swedenborg, the world is divided into discrete realms or "degrees" that could only be connected through "correspondence" (Antonielli 14), an idea that Blake himself reflected upon in his annotations to Swedenborg's *Wisdom of Angels Concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* (1762-1763; Blake annotated it in 1788). Yeats was aware of these annotations, as there is evidence that he copied Blake's annotations from the original at the British Museum on his own copy of the Swedenborgian treatise, given to him by Ellis (Antonielli 14). Ellis and Yeats also read Blake through Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary*, of which they had a 1883 copy, and *Arcana Coelestia*, dated 1891 (Antonielli 14). The theory of correspondence is the basis for the centrality of symbol in Yeats's interpretation of Blake.

In the theory, the sensible is shaped by the mental, which makes it possible to *read* the sensible to know the spiritual; in other words, sensible signs, and practically all of nature, can become symbols (Antonielli 14-15). For example, the physical body of a person, according to the theory, can reveal their personality, and in that sense the body is a symbol (Antonielli 14). Swedenborg distinguished three different degrees that would determine Yeats's vision of Blake's system: natural, spiritual and celestial, interpreted by Yeats as natural, intellectual and emotional (Antonielli 15). Yeats believed the highest of these degrees, the celestial or emotional, corresponded to Blake's notion of the poetic genius, from which, Blake effectively said, the rest are derived (Antonielli 15-16). The reason that the celestial degree was the most important and identified with the visionary capacity in Blake was the fact that it allows the individual to enter an impersonal part of themselves where all minds meet beyond physical and

[14] Marsilio Ficino's Latin translations were printed c. 1500-1641, but the original sources were centuries older.

mental boundaries (Antonielli 16). Yeats believed this territory was "a great memory, the memory of Nature herself" and that symbols, by referring to this memory or specific items in it, could awaken it (Yeats qtd. in Antonielli 16). Needless to say, while Blake used merely imagination at will to evoke vision, Yeats relied on symbols (Antonielli 17).

From this basic threefold division of the universe, Yeats derived his study of Blake. Thus, the intellectual degree corresponds to the Father (energy), the emotional to the Son (imagination) and the natural (nature) to the Holy Spirit (Antonielli 17). The latter is also divided into two, giving way to a fourth degree that the occultists called "mirror" or "looking-glass" that is a "universal matrix, or heaven, or abode" where everything else exists (Yeats qtd. in Antonielli 17).

This fourfold division served Yeats to understand Blake's four Zoas. Consequently, Urizen belongs to the intellectual degree of the Father and reason, Luvah pertains to the degree of emotion and he is the Son; Tharmas corresponds to the natural degree, that of sensation, and he is identified with the mirror; and Urthona, the Holy Spirit, is associated to the rest of the degree of nature (Antonielli 18). The division both in Blake and in Yeats's study also assigns a cardinal point to each degree and Zoa: zenith (South) is Urizen, nadir (North) is Urthona, centre (East) Luvah and circumference (West) Tharmas (Antonielli 18). Each of them represents one of the four elements: Urizen was fire before he fell and became a "cold and rational light" (18); Luvah is air, stading in between fire and water; Tharmas is water and Urthona is earth (18-19). Yeats thought that, as according to occult lore, each Zoa corresponded to one of the steps in Jacob's ladder or stages between the world of matter and the world of the spirit, and associated them with the names of the realms created by Blake: Beulah, Alla, Al-Ulro and Or-Ulro (Antonielli 19). The highest before Eden, Beulah, stands for the zenith and rules the eyes, "first point of contact between objective and subjective reality" (19); Alla, the centre, rules the nostrils; Al-Ulro rules touch and taste, and Or-Ulro rules hearing (19). Very frequent in Blake are also the references to three body parts: head, heart and loins, identified by Yeats with Urizen, Luvah and Tharmas. Urthona corresponds to the stomach and womb, since his realm is Or-Ulro (Antonielli 19). Yeats made other more daring comparison, such as that of the Zoas with the Hindu tattvas or elements (Antonielli 19). He used Blake's description of the fall of Urizen from North to South to explain the predicament of the fallen humanity, with the head in the earth, the heart full of water and the loins in the air (Antonielli 20). This change means that various positions are possible, where man or woman is dominated by one of the elements (20), as in ancient Greek medicine. The fallen position with Urizen at the North is, although fallen, harmonious (20). It is when the states are at war that each state separates from its space; the state (Zoa) becomes a spectre, and the space his separated Emanation: Ahania, Vala, Enion and Enitharmon (21).

The Swedenborgian doctrine was also very influential on Blake's division of the Covering Cherub into twenty-seven Churches or personages that are grouped into three different religious eras. These three are the Churches of Beulah, to which is added a fourth that is the Christian Church, that of those who have recognised imagination as the eternal humanity (Antonielli 22). Before the fall, the churches were one, but afterwards the three Churches of Beulah followed Albion into the material world; the Christian Church refused to descend, for which reason their Master was persecuted and crucified (22). This one Swedenborg identified with his own New Church (Antonielli 23). In Swedenborg's texts, this one is the Church where body and soul are in perfect communion, while the others represents gradual stages of incipient or total separation

(Antonielli 23). The last Church signals the moment when Moses receives the Commandments, the least imaginative moment in human history from Blake's perspective, and relates to the Tree of Good and Evil (Antonielli 23). The fallen churches are divided into: the hermaphroditic church, composed by Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Methuselah and Lamech; the male within a female (war hid in religion), formed by Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Cainan II, Salah, Heber, Peleh, Reu and Serug; and the female within a male, integrated by Abraham, Moses, Solomon, Paul, Constantine, Charlemagne and Luther (22). Each group is divided to symbolise the initial, central and final phase of the corresponding religious era, as well as "the fourth phase that indicates the beginning of another" (23). Paul, Constantine, Charlemagne and Luther have a special significance, as they are associated to the Zoas, and to Christ's three days at the sepulchre and resurrection (23). Yeats tried to combine this division of churches to the cardinal points of the Zoas, which resulted in groups of characters describing an evolution from one Zoa to the other (Antonielli 24). The one starting with Luther goes from zenith to west and marks the creation of law and oppression, the separation between creation and God (24). The Church starting with Noah and going from west to nadir corresponds to the flood and the fall of Atlantis (24), and the one starting with Abraham is the Hebrew Church (24).

Although he followed Swedenborg's teaching for a time, Blake stood in a very controversial position as regards the occult. On one hand, he drew substantial influence from Paracelsus and Böhme. On the other hand, he despised the occult tendencies towards mathematisation, systematisation and diagrammatisation, as is the case in astrology, Pythagorean sects and certain aspects of the Kabbalah (Frye 155).

In his essay "Fossil Angels" (2002), Moore also proposes a rejection of the traditional notions of the occult and magic and a renewed, artistic concept of them, as well as a re-enchanted vision of art through its alliance with magic. He believes that in this way, both magic and art would recover their original sense. In order to understand this position and the relation between Blake and Moore, we need to explore both Blake and Moore's countercultural and esoteric sources.

As I have outlined when explaining Blake's Postmodern reception, Moore grew up in the context of the Age of Aquarius boom in the 1960s and was immersed in the New Age movement (partly included in Partridge's notion of the occulture) in his early adulthood. I will use the term occulture for its inclusivity. However, I will occasionally use the term "New Age" to refer specifically to the mainstream aspects of esotericism. Specifically, I will understand by "New Age" the currents popularised since the 1960s. In his interview with Khoury, Moore himself talks about the ideas circulating in his early youth and how they affected him:

> … around this time I'm what, 14? 15? So we're talking what, '67, '68? Something like that, '69? The hippie thing is happening … this was all happening, … there was a groundswell of young people who had an opinion and a more critical view of the way society was going …. During the hippie thing I was able to delude myself, that the counterculture, the hippie revolution, was going to destroy all outmoded notions of class; that, hey, it doesn't matter whether you're a guy or a chick and the color of your skin doesn't matter either or whether you're rich or poor—we're all brothers in the Age of Aquarius (Khoury 18).

We will encounter many of the precepts of the New Age occulture in the themes of his works. Most notably, and in connection with anarchist and environmental attitudes, New Age spirituality is pervaded by the idea of "connectedness" and a "rejection of authority" (Partridge 33).

It is not strange to find common traits between Blake and twentieth century New Age spirituality. In sociology and religious studies, the origin of the New Age is traced back to the Romantics. More precisely, to the hodgepodge of beliefs emerging from the different spiritual doctrines that appeared in Blake's times. These included groups such as "deists, freethinkers, Swedenborgians and others … who rejected orthodox religion in favour of a sacralised rendering of nature" (Heelas 41-42). Blake studied Swedenborgian doctrines and belonged to the New Church during a period of his life, and probably also experimented with Theosophy, founded in London in 1783 (Heelas 42). Helena Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) developed further the ideas put forth by the original eighteenth century Theosophical Society (Heelas 43). Alexandra David-Neel, a former student of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, wrote *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* (1965), a book that became popular with New Agers (Heelas 43).

In London, 1888, the Isis Urania Temple opened. This was the local Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn to which Yeats belonged for some time and which Aleister Crowley joined the following year (Heelas 43-44). I will devote more space to Crowley specifically below (see page 66 of this chapter), as he later quit the Golden Dawn. He took up leadership of the German Ordo Templis Orientis in 1912, and finally founded his own magical order called Thelema in 1920 (Heelas 44). He has a great influence on occulture, specifically on neopagans and ceremonial magicians (Heelas 44) and is a frequent source of inspiration for Moore.

Theosophical and Golden Dawn teachings went through a period of consolidation and diversification during the 1920s, 30s and 40s, when they became integrated with George Gurdjeff's teachings and Karl Jung's psychology, until they were taken up by authors such as Huxley (Heelas 44-49). After Huxley published *Perennial Philosophy* (1946) and the Blakean *Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell* (1956), Zen became popularised in America thanks to the work of the Japanese Zen master Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki. D. T. Suzuki had, in fact, edited Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* in Japanese (Wada 171) and taught Zen and English to Japan's foremost Blake scholar, Sōetsu Yanagi, who studied the similarities between Zen philosophy and Blake's thought.

Yanagi is still an important referent in Blake studies in Japan, and the subject of many debates that continue to explore this association between Zen and Blake. Ayako Wada comments Blake's *Marriage* passage in which Isaiah explains to the poet that when unity is attained, the individual and God are not two, but one, and everything can be perceived as infinite beyond Cartesian and empiricist concepts of the world (166). Great Zen masters such as Suzuki also contemplated this idea of a "continuum" of existence (Suzuki qtd. in Wada 167). Yanagi saw this focus on the expansion of self as a trait in Blake that connects with the Orient (Wada 167), interpreting Blake as a pantheist. Yanagi, following Swinburne, thought that Blake's idea of "self-abnegation" (Swinburne qtd. in Wada 167) was distinct from other pantheist's because of its more oriental and mystic character. Like him, Yanagi argued that Blakean self-annihilation was not "self-denial" (Yanagi qtd. in Wada 167), but an expansion of the self made possible by its union with the universe. Yanagi attributed Blake's oriental philosophical traits

to the influence of Brahmanism (the Upanishads in particular) and its central idea of the union between Brahma and Atman (Wada 167). The ending of *Jerusalem*, according to Wada (who follows Yanagi in her essay), is an infinite vision of oneness between self and inner divinity, whereby the latter becomes universally present, erasing the barrier between inside and outside (168). Hatsuko Nimii interprets the union of Milton and Ololon as another similar event to Zen enlightenment, which Suzuki called "Absolute Emptiness" (Suzuki qtd. in Nimii 179), an affirmation beyond opposites. This overcoming of opposites lies in the realisation of their common origin in a higher principle (Nimii 179).[15]

The spread of these aesthetics, Oriental philosophies and alternative spiritualities[16] led to the 1960s explosion of the New Age movement (Heelas 49), characterised by the rise of an increasing growth of what in the study of religion is called "Self-spirituality"[17] (51). Huxley, along with other artists like Joan Baez, studied for a time in the Esalen Institute, probably the best known centre promoting New Age teachings in the US. Moreover, Paul Heelas relates the beginnings of the New Age movement to the *beatniks* as well (49-50), who had a tremendous impact upon Moore. In North America, the Beat poets and other psychedelic proponents (Huxley, Ginsberg, Leary, etc.) mixed in their discourse and poetry elements of Zen and of Blake (Clark and Suzuki 11). Among them, Ginsberg, for example, played a prominent role in the transmission of Blake's poetry.

The Aquarian movement was deeply influenced by the nineteenth-century Arts & Crafts aesthetics and artists who, like William Morris, shared a radical utopian perspective. Morris was himself highly influenced by Blake and both Blake's theme of the transformation of perception through vision and his poetic rejection of social conventions appealed to the emerging pacifist, ecological and psychedelic culture of the 1960s and 70s that continued in the 1980s and 90s New Age circles.

The more occultist branches of the New Age movement drew inspiration from the teachings of Crowley (London, 1875-1947), the British magician, poet, painter, writer, and mountaineer. Crowley influenced the 1960s and 70s rock and roll musicians like The Beatles and Led Zeppelin and the counterculture in general (Dent and Whittaker 157). During a trip to Egypt, he "channelled" *The Book of the Law* (1904), also called *Liber AL Vel Legis*. In this text, he established the principles of his own doctrine, Thelema (from ancient Greek *θέλημα*, "will"). The precepts of Thelema are "Do what Thou Wilt" and "Love is the Law, Love under Will". According to the "Do what Thou Wilt" principle, each individual exists to undertake a unique purpose in accordance with the original impulse of creation: the True Will. The individual must discover what this True Will is, and strive to realise it, a process Crowley identified with the

[15] There are also voices that warn of Yanagi's misreadings and therefore certain points of incompatibility between Zen and Blake. Kazuyoshi Oishi centres around the contradiction resulting from Yanagi's misreading of Blake, pointing out that Yanagi's insistence to find something akin to Zen oneness in Blake's imagination neglects Blake's "physical vitality, masculine energy and spiritual enthusiasm" (Oishi 183). Yanagi's version of Zen is also considered polite by Oishi (187), unlike Blake's heterodox leanings, which were often based on popular radical and antinomian discourse, rather than on learned academic traditions. Yanagi tended to see Blake as well as a "moderate moral reformer," a definition that corresponded more to himself than to Blake (Oishi 187).

After Yanagi, Kenzaburo Ōe strengthened the continuity between Japan, Blake and Zen with his use of Blake references in his novel *Rouse Up O Young Men of the New Age!* (1983), linking Los's entrance into Blake's soul through his foot to the Zen expansion of the individual through submission to an older tradition (B. Turner 250), a concept that goes back to Yanagi (B. Turner 250-251), but is also (again) somewhat at odds with Blake's more radical side.

[16] This spread of Zen had many ramifications, but was also taken advantage of by cults that distorted the tenets of Zen and other mystical schools. One of such cults appearing in this period is L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology.

[17] "Self-spirituality" refers to practices and beliefs that involve the sacralisation of the Self, i.e., the individual in all or any of its aspects (Heelas 2). Previous groups like Theosophy already disseminated teachings of this kind.

alchemical Magnum Opus. "Love is the Law" elevates the true desire that would tend towards said goal to a supreme principle that is in harmony with the universal will.[18] Crowley derived from this a theoretical basis for his practice of ritual magic as a psychodramatic way of transcending the illusory lower self through an arduous meditative exercise conducive to the "Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel", a reunion with one's deeper and higher self, connected to the universe. The process entails the integration of dark forces through sexual rites that symbolise the union of the masculine and feminine principles in the higher self. The meaning of love for Crowley thus acquires a material sexual dimension. Crowley believed that taboo acts could release powers from the depths of the mind and return the individual to his or her essential self. One of the outstanding figures in Thelemic belief is Babalon, a redeemed version of the Biblical Babylon, reinterpreted as a goddess of nature, that was to recover the supposedly original sexual nature of the female aspect of divinity. Babalon became unavoidably bound up with patriarchal assumptions about female identity and sexuality. Thus, Babalon's characterisation as a harlot and her sexual availability is on one hand presented as sexual liberation, but on the other hand results very convenient to promote predominantly heterosexual, male fantasies. In my analysis of *Promethea*, I will describe Moore's criticism of the problems inherent to the figure of Babalon such as the essentialist notions of femininity and the practices that objectify women involved in Crowley's interpretations of hierogamy.

Crowley's understanding of magic fell into the traps Blake loathed such as rigid structures, tedious and unproductive lists of correspondences, and unoriginal ideas (his supreme laws were copied from Augustine and François Rabelais, and his poetry from Swinburne). In purely technical terms, Crowley was a good synthesiser of previous magical lore, including Eliphas Levi's and Papus's fusion of the Tarot trumps with the Kabbalistic interpretation of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the thirty-two major arcana is identified with each of the thirty-two letters, each one ascribed to a path leading from one attribute of God to another, from the ultimate divine source to material creation. This conceptual map allows the magician to understand the universe according to this singular key. Moore takes from Crowley the practicality of his system and fully explores the concept of the Tarot Arcana as Sephirotic paths in *Promethea*.

Crowley considered Blake the last in a line of esoteric masters beginning with Pythagoras (Dent and Whittaker 158). This clearly indicates that he ignored Blake's aversion to mathematical abstractions; his knowledge of Blake was limited to *Marriage* (Dent and Whittaker 158). Crowley, like Moore, identified Blake with the archetype of the Holy Fool (158) and connected his own revelation with the apocalyptic nature of Blake's works. He believed Blake's proverb that "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (*MHH* 7; E35) and through following the principle of the derangement of the senses, he thought he had achieved experience of "holy but diabolic powers": the "angel" Aiwas and the devil Choronzon (Dent and Whittaker 158). Crowley saw Blake as more of a decadent, blasphemous iconoclast than Blake really was and used him to legitimise and emphasise his belief that sexual energies should be used for spiritual enlightenment. He used Blake's antinomian opinions to support his own opposition to conventional religious morality and moral law. This reading of Blake would

[18] This is a modern reading of Augustine's "Love and Do what thou Wilt", which Crowley took from François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. This association was acknowledged by Crowley, who in fact included Rabelais as a Thelemic Saint in his Gnostic Mass.

nonetheless become very widespread in Postmodernity, due to the generalised moral relativism and a readiness to invoke Blake to defend "bohemian wildness" (Larrissy, *Blake* 88).

Crowley's Blake is relevant to our exploration of Moore's readings. At the time of writing *Swamp Thing*, Moore's knowledge of Blake was based on Huxley. His initial references to psychedelia are intertwined with the identification of vision with altered states of consciousness and a primitive communion with nature, two topics Crowley had also seen in Blakean vision. But later, in *From Hell*, Moore presents libidinal forces as powers that can as easily be creative as destructive, as in "The Tyger". This time, Moore goes back to Crowley to show how his reading of Blake overemphasises blasphemy and confuses the celebration of Energy with the justification of violence and domination. In other words, the confusion of the theory of Contraries and Negations, which I will summarise in the next chapter. In *From Hell*, this misreading is criticised through the point of view of the villain Gull. In *Promethea*, Moore creates an alternative to Crowley's problematic misreading whilst referencing Crowley's more useful contributions to occultism. In this work, he uses Blake's idea of the need to redeem natural energies from their conventional negative connotations and turn them into liberating forces, and he also insists on Blake's theme of the rebellion against moral law.

As an artist and writer Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956) also influenced Moore, who expresses a deeper admiration for Spare than for Crowley. Spare was also a London artist, writer and occultist. But unlike Crowley, with whom he was personally acquainted, he had a profoundly original and heterodox view of magic and art that resounds much more with Moore's proposals to merge both disciplines. Spare invented radically new ways to practice magic, like the use of magical sigils, which often implied for him the use of sexual energies to achieve meditative states and focus on the will. Sigils are symbols made up of real or invented letters and ideograms. They serve the purpose of condensing an idea or goal. To activate them, the magician focuses on them in an altered state of consciousness so as to communicate directly with his unconscious and avoid the rational mental obstacles that unconsciously prevent him to reach his desired goal (Miles 65). This altered state that is necessary to communicate with the subconscious could be achieved through sexual climax or any other extremes of pain, pleasure or exhaustion. This technique of using sexual acts as ritual practice was also developed by Crowley and his predecessors. The difference lies in the creative component; they used symbols and diagrams taken from the traditional sources, but Spare's sigils were unique creations, and he often used them to generate automatic drawings through which he could express inner desires he could not achieve through conscious effort (Miles 65-66). Spare's art achieved a very complex and personal style by mixing the monstrous, the erotic, and his alphabet of desire, one of the sets of symbols that he designed for his sigilisation techniques. During his youth he edited *Form: A Quarterly of the Arts* (1916-1922), to which Yeats was a contributor (Dent and Whittaker 162). Spare also experimented with "pseudo-collage," and anamorphosis (Dent and Whittaker 162). His spirituality, like Crowley's, was highly inspired by Eastern mysticism. The central idea of his works is Kia or "freedom of self beyond belief systems", which is similar to Tao (Dent and Whittaker 162). As in Zen, Spare strived to overcome opposing dualities and achieve a state of vacuity he sometimes termed Neither-Neither, which gave access to Self-Love, a transcendent mental state based on laughter and joy with a basis in the sexual drive (Miles 60-63).

Spare's persona and works were compared to Blake's by occultist, writer and poet Kenneth Grant (Dent and Whittaker 161). Spare's *The Focus of Life* (1921) features four characters

similar to Blake's Zoas, one of whom, Zos has "forgotten the freedom of his desires and fallen into a dull round of reincarnation" (Dent and Whittaker 163). This state resembles Blake's Albion, whose sleep also implies a fall from unity with his originally uncorrupted desire and into generation, that is similar to reincarnation insofar as both entail the repetition of a cycle downwards into organic life. Zos gets trapped into the cycle of existence in a way that resembles Buddhist reincarnation; that is to say, he is trapped on the material plane and cannot escape to a different spiritual order. Zos's saviour, Aâos, redeems him after being tempted by his virgin sister Tzula, whom Dent and Whittaker compare to Enitharmon (163). *The Anathema of Zos: The Sermon to the Hypocrites, an Automatic Writing* (1927) condemns religious hypocrisy: "O Self, my God …. Free me of morals, lead me into the temptation of myself, for I am a tottering kingdom of good and evil." (Spare qtd. in Dent and Whittaker 163). Dent and Whittaker conclude that while Blake ends up annihilating self, Spare seeks fulfilment in it, but his self is not the "mundane, post-Enlightenment ego" (163). While Blake was a radical Christian, Spare's beliefs are based on the neopaganism of the nineteenth century occult revival and some witchcraft elements, allegedly acquired via his mentor Mrs. Patterson, who is often believed to be a witch with connections to Salem (Miles 69).[19] However, the most important manifestation of witchcraft in Spare is a text called "The Witches' Sabbath", a collaboration between Spare and Grant (Miles 72). The text consists in a description of the Sabbath as a ritual orgy conducted to materialise a predetermined wish or rather exteriorise a hallucination that would help to understand a magical reality (72). Blake and Spare blasphemed against different gods: Blake against the "god of this world," Spare against the Christian God (Dent and Whittaker 163).

Both Crowley and Spare shared Blake's antinomianism (Dent and Whittaker 163). Moore also highlights the opposition to conventional religious morality, but like Spare, Moore involves sometimes affirmation of the Self rather than Self-Annihilation. The difference in the role of the self is due to the influence of pagan or pantheistic worldviews on Spare and, subsequently, Moore. If for Blake, "Christianity is Art" ("The Laocoön" E274), for Spare or Moore, magic is an art and all art is magic.

Chaos Magic, one of the latest Postmodern developments in the occult, took from Spare the technique of sigilisation, and the idea of the communication with the unconscious. Chaos Magic adherents posit that the magician should be able to assimilate or discard systems of belief according to the needs dictated by his or her will. Moore's statements concerning his veneration of the Roman deity Glycon resonate particularly with this school, as he admits Glycon was a fabrication from its very origins. Actually, for Chaos Magic, no system of belief, great narrative, or scientific theory can be erected as absolute truth; these only function as ephemeral and provisional tools. Anything goes as long as it works. Staple of Chaos Magic is the admixture to magical practices of grossly simplified scientific concepts taken from chaos theory or quantum physics. This radically secularised and half ironic modality of magic encourages individuals to develop their own systems and adopt or modify them as they wish; even to make their own pantheon out of any entities, fictional or real, concrete or abstract, classical or kitsch. The Chaos magician is in a certain sense an atheist: he believes the gods are fictions created by the human mind, but consciously uses their mythical and symbolic power. Chaos Magic took this point of view from Spare, who was not interested either in whether there really were disembodied spirits capable of communicating with mortals or not; he was interested in the phenomena of individual

[19] These are theories spread by Spare himself and Kenneth Grant, although as other sources also suggest (see Louv "Strange Life"), it is possible that Mrs Patterson was imagined by Spare, and not a real person.

consciousness (Miles 67). This attitude has a special relevance because it has a precedent in Blake's previous acknowledgement that "All deities reside in the human breast" (*MHH* 11; E38), rather than on celestial heights or in the laws of nature. As I outlined on page x of this chapter, Moore follows the belief that gods are human fabrications, but also that discourse and fiction have the power to determine reality, and that it is in this sense that gods are "mankind's very best… friends" (Moore, *Promethea* 3; 3). Moreover, there is not any moral code to be followed in Chaos Magic, only techniques to be developed to achieve the desired results, as if the efficiency maxim of capitalism was applied to occult practice.

It is this emphasis on creation, individuality, and epistemological and moral relativism that attracts Moore and that he will read in Blake's defence of creative freedom and authenticity when he studies Blake's works during the writing of *From Hell* and *Jerusalem*. However, a Chaote way of understanding magic, especially as regards its amorality and degree of relativism, never persuaded Moore of the inherent value of the system (Moore, "Alan Moore")[20]. He was much more interested in individual magical practitioners like Spare or Grant, who inspired Chaos Magic, but who demonstrated outstanding creative skills in their individual works. However, Chaos Magic is useful to study Moore's concept of magic insofar as it provides an antiauthoritarian metasystem that resonates with Moore's ideas about anarchy, and to the degree that it is still an influential part of the occultural world Moore is part of. An important reason to consider Chaos Magic as part of Moore's background is the fact that other comics writers in his same context, such as Grant Morrison, have publicly declared the inspiration and interest they take in this type of esotericism. In the next subsection I will succinctly discuss this author and his own involvement in Chaos Magic. A basic notion of G. Morrison's opposition to Moore is relevant to the study of the latter, because it aids to show Moore's Blakean references not as an isolated occurrence, or a mere throwback to a hippie or beatnik reading of Blake, but as a habitual practice of their own generation. But what transpires from Moore's aspects that lean more towards Chaos Magic is that his interest in Blake is focused on Blake's awareness of the fictional and imaginative nature of deities and supernatural beings and his rejection of the rules of the arts in favour of creative freedom.

Although less central to Moore, neopaganism plays some part in the occulture that permeates the creation of his works. Kraemer points out that neopagan elements are notable in *Promethea*. As she says, contemporary paganism and magic in general are based on a "syncretic polytheism and creative rituals" (Kraemer 152). This kind of esoteric faith also bases part of its structure on Crowley. The best known branch of this faith is the Wicca, a system of beliefs structured by Gerald Gardner and Doreen Valiente in the 1950s. Among other rites, heterosexual sex in neopaganism is a symbolic representation of creativity (Kraemer 152). Sex represents both in these traditions and in Moore "the movement of cosmic forces", "union of active and receptive energies: primal Force flowing into primal Form" (Kraemer 153). It is easy to see here the parallels with Blake's ideas of positive contrariety, of energy and reason, Heaven and Hell, as well as an image of the regenerating and apocalyptic union between Albion and Jerusalem.

Neopaganism has its own misreading of Blake; a kind of Druid Blake, pantheistic or naturalistic, whose forests and dolmens could be interpreted as positive symbols of nature, fertility and energy. One example of this kind of misreading is Philip Carr-Gomm's idea of Blake in *In the Grove of the Druids* (2002), where he devotes entire chapters to Blake. In the

[20] See also his references to Chaos Magic in "Beyond Our Ken" and *Fossil Angels*.

chapter, “The Mystic Shapes of William Blake”, Carr-Gomm states that he considers Blake an “occultist-mystic” (77), a classification refuted by critics like Frye which does not correspond to Blake’s works or philosophy. His interpretation of Blake is also somewhat limited to an identification of Blake’s fourfold division of the universe with other occult concepts, giving them a supernatural instead of a poetic, historical, literary or imaginative meaning; for instance, he claims “Twofold vision … is psychic vision, Blake’s normal condition, when man begins to see” (79). In this way, Carr-Gomm falls into the error of considering Blake’s capacities abnormal, instead of being a manifestation of inspiration and imaginative power. Moreover, the author reproduces a letter from the Chosen Chief Ross Nichols where argues that Blake was indeed a Druid and became a Chief of the Order in 1804, citing as proof the Chichester Assizes for 11 January of the same year (Nichols qtd. in Carr-Gomm 80-81). Nichols argues as well that Blake decided to maintain his position secret. By these means, Carr-Gomm, himself a Druid, tries to claim that Blake’s system is Druidic and is integrated in the teachings of the Order.

Most of Blake’s references to ancient Norse, Celtic or Classical religions diverge from modern Druidic teachings, though he occasionally refers to the unfallen Druids, suggesting that he believed the Druids were in origin positive figures. But Blake’s central idea is that religion is in itself oppressive when it ceases to be poetry. Except in those branches of neopaganism that adopt Chaos Magic assumptions about the fictionality of myth, Blake and neopaganism (especially of a New Age kind) are quite at odds. Although Moore’s early works convey a sense of ancient religions more akin to New Age concepts, as in *V for Vendetta*, in later works such as *From Hell*, he reads ancient religious symbols and druidic practices through Blake’s lens as oppressive instruments of mental tyranny.

The interest of occulture in Blake was motivated by its affinity with his ideas about contrariety and polarity, the revitalising power of sexual energies, his opposition to conventional religious morality, and to prescriptivism in the dimensions of art and spirituality. Moore’s understanding of Blake was coloured by the misreadings of Huxley and Crowley, which initially led him to overlook Blake’s notion of Self-Annihilation and to occasionally conflate Blake’s vision with the psychedelic experiences that ultimately insist in the notion of an abnormal or pathological Blake. In my analysis I will highlight the presence of these occult interpretations of Blake in Moore’s texts and how he became increasingly aware of their problems.

2.4. WILLIAM BLAKE IN BRITISH COMICS: ALAN MOORE VS GRANT MORRISON

Moore was not the only comics writer to draw inspiration from Blake. On the contrary, his work must be understood as a product of the interplay of different voices that converged in the environment of British comics in the 1980s. I will show that there was often a dialogue, commentary and reply, although not necessarily explicit, between the authors of comic books.

Large numbers of comics writers have used Blake in their works, among them J. M. DeMatteis in “Kraven’s Last Hunt” (1987), Mike Mignola in *Hellboy* (running from 1993 to the present), Garth Ennis in *The Punisher: Tyger* (2006) and Robert Crumb in his *Book of Genesis* (2009). I am going to focus specifically the controversial relationship between Moore and a famous contemporary, the Scottish writer G. Morrison. The reason why I discuss this relationship, rather than, say, the relationship Moore and Neil Gaiman, another famous comics author and Moore’s personal friend, is that Morrison shares several commonalities with Moore;

both are almost self-taught, both practice magic, and both share their admiration for Blake (Whitson n. 5).

Moore and Morrison are known as rivals in the world of comics. Morrison stated that he had approached Moore and asked for permission to take over *Marvelman* after Moore left the series, but Moore curtly and roundly deterred him (*Talking with Gods* 21:11-22:37). Although Moore says that he has hardly read Morrison, Greg Carpenter suggests that he mocks Morrison for his obsession with "autobiography, style, and nuclear conspiracies" (372-373). Although Moore accused Morrison of maligning him only to gain more notoriety, and of the theft of some of his basic ideas, Julian Darius' Bloom-based analysis of their creative parallels wisely concludes that "[i]f there's a case to be made for Moore's continued influence on Morrison, it's for pushing Morrison to define himself on his own terms, to refuse to labor in Alan Moore's shadow" ("On the Moore / Morrison Feud").

One could say that Moore and Morrison engaged in a competition of references to Blake, though Morrison's use of Blake was never as sophisticated as Moore's. In Morrison's work the references to Blake are little more than a device to associate his fictional world to ideas of revolution, alternative Englishness, and unconventional spirituality. Moore consistently uses Blakean imagery and concepts (not only visual images or quotations from his poems) and incorporates them as a whole perspective both formally, as proved by Whitson ("Panelling"), and thematically, as suggested by Whittaker ("*From Hell*").

One of the first relevant Blake quotations in Moore's works is from the hymn "Jerusalem". It is included in *V for Vendetta*, at the end of chapter six, "The Vision", first published in October 1982 in the magazine *Warrior*. Later, in chapter 5 of *Watchmen*, "Fearful Symmetry", he made a very sophisticated allusion to Blake in order to reinforce the opposition between Ozymandias' cunning and scheming and Rorschach's open and rebellious violence, and to suggest that the final apocalypse was planned by the inhuman and megalomaniac genius of Ozymandias. Not only did the chapter's title directly quote Blake's famous poem, but played with the idea of symmetry through panel arrangement and image mirroring (Whitson par. 14) in order to convey the idea of the dangers lurking in abstract reason. Only one year later, in 1987, Morrison published the first book of *Zenith*, "Tygers." Chapter 4, "History Lessons", includes a reference to Blake's "The Tyger" that can be read in the inscription of a monument dedicated to a patriotic British superhero.[21] Morrison's Postmodern and antiheroic perspective on superheroes can be seen as an instance of Jack Kirby's, Frank Miller's or Moore's influence. His *The New Adventures of Hitler* (1989) narrated the events of the period between 1912 and 1913 when, according to historical speculation, Hitler might have lived in Liverpool with his brother and his British sister-in-law. In issue "Crisis", number 46, the first page depicts Hitler walking down the street while at a nearby church a choir sings Blake's "And did those feet." The juxtaposition acquires an ironically blasphemous tone, since the lines referring to Christ can be applied to one of the greatest mass murderers in history.

While Moore's understanding of Blake was deeper and his use more functional and sophisticated, this was never matched by Morrison. In chapter 2 (1994) of his comics series *The Invisibles* (1994-2000), Morrison depicts a statue of Urizen on the river Thames while the characters quote Blake's *Urizen*: "Urizen deadly black, in chains bound" (Blake qtd. in

[21] *Zenith* narrated the adventures of the homonymous ironic superhero/Rockstar from 1987 to 2000. Morrison chose London for his story (Morrison and Yeowell, *Zenith* 1; ch. 4), probably in response to Moore's setting of his anti-heroic superheroes in *Watchmen* to the US.

Morrison and Yeowell, *Invisibles* 2, "Down"). At this moment in the narrative, the protagonist's notion of reality collapses and he begins to understand how it is vaster than he had previously thought. Although it is a complex and suggestive use of Blake's work, and it demonstrates a knowledge of Blake beyond the most famous illuminated books, the reference remains less functional than Moore's in *Watchmen*. This is because the *Invisibles* reference does not extend the Blakean resonance to formal aspects of the page or issue, and there is not any further continuation or development of the theme later in the series. It does emphasise questions of nationhood and contrasts an oppressive British establishment to Dane's epiphany, as if he had just been released from his "mind-forg'd manacles" (Blake, "London" 8, *SE* 46; E27).

Moreover, Moore's use of Blake developed towards more complex forms. In *Watchmen*, his interpretation is already more subtle than four year earlier in *V for Vendetta*, where the references are not completely integrated in plot or characterisation yet. Moore's *From Hell* (1989-1996) surpasses Morrison's *Invisibles* in terms of Blake reception, by bringing the poet-prophet more to the foreground instead of making the references just in passing. In Moore, Blake's ideas and texts become a matter of perspective and misreading rather than unidimensional symbols of spiritual awakening or rebelliousness. This is emphasised by the deceptive point of view of the villain-protagonist, whose actions are motivated, among other reasons, by a serious misreading of Blake (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 201). The story shows how manipulation can turn redemptive myth into a dangerous apparatus for the legitimation of violence.

Both Morrison and Moore worked for major comics editors and both on famous characters such as Batman and Superman. Morrison wrote the script of *All Star Superman* (2011), designed by Frank Quitely, where the influence of a Chaos Magic spirituality is clear. Following Morrison's thesis that superheroes today embody the function of gods (which he puts forth in *Supergods*, 2011), he conceives Superman as a modern Hercules. To this, he adds astrological and Christian symbolism. The result is a Christ-like solar deity that saves humanity from extinction by sacrificing himself and then is reborn as a star.[22] The most relevant element here is the full-page design at the end of the book (Morrison and Quitely, *All* 292), where a golden Superman is depicted in a dynamically tense Blakean position pulling a lever inside the sun, surrounded by shining wheels and pulleys. The complementary scripted page in the gallery included in the book shows Morrison's directions to Quitely, including his instruction that the image should remind of the art of William Blake (297). Carpenter has also called attention to the similarity between Blake's *Ancient of Days* and this image of Superman (442-443).

Moore, however, has gone beyond mere allusion in earlier works such as *Angel Passage* (2001), a poetic biography, where Moore not only interprets Blake's life imaginatively, but also invents an afterlife for him. During this afterlife, Blake appears to himself as a child and scares his younger self through a window (Ó Méalóid, part 5, "Heaven"), recalling the passage from Henry Crabb Robinson's reminiscences where little William sees "God" through a window. At the end of part 4, "Experience," he stands at the door of eternity carrying a lamp and looking back just in the same way Los stands at the door of eternity in the frontispiece to *Milton*. Moore does not portray superheroes as Gods, but rather as humans. It is ordinary men and women who, like Blake, by fighting to bring their vision to life become human form divine, without superheroic intermediaries. These differences highlight the particular importance of Moore's

[22] This happens in a peculiar technological way: he goes inside the sun and builds there a machine that prevents the star from dying.

reading of Blake and clarify that if any comics writer has engaged in deep interaction and dialogue with Blake, it is Moore, as proved by the analyses carried out by Whitson ("Panelling"), Whittaker ("*From Hell*") and Green ("She," "End" and "Everything's"). The commonalities between Moore and Morrison show that Blake is part of the legacy from which the graphic novel emerges, and not only the interest of one particular comics writer.

Moore writes in a context where Blake is an acknowledged and admired predecessor, and where references to his works are rife. This comparison between Moore and Morrison underlines the specific character of Moore's allusions to Blake. It also shows why their study is more relevant than other references to Blake's poetry by other comic book writers. As this comparison shows, Moore's Blake is a figure that lends itself to interpretation, to misunderstanding, and in sum to interaction and dialogue with his texts. Morrison's Blake, for instance, is a more hieratic and institutional figure, less polyhedral and changing, even if it is hailed as an icon of transgression. Moore's take emphasises how an icon of transgression can become its complete opposite: the founding stone of tyranny.

2.5. BLAKE'S IDEAS ABOUT SEXUALITY AND MOORE'S ANARCHO-ECOLOGICAL EROTICISM

The use of Blakean imagery and ideas in order to treat the topic of a "diseased sexuality" has a considerable tradition already established throughout Modernism by authors such as Ted Hughes (Larrissy, *Blake* 13). In his works, Moore defends a mode of being based on interconnection between ecology and sexuality. These are the concepts analysed by Green in "Everything's". Chapter 5 follows Green's arguments about this set of related concepts.

Blake exalted the principles of energy and imagination through the adagio "Every thing that lives is Holy" (*MHH* 27; E45). For Moore the sacredness of all beings makes hierarchy a false principle of organisation. The idea of interconnection between anarchy, ecology and sexuality is formulated in an erotic mode that entails a change in perception that eschews authority, and erases the boundaries of established concepts. The anarchic interconnection between specimens of different life forms or even between "real" and "fictional" entities, which Moore advances in works such as *Swamp Thing* and *Promethea*, overcomes the conventions of his time. These conventions still work according to definitions that establish the human as a category that proclaims the inferiority of the natural world with respect to the human. Blake struggled against the objectification of nature. The figures of Angels and Reasoners in *Marriage*, Bromion in *Visions*, Albion's Angel in *America*, Urizen in the self-titled book and Satan in *Milton* represent the rational Cartesian subject that performs this objectification. Their opponents, be them Devils, Oothoon, Orc, Los or Milton, challenge the rationalistic error that creation can be perfected through further division and separation, and open themselves both mentally and physically to different kinds of union with the totality of other beings and the world, in which analytic power and control is relinquished. The sole exception is the case of Orc, because he is shown to be a particularly corruptible configuration of the diabolic self, always running the risk of becoming a Urizen or a Satan.

Di Liddo defined sex in Moore's *Promethea* as "a 'legendary,' almost mythic activity, a ritual that transports its practitioners 'beyond the looking-glass,' beyond the limits of everyday life into a dimension where all its primeval power is revealed" (*Alan Moore* 151). In many of Moore's stories, the protagonists' relationships overflow definitions of gender and sexuality in their normative sense, as they embody precisely the inherently transgressive character of

diabolic energies. For this reason, the comics themselves had to confront the danger of censorship by the CCA (Comics Code Authority) in America ("Everything's" 97-98). Uncorrupted sexuality appears as a sphere where humanity can have the possibility to experience a communion with nature, away from social rules or preconceptions. In its original utopian aspect of profound interconnection, which brings about a foretaste of the potential state of "Eternal Delight" (Blake *MHH* 4; E34), sex is an experience akin to Blakean vision (Green, "Everything's" 101). This can be extrapolated to other works such as *Swamp Thing* and *Providence*.

Moore's portrayal of sexuality is utopian but not naïve. It shows an awareness that sex cannot completely remain intact from public discourse (Green, "Everything's" 106). Moore's "embrace of abjection" (Green, "Everything's" 110) functions as an attempt to oppose the way ordinary discourse bans sexual enjoyment beyond what is socially acceptable and regulated. Only in a utopia where no repression exists can communion with nature take place.

Both Blake and Moore build worlds where the sexual energies and the erotic impulses are holy because they have the capacity to break the boundaries of the individual and bring forth new, visionary realities. Boundlessness of desire is a sign of the divinity of human nature in Blake. It can be an impulse towards the conventionally abject, but the values attached to this impulse and its objects are positive instead of negative. The irreducibility of desire defies social laws and commandments of the fallen world. Hence Blake defends the young woman who rejects the roles of wife and mother (Thel) and pursues her erotic desire (Oothoon) or even the adulterous woman. The latter is the case of Mary, the mother of God, in *Jerusalem*. In Blake, sexual union implies an experience of energy as "Eternal Delight" (*MHH* 4; E34), of creative energy stripped of its corrupted social meaning. Blake's line "the soul of sweet delight. can never be defil'd" (*MHH* 9.53; E37)[23] expresses this innocent dimension of sexuality.

When the erotic impulse coming from the divine core of the self is suppressed, the result is violence and war, as depicted in Blake's *Milton* through the description of the wine-press of Luvah:

> The cruel joys of Luvahs Daughters lacerating with knives
> And whips their Victims & the deadly sport of Luvahs Sons.
>
> They dance around the dying, & they drink the howl & groan
> They catch the shrieks in cups of gold, they hand them to one another:
> These are the sports of love, & these the sweet delights of amorous play (27.35-39; E125).

Throughout Blake's works it is repression that causes the perversion of this impulse and turns it into a source of social violence and even wars (Green, "Everything's" 101),[24] as in *From Hell*. Di Liddo has also commented on this repressive aspect in Moore: "[i]n Moore and

[23] Note that Blake's punctuation and spelling in this and subsequent quotations can occasionally be very idiosyncratic, diverging from both contemporary and modern rules. Both have been copied as they appear in Erdman's edition of Blake's *Complete Poetry and Prose* (1988).

[24] Of course, the notion of sexual repression here is not a simplistic one. Sexual repression means much more than simply not being allowed physical sexual release. Repression is also being conditioned to use sex as an instrument of power and conquest or as symbol of status, being obliged to be heterosexual, being forced to marry, etc. It might even entail the opposite, such as being forced to have sex, for instance to fulfil a social imperative to have offspring. In general, it entails all the different forms in which sexuality is controlled and manipulated for social and political purposes.

Gebbie's perspective, repressing sexual drives and fantasies damages the self and dooms society to repeat its mistakes, as the coming of war shows" (*Alan Moore* 155).

Throughout the course of the analysis (chs. 4-6) I will provide and examine examples where Moore's development of these ideas is influenced by Blake. I will also highlight how Moore departs from Blake, especially with respect to the late Blakean idea of the Female Will, which contradicts Moore's eco-eroticism and his view of the Goddess figures as inherently benign. It is important to understand how Romanticism and Postmodern contexts have influenced this point of divergence: how female imagery evolved from "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" to the characteristically Postmodern New Age recovery of the primitive Goddess as a positive figure (even though she was not devoid of essentialist dangers, as she can still represents a normative concept of femininity serving patriarchal discourse). I will also focus on some examples where the authors enter into contradictions and conflicts regarding their defence of sexual liberation. In chapter 5 there will be remarks on the difficulties encountered by critics to make sense of imagery of sexual violence in the context of allegories of vision, liberation and spiritual enlightenment.

Moore's background not only provides a starting point to understand his notion of Blake, but also orientates our analysis towards other significant similarities and differences between Blake and Moore with respect to the topics of perception and vision, and good and evil. I have not written a separate section on politics to address issues such as revolution or anarchism because for Blake and Moore the distinction between earthly issues and visionary matters is false: political events have a spiritual significance as much as personal revelations have political implications. Where relevant, analysis or comments on political aspects of the selected topics will be made.

The next section will explain the theoretical tools chosen to analyse the selected works, including notions of influence and structures of feeling as a useful term to encompass Blake and Moore as part of the discourses, practices and attitudes described in this chapter. Instrumental reason, excess and transgression together with Gothic monstrosity are also a set of concepts that I will describe in the next chapter to apply in the analysis

3. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

3.0. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain the theoretical framework of this thesis: a) the tools that I will use to compare Blake and Moore, b) the necessary tools to trace the parallels and differences between their respective backgrounds, c) the necessary concepts to deal with the set of oppositions that the authors establish.

The Blakean distinction between contraries and negations is the guiding idea of my project. Though he may use the term "opposition" when he deals with pairs of contraries, Blake does not use this notion to mean the mutual exclusion between terms; rather, for him, "Opposition is true Friendship" (Blake, *MHH* 20; E42). As we will see, he opposes both "opposition" and "contraries" to "negation", which is the term that he uses to denote exclusivity and imposition of one pole over the other. Thus, in *Milton*:

> Negations are not Contraries: Contraries mutually Exist:
> But Negations Exist Not: Exceptions & Objections & Unbeliefs
> Exist not: nor shall they ever be Organized for ever & ever:
> If thou separate from me, thou art a Negation: a meer
> Reasoning & Derogation from Me, an Objecting & cruel Spite
> And Malice & Envy …. (17.33-38; E162)

The following set of terms can be in a relationship of contrariety or of negation: reason and imagination, perception and vision, alienation and freedom, law and desire, good and evil, soul and body, and repression and transgression. Reason and imagination are conceived as opposites when reason tries to dominate imagination, but if they relate on equal terms they are in a relationship of contrariety. These concepts operate at different levels, because of which I need specific tools such as the concepts of misprision, structures of feeling and of instrumental reason for the analysis of the philosophical and cultural meanings. Tools such as Eagleton's explanation of the violence resulting from rational excess enable an analysis of the socio-political, moral, gender-sexual and psychological levels of the comparison.

I will elaborate on how and in what aspects the theoretical framework determines my methodological approach, which I will also describe in this chapter. In subsection 3.1.1, I will discuss Bloom's theory of influence, from which I have picked his concepts of misprision, clinamen and tessera. These will help me define the nature of Moore's reception of Blake. Subsection 3.1.2 will deal with Williams's structures of feeling; this will allow me to compare the authors not as isolated entities, but as embedded in changing and fluid cultural backgrounds that were not fully institutionalised, but still "in solution" (*Marxism* 133-134). I will give a brief explanation of each and of how they are related. Section 3.1.3 will provide a set of concepts from different theoretical approaches that will allow me to analyse the different levels at which the major oppositions work. 3.1.3.1 deals with Max Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of

instrumental reason, which is relevant to explain the opposition established by the Enlightenment between reason and imagination, and perception and vision. Eagleton's approach to reason, law and transgression (3.1.3.2) accounts for the socio-political and individual dimension of the opposition between alienation and freedom, law and desire. This will complement the notion of instrumental reason. I will also deal in the same section with some of the psychoanalytic concepts Eagleton takes from Slavoj Žižek's to support his theory, among them those of superego and fantasy. I will complement them with ideas about horror from Gothic Studies in order to account for the moral dimension of the opposition (soul and body, good and evil, repression and transgression). This section includes a detailed explanation of the terms diabolic, satanic and *kategoros* (from Whittaker "*From Hell*") which, as I have explained in the introduction, provide more precision to the analysis of the opposition good / evil.

3.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS

3.1.1. Bloom's theory of influence and the concept of misprision: the reception of Blake

A part of this thesis is dedicated to the study of Blake's influence on Moore. Moore's reading of Blake is partly faithful, but also full of deliberate or accidental omissions, distortions, and additions that make up Moore's Blake. I have found Bloom's theory useful to understand the process of influence and of misreading. According to Bloom, it is the divergence from the original predecessor that constitutes the strength of an author: "[s]trong poets make … history by misreading one another" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 5). Misreading, or misprision will be one of the central concepts to understand Moore's omissions, distortions, and additions as part of his creative process.

In Blake, the workings of influence, reception and (mis)reading acquire a rich significance, but Bloom's theory needs some revision before being applied to Blake's and Moore's case. For Bloom there has been a "diminishment" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 10) of poetry from the Renaissance to its "post-Modernist heirs" (10), which is incompatible with Blake's notion of a vision that gets ever more crystalline and pristine with each rewriting. As Frye explains, Blake understood art as an improvement of understanding through time and history, not of aesthetic "quality" (Frye 260), let alone personal fame and immortality. In the sense that he rejects this transhistorical collective achievement in favour of the virile conquests of the individual strong poet rebelling against paternal authority, Bloom is a negation of Blake. On the contrary, in Blake, successive rewritings conduce to an advancement of consciousness and of art understood as a collective human creation: "Art does not improve its quality in the course of time, but it may lead to a visionary crisis in time as more and more of its palace becomes visible to poets" (Frye 323). A poet, by clarifying more the ideas of previous poets, reaffirms the eternal edifices they are erecting (Frye 323). Moore's rendering of Blake can be observed through this lens as a result of a cumulative process of understanding. As the latest in a line of literary descent, Moore condenses what he thinks Blake was aiming at by changing or omitting what is accessory according to his own sensibility and reinforcing what is, in his view, the deeper meaning of Blake's vision.

Bloom's notion of influence is inspired by the Freudian Oedipal myth; accordingly, the "strong poet" must murder the father, diverge from and distort his predecessor's voice as a

crucial step in the process of poetic individuation. In the case of Moore and Blake, it is difficult to see any animadversion, however buried, in Moore's reading of Blake. Moore takes on a great deal from Blake's philosophy of contraries and negations. Blake's philosophy of contrariety is inherently incompatible with negation, with killing the predecessor's voice inside oneself, as Bloom has it. It encourages collaboration (even if it means opposition) across centuries with the predecessors. This means Moore is not a strong poet in Bloom's sense.

Bloom's Nietzschean reading of Blake also determines the problems implied in his notions of influence. There have been many critics before him, especially in the Victorian, Edwardian and Modernist periods, that based their appreciation of Blake on ideas of vital power (Trodd 289). Count Harry Kessler, for instance, wrote about Blake's art in his diary in 1895, after being shown his artwork in London. His view is of a "primal" Blake (Trodd 290) whose visual art he associates with "power" and "absolute freedom," focusing on plates from *America* and *Europe a Prophecy* (1794) showing "isolated or combative figures" (Trodd 291). Following this tendency, other critics have read Blake as a Dionysian between 1890 and 1920, focusing on the idea of energy as an all-pervading "spirit of life" and on the self-affirmation of the individual against external forces (Trodd 293). These ideas led to valuing Blake as a spontaneous creator, as opposed to an idea of art as "constant refinement and elaboration of cultural forms" (293). One of these critics was Arthur Symons, who saw Blake as a struggling artist that defended "self-creation as primary human act" (Trodd 295), and applied to Blake the Nietzschean idea that energy goes beyond the dualism of Judaeo-Christian morals (295). This view does justice to some aspects of Blake, like the initial notion of energy in *Marriage*, and Blake's dynamic monism. However, it entails a series of problems. Symons saw energy as entirely good (Symons qtd. in Trodd 295), whereas Blake moved past this notion towards that of imagination in later books, acquiring a more nuanced view of energy. He also considered Blake an anti-rationalist (Trodd 295), when in reality he adopted many aspects of Enlightened culture, especially critical thought and the defence of universal equality and human rights. Symons focused on Blake's prophetic wrath against dogmatic rationalists (Trodd 295), instead of other merciful aspects of Blake, and on the grandiose, heroic and epic side of Blake. His is a Blake that joys and thrives in the division and conflict of the fallen world, instead of suffering, as he often did, and that ignores collaborative aspects of Blake's poetics, celebrating a self-sufficiency (Trodd 295) that neglected Blake's calls for self-annihilation and collaboration. In 1916, John Cowper Powys identified Blake with the Nietzschean child and his self-sufficiency (Trodd 298), and most critics at this time thought Blake belonged to this strong type of battle-hardened artist (Trodd 300). A. R. Orage, inspired by Yeats's works on Blake, went as far as saying that Dionysos is the destroyer of forms, and that Blake was a Dionysian, a prophet of "pure energy", ostensibly destroying forms to liberate the infinite (Orage qtd. in Trodd 300). Blake's vindications of outline severely contradict this idea of Blake as an artist that would practise the "worship of raw energy" (Trodd 302). This tense, muscular, hammer-wielding Blake contributed to Bloom's idea of Blake as a strong, lonely, powerful poet that finds his own voice by antagonising his predecessors and traditions.

A clear example of Moore's attitude towards influence is in *Providence*, where the protagonist embodies a tragic but collaborative notion of authorship. Robert Black dies, and his inspiration becomes integrated with H. P. Lovecraft's work, which in turn is redefined as a collective effort of several generations of writers and artists, rather than the result of a male ego triumphing over a predecessor, which would be the case if Black's voice overcame Lovecraft's.

This mechanism has more to do with Blakean Self-Annihilation and Blake's notion of the construction of the eternal edifice of art than with Bloom's struggle between ephebe and predecessor, which at some points appears like a phallocentric, narcissistic game.[25]

Blake's attitude towards Milton, even where he disagreed with Milton's vision is of opposition and not of negation. Due to these objections to the notion of "strong poet", I will not focus on that aspect of Bloom's theory, but on the terms of misreading, misprision, clinamen and tessera, which can prove useful for my study of Moore's reception of Blake, and specifically for the kinds of effects of Moore's readings of Blake.

My objection to the strong poet's violent, Oedipal and patriarchal connotations, does not mean that I exclude the anxiety component from the process of influence. There is an obvious component of anxiety in Blake whenever we turn to the material conditions of creation of the illuminated books. Blake and his wife Catherine went through times of precarious subsistence and poverty. In the psychoanalytic sense Bloom refers to, Blake, even if he was a "denier[s] of influence" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 56),[26] went through anxiety, evident in his need to distinguish Milton from his own Shadow or Covering Cherub (Damon 279). Milton's Shadow haunted Blake, who thought this Shadow was Milton's "delusion" (Damon 369). Blake assimilated Milton and sorted the parts where he thought Milton was wrong or unclear. Although this might seem to contradict my earlier rejection of the notion of strong poet, it is not: distinguishing when one's predecessor is writing from his most authentic imagination or when he is being limited by the social conventions he is bound by is not killing his voice inside oneself. It is a painful process by which the poetic heir (mis)understands more deeply the predecessor and finds his own voice. The same goes for Moore's reading of Blake. We could even speak about Blake's Shadow in Moore's terms: the Blake who depends on Biblical discourse and terminology, who ends up confusing woman with the Female Will, who cannot liberate humanity without recourse to Messianism. Of course, once the aspiring poet completes this process, the Shadow is acknowledged, as happens in *Milton* when he successfully confronts his Spectre, Satan, through opposition instead of negation, and Ololon's Sixfold Emanation transforms into a dove and enters Milton's Shadow (Damon 279-280).

Bloom's theory is important because it reminds us that, as Borges said, poets create their own predecessors (Bloom, *Anxiety* 141). This creation of the predecessor cannot take place but through the process of misprision. This is because "[t]he poet confronting his Great Original must find the fault that is not there, …. The lover is beguiled to the heart of loss, but is found, as he finds, within mutual illusion, the poem that is not there" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 31). In the case of Blake and Moore, it is possible to consider some of Moore's Blakean echoes as actually his own projection to fill his perceived gaps in Blake's poetics. Misprision takes place through the already described process of searching what the poet thinks is the truth of his master: he might

[25] It is worth pointing out here that Lovecraft's racism is acknowledged and subverted in Moore's references to the author in *Neonomicon* and *Providence*. While in *Neonomicon* we start with a white male protagonist, the narration moves to a female point of view and in *Providence* Moore consciously substitutes the white, rationalist, post-Enlightened subject of Lovecraftian fiction with a Jewish, homosexual, imaginative subject. In the original Lovecraftian fictions, set in a universe that is indifferent to humanity, it is from the racist point of view from which the horror emerges: the sublime powers of the universe reveal to the insignificance of his anthropocentric and racist identitarian constructions of Western male control and agency over nature. The Blakean subversion of traditional notions of subjecthood, authorship and influence described in this paragraph are consistent, if not an integral part, of Moore's attempt to subvert of the racist Lovecraftian subject.

[26] Blake was a denier of influence in the sense that he tried to create his own system and become independent of the influence of previous authors. Even if he saw himself as part of a poetic edifice where everyone's influence is important, he aspired to discover the element in his own voice that allowed him to clarify the vision of his predecessors.

be wrong, seeing something (or seeing a lack) that is not there, but this is the stepping stone for him to achieve his own voice.

There are in Moore specific traits of some of Bloom's revisionary moments. As in clinamen and tessera, Moore tries to "correct and complete" (Bloom, *Anxiety* 121-122) the legacy of predecessors like Blake. Clinamen is a swerving away from the direction of the predecessor (Bloom, *Anxiety* 14). It is characterised as a condition "whose fundamental assumption is that the precursor went wrong by *failing to swerve* …" (85). Moore swerves from Blake by striving to find other forms of salvation outside of Christian formulas, by giving a more central role to woman and by trying to step out of systems instead of creating his own. Tessera is also another useful concept that consists in a completion of previous legacy going further from where predecessors had stopped. According to Bloom "the later poet provides what his imagination tells him would complete the otherwise 'truncated' precursor poem and poet, a 'completion' that is as much misprision as a revisionary swerve is." Tessera entails that the disciple's contribution is presented as essential to the continuity of the predecessor: "the *tessera* represents any later poet's attempt to persuade himself (and us) that the precursor's Word would be worn out if not redeemed as a newly fulfilled and enlarged Word of the ephebe" (66, 67).

With his Blake, Moore appears to be attempting to enhance the contours of the revolutionary, visionary and gender-conscious Blake into a postmodern Blake in which these aspects are the focus. Moore's reading implies he thought those were the ideas Blake was getting close to, but could not develop to their conclusions at the historical moment he occupied. I would like to stress here that I do not mean that Blake is a sort of Postmodern relativist, but that Moore's way of reading Blake provokes this distortion, as did Carter or Rushdie's reworkings (see chapter 2 of this thesis, p. 54).

In conclusion, Bloom's theory of influence provides me with the notions of misprision, clinamen and tessera, which will be used to explain Moore's reception of Blake. These terms will help me to find the points of swerving, what Moore adds to Blake's mythology and thought; in other words, what parts of his Blake are his and which are not, and in the process of misprision, what points reveal significant differences.

3.1.2. Williams' theory of structures of feeling and its applicability to Blake's and Moore's works

Williams' structures of feeling are constructions, attitudes and ideas about the world transmitted through emergent discourses that writers simultaneously create and are immersed in. This idea helps to understand Moore's inspiration in Blake both as a result of a similarity in their structures of feeling and of the circulation of ideas they share through channels that have not been fully institutionalised.

The notion of "structures of feeling" allows me to account for common interests, themes and patterns in Blake's and Moore's works that cannot be traced through methods that involve empirical connections, objective and positive data. I have already outlined some of the cases in which the connection between a characteristic in Blake and Moore is supported by literal quotations, by Moore's statements, explicit allusions to works by Blake or explicitly inspired by Blake. This is the case of Moore's quotations from *Jerusalem* in *V for Vendetta* or of *Visions* in *From Hell*. These objective methods do not grant evidence that Moore has read or understood all of *Jerusalem* or *Visions*, however much they refer to the aforementioned sources.

To counteract the problems of a purely objectivist viewpoint, it is possible to recur to the phenomenology and hermeneutics of the Konstanz School, particularly Hans Robert Jauss's theories of reception, and the notion of horizon of expectations specifically. A horizon of expectations is the framework of assumptions that determines the constitution and interpretation of a text (Jauss 22). A structure of feeling, therefore, favours a particular horizon of expectations. For example, following Jauss's distinction between narrow and wide horizons (24), the structure of feeling of 1960s counterculture allows the wider horizon of expectations of a psychedelic Blake, even when a narrower horizon of expectations would have the 1960s reader assuming that what he is reading is English Romantic poetry (just to mention the common, popular school notion of Blake, and not the academic). This is possible because the developments that mediate between Blake and postmodernism created the "new reception", the "altered aesthetic attitude" through which "an unexpected light falls back" on past literature (35). While many twentieth century readers have used their readings of Blake to support their own ideas, instead of using Blake to challenge themselves, many other artists living in the postmodern re-enchantment claim to have their philosophical grounds deeply shaken by Blake. This is the case of Ulver, the 1990s black metal band that turned to industrial music after reading *Marriage*. *Marriage* demanded from them what Jauss terms a horizonal change (25): their horizon of expectations (presumably that of a satanic artist) was defied by Blake's complexity and depth. Jauss's theory warns us against believing ourselves completely objective in our interpretations of past texts (29). Like Williams's theories, Jauss's remind us that literature does not merely reflect history, it creates history by liberating humanity from social, religious and natural conventions by showing us different ways of seeing the world (Jauss 43-44).

There is an overwhelming number of cases in which the resemblance between a given image and another, or an idea contained in one text and mirrored in another, cannot be attributed to objective types of evidence. For instance, there is a striking resemblance between Blake's passage of *Marriage* where the Poet's visionary capacity reveals the Angel's vision of Leviathan as an illusion created by his metaphysics, and Moore's passage of *Promethea* where the devil Asmodeus explains to the protagonists that his monstrous appearance is due to an illusory perception determined by convention rather than vision. There is no explicit reference to Blake in the passage, no quotations or references to the inspiration on Blake beyond other unconnected quotations and references in other parts of the text. Yet the emphasis on the topic of perception and vision and the way the problem is treated point at the possibility that the idea behind Blake's plates became ingrained in Moore's inspiration through the similarity of the structures of feeling they were imbibed in and through Blake's importance in Moore's structure of feeling.

Thompson already used the structure of feeling of eighteenth-century radical London to explain Blake's unorthodox and apparently outlandish ideas and aesthetics. He proved that Blake's vocabulary, style, ideas and imagery, are connected to several circles and discourses being passed on by the city's dissenters in formats and channels outside of the official, and outside the usual education institutions. Until Thompson, Blake's ideas had been more often studied through polite culture, ignoring that his mythology could be better understood by looking at popular pamphlets and sermons from religious and political minorities whose origins go back to the seventeenth century, like Anabaptists or Ranters (Thompson 8). Blake's works diverge in many ways from the beliefs of these sects, but an awareness of the London radical atmosphere, composed of fluid and ephemeral forms of communication and culture, allowed

Thompson to unlock a more transparent and immediate aspect of Blake's texts, instead of understanding them as obscure allegories. This is due to the fact Williams insists upon, that "[t]he pattern of change was not background … it was, rather, the mould in which general experience was cast" (*Culture* 49).

Moore participates of a particular structure of feeling in Postmodernity that, like Blake's radical London, includes an unorthodox view of spirituality, revolutionary politics and anti-commercialism in art. This structure of feeling owes to the influences I have mentioned in chapter 2: occulture, psychedelia, 1960s counterculture and ecologism. In this structure of feeling, Blake is an important referent and is perceived (often in a simplistic way) as predecessor.

Moore's reading of Blake is an example of how, as Williams asserted, "the substance of the past" is "always moving" (*Marxism* 128). Blake is an institutionalised figure, but it continues to be dynamic, and Moore's readings contribute to this dynamism. The same as Blake's profoundly original vision is indebted to a wide array of popular discourses, the Blakes we can see in Moore's texts and Moore's own ideas, characters and aesthetics have their origin in an ample network of discourses. Without taking any merit away from his imagination, it is important to note that Moore's works are also a product and a manifestation of these subterranean, popular currents of thought. Blake and Moore's works are often considered to be of an "idiosyncratic, and even isolating" nature, but Williams' methodological approach aims at understanding seemingly isolated traits in relation to a generation or period (132-133) and its structures of feeling.

Michael Sanders follows Thompson's arguments that Blake's radicalism is a result of the cultural atmosphere, rather than an eccentricity: "this cluster of ideas, values and ways of interpreting the world was in no way the individual possession of Blake. Rather they were common to a milieu which can be described as antinomian, artisanal London" (Sanders 360). In my analysis of Blake I will use Thompson's account of Blake's cultural environment and the structures of feeling present in it. In my analysis of Moore, I will use the background information about counterculture, occulture, New Age, the comics milieu and anarchist and environmental ideas to define the structure of feeling he is part of. Blakean inspiration is in itself a characteristic element of the structure of feeling shaping Moore's literary language, and to which his language contributes. This makes it easier to explain the influence of Blake in specific cases where it is unclear if Moore is particularly alluding to Blake's works, but expresses similar thoughts and ideas.

The notion of differentiated structures of feeling is associated to class differences (Williams, *Marxism* 134). Blake was an artisan and not a gentleman, which Thompson stresses in his reading, and Moore is also a writer from a working-class background. It is, therefore, more accurate to speak of "contradiction, fracture, or mutation within a class" (Williams, *Marxism* 134) rather than between different classes. My analysis will take an angle similar to Sanders's when he compares Blake to Ray Davies, leader of the British rock band The Kinks, and their portrayal of the nostalgic image of the village green:

> Through their art both sought to represent and interpret the wider forces shaping their historical period. Moreover, both were critical of the social and economic changes they were witnessing and, crucially, grounded their critique in the values and practices of a local subaltern class fraction, understood to be under

> threat (or even already destroyed) from those same social and economic changes (360).

Sanders's work helps me illustrate my use of Williams's structures of feeling, and at the same time, provides another example of the structure of feeling I will be talking about when dealing with Moore. As I explained in the introduction, he is a direct heir of countercultural 1960s artists like Davies, and will produce similar readings of Blake, although I have tried to give a more specific and comprehensive picture of Moore's background, adding other influences that have contributed to his unique readings.

To conclude, I will analyse the selected passages considering the concept of structures of feeling. In order to do this, my blueprint for Blake's will be Thompson's comprehensive picture of radical London. In the case of Moore I have combined the different authors and cultural trends I have presented in the introduction and chapter 2, including contemporary occulture, counterculture, the world of comic books and political movements like anarchism and ecologism. These elements of the background will help me identify and highlight the points of convergence and divergence between the authors and their respective structures of feeling.

3.1.3. Instrumental reason and Gothic excess and transgression: a selection of concepts from cultural studies, psychoanalysis and Gothic studies

3.1.3.1. Instrumental reason

So far, I have put forward the theoretical tools I will use for the study of the general aspects of Blake's reception by Moore: Bloom's notion of misprision and Williams' structures of feeling. In this subsection, I will deal with the theoretical tools I have used to approach Blake and Moore's specific concerns. These are the problems derived from the opposition between reason and imagination, perception and vision, alienation and freedom, and law and desire. All these are expressions of one basic opposition between natural energies and artificial conventions. It is the imposition of conventions and rules that causes the division of nature into what fits convention and what is excluded by conventional norms.

Both Blake Moore are concerned with the relation between imagination and reason. Imagination for them allows human beings to perceive truth and make humanity creative, thus divinising it; reason helps give instinctive energies concrete forms. The reliance of the Enlightenment on abstract reason caused both a misunderstanding of reason and a disparagement of imagination that led to the opposition between these two faculties and to a dramatic reduction of the world to mere object of knowledge and exploitation. When abstract reason becomes dominant, the natural energies are smothered and imagination stifled. For both Blake and Moore, the devaluation of imagination leads to a stagnant and oppressive world, without vitality and joy, and to a humanity without an access to self-knowledge and creativity.

In Blake, if energy becomes dominant it is formless, becomes corrupted, and engenders violence. In Moore, imagination without rational structures traps the subject in a maze of illusions and feelings that isolate them from the real world and leave them unable to create. The combination of reason and imagination is impossible without creative energies in Blake; similarly, the combination of reason and imagination produces art in Moore.

In order to analyse Blake's and Moore's criticism of abstract reason, I will take from Adorno and Horkheimer the notion of instrumental reason. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) they criticised the manipulation of reason by power and the notion of knowledge based on self-preservation. The concept of Enlightenment is used by Adorno and Horkheimer to speak about the oppressive consequences of eighteenth-century ideology rather than about the philosophy of the Age of Reason in general, for which the term "Enlightenment" is more commonly used. Moreover, the word is also applied to other moments in history where power employed similar strategies to dominate nature. In contrast to the promise of the Enlightenment "to rule over disenchanted nature" once the mind has been set free from superstition (2), Adorno and Horkheimer define the "ideology of the Enlightenment" as an "idolization of the existing order and of the power by which technology is controlled" (xix) and reason is transformed into an instrument of "enslavement" (2).

The expression "ideology of the Enlightenment" is thus useful to identify those aspects of Enlightenment that have been used to justify the exploitation of nature and of human beings, and to distinguish them from those that genuinely contributed to philosophy, science, and art. This notion also allows me to understand certain aspects of Moore's contemporary world, such as the banishment of myth, as part of this ideology: "Enlightenment's program was the disenchantment of the world. It wanted to dispel myths, to overthrow fantasy with knowledge" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1). Both Blake and Moore seek to counteract this aspect of Enlightenment through a poetic re-enchantment that is humanistic and Christian in Blake and more constructionist and relativistic in Moore.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the ideology of Enlightenment appeared first in Bacon. Bacon argued against myth and metaphysics, restricted the good to the useful and expostulated against animism and anthropomorphism as remnants of primitivism (Adorno and Horkheimer 1-4). Blake severely criticised Bacon's ideas and defended the concept of humanised deities and the divine humanity. Moore has also challenged Enlightened values by depicting aspects of nature denied by Enlightened worldview, often presenting them as monstrous returns of the repressed, abject from the perspective of the Enlightened subject and conventional religious morality.

Enlightened "demythologizing" thought is denounced as reductive:

> The multiplicity of forms is reduced to position and arrangement, history to fact, things to matter. …. Formal logic was the high school of unification. It offered Enlightenment thinkers a schema for making the world calculable. …. For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion; modern positivism consigns it to poetry (Adorno and Horkheimer 4-5).

The Romantic criticism of Enlightenment denounced "the analytical method, the reduction to elements, the decomposition through reflection" (18). But for Adorno and Horkheimer, the target of criticism was the reduction of the "[t]he multiplicity of forms" (4) to numbers, the identification of particular unknown forms with abstract, already-known elements in a previous system. This approach to knowledge distorts new elements, making them more similar to something already known than what they really are, and homogenising them. Conversely, this makes it difficult to recognise and understand anything that is different from the already known.

This redounds in denying the existence of anything new, because this mechanism implies that nothing can work in a different manner.

> Its [the Enlightenment's] untruth does not lie in the analytical method, the reduction to elements, the decomposition through reflection, as its Romantic enemies had maintained from the first, but in its assumption that the trial is prejudged. When in mathematics the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation, it is made into something long familiar before any value has been assigned. Nature, before and after quantum theory, is what can be registered mathematically; even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems. In the preemptive identification of the thoroughly mathematized world with truth, enlightenment believes itself safe from the return of the mythical. It equates thought with mathematics (18).

Blake criticised the preponderance of mathematics in his annotations to Joshua Reynolds ("God forbid that Truth should be Confined to Mathematical Demonstration" [E659]) and his distrust of abstraction and of the classical geometric formulations of nature can be seen in his emphasis on these to characterise the fallen universe created by Urizen. Blake thought that the mystification of calculation eliminates all metaphysical questioning and that it could be potentially disastrous for freedom and imagination, and hence for the human attitude towards nature.

Emancipation from the mythical order through this supreme power of number and order over other means of meaning production led to the self-legitimation of rational system, to the rule of power without principle. This means that it is power itself, by virtue of instrumental reason, that defines the terms on which it is to be erected as the highest authority. As a consequence, power does not follow a higher guiding principle nor does it stop at any goal, it is completely limitless and arbitrary. In this way, the instrumentalisation of reason, has helped release the freedom of the markets from any external constraints, and has generated efficiency priorities that are actually "organized anarchy" (Adorno and Horkheimer 71).

The circularity of this self-legitimisation of Enlightened ideology is also present in the fact that ideology determines perception so that every observation made by a viewer is going to confirm the worldview he has grown into: "The senses are determined by the conceptual apparatus in advance of perception; the citizen sees the world as made *a priori* of the stuff from which he himself constructs it" (65). Although this can be said of any ideology, it is the more adequate to define the ideology of reason, because reason having been set as the highest position of judgment in our culture, it is impossible to refute its primacy, which cannot be said about other faculties. As Blake pointed out in several texts, the sole adherence to rational analysis of sensorial perceptions keeps the mind closed to the perception of "the infinite which was hid" (*MHH* 14; E39). I am going to explain some of the processes involved in the entrapment in ordinary perceptions as opposed to vision in terms of an absolutised ideology of reason.

In *There Is No Natural Religion* (c. 1788), Blake stated that the problem of rationalistic systems of thought was their self-containment and that they ignored everything that could not be measured by pre-existing structures: "Man by his reasoning power. can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd" (E2). Blake's response to this was a re-enchantment of nature through poetry and prophecy, which included those aspects of the reality excluded by abstract reason: "If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character. the Philosophic &

Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again" (E3) and "He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only" (E3).

Moore's *From Hell* is also an interesting example of the thin line that has sometimes divided Enlightenment from barbarism throughout history, being the narrative of how a man of science ends up committing acts as savage as a lobotomy or even murder to maintain a particular order. This order, akin to the totalising use of mathematics denounced by Adorno and Horkheimer, is a Procrustean mythical architecture to which is attributed the power to contain everything. What cannot be contained in this architecture, however, is denied existence. The philosophical mutilation of the idea of reality to force it to conform to pre-existing rules becomes physical, political violence. This takes place when the worldview of instrumental reason informs power, and power takes advantage of it to justify and reinforce oppression. One example of this in history can be the consequences of the advancement of cartography on political, physical spaces; once foreign, far off lands could be represented, measured and divided, the West used these rational methods to redistribute entire continents into pieces and relocate entire indigenous populations (Harvey 251-252). When a subject does not conform to the rules that dictate what should be acknowledged as natural and how the natural is to conform with its rational organisation, physical and political violence are easily justified as civilising interventions. Rational organisation is not inherently harmful; what is harmful is its instrumentalisation.

Blake battled these consequences of demythologisation. In plate 11 of *Marriage*, the loss of poetic meaning of the surrounding natural world brings about the beginning of priesthood, and thus the displacement of power from the poetic capacities of every individual to a caste of elect who uniformise society. There is also a parallel change from deities and spirits attached to particular creatures, plants and features of the landscape to the worship of an abstract deity that pervades all. The former corresponds to animism; the latter to the domination of nature and its differences to an absolute One. Blake was not an animist; he did not think spirits were inherent in objects themselves but were rather a product of the interaction of nature and the human mind before priesthood began. In animism, natural elements and beings help the individual to engage imaginatively, whereas in later religions, nature and natural objects are seen as distractions, illusions and obstacles blocking the way to God. Blake considered animism a type of spirituality that is closer to poetry and art and that the inherently abusive hierarchy and the human sacrifices of later types of religion, like Druidry.

Adorno and Horkheimer pointed out that Enlightenment was also a form of myth insofar as it elevated abstract reason to a kind of absolute knowledge and power over the world which either subsumed or ignored and excluded the irreducible multiplicity of the real world. This is just another attempt to dispel obscurity in the line of ancient solar myth: "As a totality set out in language and laying claim to a truth which suppressed the older mythical faith of popular religion, the solar, patriarchal myth was itself an enlightenment, fully comparable on that level to the philosophical one" (7). In Moore's *From Hell*, the villain Gull epitomises Adorno and Horkheimer's enlightened subject. He identifies himself with the principle of light and the chthonic gods with darkness. He formulates his Enlightening mission in the mythical terms of solar Gods conquering telluric chaos Adorno and Horkheimer used to characterise the domination of Enlightened ideology: "The dark, chthonic gods of the original inhabitants are

banished to the hell into which the earth is transformed under the religions of Indra and Zeus, with their worship of sun and light" (Adorno and Horkheimer 10).

Adorno and Horkheimer define domination through enlightened knowledge as a patriarchal system that generates the oppression of women. Woman, like everything that is considered inferior to man, represents "the hated but overwhelming temptation to lapse back into nature" (87). In this respect, it should be noted that the Enlightenment contributed significantly to the struggle for the Rights of Women, and it can be said to have improved Western culture and society. However, the ideology of Enlightenment has been used from then on to legitimise male superiority, to demonstrate women are weaker or more irrational (mere body, mere nature), and to pathologise the female body.

The rejection of what knowledge cannot account for repeats the primitive move that worshipped the "principle of mana" (10). Like worship, rational explanation is an expression of fear and functions as an attempt at exorcising "everything that is unknown and alien" (10):

> … the good and evil powers, the holy and the unholy, were not unambiguously distinguished. …. The murky, undivided entity worshipped as the principle of *mana* at the earliest known stages of humanity lived on in the bright world of the Greek religion. Primal and undifferentiated, it is everything unknown and alien …. What the primitive experiences as supernatural is not a spiritual substance in contradistinction to the material world …. The doubling of nature into appearance and essence, effect and force, made possible by myth no less than by science, springs from human fear, the expression of which becomes its explanation (10).

The separation of good and evil as described here entails the misidentification of nature (including the human nature) with the evil side and the unholy on account of its abject materiality and its value of appearance as opposed to essence. This passage deepens the chasm between the two parts of divided nature: the known and the unknown, the useful and the excessive. I will use these concepts to understand how power objectifies nature in Blake and Moore.

Rather than helping human beings to achieve more freedom, the instrumentalisation of reason substituted the tyranny of the state for the dependence of humanity on nature. Hence, the ideology of Enlightenment has proven absurd: "The absurdity of a state of affairs in which the power of the system over human beings increases with every step they take away from the power of nature denounces the reason of the reasonable society as obsolete" (Adorno and Horkheimer 31). The only alternative to this requires reason's critical self-awareness and the acknowledgement that its "institutions and practices of domination" are no "guarantors of the coming freedom":

> Although humanity may be unable to interrupt its flight away from necessity and into progress and civilization without forfeiting knowledge itself, at least it no longer mistakes the ramparts it has constructed against necessity, the institutions and practices of domination which have always rebounded against society from the subjugation of nature, for guarantors of the coming freedom (31-32).

Eagleton also develops the idea of an oppressive use of reason in *Holy Terror* (2005). His explanation of the dangers of maintaining rational rigidity towards natural energies connects

the concept of instrumental reason with the problem of evil. Eagleton goes back to Euripides's *The Bacchae* (405 BC) to portray how King Pentheus's repressive violence is so excessive that it ends up matching the savagery and unreason of the god Pan, whom he intended to ward off from his orderly city (Eagleton 5). Paradoxically, it is Pentheus, the defender of rational order, who behaves in an intolerant and immoderate way. He does not realise that the forces that can potentially destroy society are also necessary to produce or maintain it (e.g. sexuality [7]), for which reason it is wrong to repress them intransigently: "reason, to be effective, must be rooted in forces which are not reasonable in themselves" (8). This is not far from Adorno and Horkheimer's logic, according to which the mind must realise that it is nature: "By modestly confessing itself to be power and thus being taken back into nature, mind rids itself of the very claim to mastery which had enslaved it to nature" (31).

In the works I will analyse, it is rational power and authority that in their attempt to ward off the dangerous forces of passion can become a source of terror. As I have outlined at the beginning of the chapter, all these critical ideas are expressed in Gothic terms by both Blake and Moore. In its beginnings, the Gothic was a conservative reaction towards the revolutionary changes, but later it veered towards recreation in transgression. In Blake's times, the polarity of reactions and opinions on the French Revolution were often encapsulated in Gothic writing (Botting 5). This polarity can be seen in Blake's faith in the principles of the French Revolution, on one hand, and his dislike of its Deist and Enlightened fundaments, on the other. This may help to explain his adoption of Gothic aesthetics. Moore continues with the tradition of Gothic as a transgressive mode in a greater measure than Blake, but his is also a Postmodern rendition of Gothic, imbued with certain sentimentality disrupted by his shock strategies.

The Gothic very often warns against the dark side of enlightenment and progress (Botting 1-2) and displays excesses in imagination and passion. Cogan suggests that Blake criticises the project of the Enlightenment by "aligning the monstrous not with ignorance or barbarism but with rationality itself" (129). Blake's underlying Gothic insight is that "[t]he assertion of rigid, totalising rationality provokes and even presupposes the eruption of its opposite: the chaos of irrationality" (Cogan 129). This is the mechanism that Eagleton describes. According to Andy W. Smith, Moore deals with these issues in *Swamp Thing* (254) where the supernatural returns with greater strength after science has tried to explain and contain it.

Eagleton's interpretation of Euripides in *Holy Terror* also helps to understand what Blake often denounces in his texts: reason's illusion of autonomy from natural energies. In his works, Urizen is the figure of unfeeling abstraction doomed to self-torment, negation and destruction. Moore's novels delve into the opposition between abstract reason and natural energies or passions and explores the dangers of the rational illusion of control. The reasoner becomes a victim of the lunacy he means to vanquish. Again, *From Hell* is the most paradigmatic case of the deranged use of reason Eagleton portrays in his book:

> Reason at its extreme limit capsizes into madness, becoming a mirror-image of the savagery it seeks to quell. …. Reason on its outer edge is demented because it seeks to possess the whole world, and to do so must override the recalcitrance of reality … to deny the substance of the world's body in this way is to be deranged. The wielder of absolute power is a fantasist, for whom reality has the endless pliability of desire (11).

Trying to secure order and stability in such a disproportionately harsh way, creates instability and chaos (12). Blake's Urizen, like Moore's Gull, is a kind of Pentheus that ends

up acting as a Dionysus. In the same way that Pentheus tries to protect order intransigently, Urizen or Gull blindly look for eternity, solidity and permanence; the same as Pentheus's rigidity brings about bloodshed, Urizen ends up creating the world of physical death, and Gull ends up killing. The death brought by Pentheus's intolerance is the human sacrifice Blake attributes to the tyrannical divine and "natural" law of Deism. Deism was for Blake the postulation of an external deity that set rules for an automatic, lifeless universe. This was for him "the ultimate kind of conceptual horror" (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 122), since if these rules were discoverable by science, they would dictate our morality and thus put an end to freedom (122).

Up to this point Eagleton's essay is in line with Adorno and Horkheimer; but Eagleton adds the connection between unreason, the sacred and terror. The connection with the undifferentiated *mana*, to tie in with Adorno and Horkheimer's terms, may mean the recovery of vitality and creation, but also lead to arbitrary and absurd violence (Eagleton 3). In the case of Moore, the idea can remind us of the characters in *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, whose monstrous violence, such as Aldo Sax "carv[ing] people into … tulips" (Moore and Burrows, *Neonomicon* issue 1) has nothing to do with any rationality.

The moral law is not oppressive *per se*: "It is because the law defines what counts as transgression that it necessarily presents itself to us as Satanic—as the baleful power which brings violence and corruption into the world" (Eagleton 36-37). But the law should not be idolised either; it has an inevitably satanic aspect because it can always exceed its protective function and turn innocent gestures into sin, mark acts of love and truth as crimes. Both Blake and Moore accept that the law is necessary in a fallen world, but they still try to limit its grasp and propose orders where society is not completely dependent on law.

Pentheus, Dyonisus, Urizen, and Gull's masculine deities of light and reason are beyond good and evil. As Eagleton states, gods and mythical beings are not moral, they are inhuman, impersonal forces, like Eros and Thanatos (24-25). We cannot judge them, we can only acknowledge these forces in ourselves and try to deal with them honestly, instead of denying their influence on us (24-25).

Eagleton formulates the necessary self-criticism of reason as an awareness of embodiment and materiality, especially the senses. If reason disavows them, as abstract reason often does, then the dangerous violent and divine forces of Eros and Thanatos, of amoral gods, can fool it and infect it:

> A reason which has no anchor in the senses, like a sovereignty which simply rides roughshod over its opponents, will become like Pentheus a prey to the very forces against which it struggles. Being too aloof from those powers, it will fail to shape and inform them from within, and so will allow them to run riot …. The more reason dissociates itself from its base in the sensuous body, the less it can mould the senses from the inside, and so the more unruly and obstreperous they become … a law founded on the repression of desire simply strengthens its sway over you (9-10).

Moral realism consists in accommodating animality, violent impulses and sexual excesses, society should reserve a space for them to avoid their destructive return (17).

So far, I have discussed the concept of instrumental reason and the interplay of opposing forces such as reason and passion, law and desire. We have seen how 1) both a lack of form of the energies and the excesses of reason can have fatal consequences; 2) Blake and Moore show

that the imposition of an exclusively rational understanding of reality hides imperialist, discriminatory, and exploitative interests; and 3) these forms of terror appear in their writings formulated in Gothic terms that allow the exploration of spaces where the subject can encounter what was excluded from ordinary perception and discourse. In order to complete this theoretical framework by exploring psychic aspects of these oppositions, I will use Eagleton's theories on alienation, evil and terror in the next section. I will complement them with concepts from Žižek, Whittaker and scholars from the field of Gothic Studies.

3.1.3.2. Eagleton's analysis of alienation, evil and terror

Both Blake's and Moore's works are articulated around concerns with alienation. Blake speaks of the "mind-forg'd manacles," whereas Moore, like many postmodern authors of his generation, identifies these with the internalisation of ideology. This trait of evil in Moore has an antecedent in Blake's tyrannical figures whose perverse compulsion Eagleton describes in *Holy Terror*: "the drive to regulate Nature … conceals a ferocious inner compulsion which is the very opposite of freedom" (12). Eagleton defines evil, in fact, as the imposition of this kind of individual fantasy over hard reality, until both collapse (11). In Blake and Moore, attempts to extend a fantasy beyond the subjective realm are harmful, as in Urizen's or Gull's madness. Eagleton proposes that rather than suppressing fantasy what absolute power does is to impose its own (10-11): this is the black magic of satanic evil in Moore that violently imposes a fantasy on others.

Eagleton explains that in the opposition between good and evil "a principle which is virtuous but imaginatively restricted confronts a destructive yet life-giving force with which it betrays a covert affinity" (58). We will see how Moore deploys oppositions similar to Blake's soul and body, good and evil and prolific and devourer in some of his works. In *Swamp Thing*, the protagonist discovers that evil exists to make virtue stronger. In *From Hell*, the forces of reason need to amass chaotic energies in order to give support to their harmonious, Apollonian architecture.

Quite to the contrary of what this may seem to indicate, neither Blake nor Moore deny virtue, because conceiving evil without any purpose beyond itself is practically impossible. Evil is never celebrated for its own sake. Whenever Blake defends wrath, lust and envy it is because they also mean inspiration, bounty and creativity. There is an important component of graphic violence in Moore that has generated scholarly controversies over whether his works gratuitously indulge in it. However, I agree with Di Liddo in her opinion that these elements in Moore obey a series of reasons, namely the requirements of the horror genre, of formal experimentation with the limits of representational decorum, and with the confrontation of the reader with shock and with their own voyeurism ("Afterword" 202-203). In most cases, the violence is not morally advocated, but the stories present how certain institutions erase, punish or reject as evil what could actually save humanity, such as happens in *Promethea*. Evil is not gratuitous in Moore, it is a way to direct the reader to a deeper understanding of good. Despite Postmodern relativism, there is a clear difference between good and evil.

Whittaker reminds us that Blake's later works reinforce the view on evil as contrary to his own Christian ideals ("*From Hell*" 192). For that reason, Whittaker makes a distinction between Blake's "diabolism" (Romantic alignment with demons and other symbols of evil) and "satanism" (evil as a force that separates the individual from the divine) (193). The central

target in Blake is the idea that man is sinful by nature (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 195). Evil in Blake is ambivalent; in one sense, it is a system of oppression, but in another, it is a liberating force that resists oppression. On one hand, it is a "satanic" (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 192) alienating force that separates the human from its divine form and condemns the erotic sources of the poetic genius. On the other hand, it is understood as a "diabolic" (192) dimension that includes the erotic forces labelled as sinful and disruptive by the established order. Blake himself called his idea of Energy "Evil" or "Hell". I will make use of the distinction between diabolic and satanic evil in Blake and show that the same pattern is present in Moore. In addition, I will use the term *kategoros* defined by Whittaker as the satanic "accuser" (192), the depraved, hypocrite figure that labels energy, joy and true inspiration as sin and forbids them. The *kategoros* is an embodiment of moral law, and we can find examples in Blake's Urizen, Bromion or Satan, and in Moore's Adam Susan (the leader of the totalitarian regime in *V for Vendetta*) or Gull.

Gothic transgressions of conventional ideas of good and evil can be seen as reestablishments of moral values (Botting 8), which can be a conservative mechanism if it allows a re-adjustment of structures that prevents a more radical change. Blake's and Moore's redefinitions of good and evil need to be studied to enquire to what extent they readjust previous concepts of morality and to what extent they favour a deeper change in culture and society. Punter has already defined the key of Blake's version of Gothic terror as "distortion" (89-90). In this sense, these Blakean monstrosities cannot be measured according to the conservative association between monstrosity and morality Botting refers to (21-22). The reason is that they are not always an index of moral impropriety (except when the point of view is Urizenic or angelic), but of extremes of liberation and repression (Punter 90), where monstrosity tends to be rather an index of alienation. Monstrosity in Blake and Moore can be understood more fruitfully in some occasions as a representation of the discourse technologies through which hegemonic culture *makes monstrous* that which threatens its power and stability; this idea has been developed by Jack Halberstam in *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995).[27] In this way, both authors are sometimes revealing how these technologies work, and promoting identification with the characters and elements that represent the deviants society represents as monstrous others.

Fantasy and distortion acquire a Gothic quality in Blake and Moore, and one of the main forms in which they appear is through transformations. These can be positive, such as when they turn the subject or certain characters into apotheosic forms, but they can also refer to "darker processes, Gothic 'mutations' that stress disintegrative negativity, degeneration, anatomisation" (Bundock and Effinger 10). Nebuchadnezzar, for example, signifies the degeneration of a ruler who sacrifices people to appease a cruel God. Degenerative transformations are also typical in "representations of ecclesiastical characters – corrupt, despotic priests and monks … symbols of that 'blackning church' (*SIE* 37:11 – 12; E 23)" (13).

[27] See pages 2 and 22 of *Skin Shows* for more detail on technologies of monstrosity. I have dealt in more depth with Gothic monstrosity in Blake and Moore, especially with regard to Halberstam's ideas, in my article "'Terrible monsters Sin-bred': Blakean Monstrosity in Alan Moore's Graphic Novels" (2020). María Cecilia Marchetto Santorun, Department of English and German Philology, Research Group Discourse and Identity (D431C 2019/01, Regional Government of Galicia) Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Complete reference: Marchetto Santorun, M. Cecilia. "'Terrible monsters Sin-bred': Blakean Monstrosity in Alan Moore's Graphic Novels." *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 6, no. 91, Springer Nature, 2020. DOI: 10.1057/s41599-020-0451-2. ISSN: 2662-9992.

One of the most important kinds of transformation in Blake and Moore is that of rebellious and liberating forces into coercive and oppressive ones. Blake's criticism of Deist ideas and his reaction to the Terror Regime show his aversion to abstraction, the uniformisation of individuals through either law or a destructive kind of absolute freedom. The association of Orc to symbols such as the snake expresses the passage from spontaneous vital energies to their abstraction, as they impose a brutal absolute freedom that ends up establishing itself as inflexible laws engraved in stone. Urizen's dominion signifies solidification into law of the spontaneous (and violent) renewing energies that Orc represented. Moore criticises blind universalisation and abstraction. The character of V, like Orc, tends to become a totalitarian. His attempt to get rid of the ideological fantasy imposed by Adam Susan and his computer consists in destruction, not in the proposal of any new order. He purposefully creates chaos and actually leaves people adrift in the nothingness of reality. V's absolute freedom can destroy, but never create (for which purpose he needs to design someone else, Evey): any construction would mean a restriction of that absolute, universal, abstract freedom (Eagleton 80-81). That's why this character has no identity or even body; those would be constraints on his absolute nature. Blake's and Moore's attempt to solve the impasse of absolute freedom against the necessity of form (Eagleton 87) is also aesthetic. According to the ideology of the aesthetic, in the work of art form or order are not imposed from the outside but internally and organically required by the object itself (87). Thus, the problems of authoritarianism but also those of anarchy can be avoided (87).

Distortions such as the Blakean anthropomorphisms in *Thel* or the *Songs* question the "human/non-human distinction" (Hutchings qtd. in Whittaker "Dark Angels" 125-126). For Blake, "every thing is Human" (*J* 34.48, E180) in the sense that everything is imaginatively alive, full of consciousness and spirit. The Human Form Divine is the opposite of the terrible bodies of the 1790s writings (*America*, *Urizen*), which are "dark mirrors" reflecting the "denial or perversion" of the soul-body unity defined in *Marriage* (Cogan 130).

Monstrosity is one of the most salient characteristics used by Blake to formulate the complex crossings of the boundaries of the rational, both from below and from above it. Urizen sees his daughters as monstrous, incomprehensible lumps of animal organs, but he becomes what he beholds: a cadaverous body. The capacities of perception diminished by satanic conventions and tyranny metamorphose the diabolic subject into subhuman monstrosity. The visionary enthusiasm of the poet makes him a monster (a sinner, a devil) in the eyes of the angelic reasoner. Vision can vanquish monsters, as the poet reduces Leviathan to a "reptile[s] of the mind" (Blake, *MHH* 19; E42) when he looks at it through his infernal perspective.

Moore's monsters follow a similar pattern, with the distinction that in many cases they have become more likeable than Blake's. They might fall into Botting's description of Postmodern Gothic monsters, which have different connotations from those of traditional Gothic monsters. They are "attractive rather than repulsive, desirable rather than disgusting. Oppositions are inverted, polarisations reversed" (172). Examples of this tendency are of course the Swamp Thing or the *gargouille de la mer*[28] in *Neonomicon*, although there are also more traditional ones like Gull or Dr Woodrue (*Swamp Thing*). Like Gothic monsters, Postmodern monsters are still other, but they "give voice to the effects of exclusion" (172) in terms of gender, race or class more than they did in Blake's times. Alienating rules and institutions are

[28] Moore's term for a Lovecraftian "Deep One," an atavistic humanoid sea creature associated to some of Lovecraft's aquatic cosmic deities.

denounced as monstrous (as in Blake) when contrasted with the figure of the marginal monster (Botting 172), that is now in a more central position and appears more often; see, for instance, the fate of Abby Cable's father in *Swamp Thing*. This is directly associated with postmodernism and the demise of metanarratives (172-173). Systems, norms, conformity and the institutions that uphold them become more often and more clearly the sources of dread (172). These were already present in Blake, although Blake also struggled with the Gothic fear of the danger of revolution despite his radical viewpoint. Moore, however, goes on to question through Gothic strategies "identity, reality, truth and meaning" (Botting 173), thus going beyond Blake to challenge yet more fundamental narratives and concepts. Although both find difficulties in picturing a "final human order and unity" (Botting 173), Moore explores this uncertainty closer than Blake allowed himself. We will see this difference more clearly in the comparison between Blake's *America* and *Urizen* and Moore's Lovecraftian graphic novels.

There is a basic difference between Blake's "strong" and Moore's "weak" Postmodern values. Although Moore criticises conventions and restrictive morality, he is careful not to create new impositions, which in Blake's case end up emerging after the crisis of *America* and *Urizen*. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, he increasingly tended to find again strong solutions in Christian salvation, while emphasising more often than before the ways in which the world of matter becomes problematic for vision rather than the ways it enables imagination. Moore's works have clear notions of good and evil, but stress open-endedness more often than the pinnacle-like quality of Blakean vision, which ends up restoring a new equilibrium based on a restructuration of a previous order. Moore leaves more often processes unfinished, loose ends, imperfect utopias and dubitative protagonists that must begin to take more responsibility and decide what to do after the revolutionary apocalypse (or apocalyptic revolution) has taken place.

Satanic evil can be studied, following Eagleton's theories, as having an excessive dimension. In order to explain this, Eagleton proposes a number of modern day examples of the evil effects of power when it supposedly defends a greater good, such as US foreign policy or Islamist terrorism. These are especially adequate to understand Moore's concepts of good and evil, since they are directly contemporary to Moore's works. As in the Lacanian perversion hiding behind good, these acts have an excessive dimension. Even if in some part they can be rationally explained as destruction motivated by the consecution of some goal (defending democracy, for instance), they are "excessive of its [their] purpose" (Eagleton 118). Was it necessary to torture and humiliate the prisoners at Abu Ghraib or at Guantánamo to protect democracy? When actions do not adhere strictly to what is necessary to achieve an alleged purpose, there is always some hidden pleasure derived from this excess. The judicial process in which Abby is involved in *Swamp Thing* is a good portrait of this perversity. Both the authorities and the society around her appear to take pleasure in her public humiliation rather than simply accomplishing their duty of removing a member who is (allegedly) a moral danger and a corrupting influence on nature, children and the community as a whole.

Eagleton points out that in extreme cases, such as Nazi Germany, this perverse dimension of the law and power was expressed as an utterly necrophiliac fanaticism where death and destruction are celebrated as a tragic, apotheosic *telos* towards which the nation is conducted by the messianic leader (118-119). We can find another manifestation of this perversion in Spanish history in the fascist cry of "*¡Viva la muerte!*" According to Eagleton, behind this gloating in death lies a world-hating theology of depravity, where creation itself is also the fall (119). This kind of theology is portrayed by Blake in *Urizen*, where Urizen is the demiurge who

shudders with horror at the world of matter he has created, and then writes mysterious laws to control it. He perceives physical life as horrific and disgusting because it has trapped him in perishable matter and pain; he does not realise that if Los had not built the (mortal) human body to save him, he would have fallen further down. Blake occasionally presents life's terrifying appearance from Urizen's fallen point of view, but more often he emphasises the opposite perspective showing a world in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour, as in "Auguries of Innocence". Moore tends to emphasise the point of view of Blake's visionary innocence. Although he also represents existence as an incomprehensible horror in certain cases (the point of view of some characters in *Swamp Thing*, *Neonomicon*, *Providence*, etc.) this is usually finally revealed as an illusion and in some cases is the product of the influence of different authors, like Lovecraft.

Blake's doctrine of contraries could be understood through the perspective of their having a hidden connection. This will be an important aspect of my reflections on the topic of evil in Blake and Moore, because it connects with the Lacanian idea that radical Evil hides behind supreme Good, duty and the law (Žižek 161). Blake's *Marriage* is a very good example of the identification of Good with a hidden perversion of hypocrisy, presumption, self-righteousness and the enjoyment reaped from them. But apart from *Marriage* (the most cited text to emphasise a demonic, blasphemous Blake), we can find further examples of this awareness of how evil can masquerade behind apparent good, such as in the figure of Urizen, whose lofty attempt to find eternity and permanence actually results in sadomasochistic torment. Satan's passive-aggressive holiness in *Milton* also reveals how destructive tendencies can hide behind injunctions to pity and meekness.

As opposed to the abstract external law, Blake and Moore relied on an internal dimension that Blake identified with imagination or Christ and posited as the ultimate source of guidance for humanity. It is hardly surprising that this is also the source of passions which, though unruly from a conventional perspective, are secretly a "good" kind of "evil" energies. Moore takes up the notion of self-created imaginative humanity through a psychedelic perspective where the self is sacred rather than a Christian idea of internal guide associated with a particular deity.

Žižek's concept of the Other (150) complements and supports Eagleton's theories. According to Žižek, alienation is not simply a result of the imposition of a purely mechanical and lifeless external law, but springs from the hidden connection between authority (superego) and the desiring subject. This connection is necessary to understand Orc's associations with rebellion and transgression but also sometimes coercion and tyranny, or the ambiguity of figures like Moore's V. Žižek finds the origin of the excessive, obscene aspect of the law in repressed desires (152), a connection that helps to clarify some great difficulties in Blake's and Moore's search for their utopian liberation.

3.2. CONCLUSION

Influence, structures of feeling and instrumental reason are the fundamental concepts that will help to analyse the selected texts. The concept of alienation, understood as the imposition of the fantasies of absolute power, will be of capital importance to define satanic evil. This will be contrasted to the search for an internal, self-created guide that allows the self to be celebrated instead of condemned as the product of a fallen creation. Although in Blake the formulation of this problem is Christian, this formulation will be transformed in Moore's works to a different

rendition based, first on psychedelia, and later on a subtle understanding of the occult and critical adoption of postmodernism.

In order to apply these ideas to their optimal productivity, the methodology adopted will use a combination of theoretical tools from Bloom's reception theories, Williams' structures of feeling and Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of instrumental reason. The procedure by which the selected passages from the above mentioned works will be analysed involves: 1) the comparison of both authors' ideas about nature, vision, and evil; 2) the study of critical literature about these themes; 3) The exploration of the cultural context that affects the authors' understanding of nature, vision, and evil and their criticism of conventional morality, gender, and sexual norms; 4) an analysis of the Gothic distortions and transformations of figures, such as Blake's Urizen, Orc, and Ololon and Moore's Gull, Promethea, and Asmodeus; 5) a comparative study of selected passages from Moore either directly or indirectly inspired by Blake. After the description and interpretation of each authors' passage, I point out the similarities and differences in both text and visual imagery, and I elaborate on the reasons for these similarities and differences, and on their cultural implications.

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4. ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES OF PERCEPTION AND VISION[29]

4.0. INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter, I will analyse selected passages from Moore's works *Swamp Thing*, *From Hell*, and *Promethea*, and contrast them with the passages from Blake's works that have either inspired them or with which they have relevant similarities or meaningful differences. Additionally, I will complement these analyses and comparisons with some examples from *V for Vendetta*, *Neonomicon*, and *Providence* where they serve to provide background, explain, interpret or draw conclusions from the comparison.

The first section of this chapter contains an exploration of the concepts of reason and imagination in Blake and Moore. This will be subdivided between a presentation of these notions and how they contribute to the authors' critiques of materialism, and a discussion of the relationship of contrariety between reason and imagination in Blake and Moore and its consequences. These considerations will give way to the next section, which is the analysis of the themes of perception and vision in Blake and Moore and finally the chapter will include a conclusion that summarises the main results of the analysis.

Inside these sections, the order of the works analysed is chronological wherever possible. This order helps to understand the evolution of Moore's understanding of Blake until his knowledge of Blake's works became more integrated in the narratives beyond simple quotation or allusion, and to underscore how initially simple ideas and imagery are later developed.

4.1. REASON AND IMAGINATION

4.1.1 Notions of reason and imagination vs rationalist materialism

The idea of imagination present in Moore is developed at length in *Promethea*. The protagonist, the demigoddess Promethea, coming from the realm of the Immateria (Moore's "Ideaspace"[30] [Moore qtd. in Di Liddo, *Alan Moore* 86]), stands for human imagination. She is consistently referred to as an "emanation", a term that recalls Blake's myths (Green, "She" 740). According to Di Liddo, it is "the same conception of imagination that Frye developed in his 1962 essay 'The Imaginative and the Imaginary'—a force that can transform mankind because it can create 'everything that we call culture and civilization'" (*Alan Moore* 101). Not only does it create culture and civilisation, but also literally our physical world, an idea shared by both Blake and

[29] In this chapter I will make references to my article "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*". María Cecilia Marchetto Santorun, Department of English and German Philology, Research Group Discourse and Identity (GRC 2015/002, GI-1924, Xunta de Galicia) Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Complete reference: Marchetto Santorun, María Cecilia. "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*." *English Studies*, vol. 100, no. 4, Routledge / Taylor & Francis, 2019, London, pp. 387-406. DOI: 10.1080/0013838X.2018.1555983. ISSN: (Print) 0013-838X (Online) 1744-4217.

[30] Di Liddo defines it as an "immaterial dimension acting as repository for both individual fantasies and the collective imagination" (*Alan Moore* 86).

Moore (Green, “She” 742).

Promethea presents similar distinctions between literal war and imaginative confrontation to those Blake presents in the preface to *Milton*. In *Promethea*, the advocates of Corporeal War defend abstractions (systems, politics, economies, flags, banknotes) and seek to maintain mental slavery to preserve their self-interest. The answer must be Mental Fight: the abolition of conventions, of the abstractions used to send people to corporeal war against each other. The first convention that must be destroyed is that which associates “the flesh” with “sin” (Green, “She” 741), that condemns matter, bodily realities, instead of the wrong ideas we have built around them. Urizen and his book of brass are holier in this fallen world than everything that lives. Promethea comes to help humanity claim their birth right, their true holiness, the “Promised Land” that is Imagination (Moore et al., *Promethea* 1; 5). This section will analyse some passages of *Promethea* and other works by Moore alongside extracts from Blake’s works that show precedents for Moore’s ideas about imagination.

In previous work by Moore, like *Swamp Thing*, the consequences of Moore’s idea of imagination can already be seen. The monster is presented as a being that cannot be understood through an exclusively scientific and rational perspective; analysis and calculation are incapable of defining it. As we learn in issue 21, “The Anatomy Lesson”[31], the Swamp Thing’s organs are not functional (1; 4). This seems to suggest that understanding his lifeform is not merely dependent on a conceptual arrangement of sensorial perceptions, which echoes the Blakean critique of empiricism. As stated in chapter 1, Blake and other Romantics thought empiricism produced a reductive idea of the mind, and failed to acknowledge the important role of imagination in unifying the perceptions of the world. He also feared the implication entailed in empiricism that the individual remains ensconced in his particular perceptions, unable to go beyond the ultimately meaningless data provided by physical senses. Without any capacities other than memory and reflection, Blake claimed, one could very accurately describe nature, but could never relate to it as a living entity, let alone create.

In this section we will treat the notion of reason as the Blakean contrary to imagination. Reason is not necessarily a negative notion in Blake, which is why I refer to this relationship as one of contrariety. It is only when reason is erected as superior that it becomes problematic in his works. I will refer from now on to this negative aspect of reason in this chapter as Reason (with a capital letter) to distinguish it from the notion of reason Blake recognised as good. In any case, whenever I refer to “instrumental,” “instrumentalised Reason” or the “ideology of Reason” I will also be referring to these negative aspects, distinguishing them clearly from reason as a positive force.

The consequences of the notions of reason are explored more than imagination in works like *From Hell*. Blake serves Moore to frame Gull's reflections on madness and civilisation, apparently based on rational structure. In Hercules Buildings, Gull remembers “London”, Blake's poem about the “Hellish city, haunted by the street-cries of its damned” (Moore and Campbell ch. 4; p. 22). Unlike Gull’s perverse relish on the suffering of the oppressed, the speaker in Blake’s poem (the Bard) sympathises with the sufferers and attacks the oppressors (Thompson 190). The cause of suffering is related to charter, the mark that authority has dispossessed people of what belongs to them by right, and concedes it back in false magnanimity. In Paine’s view, which was very influential on Blake, this was a mark of the buying and selling of the people’s freedom as living beings (Thompson 190-191).

Gull’s references to Blake also highlight the myth of Blake’s madness, as he says that, for

[31] Notice that anatomy is also a frequent Romantic concern and metaphor for the cold abstraction and unfeeling treatment of nature on the part of instrumental Reason. I will develop further the parallels between Blake’s theme of anatomisation in *Urizen* (pp. 123-124).

the poet, Bedlam was where “the mad had locked away the sane” (Moore and Campbell 4; 22), referring to the confinement of the individuals that were made sick by a mad established order. This reversion of values manifests, in the context of Gull's narrative, that civilisation is built upon wrong premises and that it uses mental health as an excuse to purge society of deviant individuals. According to Gilchrist, James Ward also defended Blake against accusations of insanity, with a remark similar to Gull’s: “there are probably men shut up as mad in Bedlam, who are not so: that possibly the madmen outside have shut up the sane people” (Ward qtd. in Bentley 373).

In *Promethea*, Margaret, a prior avatar of Promethea, tells Sophie that for those who try to maintain the social and political structure as it stands, the idea of imagination the narrative presents must be avoided because it implies the unreality of the limits they have set or want to maintain: “There are some people with a vested interest in keeping the world as it is, because that's the world they have power over. You see, in the Immateria there's no rent, no tax, no property. There's no real estate, no boundary fences... no limits” (1; 5). This is what Margaret teaches Sophie:

> Promethea makes people more aware of the vast immaterial realm. Maybe tempts them to explore it. Imagine if too many people followed where she led? It would be like the great Devonian leap, from sea to land. Humanity slithering up the beach from one element into another. From matter to mind. We have many names for this event. We call it ‘The Rapture’, we call it ‘The Opening of the 32nd Path’. We call it the Awakening, or the Revelation, or the Apocalypse. But ‘End of the World’ will do (1; 5).

What ends on this event, what is destroyed, is not literally, as Promethea herself explains, “the planet, or the life and people on it”, but rather “our systems, our politics, our economies… our ideas of the world! It’s our flags and our banknotes and our border wars” (1; 5).

Another aspect in which imagination is approached by Moore in a way that is very close to Blake’s is his replacement of the supernatural by human imagination. Blake made light of artist and astrologer John Varley for believing that his “Visionary Heads” (drawn c. 1818) were really supernatural visions of spirits who had an objective presence in the room where he was sketching. Moore suggests that magic works, like Blakean vision, in an imaginative and not a literal way; that it is primarily a matter of mental forms and not ectoplasmic apparitions. The spiritual in Blake and magic in Moore work through imagination, without complicated, rigid systems and pretensions of objectivity. This way of conceiving the spiritual is a marginal, excluded point of view that is missing from hegemonic discourse in a post-Enlightenment world. The recovery of this conception of magic and spirituality and its re-adaptation to our times could transform it into the “new way of seeing the ordinary universe, and ourselves as creatures in that universe” (Moore qtd. in Kraemer and Winslade 288). Such a change of perspective would transform the world. When magic is explained to the reader in Moore, it is clear that it is not a question of following a set of rules and obtaining predictable physical, causal results, as a scientific paradigm would expect of any valid method. The following dialogue illustrates this distinction:

> [PROMETHEA.] How do I get back there [to the Immateria]? Do I open a gateway, like those demons did?
> [BARBARA.] No. No, that's physical magic. It's always sort of brutal and unnecessary. You oughtta be able to do it in your mind…. The imagination's the most important thing….

> [PROMETHEA.] Uh... So if I were to kind of imagine, say, these columns growing up through the floor, just as an example...?
> [BARBARA.] The ones with snakes and stars on top? Yeah, you're getting it. Now, the trick is, you gotta believe in those columns more'n you believe in this hospital. Imagine them more solid, and this world more ghostly.... (1; 3)

The way to access the spiritual dimension is through imagination, not physically. The double page where this dialogue is illustrated emphasises the gradual unveiling of another dimension of reality through a process involving imagination. Imagination necessarily leads to empathy and responsibility for global problems, as it implies the capacity to imagine solutions that are not destructive, and it can foreclose the need to intervene violently in physical matter by changing first the way we see it. These are the arguments why Moore treats anti-militarism, like Blake, by arguing that war is opposed to imagination. The difference here is that Blake wanted to use imagination through the senses, and not in a Platonic sense, without them. This passage, for its emphasis on the mental, would be at odds with Blake's idea that the body is important for the development of imagination. Even if he opposed a blind materialism, like Moore does, he did not oppose the body or physicality, which is the basis of art, and the very same paintings and books he made. In any case, Moore is here treating a very specific point of mysticism, which is very important in *Promethea*, but will later also criticise esoteric notions of magic in favour of more artistic ideas of it that of course require the mind to act on physical reality.

Margaret tells how, when she became Promethea, she started to feel that her visionary capacities entailed social responsibility:

> All of a sudden I felt responsible for the problems of the world, for every avoidable disaster and plague. When the First World War erupted, it felt like a personal failure … war, all war and conflict is naught but the failure of imagination …. Mankind must imagine a way to rise above the perilous material situation that it has created. That's why Promethea is necessary (1; 5)

The idea that war is a failure to achieve more imaginative solutions recalls Blake's distinction between "Corporeal War" and "Mental Fight" (*M* 1; E95). Imagination in Moore appears as a threatening force for those who deny in the physical world the freedom of the imaginative inner space that is the equivalent of the human form divine in Blake. The human form divine in Blake is love, as the poem "The Divine Image" says. It is also imagination, because imagination, like love, allows humanity to perceive the unfallen aspect of the surrounding world and of other beings (Frye 124), in which aspect some of the original sense of unity between humanity and nature still survives. Imagination often takes the form of a great spiritual self composed by the human collectivity in a prophetic, visionary state (43) that would reveal what we really are: "Every one a translucent Wonder: a Universe within" (*J* 14.17; E158). Blake's giants, universes of imagination in themselves, their dimension and unity with a humanised nature, and the language of building the city of imagination, create a sense of the spatialisation of this enormous human imaginative body. Imagination as the inner self of humanity and simultaneously as a spatial dimension connect Blake's human form divine and Moore's imagination *qua* Ideaspace.

It is important to highlight how, according to the above mentioned passages from *Promethea*, Reason can constitute law in Moore's works. This is the origin of the problem of moral law that has a great precedent in Blake's criticisms of it. We can observe this aspect in

earlier works by Moore as well. Issue 53 of *Swamp Thing*, "The Garden of Earthly Delights", reflects on the interlacing of civilisation (more associated with Reason than with reason) and savagery (irrational monsters), and emphasises the authoritarian embodiments of Reason as law. Alec Holland attacks Batman's Gotham City to force the authorities to release his beloved Abby, prosecuted for "crimes against nature". This is the category society has used to label her relationship with Alec due to the impossibility to ontologically classify him. The court considered that her maintaining a sexual relationship with Alec, a being of uncertain nature (viz. a cluster of vegetable organisms with the consciousness of a dead man) constituted a crime. The authorities have to face a dilemma: if they give in to the monster's demands, they will lose power, but if they do not, the monster threatens to take the city back to "primordial wilderness" (5; 60~~.4~~). The story develops an idea that we can describe through Eagleton's proposal in *Holy Terror*. Disrespecting Dionysus by too staunch an adherence to rational law causes a worse relapse into barbarism. As Green suggests, in *Swamp Thing* issues 51 to 54 "Batman (…) becomes an unthinking agent of law, describing the eruption of the wilderness as 'terrorism'" (*Alan Moore* 7). The contrast between an innocent perspective and an experienced one (almost as in Blake's *Songs*) can be appreciated in the difference between, on the one hand, the narrator's voice and, on the other the authorities and the media reports on the events taking place in the city. The testimony of people who are finding the return of the city to nature liberating, inspiring and fulfilling rather than distressing reinforce the narrator's poetic language used to depict the changes in Gotham. In the episode "Natural Consequences", issue 52, it is the children, the criminals, the dispossessed and the lovers who first become responsive to the transformation of the city operated by the Swamp "God": "The children are first to embrace the jungle, shrieking in the low branches with juice on their chins. After them come the criminals, the derelicts, the lovers. By dusk, deep in the October cold, the first few converts remove their clothes and go naked amongst the hanging gardens of Gotham" (5; 54). In "Garden of Earthly Delights", the media describe the placid return to nature in very different terms:

> …And all major highways leading in and out of Gotham are mossbound, making effective transportation impossible. As the greening of Gotham continues, almost every aspect of city life is being radically disrupted. Despite the advice of Mayor Skowcroft earlier this evening, many citizens seem reluctant to stay indoors until the crisis is over… And police are already reporting a high incidence of assault, looting and public indecency (5; 59).

The study of the topics of perception and vision in *Promethea* shows the profound link with Blake's ideas of Reason and imagination. *Promethea* evidences how these definitions are co-dependent, for which reason here it is necessary to start introducing the relationship between them, which will be further explored in the next section of this chapter. In the first chapter of *Promethea*, imagination is defined as "[t]he mythic bough that Reason strains to bend" (1; 1). In this definition, imagination is an organic force (a bough), and Reason is external to it, a force that tends to dominate or deform. This negative version of Reason appears, as in Blake's *Marriage* as an external force that gives shape to things: "Energy is the only life and is from the Body" and reason is "The bound or outward circumference of Energy" (*MHH* 4; E34). Alternatively, if it negates imagination, Reason deforms objects, as Blake's Reasoners, Angels, and the fallen Urizen do.

The positive aspects of reason are more often highlighted in *Promethea* than in *From Hell*,

as in chapter 6, where Sophie, the new incarnation of Promethea, is taught the way of the sword, of intellect (1; 6), following the traditional esoteric pattern of the four magical weapons that represent the natural and spiritual elements or humours, the four Kabbalistic worlds, the cardinal directions, the four Archangels, etc. In this chapter, the Promethea Grace teaches Sophie: "Swords stand for reason and discrimination. Frankly, dear, they cut through bullshit. … reason slices through illusions and hallucinations" (1; 6). This highlights the purposes reason should serve to work in harmony with imagination, its beneficent effects of detecting deceit and giving accuracy.

These notions of reason and imagination in Moore, and their relationship go back to traditional Romantic topics of dreams and the irrational. These constantly appear in Moore, starting from the *Swamp Thing* series, and the "sleep of reason" in issue 25 "Roots" is presented as a failure of reason (McGillis 203). This allusion to Goya acquires new meanings in the context of the ecological vindications of the series. The creature undergoes a gradual process of union between his human side and the natural consciousness he has access to by virtue of his botanic physical self. This allows the series to adopt his perspective, and to deal with problems such as nuclear pollution, the exploitation and destructions of the environment, and also to show certain social impositions against desire and freedom as equally anti-ecological. In the comic book, the sleep of reason is the refusal of instrumental Reason to acknowledge the destruction it brings to the planet, and the monster is the natural consequence, or the earth's answer before the aggression of anthropocentric technocracy. The monster learns throughout a number of story arcs and issues, that the answer is not violence. The answer of the green does not imply the idea of a revengeful nature (represented by Dr Wooodrue), but rather, a deeper collaborative wisdom that patiently allows humanity to evolve, learn and take responsibility for their habitat. The swamp creature's very nature questions the modes of perception derived from the concept of Reason that is criticised in Moore. The concept of Reason and the way it affects perceptual modes recalls Blake's ideas, but only to a certain extent, given that Blake's criticism of Reason diverged from later anti-rationalist Romantic criticisms; his critique was based on the recovery of myth, but also on Enlightened criticism itself. He tried to articulate a reason that was self-critical.[32]

The Swamp Thing is an "unknown, not unpercievd, spread in the infinite microscope" (*VDA* 4.16; E48), as Bromion, the *kategoros* figure in *Visions*, calls the natural others that Western scientific discourse objectifies. For Bromion, there are "unknown" beings and places in nature waiting to be consumed and conquered; an attitude that criticises the eighteenth-century idea of the infinite scientific and technological progress. The scientific and technical aspect of this knowledge is evident in the allusion to the "microscope", which makes it possible to perceive more parts of the world. This empiricist approach to objects unknown, not unperceived, causes a "split between the world and self"; it is a Urizenic epistemology entailing the "objectification of the body" where "cognition is separated from perception and becomes two operations, sensation and synthesis" (Whittaker, *William Blake* 40). *Visions* also emphasises Bromion's ambitious thirst for domination and possession characteristic of the Enlightened theory of knowledge associated with progress, and colonial enterprises. This

[32] At least partly, this critical position towards the ideology of Reason might be due to the influence of Muggletonian beliefs on Blake. Blake's mother, Catherine Blake (née Harmitage) might have inculcated these attitudes on young Blake, as she learnt them from her father, who might have been a London Muggletonian leader (Worrall 13). Blake, in fact, maintained a certain notion that reason is in conflict with the innocence faith requires (Worrall 13) despite his rationally motivated criticism of religion. Muggletonians also preceded his belief that reason is not the central quality that defines Christ's humanity or the human divine (14).

concern with the ways in which instrumental Reason distorts knowledge is commented upon in *Milton*. Plate 29 questions the way in which the scientific instruments distort the organs of perception:

> The Sky is an immortal tent built by the Sons of Los
> And every Space that a Man views around his dwelling-place:
> Standing on his own roof, or in his garden on a mount
> Of twenty-five cubits in height, such space is his Universe;
> And on its verge the Sun rises & sets. the Clouds bow
> To meet the flat Earth & the Sea in such an orderd Space:
> The Starry heavens reach no further but here bend and set
> On all sides & the two Poles turn on their valves of gold:
> And if he move his dwelling-place, his heavens also move.
> Wher'eer he goes & all his neighbourhood bewail his loss:
> Such are the Spaces called Earth & such its dimension:
> As to that false appearance which appears to the reasoner,
> As of a Globe rolling through Voidness, it is a delusion of Ulro
> The Microscope knows not of this nor the Telescope. they alter
> The ratio of the Spectators Organs but leave Objects untouchd….
> (29.4-18; E127)

This distortion creates the astronomical universe that Blake thought was a delusion, a construct that should not be mistaken with direct, imaginative personal experience. This is not necessarily a reactionary outrage on the part of the poet against scientific discoveries. What was problematic for him was the contradiction between the universe of "immediate sensuous and imaginative perception" (Damon 417) and that of "geometrical logic; psychological, not material," (417) i.e. of mathematical abstraction reached through reflection. Blake thought this mode of understanding was beginning to completely negate and replace the former.

Moore manifests a similar preoccupation with the absolutisation of Reason and the modes of perception it generates in *From Hell*. *From Hell* is a graphic novel retelling the Ripper murders, where the focaliser is mainly the criminal, whose identity in the narrative is attributed to Queen Victoria's physician, Gull. In this novel, Gull's theory is a mythical justification for the oppression of women. He thinks that "Symbols have POWER, … enough … to deliver half this planet's population into slavery" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 23). In his view, order is maintained by the prevalence of one great archetypal principle over the other. This he expresses as the "harnessing" of a great female "ocean": "Man... attempts, like her [Diana], to bind the ocean to his will" (4; 25). This would ensure the predominance of light, good, Reason, and men over darkness, evil, passions, and women. In the narrative, power is held by white males who impose their notion of rationality and order. The consequences to this appear at several levels: political (the imminent fall of the British Empire), social (the few but decisive ways in which the women in the story endanger the stability of power), and psychological (the irrational violence by the suppression of affects, empathy and imagination). Gull's esoteric theories are an example of a literal obsession for rigid systems and their application to society. His attitude is also a result of a lack of imagination, and precipitates its own failure for its lack of flexibility.

Characterised as a scientist, thus associated to elements of the Enlightened subject and especially to the instrumentalisation of Reason, Gull is criticised from a Romantic or Neo-Romantic point of view. He commits savage acts such as Anne Crook's lobotomy, believing

that using his scientific knowledge to repress subversive individuals he is enacting a higher purpose whose ultimate effect is to grant order and rationality. In this respect, the character exemplifies the contradictions of absolutised Reason, which becomes irrational in its excessive hubris. This basic contradiction turns Gull's earlier grand speeches about civilisation and Reason into a discourse of legitimisation of violence. Gull is trusted with the care of the "deranged women" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 2; 10) at Guy's Hospital, which corresponds to the role he will come to think he has: to bind and repress the energies of the irrational, including imagination, the unconscious, and femininity. The way he mocks his friend Hinton's pity towards women's misery ("are all your outbursts so passionate?" [2; 10]), exemplify his lack of empathy and his contempt for feelings and passions as weaknesses. It is no coincidence that the chosen protagonist is a doctor, as he enacts a "perverse cure" (Miettinen 89) of society through his ritual murders. His obsession with the domination of women is associated not just to his mental imbalance, but rather to "nineteenth century visions of history and progress" (Brigley-Thompson 77) that entail the superiority of a male instrumental Reason over a supposedly irrational femininity. His actions respond to "the instrumentalism that pervades our economic and social relations" (Benjamin qtd. in Brigley-Thompson 77), causing his dehumanisation of marginal subjects such as the prostitutes.

Promethea also suggests that reason has a reverse, oppressive side, which is seen when reason lacks any proper limit, and stifles imagination by overexerting its capacity to "cut" illusions, even when illusions and visions are true or liberating. Another case when negative properties of Reason are shown is on chapter 15, "Mercury Rising", where Promethea, on her journey through the spheres of the Kabbalah, visits Hod, the realm of reason and intellect. Her friend Barbara remarks: "All this math and language and reason… why do I feel that something behind it that's so intricate, so insane?" (3; 3). Here, Moore suggests the dangerous capacity of Reason to lead the mind to solipsism, to get us entangled in abstractions and loops. Promethea ponders on the dark side of intellectual genius: "I guess it's where genius shades into madness. Say, is it getting darker ahead?" (3; 3). Some commentators, such as Roderick McGillis, have pointed out that the Moebius strip the protagonists walk on in this episode stands for infinity, and that the pyramids, as in Blake, symbolise "the geometry of Newtonian science" and the "fearful symmetry" of over-rationalistic positions in a visual form (205, 206).

There is an important reference to a letter from Blake to Butts (that of 22nd of November 1802) in issue 12 of *Promethea*, "Metaphore", that underscores Blakean notions of reason and imagination and their opposition to an excessive materialism. As Green points out, "Blake himself appears by name in Moore's revised history of civilisation, as told through the Tarot" ("She" 740). The serpents from the symbolic caduceus that Promethea carries teach her Blake's point of view about Enlightenment:

> Materialism's steady creep
> which William Blake called "Newton's Sleep"
> brings worldly blessings, fair and fine,
> yet blinds mankind to the divine (Moore et al., *Promethea* 2; 6).

They argue that materialism and the disrespect for humanity it entailed in some historical periods was in part caused by the obsession with science and Reason over imagination. The stress is on the balance of the world of matter and the world of the spirit, as in Blake's poem in the letter to Butts, in which a "twofold" vision shows both the material dimension of things and their spiritual forms (Green, "End" 182-183). Green compares too the image of Oothoon in plate 8 of *Visions* to Promethea's depiction in issue 27, "When it Blows its Stacks" (Green,

"She" 741 [see Moore et al., *Promethea* 5; 2]); in the artwork of the previous Blakean homage *Angel Passage* John Coulthart used the same image of Oothoon, which indicates the image was known by Moore and the artist, J. H. Williams III. Green's observation of the use of this image is part of his development of the topics of sex, imagination and transgression in Blake and Moore. In his article, he studies the association between Blakean apocalypse and vision and Moore's notion of apocalypse, which inherits the sense of this event as an "alteration of appearances, a change in representational practices," and a "new way of seeing the world that already exists" ("She" 744). He argues that Oothoon is precisely a Blakean character that announces this visionary change. Her line "Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!" (*VDA* 8.10; E50) illustrates this new outlook on the world (Green, "She" 744). The connection to Oothoon's image in Moore suggests this kind of apocalypse as well.

4.1.2. The contrary relationship between reason and imagination and its consequences

To explore the opposition between reason and imagination in Blake and Moore it is necessary to start by reading of a series of passages from Moore's *Swamp Thing*, the first of the selected works that deals with the conflict between science and the supernatural, rationality and myth, and Reason and imagination.

The defence of imagination in the series emphasises an underlying assumption that "[w]hen reason works for humanity it is reason in her most exalted mood; in other words, reason at its best is a form of imaginative activity" (McGillis 203). In *Swamp Thing*, it is a balanced, self-critical reason working in unison with imagination, as opposed to instrumental Reason, that is mutually beneficial for humanity and nature. This concept of reason implies the need for a rationality that analyses itself, an idea also found in Eagleton's warning that reason should not exceed its own bounds, leaving appropriate space for other capacities and feelings. The characters that lack imagination fall prey to all kinds of mental traps and to their own repressed impulses, from order into chaos and from lucidity into madness. *Swamp Thing* builds "a world outside illusory myths of human mastery" (Green, *Alan Moore* 5) promoted by instrumental Reason. Nature appears monstrous and hostile to those who attempt to exploit it for self-interest and to suppress what is not useful in it from a utilitarian perspective.

The Swamp Thing is a creature that challenges the distinction between natural and artificial, animal and vegetable, human and non-human, life and death. The genesis of the creature starts with Alec Holland, a scientist researching a "bio-restorative formula" in the Louisiana swamps. After a criminal organisation attacks him and plants a bomb in his laboratory, Alec runs away to the swamp covered in flames. Although to all appearances he dies at the bottom of the swamp, the bio-restorative formula had drenched his body and its effects on the plant and microbial colonies of the swamp make this "primordial matter" (Smith 254) reorganise itself into a human form that assimilates Alec's consciousness. In the first issue, the Swamp Thing reflects with his enemy Arcane on their monstrosity and the displacement they are subject to:

> It's a… new world, Arcane. It's full of… shopping malls and striplights and software. The dark corners are being pushed back… a little more everyday. We're things of the shadow, you and I… and there isn't as much shadow… As there used to be. Perhaps there was once a world… we could have belonged to… Maybe somewhere in Europe… Back in the fifteenth century. The world

> was… full of shadows then… full of monsters… Not anymore (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 1; 21; original punctuation).

The monstrosity of the protagonist starts out as natural and ancient, as opposed to modernity and technology. However the narrative questions the monstrosity of the Swamp Thing and the fairness of the order that tries to displace him. It is said order that threatens to become monstrous because of the oppression and enforcement it exerts: "Maybe the world has run out of room… for monsters… Or maybe… they're just getting harder to recognize" (1.1.8). The character here denounces that the former contrariety between the world of reason and the world of monsters is turning into a negation, on the part of a monstrous, distorted Reason, of what exceeds its bounds. These exceeding elements are also classed as monstrous, but in a different sense than the monstrosity of a corrupt version of Reason.

General philosophical ideas like these run through Moore's writings proving that there is a continuity between Blake and Moore's reflections on the ideology of Reason, and on contraries and negations. Moore follows a similar pattern, by showing the problems of the modes of perception privileged in a technocratic society, and completes Blake's picture of the tyranny of Reason with the tessera of his ecological awareness and a spirituality that stresses also the role of nature in the process leading to vision by means of, for instance, the character of the Swamp Thing.

The story arc involving the re-greening of Gotham also helps to understand the dynamic relationship between reason and imagination and its implications. On one hand, Batman (unlike Pentheus) realises that the law can coexist with violent energies less problematically than the "experienced" point of view of the media or other authorities suggests. On the other hand, during this episode, Alec achieves a deeper understanding of his powers, when he declares: "The city cannot contain me" (5; 66). Rather than in his monstrous force banished to the margins (a theme already introduced in issue 1), Alec's real power resides in his realisation that he cannot be contained. He exceeds any limits like the unbound energy (Blake, *MHH* 4; E34) of the Blakean human form divine (Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* xv). The initial contradiction between Reason and the supernatural is surmounted by the revelation that natural forces were all the time the basis of the civilised rationality and regulation of the city. Originally, the swamp monster was not an exile; he always resided inside the city walls, at the core of the light of rationality, exactly as darkness and light intertwine and feed each other in issue 50, an intertwining to be analysed in chapter 5.

Living beings and nature appear in *Swamp Thing*, beginning with the protagonist, as resistant to the excessive impositions of abstract Reason. This resistance of life to fit into deadening rational abstraction finds many precedents in Blake. In Blake's *Urizen*, Urizen's children, the natural elements and creatures spawned after Urizen decides to separate himself from eternity, represent the chaos of natural, material life as opposed to Urizen's geometric conceptions of the cosmos. It is when Urizen explores the created world and finds that living creatures do not follow his iron laws, that he imposes obedience through the Net of Religion (Worrall 22), which unites "feminized sensibility," a shrinking of the senses, and social and religious enslavement (22). When he sees what he has created, Urizen is horrified and curses his creation. He perceives these beings as monstrous because they escape his rational patterns:

> 3. Most Urizen sicken'd to see
> His eternal creations appear

Sons & daughters of sorrow on mountains
Weeping! wailing! first Thiriel appear'd
Astonish'd at his own existence
Like a man from a cloud born, & Utha
From the waters emerging, laments!
Grodna rent the deep earth howling
Amaz'd! his heavens immense cracks
Like the ground parch'd with heat; then Fuzon
Flam'd out! first begotten, last born.
All his eternal sons in like manner
His daughters from green herbs & cattle
From monsters, & worms of the pit.

4. He in darkness clos'd, view'd all his race,
And his soul sicken'd! he curs'd
Both sons & daughters; for he saw
That no flesh nor spirit could keep
His iron laws one moment.

5. For he saw that life liv'd upon death …. (23.11-27; E81)

These stanzas from *Urizen*, express the opposition between Reason and natural energies that cannot be understood without imagination. The opposition turns into a conflict between perceptions organised by a sterile and rigid kind of Reason symbolised by Urizen, the horror he experiences before his children rising from nature, and the "darkness" of his mind enclosed in reflection through "iron laws" that are the moral Law of religion[33] and also the laws of rational measure, mathematical proportion, geometry, etc. The possibility to expand the faculties through vision would accommodate nature as it really is, with all the elements in it that do not fit into Urizenic dimensions, present as the passions and feelings used in this passage: "sorrow", "Weeping! Wailing!", "Astonish'd at his own existence", etc.

The Blakean resonances around the themes of reason and imagination augment in *From Hell*, a work for which Moore studied Blake more in depth and which owes much more to the Blakean philosophy of contraries and negations. The author himself, in an interview with Neil Spencer for the *Observer* (22 October 2000), declares that he did research on Blake while he was writing this graphic novel: "I read Blake at O level, but studied him seriously when I was researching *From Hell*, my book about Jack the Ripper" (Moore qtd. in McGillis 201). The opposition between Reason and imagination in *From Hell* follows the pattern portrayed in *Marriage* through the opposition between the Prolific, energetic beings and the Devourer, the class to which Gull would belong (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 11), as he "only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole" (*MHH* 16; E40).

Throughout *From Hell*, there are numerous Blakean elements that serve to highlight the distortion Gull makes of the ideas of reason, but also of contrariety, as he identifies with a

[33] When Blake engraved *Urizen*, the political climate and the war with France was full of treason trials, spying, economic hardship and repressive legislations that curtailed freedom of speech. Even Biblical prophetic language became associated with radical discourses, and was therefore often suspect, as was the discussion of religion and its social function (Worall 12-13). These were institutional reactions to the effect of Paine's *Age of Reason* (Worrall 19) and the "de-Christianization" campaigns in France (20). Painite influence was opposed publicly through the creation of the APLAP (Association for Protecting Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers), an association whose mission was ultimately to maintain "religious compliance" (24).

dominant instance that enjoys the suffering of the oppressed as part of a natural state of affairs. We can find references to *Visions* that Blake wrote to criticise patriarchal institutions: "Enslaved, the daughters of Albion weep, a trembling lamentation" (Blake qtd in Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 10). On the page, Gull recalls Blake's illuminated book to celebrate the suffering of male-dominated female population; this is one of the passages where Moore portrays Gull's misreading of Blake more clearly (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 203). Reinforcing the previous allusion, Gull also evokes "London" later in the same passage: "Hercules Buildings: Blake wrote 'London' here, that Hellish city, haunted by the street-cries of its damned" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 22). The reference inscribes the figure of the poet prophet in the symbolic fabric of the city of London. In the passage, Gull associates certain parts of London with a series of characters, events or meanings, which give each their singular effect on the perceiver's mind. In the case of Hercules Buildings and other places, Blake is the mythologiser of this space, but also one of the elements that are mythologised upon. Through "London" and other works he contributed to the dense interrelation of meanings of the city.

The oppositions established by the villain protagonist between man and woman, Apollonian and Dyonisiac, solar and lunar, rational and irrational, are structured like Blake's early opposition between reason and energy in *Marriage* (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 5). Blake treats reason and energy as mutually complementary Contraries that must collaborate or coexist: "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason [.] Evil is the active springing from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell" (*MHH* 3; E34). In Blake, neither of the two sides should "absorb" the other, and the two are ultimately good (Bloom, Introduction 4). However, Gull treats them as Negations, as one quality that must dominate and take precedence over the other: "Measured against the span of goddesses, our male rebellion's lately won, our new regime of rationality unfledged, precarious. Our grand symbolic magic chaining womankind thus must often be reinforced" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 25). Since the theories in *From Hell* are told from the point of view of the villain, it is strongly implied that there is something fundamentally wrong in them. We learn that the answer is the opposite of what Gull believes, the union of fire and water, Tiamat and Marduk, Beast and Whore, imagination and nature. They produce life and creativity, not the domination of one by the other. While Gull sees the triumph of Reason in dragon-slaying myths, Moore would see there the domination of nature by Reason, male supremacy, extreme asceticism, and hatred of the "abject" body.

Rational order and anarchic chaos, law and transgression are often present in the narrative of *From Hell* under the form of the contrast between civilisation and barbarism, continuing the reflections developed in *Swamp Thing*. This is shown through the perspective of characters that are supposed to protect and defend the values of civilisation, such as inspector Fred Abberline or Gull, who are partially or totally blind to the violence they either participate in or exert. Nonetheless, their actions speak for themselves, showing the consequences of the opposition between order and chaos and of the assumption that civilisation automatically safeguards order. This problem takes us back to Eagleton's argument about the perverse excess of law, in line with Žižek's idea of the obscene superego. Critics like Monica Germanà have already studied the deep interrelation between Reason and insanity, civilisation and madness in *From Hell*, reaching the conclusion that madness pulsates at the very basis of modern, urban life (154).

In *From Hell*, Abberline is revealed something similar to the Swamp Thing's realisation

that a chaos of natural forces secretly constitutes the core of the city of Gotham. Whitechapel is introduced in the story through Abberline's point of view as a place of poverty, violence and crime where civilisation seems to fail. They call this place "Hell" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 6; 22). The way Abberline talks about it demonstrates how the idea of chaos is also associated to this place: "Alligators waddling through the shit in the gutters; Albinos being led about in chains... I've stepped over kids, no more than nine, having it off in broad daylight, probably with their sisters" (6; 22). Another characteristic they use to describe it is the abundance of prostitution: "Twelve hundred tarts in Whitechapel. Officially. My arse: ANYBODY in Whitechapel's yours for under a shilling" (6; 22). Finally, Abberline characterises the place by madness: "How do you maintain law and order in a fucking bedlam like this?" (6; 22) All the socially unacceptable is repressed and banished to this abject place, where it grows and finally returns in a violent form. In a similar way, Alec and other monsters are banished to the swamps, from whence they come back to reclaim their space. In both cases it is power and its narrowing bound on the marginal that ends up producing violence. Whitechapel is hell, London's unconscious, its repressed side, where all that has turned alien and dangerous (violent and sexual drives, chaos, animality, dirt) is kept away from respectable society where rationality and order reign and monuments to Reason and to the sun protect the powerful from the influx of the dark forces. But Abberline feels attracted to this world and makes friends with a working girl (and a prostitute too; possibly Marie Kelly herself) in the Ten Bells (6; 24-25). He finds in this character the vitality he cannot find in himself, his home and his wife, a woman repressed by her more refined education.

Gull's theories are a complete misunderstanding of how society is built on the basis of imagination and sexuality. The symbols of order that he identifies with were created, according to his own theory, to constrain subconscious, libidinal power. Civilisation for him requires the slavery of the Dyonisiac and feminine, which is afterwards sublimated into art: "they [the Dyonisiac architects] knew the unconscious was the inspiration whence their towers of reason sprang. Thus, HARNESSING its power symbolically was their sublime accomplishment" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 23). According to him, these mythical architects are called "Dyonisiac" because they have stolen their force from Dyonisos. As Germanà points out, this passage from chapter 4 of *Form Hell* exemplifies how madness cannot be banished through the murders, because it is the very foundation of the city (151-152).

Moore's *Promethea* presents a more uplifting image of the relationship between reason and imagination than that which is portrayed in *From Hell*. In *Promethea*, Moore embarks on a metaphysical, magical and mystical journey where the two terms are understood as contraries, that is, as complementary and productive in their collaboration, as in Blake's famous mottoes "Without Contraries is No Progression" and "Opposition is True Friendship" (*MHH* 3; E34, 20; E42). In this work, Blake ceases to be such a central figure as in *From Hell*, but his presence is still notable in some quotations from *Marriage*, from one of the letters from Blake to Butts (22nd of November 1802) and visual allusions to the Ancient of Days from the frontispiece to *Europe*, and to *Visions.*

The references to Blake in *Promethea* reinforce the meanings of Blake developed by his psychedelic reception, which has been often used to highlight the necessity of finding alternative forms of perception conducive to more visionary experiences of the world. The first overt reference to Blake, in issue 6, "A Warrior Princess of Hy Brasil", is delivered by the singer of the band The Limp, Montelimar (Monty) Sykes. This character, traumatised after a vision of

demons, goes into a rest home where he begins to change his perspective, as is proclaimed on the streets of New York: "he announced a new, more spiritual direction for the band, influenced by 'William Blake and that guy from VERVE" (1; 6). In issue 25, "A Higher Court", Monty Sykes has changed his lyric style and tone at the onset of the collective Revelation taking place in the narrative. He now seems to be a parody of John Lennon, singing verses by Blake: "And did those feet, in Penny Lane, develop dark satanic blisters?"; "The long and winding Abbey Road of excess leads to wisdom", or "Prudence in the sky with tigers burning brightly from afar" (4; 7). The former echoes Blake's proverb "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom" (*MHH* 7; E35) and the latter evokes both "Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by incapacity" (E35) and the first line from "The Tyger" that Moore had already used in *Watchmen*. This Postmodern collage of Blake with 1960s counterculture is combined with parody of Postmodern culture through the character and the vertiginous flow of information shared through TEXTure, a futuristic public information device. The same cultural collage is replicated on the cover of issue 10, "Sex, Stars and Serpents", which mimics the cover of the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album. William Blake is among the crowd behind the main group of figures together with Lovecraft. These are some examples of overt references that connect Blake with psychedelic topics, but throughout this chapter more subtle and less explicit parallels will be examined.

4.2 Perception and vision

In *V for Vendetta*, the first graphic novel scripted by Moore that has Blake references, we can already note the influence of 1960s counterculture, which will determine Moore's reception of Blake in subsequent works with respect to the topic of perception. In Book 3, chapter 4, "Vestiges", Finch, one of the secondary characters in charge of persecuting V, the anarchist terrorist, undergoes a process suggestive of Huxley's Blake-inspired cleansing of the doors of perception. Investigator Finch decides to take drugs to understand the abnormal mind that is committing the terrorist attacks. Under the effects of LSD, Finch visits the deserted Larkhill concentration camp, where the totalitarian regime in the story had held V captive before he became a terrorist. Initially, the experience is terrible and upsetting, and he starts fancying he is an inmate at the camp. During his trip, he reencounters the people he knew before the regime executed them: non-whites and homosexuals. He experiences the suffering and destitution V must have felt and realises, like V, his inner ontological freedom (Moore and Lloyd 215). This revelation causes (in the trip) a deflagration like the explosion V engineered to escape the camp, and Finch runs off into the fields, taking off his clothes and finally standing arms raised in a V in the middle of a megalith circle: "Vaulting, veering, vomiting up the values that victimized me, feeling vast, feeling virginal… Was this how he felt? This verve, this vitality… this vision" (216). The imagery of the last panel can be compared to Blake's picture "Glad Day", depicting naked Albion with arms raised in an attitude of joy. It also refers to the ideas of British nation, vision, revolution and freedom from oppression.

Finch refers to V as the figure in the hymn "Jerusalem" (Moore and Lloyd 230), which refers to Joseph of Arimathea, although popular assumption identifies it with Jesus Christ. The reference connects V with the values of alternative Britishness I have mentioned in chapter 2. Finch's LSD experience presents a number of ideas that will be later associated to the use of Blakean references and imagery. First, the reference to a drug-induced type of vision inspired

in Huxley's *Doors of Perception*. Second, the allusion to resistance to political oppression. Third, the visionary experience of freedom. Fourth, the association of liberation with a fiery consumption of limits, and fifth, the use of symbolism popularly associated to Druidry, which, however, meant human sacrifice in Blake. The difference between the use of Druidism in *V for Vendetta* and Blake's works is due to the fact that probably Moore had not yet studied works such as *Milton*, where the imagery of Druids as oppressive figures is more frequent and salient than in previous works with which Moore might have been familiarised at this stage. In Blake, prehistoric structures such as dolmens and cromlechs are used in the illuminations and associated to Druidism, and to "tendencies towards repression and imaginative failure" (Johnston 414). On plate 4 of *Milton*, two figures representing the Daughters of Albion, stand with heir spinning tools by a rock on which a female victim lies huddled in fear, ready to be sacrificed, while the background depicts three dolmens looming over the figure. This contrasts starkly with Finch's triumphant, Albion-like pose at the centre of the stone circle.

By examining these passages, it is easy to see how Moore might have connected these previous ideals and images of psychedelia and counterculture and to his later growing acquaintance with the works of Blake. Some of them reappear unchanged in later works, such as the psychedelic narrative, while others change their meaning, such as the Druidic imagery in *From Hell*, which acquires a more sinister connotation of human sacrifice, like the one it has in Blake.

Issue 34 of *Swamp Thing*, "Rite of Spring", is one of the first examples of Moore's focus on the passage from ordinary perception to visionary imagination that can be more specifically linked to Blake via Huxley. At this early stage of his career, as I have pointed out in the introduction, the ideas of imagination and vision were deeply connected to the culture of psychedelia. His reception of Blake is at this time determined by this lens, but it will be combined with Moore's emphasis on the monstrous. V was already a monstrous character, especially from the point of view of his prosecutors. However, in *Swamp Thing* the protagonist is not a destitute, tortured human of unknown identity, he is literally a hybrid monster, whose abjection is even more emphasised when we see him through the point of view of characters that represent social convention. Another element that becomes more central than in *V for Vendetta* is the instrumentalisation of reason and science. Monsters appear as representations of that which has no place in a scientific, rational view of the world. They are the parts of nature that remain unknown.

In "Rite of Spring", Alec (the Swamp Thing) and Abby find that Abby's consumption of the fruits Alec's vegetable body produces is a means of achieving a deep erotic closeness in an act that could be considered sexual. Abby and the Swamp Thing's rite is an "'erotic' exit from the rational and autonomous Cartesian subject of knowledge" (Johnson 23). Pages 210-211 convey graphically the characters' change in perception once Alec's fruit produces its effects. It distorts Abby's visual perception, while the panel organisation remains relatively linear and conventional. From page 212 on, this change is amplified, not only does she perceive shapes, colours and light in a different, harmonious way. The panel arrangement begins to reflect the interruption of habitual patterns of perception and thought. On page 212, the succession of panels is semi-radial around a centre displaying the beautifully altered aspect of the vegetation. The dialogue reflects on the cause of these sensations:

> [ABBY.] Oh, look at the swamp… It's all of fire… Millions of birthday candles… And… look at me! All these strands of pearly stuff… Alec… what's happened to everything?
> [ALEC.] You ate… the fruit… Abby… You absorbed a little… of my consciousness… my perceptions…
> [ABBY.] You mean… You mean… This… Is how you see things?
> [ALEC.] Not… all… of the time… Only… when I… wish to (2; 212).

This passage reflects on the relativity of perceptions and how perspectives and modes of consciousness change our surroundings. In this particular work the visionary experience is dependent on intersubjectivity. Abby has access to this mode of vision by participating of Alec's consciousness, which suffered a substantial change after his death and transformation into a vegetable-human consciousness. As Di Liddo puts it, Alec "can perceive the vital pulse of the earth and of the natural world. Swamp Thing is thus endowed with a proper 'pantheistic consciousness'" (*Alan Moore* 51).

As the action progresses, new changes are introduced in the representation of the perception of reality. Notice on page 216 panel structures are completely removed to reflect the change towards visionary experience. These passages evidence the affinities between psychedelic notions in counterculture and the Blakean idea of vision. In vision "the objects of perception … have become transfigured and charged with a new intensity of symbolism;" (Frye 8) it is a "perceptive rather than a contemplative attitude of mind" (8). Equally, in the psychedelic experiences in *Swamp Thing*, what is perceived acquires a different, powerful significance, be it wondrous or terrible, and it is a state that rather than divorcing the individual from her physical senses and making her retreat into a mental world, vision takes its roots in sensorial perception, so that the visionary has physical sensations of unusual intensity from external stimuli. Both authors, Blake and Moore, attempt to substitute the Urizenic division and separation of the Cartesian Enlightened subject. In Blake's *Thel*, for instance, the interconnection between all forms of life and natural elements is crucial. In this book, the Cloud explains to Thel that, even if he will live but some hours, he participates of the lives of other beings and feeds them, having thus his life continuity in them: "Every thing that lives / lives not alone nor for itself …." (3.26-27; E5). Hutchings has analysed Blake's defence of this idea as proof that his concept of nature and life draws inspiration from hylozoism, and is more interrelational than previous studies had shown (*Imagining* 62). Moore criticises the limits of the Cartesian subject by proposing "a paradigm of interconnection" (Johnson 27). The difference is that at least in *Swamp Thing*, "the expansion of consciousness is linked to the ingestion of a psychoactive organic compound" (Green, "Everything's" 110), a pattern that immediately refers us to 1960s counterculture.

On page 217 we can also see how in their union, Abby and Alec can access the consciousness of every creature on earth, each perceived now almost as "an immense world of delight" (Blake, *MHH* 7; E35), including vermin like rats and processes like death or decay. These natural elements and processes are contemplated as part of a larger order of nature in which the Blakean dictum "every thing that lives is Holy" (*MHH* 27; E45), implying that "all true desire is sacred" (Bloom, Introduction 23) is applicable. Like Blakean visionaries, the characters see beyond appearances and go deeper than superficial perceptions: "The imagination in seeing a bird sees 'an immense world of delight'; the imagination in looking at society not only sees its hypocrisies but sees through them, and sees an infinitely better world.

The prophet can see an infinite and eternal reality ….” (Frye 59). This opening of vision caused by the ingestion of Alec’s tuber is the imaginative change that will start the transformation of the characters, until they realise the wrong in society and begin to explore what the world could be like. Without this, Abby would probably not start her environmental group, and Alec would not learn that despite his enormous powers, he must let humanity acquire enlightenment on its own, and take responsibility to protect the planet. In this aspect, Moore’s idea of vision departs from Huxley’s reading of Blake to the degree that Huxley conceived Blakean vision as passive and contemplative. As in *Urizen*, where Urizen discovers that “life liv’d upon death” (Blake, *BU* 23.27; E81), in *Swamp Thing* life and death are experienced as a continuum where conventional morality and values are out of the picture, as they delight even in the rat killing its prey: “There is no contradiction… only the pulse. The pulse within the world. Within us, Within me” (2; 217).

From a visual perspective, it is important to note that “Rite of Spring” is full of representations of opposites in union that reminds of the visual contrast between heaven and hell in *Marriage*. Pages 214-215 show the human and the monstrous hand clasped together from each side of the page, with a symmetrical disposition of two red eye-shaped orbs at each side; from the Swamp Thing’s side, the orb extends roots, and from the one at Abby’s side has a spine growing from it, underlining the complementarity and union of vegetable / natural and animal / human selves. Another example is pages 218-219 with Abby on one side and the Swamp Thing on the other, again as the animal and the vegetable, the human and nature, united through a heart-shaped form composed of leaves, roots and organs. These representations repeat symmetrical motives of union of opposites that can be found in *Marriage*, for instance in the title plate, where from each side of the plate two different characters representing Heaven and Hell (a man and a woman respectively) embrace. Eaves, Essick and Viscomi have explained that in Swedenborgian doctrine, the basis for Blake’s *The Marriage*, this apocalyptic marriage is a mental event happening in the individual rather than an objective, external culmination of human history (*William Blake: The Early Illuminated Books* 131). The vision of the union of opposites as an event occurring in the human soul (131) is a perspective that is shared by Moore. The contrast of the opposites in union is reinforced in Blake’s plate through the colours (blue for heaven and red for hell in copy H), and the different elements accompanying the figures. Thus, there are clouds on the heavenly side and flames on the hellish side. Instead of good and evil, reason and energy, Moore visually opposes human and natural, vegetable and animal. These depictions reinforce the belief in contrariety, in relationships of mutuality and collaboration rather than negation or domination that nurture the visionary possibilities addressed both in *Marriage* and *Swamp Thing*.

Another Blakean resemblance in this work is from *Visions*. Although it is less likely that Moore had read *Visions* before scripting *Swamp Thing*, there is a striking interest in both works in excluded natural elements and beings, conventionally neglected as insignificant, repellent and prophane. In both works, they are associated with connotations of eternity and regeneration, subverting their usual association with death and decay. In the illuminated book, the protagonist, Oothoon, attempts to persuade her beloved, Theotormon, to embrace a more imaginative consciousness that would help him rise above moral law. His anguish is caused by his belief that Bromion’s sexual violence has corrupted Oothoon, and his inability to see Oothoon’s true infinity, her divine form, beyond the limits of the situation. In this passage,

Oothoon precisely recurs to the hidden aspects of nature, to make Theotormon understand how mistaken is his distinction between pure and impure, life and death:

> Does not the eagle scorn the earth & despise the treasures beneath?
> But the mole knoweth what is there, & the worm shall tell it thee.
> Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church yard?
> And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave
> Over his porch these words are written. Take thy bliss O Man!
> And sweet shall be thy taste & sweet thy infant joys renew! (*VDA* 5-6; E49)

The non-dualism of Blake's *Marriage* has probably been an influence on these passages, through the intermediation of Huxley's work. It is clear that Abby and the Swamp Thing, and other characters like Dave and Sandy, whose story arc is described below, learn to perceive "the infinite which was hid" (Blake, *MHH* 14; E39). They discover eternity beyond the appearances of ordinary perception through acts of "sensual enjoyment" (14; E39).

The effects of Swamp Thing's fruit not only depend on personal and ecological interconnection, but also on each individual's perceptions. This aspect is explored in issue 43, "Windfall". This issue contains evidence that a Blakean understanding of perceptions was assumed by Moore through Huxley, as Chester, a character introduced in this episode, is depicted reading a volume of *Doors of Perception: Heaven and Hell* (4; 33). In this episode, the difference between the diverse states the Swamp Thing's fruits provoke is expressed as heaven (or at least some spiritual consciousness) and hell (pp. 24-25).

This happens when Chester finds a tuber proceeding from Alec's body, the same kind of fruit Abby consumes in "Rite of Spring". At the beginning of the chapter, Chester first receives a visit from his friend Dave, whose wife Sandy is dying of cancer. Dave is desperate to alleviate her wife's pain and he mentions that Huxley took a psychedelic drug at the moment of his death (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 4; 17). Chester offers him a piece of the tuber he had been studying, in the hopes that its effects might ease Sandy's final moments. After this visit, a man called Milo rudely barges in, looking for recreational drugs. Despite the fact that Chester says he has not got anything that fits Milo's requests, Milo sees a piece of the tuber on a dish and asks Chester about it. Chester warns him he has not tested its effects, but Milo obtusely and disrespectfully insists in buying it, greedily picking the largest portion. As a consequence of their attitude and mindset, Sandy and Milo achieve very different results from the consumption of the same substance. While Sandy's experience is peaceful, comforting, beautiful and spiritual, Milo's is painful and terrifying. Sandy sees the world like Alec does and like Abby saw it in issue 34: with every living thing emitting its own light, and she feels at one and interconnected with all living creatures. On page 25, she is depicted in golden yellow, with a radiant halo on her head, while she compares her death to a loss of form, a physical change of state not unlike that of an icicle melted by the sun. The sun becomes here a symbol of the totality of life, its source, undivided into different beings. The page is correspondingly undivided into panels, the different scenes being merely juxtaposed. In this state, Dave and Sandy make love, believing that this act enables a temporary transcendence of individuality. This fact is expressed through natural imagery of water, following the previous metaphor of the icicles melting under the sun:

> Droplets. All distinct, individual, with their own little highlights, their own little reflections of the world… And they run together and lose their individuality, becoming a puddle, a lake, an ocean, merging with all the other droplets… Flowing together… We spend our lives, pressing our bodies against each other, trying to break the surface tension of our skins, to unite in a single gleaming bead… (4; 27)

Moments prior to her passing, Sandy remarks she can feel the sunlight. Dave replies that it is night-time, and it is raining, upon which Sandy clarifies she was not talking about any physical sun, "not that sun" (4; 29). After this dialogue, Sandy expires while her partner kisses her.

Milo also sees the world like Alec after consuming his fruit, but in his case, he feels like Alec when he went up in flames after the bomb exploded at his lab (4; 22). Milo feels, like the Swamp Thing, insects crawling inside him, but for Milo it is a horrible sensation, the same as the roots tangling around him. He sees himself reflected on a puddle and is repelled at his monstrous appearance, closely resembling that of Alec: green-brown and red-eyed, with all kinds of vegetable parts growing on his skin (4; 24). As the action proceeds on page 26, he encounters other people on the street, whom he sees also as monsters: "Oh, God, this is what the world's really like, isn't it? I can see it now, we're all monsters! We're all deformed things, living in hell…" (4; 26) He is seeing what he actually knows he is, as later we know that he is not only an impertinent, reckless character, but also morally despicable: "In Jersey, I sold junk cut with rat poison. In Arkansas I pushed Juliette downstairs so she miscarried…" (4; 28) Finally, scared out of his mind, thinking he has been sent to hell while living, Milo is run over by a lorry. The contrast between Sandy's beatific experience and this horrific vision resounds of Blake's vision of Leviathan in *Marriage*, caused by the Angel's "metaphysics" (19; E42), where the Poet sees a pleasant riverbank.

The relativity and changes undergone by perceptions in Moore's passages seem to follow a similar succession to that in *Marriage*, where the Poet experiences his fate as seen by an Angel, and then perceives it through freedom from the Angel's impositions. In the section starting on plate 17 of *Marriage*, the poet is visited by an Angel, who tells him he is condemning himself. The poet dares him to prove it by showing him his "eternal lot" (19; E42). The Angel takes him through several places until, under the vault of a church, passing a mill, they see "a void boundless as a nether sky" (17; E41). Apparently, the poet will spend eternity in the Abyss. He dares the Angel to fling themselves into it; the poet is not afraid and suspects the Angel is. But the Angel indicates him to stand still, as they will attain a vision of the poet's fate:

> By degrees we beheld the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us at an immense distance was the sun, black but shining [;] round it were fiery tracks on which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey; which flew or rather swum in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption. & the air was full of them, & seemd composed of them; these are Devils. and are called Powers of the air, I now asked my companion which was my eternal lot? he said, between the black & white spiders
>
> But now, from between the black & white spiders a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro the deep blackning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea & rolled with a terrible noise: beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire and not many stones throw from us

> appeard and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent. at last to the east, distant about three degrees appeard a fiery crest above the waves slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks till we discoverd two globes of crimson fire. from which The sea fled away in clouds of smoke, and now we saw, it was the head of Leviathan. his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tygers forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward us with all the fury of a spiritual existence (18-19; E41).

After the Angel leaves, terrified by the nightmarish vision of Leviathan, visually depicted on plate 20, the vision changes into a placid reverie: "I found myself sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moon light hearing a harper who sung to the harp. & his theme was, The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind" (19; E41-42). Keynes (pl. 21) compares the illumination on plate 21 to plate 6 of *America*, and with the description of the poet in the "Memorable Fancy" where, after the Angel's illusions had vanished, he finds himself sitting on a riverbank. The image seems to be in contraposition with the content of the paragraphs, speaking of the Angels' arrogance. Blake offers an account of the illusions created by perceptions when they are influenced by religious conventions rather than by imagination. In plates 17-20, the representations of destiny are different according to the perspective of each character (the Angel and the poet). The idea of perceptions in this passage has surely inspired the contrast between the interpretations of the visions experienced by the characters in Moore's graphic novel.

The poet concludes all the terrible visions were due to the Angel's "metaphysics" (19; E42); conversely, when the Angel sees his own lot as a bunch of wild apes cannibalising each other, he exclaims at the poet "thy phantasy has imposed upon me" (19; E42). The Angel's perceptions were influenced by biased philosophical and religious concepts, such as simplistic concepts of good and evil and the idea of natural morality (Damon 240); the ironic theme the harper sang states the Angel's problem. Leviathan is revealed to be merely a reptile of the mind; its enormous and terrific appearance was caused by the Angel's prejudice, because of which he could not deal with the eternity contained in manifestations of energy. To the poet, they are enjoyable, and they appear as they really are, pleasant and inspiring. What is hell for the Angel is paradise for the energetic poet. In *Swamp Thing*, Alec's pantheistic consciousness proves to be terrifying for the narrow-minded and selfish Milo. These passages are similar in their conception of perceptions as dependent on each individual's consciousness, although other graphic novels will also treat these differences in a more philosophical vein. I will shortly go back to these plates from *Marriage* in the discussion of *Promethea* in this chapter (p. 129).

"Rite of Spring" and "Windfall" express the imaginative, visionary capacities as the revelation of one's true being and connection with the world. In "Windfall", such revelation is depicted as potentially terrifying for those who do not possess imaginative sensibility, are not ready to confront such radical self-knowledge, or are too selfish and mean. There is another passage in the series that stresses the negative side of imagination and vision in issue 1, "Loose Ends". On page 23 of volume 1, alcohol addiction is presented as another monster, through Abby's first partner, Matt. Due to an electroshock treatment, he starts materialising horrific visions that could be associated with delirium: "There were things with no eyes and things like damp, furry rugs that giggled with children's voices. There were things I can't tell you about… but I fought them" (1; 23). However, Matt lies to Abby, as he can secretly control his visions

and uses them to satisfy his sexual appetite while both the visions and the drink isolate him from Abby. Thus, Matt's visions are different from Abby's or Sandy's; they are a refuge in an imaginary world where he has control, away from the complexities of real relationships. They are also different from Milo's, which at no moment appear even deceitfully attractive, neither they respond to the individual's will as do Matt's; in Milo's case they reflect his stupidity and moral foulness. Matt's are, rather than visions, hallucinations, although his control of them and the use he puts them to do indicate a darker side of imagination that tends to lock the individual away from the outside world, instead of uniting him with it as the visions (pleasant or otherwise) caused by the ingestion of Alec's consciousness.

In the case of *From Hell*, visions are also an important element in the narrative. These are mainly the visions experienced by Gull in several moments of the story, although other characters have visions as well. In both cases many of these visions have a premonitory nature, they are disruptions of the linearity of time (Germanà 145-146), and their content in many cases turns out to be true. Due to Gull's perversion of imaginative capacities, some of his visions are more akin to Matt's than to the other characters of *Swamp Thing*. From the reader's point of view there is a great deal of uncertainty concerning the reliability of Gull's standpoint as regards the authenticity of the visionary passages of the graphic novel. For example, in pages 26 and 27 of chapter 2, Gull's first vision is depicted. It is a mystical vision of the Masonic deity Jahbulon caused by a heart attack. However, Gull, despite being perfectly aware that it was the heart attack that caused it, chooses to interpret it as a genuine epiphany: "Quite recently I had a heart stroke, did I tell you that? It caused Aphasia: a fluxion of the Brain's Right side that caused hallucinations. Netley, I saw God. I knelt before him… and he told me what to do. And Gull the doctor says 'Why, to converse with Gods is madness.' And Gull, the man, replies, 'Then, who'd be sane?'" (4; 22) Whether to interpret it as an epiphany or a product of Gull's deranged mind depends on the reader's decision, because the narrative constantly undermines "rational knowledge and logic" (Germanà 145): fortuitous coincidences end up having global consequences, speculation and make-believe get amplified into prophecy and pretence turns into reality.

Unlike in *Swamp Thing*, where Milo's morality determines his capacity for vision and his impotence to induce, control and make sense of his "trip", Gull's morality does not prevent him from deliberately provoking himself more visions and interpreting them to reinforce his idea of reality. The result of this is the continuity of the violence he exerts and originates. In other words, Milo is stupid, but Gull is intelligently wicked, apart from insane. In several passages, especially in the chapter "Gull, Ascending", we can see that Gull's visions show him scenery, people and events the reader knows extradiegetically Gull could not have possibly known, because they happen decades and centuries after he dies. We can cite examples such as the TV set and the Marilyn Monroe poster on page 24 of chapter 7 or Peter Sutcliffe's real-life murders, alluded to on page 14 of chapter 14. This proves that at an intradiegetic level, these could be understood as true visions. He has, nonetheless, a great incapacity to understand his visions in the right sense, and this perverts his visionary capacity. Corrupt interpretations and outcomes of vision is also an important concept in Moore's later Lovecraftian graphic novels, and a point in common with Blake, since, as Green suggests: "Like predecessors such as William Blake, Moore not only understands imagination's potential to redeem is bound up with its capability for destruction, but also unflinchingly explores the darker dimensions of human experience" (Green, "Darker Magic" 272). This deadly aspect of Blakean vision is present most of all in

America and *Urizen* among the works analysed in this thesis. In *America*, revolutionary energy appears as potentially violent and monstrous, not only from the point of view of its opponents, but also intrinsically bound to the Urizenic. *Urizen* shows how vision can also present to us the horrors of a wrong interpretation of the universe as merely material and mechanical.

The most important and explicitly mentioned source for Gull's ideas is William Blake. According to Gull's interpretation, Blake was a Druid, who saw the sun of Reason as a cruel deity: "Blake was a throwback from beyond the Age of Reason, from a time of magic thinking when the Gods yet walked with men. By faith, he was a Druid, such as praised the sun from Parliament Hill, yet Blake abhorred the sun. Talking to Calvin, pointing to the sky, he cried 'THAT is the Greek Apollo! He is Satan!" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 12) This account does in fact remind of Los's invectives against the "detestable" Gods of Priam and Apollo in plate 25 of *Milton*, who are said to have ruined Lambeth:

> And you shall Reap the whole Earth, from Pole to Pole! from Sea to Sea
> Begining at Jerusalems Inner Court, Lambeth ruin'd and given
> To the detestable Gods of Priam, to Apollo: and at the Asylum
> Given to Hercules, who labour in Tirzahs Looms for bread
> Who set Pleasure against Duty: who Create Olympic crowns
> To make Learning a burden & the Work of the Holy Spirit: Strife.
> Thor & cruel Odin who first reard the Polar Caves
> Lambeth mourns calling Jerusalem (25.47-54; E122).

Gull is right insofar Blake thought the solar deities in this passage are sacrificial and tyrannical, and associated them to the absolutised Reason and abstraction he disliked. Asylum and workhouse (the looms) appear as concrete images of the human suffering cause by the order imposed by what these deities represent, under which education and religion degenerate into burden and strife respectively.

Gull's lecture about Blake reflects the Victorian concept of the artist as a visionary but a madman. The source of this vision is Gilchrist's biography, mentioned in page 11 of chapter 4. Gull speaks of Blake with admiration, but places him among his enemies, "soldiers of the moon" (4; 21), representatives of the irrational of dreams, madness and poetic inspiration. He also defends the idea of vision and the supernatural as a product of a deranged perception of reality, which reinforces the idea of an abnormal or pathological Blake. From Gull's point of view, drawn from Gilchrist's work, "Blake spiritually belonged to earlier ages of the world, since when, as Hazlitt has remarked, 'the Heavens have gone further off.' Our lunatics were prophets once, and had a prophet's power" (4; 11).

Although not a throwback, as Gull implies, Blake did seem to follow theories about the loss of certain visionary capacity that was more spontaneous in ancient times yet became atrophied throughout the centuries. However, Blake's version of this fall was vastly different from Gull's. Blake blames the appearance of priesthood for the fall of vision, as we can see in plate 11 of *Marriage*, where he describes this capacity in the following terms:

> The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could percieve.

> And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country. placing it under its mental deity.
>
> Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood (E38).

The passage is reminiscent of the Classical theory of the Golden Age, but its end is attributed here to the rise of religion and its use for social engineering. Later, he extended the reflection on this fall in his *Urizen*, where the Zoa Urizen embodies the primeval priest and all the errors of organised religion, together with its effects on human perceptions as the diminishment of imagination (see pp. 124-125 of this thesis). In *Urizen*, Blake develops his own myth of the origin of man, religion and social and political systems (Worrall 9), concluding the book with the message that his contemporary societies are subjugated under the Net of Religion (11). Urizen subjugates humanity through his holy book, Blake's allegory for the problems with the authority and interpretation of the Bible, which other radicals were also debating at the time.[34]

Gull talks about Blake sometimes in a certain condescending manner, as if Blake was mistaken in rejecting the deification of Reason. In fact, Gull calls Blake "England's greatest Holy Fool" (4; 12). Blake represents the visionary aspect of madness for Gull, "a transcendental guide, a druidic master revealing the secret mysteries that science and reason have failed to uncover," an example he follows to derange his senses further and commit his atrocious crimes (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 202). However, at the same time, Gull takes the side of what for Blake is evil, Heaven, Urizenic Reason (Green, "She" 742), with all its negative connotations in Blakean cosmology. Gull points out that the unconscious prophetic forces Blake represents for him are symbolically kept at bay by the shadow of the obelisk in Defoe's tomb, which fell on Blake's (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 12) at Bunhill Fields. As he explains to his coachman Netley, the obelisk is "consecrated to the Sun God Atum" and is "phallic, for the Sun's a symbol for the male principle" (4; 12). Although in an urban environment, these architectural features are still both physical and symbolic devices of contention of the natural forces that would disrupt the established order (Murray 221-222). This explanation on the meaning of obelisks comes after Polly Nichols's dream about her brother setting Cleopatra's Needle on fire, and the meaning of the dream is thus made clearer and turned into a premonition of the women's fate encoded in the symbols of Gull's narrative. Notice that Gull prefers Egyptian architectural features when Blake consistently used them (especially pyramids) to signify mental slavery and the tyranny of geometry over living form. Thence how pyramids are depicted in *All Religions Are One* and *Tiriel* (c. 1789). In plate 7 of the former, the image shows

[34] Gilbert Wakefield highlighted that the recording of revealed divine knowledge in writing made possible that priesthood took advantage of divine words to rule others for their benefit (Worrall 25). Alexander Geddes, in his volume *The Holy Bible; or, The Books Accounted Sacred by Jews and Christians otherwise called the old and New Covenants* (1792), said Genesis had its origins in ancient indexes and oral tales, while the Pentateuch, he proposes, had been altered and it had not been demonstrably written by Moses (21). Volney's *The Ruins: or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires* (1791) had also put into question the authority of Mosaic writings (20). Blake's parody was aimed at questioning the authority of Mosaic writings, and demonstrating that writings derived from them cannot be divine revelation (Worrall 20). At the same time, Paine spoke of the Bible as the work of "inspired penmen" (Paine qtd. in Worrall 25), thus casting scepticism over the divine authority of the Word.

Dissenting religious sects, such as the Muggletonians, to which Blake's maternal family belonged, were concerned with this problem. A Muggletonian author wrote "how can an Infinite Faith be fixt upon a Finite word[?]" (Silcock qtd. in Worrall 25). Even Blake's mythological source, Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* (1770), reflects on the myth of Odin's invention of runes, thus contributing to Blake's reflections on revelation, writing and their problems (25). That might have inspired Urizen's depiction as a scribe, transcribing the sacred books in the title plate in a position that resembles that of the character Doctrina in *Minerva Britanna*, a book by Muggletonian writer Henry Peacham (25).

a man walking with a stick, the traveller in the text : “As none by traveling over known lands can find out the unknown. So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more. therefore an universal Poetic Genius exists” (7; E1). The traveller is also an image of the Reasoner, with the stick as an indication of the imaginative incapacities of his thought, which cannot lead him anywhere new. Behind him two pyramid-like constructions convey connotations of slavery at the service of monolithic abstractions, desertic mental spaces and rigid geometric thought.

In Blake, Egypt symbolises Ulro (Frye 133), the level of nature deadened by the discourse of instrumental Reason. In *Urizen*, “Africa” (Blake qtd. in Worrall 22) symbolises Britain dominated by mental slavery to religion (Worrall 22). That is precisely the reason why when the children of Urizen leave the earth at the end of *Urizen* they call it “Egypt” (28.10; E83). Less likely to have influenced Moore, but remarkably interesting for the contrast is Blake’s description of London architecture in one of the cancelled plates for *America*: “Infinite Londons awful spires cast a dreadful cold / Even on rational things beneath” (C.7-8; E59). This example shows how Blake also figured in architectural terms the baleful influence of power, a more obvious example being the whole metaphor of the holy city and the fallen city, Jerusalem and Babylon (Johnston 413).

In some instances Gull almost paraphrases Blake, as in one of the most daunting lines from this character: “The only place Gods inarguably exist is in our minds where they are real beyond refute, in all their grandeur and monstrosity” (4; 18). This statement is very close to Blake's “All deities reside in the human breast” (*MHH* 11; E38), as Green noted (“She” 741). Whereas in Blake these reflections conveyed a sense of the liberating power of human imagination, Gull’s interpretation of Blake’s consciousness of Gods as a human creation reinstates the horrific grasp the Gods of internal forces have over humanity. Blake’s humanistic perspective emphasises the human capacity to create, and thus be like Gods, instead of regarding the Gods as tyrants they are condemned to. Those who, like Gull, are under the influence of the spirit of conventional religion and worship of abstractions, forget this liberating truth (see *MHH* 11; E38).

The visions in *From Hell* in combination with the allusions to Blake invite the reader to think of Blake’s own visionary experiences, but Gull certainly gives them an uncanny resonance. Gull’s attainment of the vision of a late twentieth century office is important in the sense that it involves a reflection on the contemporary world via the villain’s perspective, especially towards the culture of Postmodernity. Gull reflects: “What spirits are these, labouring in what heavenly light? No... This is dazzle, but not yet divinity. Nor are these heathen wraiths about me, lacking even that vitality” (10; 21);

> It would seem we are to suffer an apocalypse of cockatoos... Morose, barbaric children playing joylessly with their unfathomable toys. Where comes this dullness in your eyes? How has your century numbed you so? Shall man be given marvels only when he is beyond all wonder? Your days were born in blood and fires, whereof in you I may not see the meanest spark! Your past is pain and iron! Know yourselves! With all your shimmering numbers and your lights, think not to be inured to history. Its black root succours you. It is INSIDE you. Are you asleep to it that cannot feel its breath upon your neck nor see what soaks its cuffs? See me! Wake up and look upon me! I am come amongst you. I am with you always! You are the sum of all preceding you, yet seem indifferent to yourselves. A culture grown disinterested, even in its own abysmal wounds. Your women all but show their sexes, and yet this display elicits not a flicker of response. Your own flesh is made meaningless to you. How would I seem to

> you? Some antique fiend or penny dreadful horror, yet you frighten me! You have not souls. With you I am alone. Alone in an Olympus. Though accomplished in the sciences, your slightest mechanisms are beyond my grasp. They HUMBLE me yet touch you not at all. This disaffection. This is armageddon. Ah, Mary. How time's levelled us. We are made equal, both mere curios of our vanished epoch in this lustless world. This world, where in comparison I am made ignorant, while you... you are made virtuous [embraces the mutilated corpse] (10; 21-22).

In my article "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*," I have already interpreted this passage as one of the visions which cannot be hallucinatory, in the sense that it represents things that match the reader's world knowledge, and to which Gull could not possibly have access (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 10). It is important to note that Gull laments a lack of energy in the future world, precisely as if the ideology of Reason had triumphed in completely binding a deeper human nature. Of course, this has different implications for Gull, who embodies energy turned into brutal murderous instincts repressed behind a façade of rationality, and for Blake, whose initial idea of energy in *Marriage* focused on more positive aspects such as political and sexual emancipation. For example, energy leads to Orcian revolution and liberation from oppression through the wrath of the prophet, Rintrah, and lust is energy, therefore to be cherished as a natural manifestation of abundance: "The lust of the goat is the bounty of God" (8.23; E36). Although in both Blake's text and Moore's the idea of the release of energy is the theme, the meaning it acquires differs.

Gull's final transformation into the creature portrayed by Blake in his painting *Ghost of a Flea* is one of the key Gothic distortions in this work. It condenses the issue of transformations caused by different ways of perceiving and by the way of relating to natural energy. This is the way Gull is seen by Blake in *From Hell*, during the passage of Gull's final vision before his death, which he perceives as apotheosic. In the vision, Gull travels throughout space and time to Blake's house, where, under Blake's gaze, his hands look scaly and he notices how the poet is frightened at the sight of him: "My word. How extraordinary. He can SEE me. I move closer to him, but he runs away … What's the matter with my hands? They are grown scaly, monstrous. Am I now but a thing of mind, and coloured by the minds that view me?" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 14; 19). The panels show his hands through his first-person point of view, the same as in a dream. In the following panel, he floats away and out of the house, of which we can see the roof. The scales begin to disappear from his hands and he muses "I am wholly concept now. Without the flesh to contradict, I truly AM as I am PERCEIVED in all the myriad ways" (14; 10). This is the way he sees himself precisely because of his corrupted and perverted conception of the human, leading to his heinous crimes. It is here that Gull is definitely identified as monstrous. Similarly, in Blake, Urizen's invention of religion to subsume the world under his control also turns human beings into reptile monsters, as a figuration of the narrowing of their perceptions. Moore is similarly presenting Gull as a character enclosed within a rigid esoteric system and within reductive perceptions:

> 1. Then **the Inhabitants of those Cities:**
> **Felt their Nerves change into Marrow**
> **And hardening Bones began**
> In swift diseases and torments,
> In throbbings & shootings & grindings

Thro' all the coasts; **till weaken'd**
The Senses inward rush'd shrinking,
Beneath the dark net of infection.

2. Till the shrunken eyes clouded over
Discernd not the woven hipocrisy
But the streaky slime in their heavens
Brought together by narrowing perceptions
Appeard transparent air; for **their eyes**
Grew small like the eyes of a man
And in reptile forms shrinking together
Of seven feet stature they remaind

3. Six days they shrunk up from existence
And on the seventh day they rested
And they bless'd the seventh day, in sick hope:
And **forgot their eternal life** (Blake, *BU* 25.1-21; E82-83, emphases added).

Gull has been turned into a monster for the same reason: his imagination is ossified into a repetitive pattern of negation, his physical perceptions diminish, and he withdraws into himself, as we can see in the last passage of the episode "Gull, Ascending." He sits in his asylum cell, completely isolated from the people and events going on around him, his eyes do not see anymore (14; 4). Finally, the aspect he acquires in his vision in Blake's presence, that of the creature in *Ghost of a Flea* is also suggestive of a reptile. Blake himself commented on the meaning of his picture that *Ghost of a Flea* meant to visually depict the mean spirit of blood-thirsty men, but reduced to a size that limits its destructive power (see page 126 of this thesis).

A similar transformation is undergone by Urizen himself throughout the illuminated book. Worrall suggests that there are two creations in the illuminated book: that of Urizen and that of Los, although it is unclear which one happens first due to Blake's deliberate imitation of Biblical obscurity. Los is "rent" from Urizen's body like Eve is from Adam in the Bible, thus confusing the family relations in the narrative (10). The relationship between the two Zoas changes throughout the narrative, first one is in control and then the other (10). The Eternals say Urizen is "a clod of clay" (*BU* 6.10; E74): he has become condensed into matter.[35] Los, attempting to help Urizen, gives him a human form, thus fulfilling the function of putting a limit to Urizen's contraction. This process, according to Raine, is a reference to cabbalistic accounts of Elohim's creation of Adam, where Elohim contracts and hardens the human body, but this contraction is also set a limit by Jesus in Blake's *Vala* (Raine 78). Raine's description is very useful to understand Blake's continuous allusions to these physical properties (contraction, cold, opacity vs. expansion, warmth, radiance). However, in her attempts to find

[35] Kathleen Raine explains that the origin of Blake's description of these processes is in the Bible, Swedenborg's, Böhme's and Robert Fludd's cabalistic texts. Urizen's place is in the north, the place of the Creator in the Book of Job (Raine 73). Böhme associated the "contractive, constrictive" capacity of cold to the spirit of Saturn (73). Swedenborg associated this property of cold and contraction to the creation of beings in the natural world (74). Fludd's *Mosaicall Philosophy* (translated into English in 1659) identifies this creative, contracting, "freezing" force with the cabalistic Ruach Elohim, the aspect of God attributed to Binah, the third sphere of the Sephirot, ascribed to Saturn (74-75). This aspect Fludd identifies with the rational mind as opposed to the more expansive force of universal wisdom (75). Blake would later make a similar contrast between Satan (Selfhood) as a point of attraction and condensation at the centre of the Earth, and the opposite point of infinite power (78-79). Attraction and contraction in Newton's theory of the law of gravity were symbolically associated by Blake with these principles of Elohim and Satan (79). Thus Adam, the first human, is the product of Elohim's forces of contraction, but also of Jesus putting a limit to the contraction and opacity (78).

exact and detailed correspondences between the illuminated book and the cabalistic and esoteric symbolism the general thrust of Blake's criticism gets pushed to the background. Blake emphasises the constructedness of religious myth through the confuse account of the creation of Los and Urizen. According to Worrall, a possible way of understanding it is to see Los as an "original state of Being" that creates "Urizen as a myth" (22). The events are narrated first from the perspective of the Eternals, and later, from that of Los, who creates Urizen in several "ages" that criticise Paine's ideal of a single Age of Reason (Worrall 22), reflecting Blake's belief that there is more than one.

The appearance and description of Urizen's body signify the fallen nature of the figure. Urizen is usually represented as an elderly but robust patriarch with a white beard, long hair and a white robe, as he can be seen throughout most of the plates of the illuminated book, or sometimes nude. However, in plates 8 and 11 (Erdman's numbering) of copy G, printed in 1818, one year before painting *Ghost of a Flea*, Urizen appears as a huddled skeleton (8) or a blackened cadaverous body in flames, before which Los recoils in dread (11). In the corresponding text, this generation is painful and terrifying because its description draws from the Neoplatonist belief that every creation is a fall and therefore painful:

> 5. Restless turnd the immortal inchain'd
> Heaving dolorous! anguish'd! unbearable
> Till a roof shaggy wild inclos'd
> In an orb, his fountain of thought.
>
> 6. In a horrible dreamful slumber;
> Like the linked infernal chain;
> A vast Spine writh'd in torment
> Upon the winds; shooting pain'd
> Ribs, like a bending cavern …. (10.31-39; E75)

Here the cranium and hair are presented as an artificial, or deformed enclosure for Urizen's "fountain of thought". The human body is presented as hellish in its restrictive and limited aspect. The same happens with his brain, his heart and his sense organs, whose development is construed as horrific. The "bending cavern" hints at the macrocosmic aspect of Urizen's body.[36] It is important to note that in Urizen's body, the brain invades the heart and the bones invade the nerves: "bones of solidness Froze / Over all his nerves of joy" (10.40-41; E75).

Urizen emphasises the human body as monstrous and grotesque in its disenchanted process of generation.[37] This work helps us understand the topic of perception, since Urizen's transformation from an eternal Zoa to inert matter is especially fearful from Los's perspective, precisely the character who creates his bodily form. This allows man, under the figure of Urizen, to continue existing in the world he has created. If in later prophecies Albion is the whole universe, Urizen becomes a universe of restriction and confinement (Marks 584-585), thus becoming an object of horror for all. Fear and dread are the predominant feelings throughout the book. Los "watch'd in shuddring fear" (Blake, *BU* 9.9; E74) Urizen's slow and harrowing transformation. It is not only Urizen's fallen condition that determines this, but also the way he perceives. The physical organs he develops correspond to his spiritual isolation from the

[36] Note that on plate 13, Los is also described in this way when he divides bringing forth Pity: "His bosom earthquak'd with sighs" (13.49; E77), "Life in cataracts pour'd down his cliffs" (13.55; E77).

[37] See Larrissy, *William Blake* (127-133); Worrall, Introduction and Themes and Context of *Urizen Books*, or Whittaker, *William Blake* (37-42) for fuller accounts of Urizen's creation of the world, his separation from Los, the Eternal Prophet, and Los's creation of Urizen's fallen, material body.

surrounding world. For example his eyes are described as small and retracted inside his skull, as if withdrawing from the outer world:

> From the caverns of his jointed Spine,
> Down sunk with fright a red
> Round globe hot burning deep
> Deep down into the Abyss:
> Panting: Conglobing, Trembling
> Shooting out ten thousand branches
> Around his solid bones.
> . . . . . .
> 8. In harrowing fear rolling round;
> His nervous brain shot branches
> Round the branches of his heart.
> On high into two little orbs
> And fixed in two little eaves
> Hiding carefully from the wind,
> His Eyes beheld the deep, …. (11.1-16; E75-76)

The accompanying image of plates 8 and 11 of copy G show Urizen now with a cadaverous form, as if his perception of the world as an empty shell had turned himself into a dead body (Cogan 141). Los's separation from Urizen and creation of a material body for him entails a model of creation that privileges the mind over the body and Reason over passion. This results in Los's terror and in Urizen's monstrosity, as reflected in Whittaker's commentary about the passage above:

> In the description of Los's binding of Urizen's body in *Urizen* chapter IV (E75-6), the biblical model of the creation in seven days is immediately apparent, but there are also echoes of the *Timaeus* where the formation of man begins with the globe of the skull, being the most perfect part of the body and corresponding to the world and containing man's reason, before continuing with the rest of man's body and the senses. Blake's grotesque account adds later scientific discoveries, such as the circulation of blood and the nervous system, which result in a terrible parody of man (Whittaker, *William Blake* 39).

As an outcome of the Urizenic separation of mind and Reason from body, the senses and physical sensations become even more uncontrolled, as can be seen in passages such as the following:

> 6. And Urizen craving with hunger
> Stung with the odours of Nature
> Explor'd his dens around[.] (Blake, *BU* 20.30-32; E80, punctuation added)

In *From Hell* we can note that Gull's idea of the body is that of an encumbering envelope (7; 21), and his idea turns into reality every time he objectifies and reduces his victims to a bloody dissected corpse. This comparison with Blake helps to understand Gull's final transformation as an index of his insistence on negation, his mechanistic worldview, his horror of the chaotic, unclassifiable aspects of existence and of nature and the return of his vital forces as savage destruction.

The last plate of *Urizen* conveys a similar idea of degeneration that causes further division

among mankind, who are now unable to recognise their fellow human beings, an element of Biblical inspiration that recalls the myth of Babel. The remaining sons of Urizen depart from earth; the ocean surrounding and swallowing the land reminds us on one hand of Atlantis, and on the other hand of Exodus and the Deluge, both iterations of the myth of the Fall in the Blakean interpretation of Biblical and Classical myth (Frye 206; Whittaker, *William Blake* 25-26):

> 7. The remaining sons of Urizen
> Beheld their brethren shrink together
> Beneath the Net of Urizen;
> Perswasion was in vain;
> For the ears of the inhabitants,
> Were wither'd, & deafen'd, & cold:
> And their eyes could not discern,
> Their brethren of other cities.
>
> 8. So Fuzon call'd all together
> The remaining children of Urizen:
> And they left the pendulous earth:
> They call'd it Egypt, & left it.
>
> 9. And the salt ocean rolled englob'd (*BU* 28.11-23; E83)

As regards Urizen's nets and webs that represent the oppressive uses of religion and science, they seem to find a counterpart in Gull's psychogeographic patterns to bind womankind (Green "She" 741). Gull commits each crime on a specific spot, following a pattern that connects symbolic places in the city, thus also forming a sort of web. In Blake, this is a reference to religion, but although Gull's are literal visual patterns, he does use the word "web": "the soul of womankind bound in a web of ancient signs, that woman might abandon useless dreams of liberty" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 35). The diminishment of perceptions and the shrinking in the sons of Urizen (Cogan 146) have a correlate in Annie Chapman feeling herself "shrivelling in the sun" (*From Hell* 7; 9), just as Gull's magic is supposed to affect them. Unlike in Blake, this shrinking is not an allegorical but a literal weakening of physical energies caused by a more material kind of oppression. Finally, the ocean in Blake often means the triumph of chaos over the imaginative form of the earth inhabited by inspired human beings (Frye 138-139), for which reason Oothoon is escaping from it in the title page of *Visions* (Damrosch 203) and Urizen is often portrayed under the waters, as in *Urizen*, plate 12 (copy G), at the end of which book, the waters of the Deluge swallow the earth, transforming definitively the prelapsarian world into the material world we know. In *From Hell*, Gull is repeatedly associated to the ocean since his early youth, through his statement that he wanted to work with something similar to it: "If I may not work the ocean I should like to work with something of a KIND to it... Something that flows like the ocean... something salt, and old" (2; 2). His later characterisation of the male theft of women's power alludes again to the ocean: "Man... attempts, like her [Diana], to bind the ocean to his will" (4; 25). Gull tries to dominate chaotic forces, like the sea, which have a similar meaning to the one Blake attributed to it, and like the world of Blake's Urizen, by the force of his negation he ends up being swallowed by the waters.

The graphic novel also depicts during the same passage the moment Blake first sketches *Ghost of a Flea*. In actual history, this happened on one of the nights Blake met the artist and astrologer Varley at Fountain Court. Varley firmly believed in the literal truth of astrology and

occult teachings, and thought Blake's visions were supernatural rather than natural, albeit no less prodigious, imaginations. On page 16 of chapter 14, the images depict again Gull's first-person perspective, where he sees his scaly hands once more before the scene where Blake and Varley are sitting in a parlour talking. Blake is describing his vision of the creature Gull has become as having "a face worthy of a murderer" (14; 16). Instead of realising his fatal mistakes when acquainted with Blake's vision of his spirit, Gull, when noticing the gentleman before him is Blake, wallows in the fact that he is one of his visions and takes this as a portent that confirms his macabre mission. On the last panels, while Gull entertains these thoughts, Blake copies him onto a notebook and Varley remarks: "It is indeed a fearful beast" and "What a horror!" (14; 16) On the following page, Gull's voice is superimposed on a close-up of the final picture of *Ghost of a Flea*: "It is a marvel. Beyond death, he has caught me to the life. Caught me red-handed in the fourfold city" (14; 17).

In Bentley's *Blake Records*, we can find more details that prove the exact nature of Blake's and Varley's attitude and comments on the circumstances around the creation of the image and its meaning. From Blake's friend John Linnell's journal we learn that "Varley … devoured all the marvellous in Blakes most extravagant utterances" (Linnell qtd. in Bentley 341). However, he says "Blake claimed the possession of some powers only in a greater degree that all men possessed and which they undervalued in themselves & lost through love of sordid pursuits—pride, vanity, & the unrighteous mammon[.]" (341-342) Blake sketched the "Visionary Heads", among them a first draft of *Ghost of a Flea*, from visions he had those nights, copying while the vision was before him (354). Varley thought these were appearances of spirits (355), although Linnell's journal annotations above seem to suggest Blake did not literally believe these were spirits in the same way Varley believed so. Linnell's autobiography describes Blake's attitude as reasonable and open-minded, in contrast to Varley's obsession with occult systems: "Varley could make no way with Blake towards inducing him to regard Astrology with favour. … Varley beleived [sic.] in the reality of Blakes visions more than even Blake himself—that is in a more literal and positive sense that did not admit of the explanations by which Blake reconciled his assertions with known truth" (368).

Linnell also describes in the same text his sketch of Blake and Varley conversing, and comments on how it reflects the two different attitudes, thus providing more indications of the way Blake regarded both his own visions and Varley's persuasion that they were genuinely supernatural: "Blake by the side of Varley appeard decidedly the most sane of the two" (368).

As for the nature of the creature represented in Blake's sketch, Bentley states "[t]he oil version is inscribed by Varley: 'The Vision of the Spirit which inhabits the Body of a Flea & which appeared to the Late Mr. Blake . . . […] A Flea he Said drew blood. . .'" (*Blake Records* 359). The cup in the monster's hand serves "to hold blood", according to Cunningham (qtd. in Bentley, *Blake Records* 359). This is similarly recorded in *From Hell*, where Blake says "I shall have him wear a cup for holding blood" (14; 16).

All these clues indicate that the passage where Gull identifies with the Ghost of the Flea proves Gull's erroneous interpretation of Blake, as Whittaker commented:

> According to Varley, Blake considered the ghost of a flea to be the reincarnation of those murderers who were made so small because otherwise each one would be "a too mighty destroyer" (*BR* 352). Gull, in his depraved quest to become more than human, the great man who will dominate woman forever, has sunk to the lowliest of demons, the spectre envisaged by Blake who foolishly assumed that Blake spoke with his voice. Gull, ultimately, is an idiot – and far from a holy one at that – gulled by his own literal failure to match knowledge

> with love and imagination and corrupted by his pursuit of a power rooted in repressed sexual desire (Whittaker, *From Hell* 203).

According to this interpretation, Gull is a fool in the sense that his libido is fatally misdirected towards violence. He has failed to follow his energies in the sense Blake gave to them. It is clear he misunderstands both Blake and his own desire, which explains the reversal of Blake's apocalypse of sensual enjoyment that Gull's acts constitute. The last vision from *From Hell* is Gull's spectral visitation of Marie Kelly's cottage, and its striking parallel with Ololon's descent upon Blake's Felpham cottage in *Milton*. This scene is precisely associated to the reversal of Blakean vision: where in Blake a redemptive female spirit visits the poet, who asks her for help to heal his ailing spouse, in Moore a male murderer visits the victim he failed to kill, who shoos him away to protect her daughters. This last scene is the only glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak narrative, and an illusory one if we are to believe that Gull's vision is not somehow showing the truth. The scene shows that, at least on a mythical dimension, Gull's mission was futile since he cannot destroy or dominate the forces he wanted to vanquish. This passage is, however, deeply connected to the gender angle of the narrative, for which reason it is analysed more thoroughly in chapter 6 (see pp. 187-189).

The theme of perceptions and vision in *Promethea* makes a return to the psychedelic concepts from *Swamp Thing*, which are reformulated through more overtly esoteric forms. The visions appearing in this work are strongly associated to imagination, more so than in *From Hell*. This time, in *Promethea*, Blake is not evoked as a counterpoint to false delusion and madness, but rather as a precedent in the philosophical positions that appear in the narrative. It is important to note for the purposes of this thesis, that *Promethea* is a secular apocalyptic narrative that inherits the Romantic conception of apocalypse as the consumption of our "illusory constructions of reality" (Kraemer and Winslade 276). This consumption is possible via an awakening of the imagination, understood as "a way to participate in the ongoing creation of the universe" (276). This is a utopian rather than an eschatological view that combines, as explained in chapter 2, a political kind of revolution and a change in consciousness of aesthetic and artistic nature (276). We will see how *Promethea*, as Kraemer and Winslade posit, reinterprets this Romantic apocalypse through feminism, contemporary politics and esotericism (276), which results in a Postmodern re-enchantment.

As in the previous works analysed, *Promethea* also follows the premise that perceptions can shape reality, an idea to which Blake was an important contributor. The protagonist, the student Sophie Bangs, enters into contact with Promethea, the spirit of imagination, and becomes her mortal vessel. Most of her learning consists in her gradual realisation that "[w]e're not experiencing any of this [reality, life] directly. It's all a tapestry of our perceptions. Matter's just a state of mind" (Moore et al., *Promethea* 3; 1). The whole of the graphic novels can be understood as an enormous exercise of vision. For the theme of the series, the development of an imaginative consciousness in the protagonists and in humanity, continuously requires the representation of vision, sometimes of a more poetic or surreal character, other times more theological, occult or mystical. There are several examples of passages depicting transformations that respond to this idea of the malleability of reality. The most representative have been selected to illustrate the theme of this chapter.

Characters change their appearance depending on the mode of perception with which they are beheld. The most salient case is the protagonist herself. She can pass from looking like an average young student to be imaginatively transfigured into a radiantly beautiful demigoddess with a shining caduceus, wearing vaguely Classical-Egyptian armour and apparel. This is presented differently from traditional superhero comics, as this transformation is not explained

as the effect of supernatural powers or science-fiction engineering; it is inspiration that transforms Sophie, and many characters in the book are capable of this feat (like Jack Faust, Sophie's friend Stacia or the previous Prometheas) or are imaginatively invested with a fantastic appearance by someone else (as is the case of Barbara or Sophie's mother, Trish). Perhaps the best example of the transformation of a character in Blake is Ololon, Milton's female emanation, who is initially described as a river of milk and pearl in Eden (*M* 21.15; E115), but later acquires the form of a girl (36.17; E137) before she reintegrates into Milton. Like Promethea, she is also linked to inspiration, an inspiration Milton feared but needed to reconcile with (Damon 307). Another parallel is found in the role of these characters garments. When Ololon reunites Milton, her clouds turn into a bloody garment that clothes Jesus at the moment of Apocalypse (42.11-15; E143); Promethea also changes her white and gold clothes for a scarlet tunic in order to preside over the end of the world. In Blake it is the imaginative eye of the very author that determines these allegorical transformations, although in Moore it is the characters that exemplify this process inside the narrative. Although not as often, and with the same complexity there are also cases where elements of the transformation are also symbolic, such as happens with Promethea's garments.

Ultimately, in both authors the whole world is the object of this transformation in the event of the apocalypse. The whole of reality is perceived under a new light and in *Promethea* this is accordingly represented in a more realistic, but also more luminous, style that stands out from the other styles employed in the rest of the series. Other changes include the spatial collapse of all cities in the world and history in the New York of the story, and different visions experienced by various characters. Each of them experiences these visions in a different way. FBI agent Karen Breughel, for instance, under the influence of the apocalyptic Promethea, faints and gets the illusion she has fallen through the floor upwards to a "roof" of her two-dimensional graphic existence. In her vision (*Promethea* 5; 3), she is lying on a roof composed of all the comics strips of *Promethea* we have been seeing, dressed only in a baby's nappy. By her side, three titanic figures in deep blue robes with spinning-top heads showing multiple faces. One of them holds her by her arm, preventing her to slide down on the slanting roof. When Karen or the blue-clad giants speak, the bubbles are not circular, but spherical, and the words are freely floating inside them, in an apparently random order. In short, Karen Breughel's vision is a revelation of a higher reality outside her flat comic-strip, which takes advantage of the metafictional dimension of the story to represent the passage from ordinary reality to a higher dimension or mode of perceiving. Finally, when all normal perceptions have been disrupted and everybody has attained a visionary mode, in the final apocalypse, the first result is a chaos where dreams, both sublime and terrible, and ordinary reality coexist: a mother identifies with Virgin Mary while she holds her child up to the angels, a man walks hand in hand with a colossal angel-like creature, children chase fairies while demons eviscerate another individual, while a woman turns into a cubist Picassian figure (5; 5). However, the spatio-temporal crunch culminates in a series of visions everybody experiences: the primordial vision of Promethea as Hestia (5; 5), the Hermetic sun (5; 6), the Biblical Beast and the Whore conjoined (5; 6), and Promethea's message. While she watches the universal hearth, she communicates humanity the ultimate unity of nature and mind, of humanity and divinity, of good and evil. This occurs throughout the last issues of the novel, 28 to 31. The tearing down of conventions and limits is brought about by an experience of interconnection (Kraemer and Winslade 286) akin to the one Moore already described in *Swamp Thing*.

While Blake and Moore share to a great extent the idea that apocalypse entails the awakening to the reality of imagination, their focus is different. Blake initially depicted the Apocalypse as a very violent event, such as happens in *Vala*; this is because at the time he wrote

this work, he still believed in a historical revolutionary Apocalypse (Damrosch 186-187) that would naturally require the literal destruction of tyrants. In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, though, Apocalypse acquires the more internal, imaginative meaning mentioned above. However, it recedes from view or is understated, as critics like Leopold Damrosch point out (187-188). *Milton*, for example, ends at the beginning of apocalypse, and does not go beyond that point. Moore luxuriates in the apocalyptic ecstatic visions and union of all mankind through the downfall of the psychic limits of the mind, describing multiple and colourful examples. Blake was more interested in the process that leads up to revelation, the struggle for union and regeneration, rather than the end itself (Damrosch 188). Imaginative revelation is, for this reason, a common goal for both authors, but rather than in Apocalypse, it is in the visions leading up to it that the parallels can be more fully appreciated.

In order to better fulfil the objective of this study, and since depictions of vision are so numerous in *Promethea*, I will focus now on two larger passages where the contrast between ordinary perception and vision is more manifest through changing visions, through transformations of perception that change what is being seen.

Not only can perceptions of places and figures (and accordingly their graphic representations) change with respect to point of view, but they can also convey different ways of understanding the process of perception and vision. Such is the case of issue 18, where the protagonists visit the sphere of Geburah, the realm of universal strength and severity, attributed to Mars. There, they meet the demon Asmodeus, regent of the place, who torments them. He appears first through the conventional Gothic figuration of a gigantic black spider, surrounded by a swarm of other arachnids that form nets around him. Behind the red background of the fiery sphere a black background with green fractals represents the chaos behind the ordered spheres of the universe the characters are visiting (3; 6).

At the moment when they acknowledge him as part of their own human nature and take responsibility, the demon acquires a tractable human appearance, and they manage to return to the Sephira. Asmodeus proclaims: “Approach us with fear, with hatred and revulsion, and we will be fearsome, hateful and vile. Approach us humanely and with respect, and we will be human and respectable” (3; 6). The passage implies an important distinction between ordinary perception (associated with conventions and prejudice) and vision (associated with imagination and empathy). This metamorphosis dependent on perceptions leads us again to the Blakean change from Leviathan rising in a stormy sea of fire to the harper singing by the river bank in *Marriage*, plates 17-20. In the first case, an Angelic perspective had determined a conventional vision of hell and chaos, where for the Poet there was pleasant reverie and inspiration. Unlike in *Swamp Thing*, now what we have is not a character who is too small-minded to experience the consciousness of infinity without fear as opposed to other characters whose openness and honesty help them assimilate a psychedelic experience. Here, in *Promethea*, we have the same characters confronting a force of the unknown they first associate to a conventional idea of evil, and then they realise its true proportion, nature and meaning. This is more similar to the *Marriage* passage than the example analysed from *Swamp Thing* insofar as it is liberation from conventions, rather than the moral qualities and readiness of the characters what transforms perceptions.

The visions in the chapter “The Wine of her Fornications” involve the knowledge of the feminine aspect of the divine, symbolised in the cabalistic sphere of Binah. This aspect is twofold and appears as the Crowleyan Babalon, who defines herself in negative sublime terms: “Then am I the World’s Destruction. / Then am I that Understanding wherein all things are concluded” (4; 3) and as Marie, who is characterised in more approachable humane terms: “Then am I the font of Pity without end” (4; 3). The disturbing and profane quality of her

apparition is none but the product of our incomplete understanding of the sacred feminine. After she has revealed her overwhelming taboo nature, the characters see her changed:

> [SOPHIE.] Barbara, look. She's changing.
> [BARBARA.] You're right, she's... No. No, she isn't changing exactly. What is that?
> [JOHN DEE.] She changes not. 'Tis but thine eye alone is changed, with comprehension (4; 3).

On the page, we see Babalon transformed into Marie, who explains her previous apparition as a product of her fallenness. Her fall is itself a sacrifice made out of compassion for humanity: "In my Compassion have I not stooped Low, so that my aspect is cast down? Behold, I am the Shekinah. I am the Bride, and on the World's streets ragged go I, and reviled" (4; 3). This self-sacrifice makes her a female equivalent of Christ, and invests Promethea with the same sense, as this chapter reveals she is an emanation from Binah. The Shekhinah's self-abasement is a Fall in a mythical plane, although as Dee makes clear to the protagonists, this mythical dimension is comprehended inside our perception, which is after all the factor determining the appearance of the deity. If we consider her through ordinary perceptions, she is an abject universe; our capacity for vision redeems her into a more serene form.

This duality caused by the gap between perception and vision is replicated in the origin story of Promethea, also developed and revealed to the protagonist in this chapter. Pages 20 and 21 oppose the traditional, biased notion of the female embodied in Crowley's "Scarlet Women", resulting from a "bad" kind of vision, impaired by the inability to shake off the worldly ideas that bind us to ordinary perceptions. Crowley's Scarlet Women were often talented individuals, but the role Crowley appointed to them, inspired on the myth of sacred prostitution, was often degrading and humiliating. Moore is here suggesting that such a magical role cannot bring any good into the world, at least while there are systems of oppression that make innocent love and freedom impossible, as in *From Hell*. This is "The Vision of Sorrow". This is opposed by an apocalyptic and revolutionary vision of female divinity embodied in "The Child" Promethea, which ends in "The Vision of Compassion", resulting from an imaginative power that is not "in its downward path corrupted" (Moore et al., *Promethea* 4; 3).

The duplicity of the female side of God as Babalon and Marie goes back to the traditional association of the female with nature and matter, the corporeal and the animal. Moore's rendition of this conflict can be seen as derivative from Blake's interpretation of it. In Blake, Vala is fallen nature, and she is associated with figures like the Shadowy Female, the Female Will, Enitharmon, Babylon, Rahab and Tirzah. Especially these last three figures are forms inspired in the Biblical Babylon. In Blake, these are cruel goddesses of sacrifice, often depicted as harlots, or as castrating, virgin goddesses (Whittaker, *William Blake* 135, 165-166). Crowley's Babalon, which then appears by the same name in *Promethea*, is also inspired in the Biblical character of Babylon, but she ceases to be a symbol of corrupted empires. Although there is no evidence that Crowley's or Moore's character is based on Blake's, Moore's allegorical interpretation of it as a fallen deity of the abject that can be transformed and redeemed into a positive figure of compassion does pose the question whether there is a Blakean influence in the way this duality is associated to the question of the transformation of perceptions.[38]

The nature of apocalypse is revealed as the consumption of appearances (as in Blake's

[38] See chapter 6 for a full development of these passages with respect to the topics of gender and sexuality (pp. 211-212).

illuminated printing) through fire: “Revealed to Man, then is my Inspiration come unto the Earth a child. And is that child become a blaze, where in thy time, Man’s World must be CONSUMED” (4; 3). This is comparable to Blake’s description of apocalypse in *Marriage*: “The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true. as I have heard from Hell. … the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite. and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt” (14; E39). Blake conflates the mythical dimension of the prophecy and the abolition of conventions with his artistic technique of illuminated printing: “But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid” (14; E39). Similarly, Moore associates the change in the way of perceiving with the language of comic books and its combination of the visual and the verbal: “It’s also appropriate that I’m talking to you through the medium of a comic-strip story. … Words being the currency of our verbal ‘left’ brain, and images that of our pre-verbal ‘right’ brain, perhaps comic strip reading prompts both halves to work in unison?” (5; 7). This commentary made by Promethea directly to the reader suggests that there are also important differences between Blake’s conception of a change in perceptions and Moore’s. Illuminated printing becomes a metaphor for consumption of appearances, of an illusion of separateness between body and soul. Promethea refers too to the burning of the erroneous ideas about the world and the imposition of social conventions, but he formulates this in the last issue through the Postmodern popular belief that each brain hemisphere controls different faculties that should work in harmony. Although this is reminiscent of Blake’s collaborative union of opposites through contrariety, Moore’s formulation hesitates between different languages, the mythical, and the natural or (pseudo)scientific.

In his last graphic novels, Moore has focused more on the Gothic and horror implications of his view of the opposition between ordinary perceptions and vision. This is especially patent in his Lovecraftian narratives. In *Neonomicon*, FBI agent Merril Brears is implicated in the investigation of a series of gruesome murders not unlike Gull’s in *From Hell*. However, in this graphic novel, unlike Abberline, she experiences a shocking, direct contact with the dimensions of reality we class as supernatural. The protagonists’ boss, Carl Perlman, does not believe these strange events are really happening, as when Brears tells him of the mysterious metamorphosis of the subject she was pursuing, the uncanny Johnny Carcosa, into a picture (Moore and Burrows, *Neonomicon* 3). After she refers the incredible happening, he answers: “That was some sort of illusion, some sort of fucking David Copperfield shit. No. I want you two chasing down the supplier in Salem. Let’s show the world we still know how to handle a witch trial” (4). They are more interested in tracing the origin of the unusual and suspicious pornographic material found at Carcosa’s domicile instead of focusing on the anomalous events. It would seem that the connection to Blake has grown much fainter here, overshadowed by the influence of Lovecraft, and the reception of Lovecraft in occult circles and authors such as K. Grant. As in Carcosa’s fusing with the wall painting and then disappearing, art in *Neonomicon* and *Providence* is visionary, but the vision is Lovecraftian. This choice serves Moore to exemplify the danger and violence implied in the capacity of art and imagination to erase the boundaries between worlds (Green, “Darker Magic” 269). This is a kind of vision that does not render the world more responsive to the human in the way Blakean vision did. If it is a responsive vision, it is responsive in a way humanity cannot handle. What is more, we are made unresponsive before the world to which these doors of perception open. It is humans that are more unreal, that become objects in this bewilderingly superior world of Lovecraftian entities. However, a series of important products of Blakean influence remain: imaginative vision, the

transformation of perceptions, apocalypse and the adoption of materialistic points of view, used by Blake in crucial works to show the horrors of instrumental Reason. The implications of these themes are fully developed in the following comics series scripted by Moore: *Providence*.

In *Providence*, several elements depart dramatically from Blake and as would be predictable by the weight of Lovecraft in the narrative, which veers more towards rationalistic and science-fiction inspired modern myth. For instance, the frequent allusion in the narrative to the possibilities of the hidden reality consisting in some sort of "higher mathematic space" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* issue 5), a notion that is a far cry from Blake's distrust of mathematisation. Another diverging element is Moore's interpretation of language (the Lovecraftian "Aklo") as a perception-disturbing device akin to hallucinogenic drugs, which takes on a more Postmodern pantextual view of reality as discourse. The drug element also goes back to Moore's interest in 1960s counterculture, although in this instance it acquires Gothic rather than utopian implications. Most important of all, the ordinary human world appears as a brief, fragile construct over the vast chaos of existence, whereas Blake's texts ultimately and finally turn towards the building of a new world with its own human structures. This is Golgonooza, the imaginary city of humanity. Another difference is the attitude of Lovecraft's characters and Blake's, for instance, when the poet in *Marriage* bravely descends into the Angel's vision of Hell to find out that the terror was a product of the Angel's metaphysics (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 118). In Blake "[i]t is the inability to transform our own perceptions that is the source of true horror" (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 119), which is just the opposite from Lovecraft's Newtonian universe, where the best is for the doors of visionary perception to remain mercifully shut. However, horror comes from the same mental source Blake attributed to it, since, as Whittaker says: "[i]f understanding is, indeed, formed by the sensations with imagination restricted to a lesser, assimilative role, then the human mind must react with shock when faced with the terrors of the cosmos" (119). Through a Blakean perspective, when Lovecraft's characters think their perceptions have been liberated from their natural constraints (often through artificial, technological means), they have not properly done so. They have merely changed a flesh organ by an artificial one without having opened their imaginations to assimilate a sublime universe. They have not shed conventions associated, for instance, to race, that prevent them from understanding difference and approach the other with curiosity or familiarity instead of fear. As Whittaker puts it, "[w]hen … we open the doors of perception to the essential strangeness of the universe then we can become more than we behold" (127).

Although the Blakean and Lovecraftian worlds might seem to be totally incompatible, we can find strong suggestions in these graphic novels that there are themes which both authors shared. Moore's interpretation of Lovecraft takes on a visionary turn that can be attributed to Blake's influence. Awakening and apocalypse are equally present in the notions of Albion's and Cthulhu's sleep, as is the possibility that our ordinary perceptions are an illusion concealing a higher reality that would be revealed through vision. This process implies both in Blake and in Moore a dissolution of the limits in between that separate this vision from our everyday reality: "Lovecraft himself, he liked blurring the line between what was real and his invented stuff" (Moore and Burrows, *Neonomicon* 2). Albeit horrible, the world Cthulhu's awakening will bring about will be one free of conventional illusions. In this sense, the Lovecraftian narrative approaches Blake through the belief in a removal of the limits of our perceptions, with the difference that in Lovecraft's stories, the vision achieved is that of "the horribly empty (naturalistic) cosmos" (Price qtd. in Green "Darker Magic" 258). In the Lovecraftian protagonists, perceptions open, but the dread of the rational subject suddenly decentred from his preeminent place in the universe and from his racial superiority dominates the emotional tone. Whittaker mentions Los's creation of Urizen, which I have compared to Gull's equally

uncanny transformation (see pp. 121-123), as one example of the sources of horror in Blake, and he parallels Los's reaction to Lovecraftian characters' "loss of sanity" (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 118). Indeed, Black's loss of sanity in Moore's *Providence* is caused by a radical and traumatic separation (his lover's suicide), whereas Los's excruciating agony and horror are caused by another kind of separation: his separation from Urizen first, then his division to create Pity or Enitharmon. In Moore, as in Lovecraft and Blake, "the veil which typically obscures our vision and which allows us to perceive the sun as a guinea coin can be torn aside at any moment, revealing to us a universe beyond comprehension" (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 118). There is then, another angle that unites the topic of vision and perception with that of evil: there is a "terrible and destructive power" in imaginative vision (118).

Cleansing the doors of perception and achieving privileged visions, especially through the imaginative power of art, might lead to horror in *Providence*. The idea connects with Blake's negative depictions of vision. Black reflects on Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase", trying to get inspiration for a story: "What if it transpired that his model actually looked like that? Better if the artist turns out to actually see the whole world like that, with a horrible implication that he sees world this way because this is how world is in reality, beyond the narrow range of our human senses" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 2). This is stressed in the last conversation in *Neonomicon* between Brears and Sax: "The world, it's not how people see it, right? And time's different too. … Human beings aren't where they think they are. They aren't even ***what*** they think they are" (4, authors' emphases). An occult scholar in *Providence*, Suydam, employs a very Blakean rhetoric to suggest to Black that the reality beyond the satanic "tyranny of the material world" is not above our own, but might "underlie" it (2). This means that maybe the "higher" reality is not a superior celestial world, but rather a dark, chthonic hell, unlike Blake's Eden, found above Beulah and Generation (Eden "descends into" Palamabron in *Milton* 9.1, E102; in 23.35, E119, the Prophecy says Milton will "up ascend") and the heavenly Jerusalem whose description suggests the traditional Christian celestial associations:

> Thy Pillars of ivory & gold: thy Curtains of silk & fine
> Linen: thy Pavements of precious stones: thy Walls of pearl
> And gold, thy Gates of Thanksgiving thy Windows of Praise:
> Thy Clouds of Blessing; thy Cherubims of Tender mercy
> Stretching their Wings sublime over the Little-ones of Albion
> O Human Imagination O Divine Body … (*J* 24.18-23; E169)

All the occult lore about fearful prodigies and dreadful visions is attributed in *Providence* ultimately to a medieval Arabic author, Khalid Ibn Yazid, also known as Hali in Moore's comic, in order to associate it with the Lovecraftian place name. This character is a clear double of the original Abdul Alhazred, in Lovecraft's stories the Arab author of the nefarious Necronomicon. Khalid is said to have written the *Kitab Al-Hikmah Al- Najmiyyah* or *Book of the Wisdom of the Stars* in a "visionary state" (2) that mixes the Lovecraftian and the Blakean myth of madness.[39] The onset of apocalypse is, as in *Promethea*, still associated to the liberation of sexual energies and to the capacity of humanity to dream and imagine, more specifically through "words and books" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 9). Narratives are seen in *Providence* as the spores through which the world of dreams will gradually infect, take root and prevail over ordinary

[39] From a race perspective, he is a character that in Lovecraft expresses the traditional Western prejudice against Islam through a fictionally othered, heretic and evil Orient. In the context of Moore's *Providence*, especially, with rampant Islamophobia in the English-speaking world and Europe and the paranoia over immigration and terrorism, this character acquires on one hand a prophetic height of wisdom he did not have in Lovecraft, partially reassessing the character, although on the other hand the original othering and horror elements have been retained.

reality. This metaphor perfectly illustrates Green's interpretation of *Neonomicon*, in which "the invasion of the human universe by monstrosities from another world" is turned by Moore into "a metaphor for the darker implications of art's redemptive capacities" ("Darker Magic" 269).

It is especially in the eighth issue of *Providence*, "The Key", that the role of fiction and imagination is most emphasised in the apocalyptic plot of occult conspiracy and in the cosmic process of change of realities. As Lord Dunsany, appearing in the issue, remarks, "we have that within us which is timeless and unbounded by a bayonet-scarred world, this being our imagination" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 8). There are various passages like this where the visionary remains bound up with its more redeeming implications, and as this quotation exemplifies, it appears as a way to overcome or take refuge from corporeal war and all the destructive abstractions humankind has created. These reflections are indebted to Blake's oppositions between art, and war and oppression, described on page 100 of this chapter. However, other passages stress how these visions threaten also to destroy the necessary form-giving aspect of reason. In the *Kitab*, the *Book of the Wisdom of the Stars*, Khalid says that what was revealed to him could not be contained by ordinary notions of the world, thus causing him to appear insane and deranged to Black (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 6).

The protagonist's psychosis-inducing encounter with Carcosa, identified in the story as the emissary of the Lovecraftian deities, Nyarlathotep, deserves a brief commentary. This will serve to introduce what will be a very significant association between Blake's worldview and Moore's. Moore gives greater emphasis to the idea Blake presents in *Marriage* that gods are fictions created by humanity, and that humanity is therefore the ultimate kind of divinity and creative spirit. Blake was aware of the Cartesian argument for the existence of God. It was based on the idea that perfection originates in God, and even if humans doubted everything but the thinking subject, our capacity to conceive divine perfection would link us to its source. Blake similarly thought that humanity is divine because it can grasp the idea of divine perfection, but unlike Descartes, he did not think this perfection resided anywhere outside us. In *Providence*, Carcosa, a man-made character, reveals to a terror-stricken Black that gods, dreams, stories and fictions have created humanity and reality despite having appeared, from our point of view, after us. We have been created by the "thing" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 10) we have named. In Blake's *Marriage* this paradox is disentangled. Blake also believed fiction creates us, but not implying, as John Locke believed, that knowledge goes only one way from outside (nature) to a passive mind. Blake believed that the power of poetic tales would change our interaction with the world. Even if they are conscious that their tales are inventions, the poets create through them an intersubjective process between the world and themselves. However, Blake's notion of the divinity of humanity turns against humanity in *Providence*. The implication is that creation makes humans slaves to higher forces. As Green puts it, "Gothic works are capable of giving a local habitation and name to the more horrific impulses and aspects of experience" ("Darker Magic" 259).

For all the meaningful differences, vision is the common link between Blake's humanistic universe and Lovecraft's mechanistic and cosmic horror. The best evidence is Blake's *Urizen*, which reminds us there is a Blake that once experimented with he horror and death-dealing implications of a mechanistic worldview[40] such as Lovecraft would subsequently develop. Whittaker has outlined the links between revelation in Blake and in Lovecraft, as revelation is

[40] The *Urizen* books were written when Blake was the most ferocious in his criticism against institutional religion, annotating on the margin of *An Apology for the Bible* (1796), by the Bishop of Llandaff, "the Bible is all a State Trick, thro which tho' the People at all times could see they never had the power to throw off" (Blake qtd. in Worrall 20). Although he remained always a Christian, he was influenced by many anti-clerical dissenters and writers at this time, which caused these books to be the darkest in their depiction of the religious establishment.

in both "always apocalyptic: the universe will resist and even destroy every attempt to reduce it to the sum of human knowledge, a process which also unveils the strange or weird nature of our experiences and perceptions" (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 112). He suggests we can find grotesque parody and chaos both in Blake and Lovecraft. In *Urizen*, Blake borrows from radical critics to parody the Bible. *Urizen* is Blake's version of Genesis, written in imitation of Biblical "obscurities and narrative disjunctions" (Worrall 12), the traits Robert Lowth, Geddes and Paine had pointed out. Blake's strategies, similar to Geddes', imitated the Bible in its "apparent discontinuities, abrupt transitions, repetitions and inexplicable speakers" (Worrall 21). As a result, Blake's book acquires the obscurity that is the staple of prophetic poetry according to Lowth (Worrall 21). The chaos of creation is also present in *Urizen*, as Blake borrowed from authors that discussed Genesis as an allegory of political and social events in remote times. Lowth had suggested in *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1787) that creation and chaos as described in Genesis were metaphors of revolution and that other Biblical passages were allegorical records of public affairs in ancient times (Worrall 21).

Blake employs mechanistic and horror elements to criticise narrow-minded attempts to recreate or improve the human (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 114-115). In *The Book of Los* (1795), Los tries to preserve human form against the Abyss, but fails and ends up transformed into a polypus (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 115) that also appears in *Milton*: "Then view'd from Milton's Track they see the Ulro: a vast Polypus / Of living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space growing / A self-devouring monstrous human Death Twenty-seven fold" (34.24-26; E134). The polypus is an important element to support the association with Lovecraft, as it is a "symbol of purely bodily existence, disgusting in its voraciousness and its multiplication" (Connolly, *Blake* 132). Blake can often deform ordinary reality to show a perspective through which it appears alien and horrifying in a way that Lovecraftian stories would very often echo later on:

> the universe of things was so fundamentally strange to Blake that he would not have been opposed to the 'hyper-chaos' of a world predicated on radical contingency … Blake frequently saw the qualities of Ulro compressed into the daily objects around him in visions of cubist horror as disturbing as R'lyeh and its inhabitants … The Polypus, fibrous and self-devouring, is more than a little reminiscent of one of Lovecraft's terrible crawling chaoses (Whittaker, "Dark Angels" 117-118).

As I pointed out above, the Lovecraftian horror of an empty naturalistic universe has a Blakean equivalent, here exemplified through the horribly organic visions of Ulro and the mechanistic and vacuous concept of the world viewed through Urizenic eyes.

4.3. Conclusions

Throughout these analyses, it could be observed that Moore's narratives constitute a very complex dialogue with Blake's works. From the point of view of reception, it could be said that Moore's first works set the foundation of his readings and misreadings of Blake. Among the traits that differ from Blake's visions, we can find a clinamen towards a more nature-oriented sensibility that stresses the union with nature in a more primeval, pantheistic, immediate form, such as we can infer from Moore's Blakean treatment of the concept of perceptions and vision in *V for Vendetta* and *Swamp Thing*. The emphasis in subsequent works is placed more often on art and human creativity as privileged means to recover relegated nature, coinciding with a greater knowledge of Blake's work. This takes place in *From Hell*, *Promethea* and to a moderate

extent in *Neonomicon* and *Providence*. Moore's graphic novels swerve from Blake's more neatly Biblical religious patterns to embrace more syncretic spiritual manifestations that are explained through the structure of feeling of 1960s counterculture and New Age self-spirituality. This structure of feeling provides Moore with three lenses that distort his reading: Postmodern versions of Hermeticism and Gnosticism, anarchist rebellion and a more long-standing defence of gender equality and sexual liberation (see chapter 6). This clinamen consists as well in the greater identification with diabolic evil[41], a question that will be more fully developed in the next chapter, that envisions a more open-ended, sometimes post-humanist consciousness of existence. In sum, the initial misreadings strengthen the concept of a rebellious, psychedelic Blake.

However, there is also a dimension to Moore's misprision that conforms to the tessera ratio of influence, which resides in his taking Blake's visual imagery and written words and extending their signification to higher intensities that respond to the Postmodern predicament. For instance, by continuing Blake's utopian political vindications, by defending an immanent spirituality and by proposing an embrace of the totality of existence. Moore also includes the conventionally abject, prophane or base as means to transform our perceptions. With respect to the positions towards the instrumentalisation of Reason and their understanding of contrariety, it could be said that Moore is giving Blake a continuity, and even going beyond social limits Blake struggled with.

As for the Gothic visions, distortions and transformation in these works, there is a clear shared pattern where alienation and degradation of the human resides in the incapacity to go beyond ordinary perception. This incapacity amounts to forgetting the relegated aspects of nature, and letting them become strange to us. The differences between the authors also need to be considered, because Blake focuses more than Moore on the inability to shape or give a meaningful form to a chaotic universe. In Blake, this is the main cause of diminishment and relapse into the natural *qua* purely mechanical matter, as happens when Urizen separates himself from his creation, which turns too chaotic and overwhelming for him to control through his rules. In Moore, however, there is a more direct readiness to embrace the chaotic "thing" of relegated nature, which is never understood as mechanical and blind. The notion of mystery, of a hidden meaning in the order of things that Blake distrusted for his sympathy with radical criticism of institutional religion, finds more easily a place in Moore's works. As in many Postmodern narratives, in Moore's, the human self is paradoxically the creator of meaning but at the same time he is decentred, called into question as regards his autonomy and power to understand his existence. Even in the Lovecraftian narratives, there is an openness to let go of old systems of signification and a call to create new ones. In the new ones, the abject, the unknown, and the fearful, can acquire a place that allows humanity to relate to them in a more amiable fashion. Thus chaotic nature is itself regarded more positively than in Blake, where there is always a greater necessity of mediation via human agency. This necessity takes its root in Blake's belief that it is the human mind that needs to actively engage with nature, whereas in Moore, there is more emphasis on the human as relative and contingent. This, as must be made clear, is a difference of focus, nuance or emphasis that does not imply anthropocentrism on the part of Blake or a deification of nature on the part of Moore. Quite to the contrary, both authors are aware of the complexity of this relationship. Blake thought poets had extraordinary openness of senses that allowed them to be receptive to nature. Moore shows an acute awareness that without the proper mental faculties it is useless or even dangerous to try to see an external will in nature.

[41] This diabolic evil does not refer to the Kantian concept of diabolical evil, but to the notion of Romantic diabolism, as explained in chapter 3.

The following chapter will clarify this analysis further by exploring the notions of good and evil. This will shed light on the moral aspects that intervene in ordinary perception as mediated by an instrumentalised Reason whose application is sometimes totalising according to both authors' criticisms. We will see how the excess of this kind of Reason under the guise of law can betray excesses that are caused precisely by this failure to acknowledge the darker energies of human and non-human nature. This will help to understand the ideas of good and evil, moral conventions and law in the texts and their import in the process of transformations of energies and realities. This will also provide us with ways to talk about these energies in their processes of change.

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5. ANALYSIS OF THE TOPICS OF GOOD AND EVIL[42]

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the theme of evil, the thread that connects Blake's popular image to the countercultural protest against established moralism and institutional religion. Throughout this chapter, I will be exploring this theme using several definitions of evil, including the symbolism of the opposition of good and evil, albeit with more emphasis on evil.

One common convention of understanding evil in relation to Romanticism, has been to identify it with whatever alienates the subject from her imaginative capacities and of the erotic as a creative force. Similar Romantic ideas of evil, imagination and the erotic reappeared in certain interpretations of Freudian psychoanalysis (mainly Reichian psychoanalysis) and were subsequently adopted by counterculture, which influences Moore himself. According to the Romantic tradition, the energies of Eros are the foundation of the lofty expressions of art and religion (Langbaum 9). This view appeared in the writings of British alternative psychotherapist R. D. Laing, author of *The Divided Self* (1960), a book in which Blake was referenced to illustrate these concepts. Laing and his use of Blake to explain the human psyche had a tremendous impact on counterculture. The defence of Eros against intransigent law also characterised Roszak's analysis of 1960s counterculture. According to Peter Otto, Roszak identified it with a mixture of Gothic, Dionysiac, Eastern and mystic tendencies (Otto 33). He compared the contrast between the cultural establishment and counterculture to the contrast between Greco-Roman culture and the early Christian mysteries, which Classical rationality could not understand. He then amplified this comparison to other analogies such as Zeus and the Centaurs, Apollo and Dionysus, and Enlightenment and Romanticism (33).

Roszak's comparisons allow us to see how counterculture has defined itself as indebted to Romanticism. As Otto says, from Roszak's perspective "Romanticism and the counterculture are anti-modernities … rather than bringing Enlightenment critique to an end, Romanticism/counter culture extends it to reason" (37). Otto's association between Romanticism and counterculture relies fundamentally on a notion of reason that can be critical towards its own processes and therefore prevent itself from becoming authoritarian or merely instrumental. To the extent that these critiques defend aspects of culture excluded from the Enlightened point of view they contribute to a "Gothic erosion of enlightened value", which would be the surviving element of Romanticism in Postmodernity (Larrissy, *Romanticism* 8). However, if one agrees that they maintain the necessity of more critical, self-aware reason, such

[42] In this chapter I will make references to my article "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*". María Cecilia Marchetto Santorun, Department of English and German Philology, Research Group Discourse and Identity (GRC 2015/002, GI-1924, Xunta de Galicia) Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Complete reference: Marchetto Santorun, María Cecilia. "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*." *English Studies*, vol. 100, no. 4, Routledge / Taylor & Francis, 2019, London, pp. 387-406. DOI: 10.1080/0013838X.2018.1555983. ISSN: (Print) 0013-838X (Online) 1744-4217.

an "erosion" should not be understood as negation or destruction, but rather as polishing, refinement, and improvement of the Enlightened notion of reason.

Blake's attitude towards the Enlightenment and religion is apparently contradictory. On the one hand, he adopted a critical Enlightened position to condemn institutional religion; on the other, he criticised those aspects of the Enlightenment that he saw as negations of spirituality. This is relevant to understand his notion of evil. In one sense, evil for Blake is a system of institutional oppression, whether rational or religious; in another sense, it signifies resistance to oppression and is conceived as a liberating force. As Whittaker says, "Blake's dialectic with evil … recognises a distinction between the diabolic endeavours of revolution, labelled wickedness by supporters of the 'God of this World', and the satanic orthodoxies of power that 'destroy[s] all who do not worship Satan under the Name of God' (*J* 52: E 201)" ("*From Hell*" 203). On one hand, evil is a "diabolic" (192) dimension that includes the erotic forces labelled as sinful and disruptive by the established order. On the other hand, it designs a "satanic" (192) alienating force that separates the human from its divine form. Early Blake identified his idea of Energy with "Evil" or "Hell" (*MHH* 3; E34), ironically adopting the label of conventional religious morality. Later Blake emphasised imagination more than energy, considering energy potentially destructive. He starts by identifying the Old Testament deity in *Marriage* with satanic evil, and Satan and the devils with diabolic evil, but in his last illuminated books Satan, representing satanic evil, is no longer a positive figure. Despite these changes, both hypocrite angels in *Marriage* and Satan in *Milton* are self-righteous rather than overtly hostile.

Whatever terms employed, the origin of evil for Blake, and what turns natural energies into destructive forces, is a disjunction of the faculties caused both by the will to power of abstract Reason[43] and by oppressive social institutions. Despite his criticism of some of the values of sentimentalism Blake keeps sentimental elements. In the sentimental tradition, evil proceeds from convention and selfish interest preventing the spontaneous expressions of nature and distorting the rational faculty. In Blake's works, especially the later ones, there is more emphasis on the problems that arise from the release of energies, which become very problematic, as they could be corrupted. Nonetheless, Blake also considered sentimental literature reflected a passive attitude towards injustice. Feelings of pity were in themselves deserving of praise for sentimentalists, whereas Blake considered this attitude favoured established values rather than change. He preferred to focus on more active rebellion and creative struggle.

I will make use of the distinction between diabolic and satanic evil. Whittaker's notion of "*kategoros*" ("*From Hell*" 193), the accuser who forges the moral law and with which he identifies the figure of Satan in Blake's later works, will allow me both to identify the source of real evil in Blake and to compare it to Moore's. Thus, diabolic evil will refer to natural energies in their hazardous search for liberation, considering both their destructive potential for the order that constrains them and their revitalising power for those who are oppressed. Satanic evil will refer to the will to the domination of abstract Reason, oppressive social institutions, conventions, and self-interest.

Behind the notion of *kategoros* lies the figure of hypocrisy and "priggish" self-righteousness defined by Frye (66). But Satan not only imposes rules that he does not himself

[43] As in the previous chapter, I will continue distinguishing the neutral or positive concept of reason from negative aspects of it by capitalising the word in references to the latter.

follow, he also torments man for his "insufficiency" (65), his incapacity to live up to the expectations created by those rules, an authoritarianism that Frye identified with Urizen (300-301). In this sense, the *kategoros* is reminiscent of the superego. Bloom compared the Blakean Spectre to the superego, who carries the "exhortations of society" (Rieff qtd. in Bloom, Introduction 17). In Blake, Urizen is the mythical figure that embodies this principle, acting as such in *Visions*, where Oothoon calls him the "Mistaken Demon of heaven" (5.3; E48). He is very often identified with Satan, such as in plate 10 of *Milton*: "Then Los & Enitharmon knew that Satan is Urizen / Drawn down by Orc & the Shadowy Female into Generation" (10.1-2; E104). Many characters identify Urizen as Satan, even though Urizen believes himself to be the only God, in fact, Blake makes reference through him to the vengeful and fearsome God of the Old Testament, denouncing that what that God represents is actually a destructive principle. Blake also depicted Satan with Urizen's appearance in his illustrations to *Paradise Regained* (1816-1820). There, we can see Christ in plate 2 addressing Satan, the Tempter, who appears like an old man with long white hair and beard, very similar to the physical appearance of Urizen. There is also a hidden connection between the superegoic aspect of satanic oppressive authority and the diabolic rebellion against it, which in the end can become violent and authoritarian. From *America*, Orc begins to be shown as analogue to Urizen.

The concept of *kategoros* also entails a certain corruption of perception represented in Blake by the perversions of the Angel (*Marriage*), Bromion (*Visions*) and Urizen (*Urizen*), and in Moore by Gull, as I have analysed in the previous chapter, and by other characters such as those who accuse Abby (*Swamp Thing*) of crimes against nature. This kind of accuser perceives an innocent act as guilty or malicious due to a lack of imagination that encloses him in single vision, the merely physical act of perception, and leaves him unable to interpret events through vision, with more empathy and humanity. The troubling nature of the *kategoros* lies in his will to impose a rigid supposedly objective notion of reality on the constant fluidity of life. Eagleton's understanding of the excess of authoritarianism is useful to conceptualise the *kategoros*. For him, this excess consists in the imposition of fantasy despite the resistance of reality (11). We can understand the *kategoros* imposition of law, objectivity and permanence as a fantasy of will to power that opposes the intrinsic qualities of desiring life.

The accusation of the *kategoros* does not spring from a genuine sense of justice, pity or sympathy for a hypothetically aggrieved part, but from jealousy and from fear of that which cannot be dominated through laws.[44] Urizen, for instance, is called "Father of Jealousy" by Oothoon in *Visions* (7.12; E50), and in "Earth's Answer" (*Songs of Experience*) jealousy is also reviled (31.11-15; E18-19), which fits in with Blake's other references to Urizen as Satan (see previous page). Blake's criticism of conventional religion morality is at its most manifest when he identifies the *kategoros*, Urizen and Satan with the "God of this World," the deity worshipped in conventional religion, which is in theory a good deity. However, since his worshippers use this god to uphold and legitimise oppressive values that contradict the teachings of the New Testament, Blake calls this god out as the devil in disguise:

> To The Accuser Who is

[44] Both jealousy and fear are forms of hindrance, of limiting energy or imagination in its expression as desire. Blake had established hindrance as the real sin in his annotations to Lavater (E600-601).

The God of This World
Truly My Satan thou art but a Dunce
And dost not know the Garment from the Man
Every Harlot was a Virgin once
Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan
Tho thou art Worshipd by the Names Divine
Of Jesus & Jehovah thou art still
The Son of Morn in weary Nights decline
The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill (*For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* [1793], Epilogue; E269)

Diabolic Romanticism sees the "low" instincts as good and holy because they are the foundation of "high" ideals. While Satanic evil represses and turns the low energies hostile, diabolic evil channels them. Both forms of evil are present in the works analysed in this chapter. The Romantic diabolic reversal of negative and positive connotations associated with "superior" / "inferior" or "higher" / "lower" spatial oppositions lead Blake to develop redefinitions of good and evil that Moore reinterprets. Blake's radical antinomianism and Moore's cultural rebellion convey different aspects of this common pattern in which the worst is identified with the violence exerted by abstract Reason, that erupts, according to Eagleton, when Reason achieves its "extreme limit" (11).

In this chapter, I will examine Moore's reception of Blakean ideas about evil. I will contrast the topic of evil in *Swamp Thing*, *From Hell*, and *Promethea* with Blake's philosophy of Contraries and Negations. The analysis of passages from *V for Vendetta*, *Neonomicon*, and *Providence* will allow me to provide additional examples to understand this contrast; *Providence* in particular will allow me to explain how the Gothic view of good and evil locates evil "both outside and within" (Botting 10). The similarities found in the previous chapter about perception suggested that, in Blake and Moore, what is inside colours what is seen outside, while the transformations of characters or places reflect qualities of perception. Evil is not only an external, but an internal oppressive element. Finally, I will compare some of Moore's figures of the accuser and Blake's *kategoroi*.

5.1. MOORE'S RECEPTION OF BLAKEAN IDEAS OF EVIL

The best of Moore's texts to understand his reading of Blakean evil is *From Hell*. According to Moore, the imposition of a repressive system that excludes vital aspects of the human being is a form of satanic magic. Allusions to Blake as a figure that is misinterpreted by the psychopathic Gull – a character representative of madness and derangement who believes in rational self-control – show that Moore was deeply aware of Blake's indictments of rigid rational systems and of his distaste for simplistic binary divisions of reality such as Gull's, as well as suspicious of hasty condemnations of reason or unproblematic exaltations of energy. The reception of Blake in *From Hell* is deeply influenced by the way Iain Sinclair reads Blake in *Lud Heat.* Gull's fixation with human sacrifice in *From Hell* is specifically linked to patriarchal violence, which corresponds in Blake to Deism, militarism and state religion.

The idea of evil in *From Hell* is indebted to the ways of understanding morality in Postmodern magic. In many of the Postmodern adaptations of magic I have discussed in chapter 2, magic is conceived as pure practice and experience, unlike certain traditions that emphasised

its relevance as a means of moral improvement. Thus, certain traditional texts might encourage or discourage some practices (e.g. sexual promiscuity) on moral grounds. In many forms of Postmodern magic, these ethical concerns are regarded with suspicion as characteristic of institutionalised religion and of its imposition of specific values to maintain the status quo. Thus Chaos magicians often encourage the practitioner to be critical of traditional religious morality and develop their own personal ethical values (Hine 51, 133). Moreover, they work with systems of belief, but maintaining the awareness that none of them is absolute truth and encourage the use of the power of myth while knowing that it is fiction (Clarke 105-106). Moore's attitude to magic is close to Chaos Magic as regards the attitude to morality and the conception of the power of magic. However, Chaos magicians and other Postmodern occultists do not pay much attention to the possible dangers of this power, preferring to stress more often the freedom of their occult mix-and-match.[45] In *From Hell*, Moore warns against the liberation of dangerous energies that might result from a naïve approach to the power of myth. The magician's actions, as in the case of Gull, are often supported by a pseudo-theological background. The fact that Gull is as skilful enough to make reality *seem* responsive to his actions does not mean that the world is really the way he thinks it is or that his ideas about the world are being confirmed, it means he is a good manipulator, good at infecting others with his dangerous fiction. This extension and imposition of his fantasy, especially through violent means, is what most defines Gull as an evil figure of *kategoros*.

Gull's power resides in his capacity to manipulate. It could be argued that manipulators do not believe, but Gull's manipulations include himself. Chaos magicians regard magic as a form of suspension of disbelief applied to reality. Moore defined magic as a methodical way of deranging one's own mind (*Magic*). Gull gains power by manipulating not only other people's minds, but also his own mind. By doing so, he perceives the world around him according to certain patterns he chooses, which leads him to commit acts that he might have not enacted if not sustained by his magical fiction. Gull's narrative ends up obsessing him. By creating this narrative, Gull can manipulate physical reality in the sense that he can exteriorise his worst impulses at the cost of women's lives. From a Postmodern occult perspective, a magician does not manipulate objective reality; he is a master of illusions that may affect reality. From this point of view, Gull's manipulative power is a real magical power because he creates a parallel reality and imposes it on himself and others.

Gull must constitute a real threat for his narrative to work properly and generate horror and dread in the reader. According to Mervi Miettinen (91), Gull's grandiloquence allows him to remove part of the blame. However, in order for him to be an impressive enough villain, he must be portrayed not only as a vicious killer, but also as charismatic or convincing to some degree. This is the reason why the grandiloquence is needed. There must be a tension between

[45] Consider, for example, Carroll 154-155:

> There is nothing spiritual or moralistic about Chaos and Kia. We live in a universe where nothing is true, although some information may be useful for relative purposes. It is for us to decide what we wish to consider meaningful or good or amusing. ….
>
> There can be no absolute truth in a universe of relativities.
> All things are arbitrary, some things have relative truth for a time.
> Life being accidental we are free to give it any point we like.
> I do not find it necessary to account for my actions even unto myself
> I require no justification.
> That I do it, is sufficient in itself.

the horror of his acts and the grasp of his words to achieve an uncanny psychological effect. If he did not appear powerful, he would not be an effective villain, which would make *From Hell* more a Gothic comedy or parody than a horror.

The villain somehow operates like the Chaos magicians describe, and the mythical plane of the story does as well: no matter if his intentions are good or bad, his magic achieves certain effects according to his will. Nonetheless, throughout the graphic novel, the narration does not fail to portray his intentions and actions as evil, mad and completely repulsive, despite the critical claims that the narrative glamorises violence against women. These criticisms (such as Miettinen's "'Do You Understand How I have Loved You?': Terrible Loves and Divine Visions in *From Hell*" [2012]) confuse the independence from morals of the magical system of the subject matter with amorality or even perversion at a narrative (or even authorial) level.

Gull is an allegory of the hold patriarchy and violence have on social reality. The graphic novel portrays how power has so often successfully wrapped all kinds of atrocity in seductive and aestheticised rhetoric, convincing so many people to follow it and justify its violence. In this aspect, *From Hell* functions as a commentary on the workings of hegemony. Gull's plan depends on the development of a particular way of seeing the world that has political implications, in this case, imperialist and proto-fascist ones. This is precisely the deepest source of horror in *From Hell*, the fascination that evil can exert on imagination (Merriman 40). The "detailed account" (Miettinen 91) from Gull's point of view of his reasons to murder exposes his blunders, his delusion, and his misreading of Blake and other authors, and helps the reader to understand the mistakes and assumptions that breed misogyny.

From Hell takes after Sinclair's *Lud Heat* in this imagery and in his references to Blake (see Larrissy, *Blake* 129). Sinclair conflates the parody of literal occult belief and of Blakean imagery of the satanic (Larrissy, *Blake* 95). In Moore's graphic novel, Gull states the principle that symbols have the power to influence the mind ("Certain symbols might subtly affect men's minds," and "instill a sense of 'terrour and magnificence'" [2; 13]) and invokes Hobbes and Coleridge names to ground the disproportionate conclusions he later develops. Like Sinclair, Moore gives the fire imagery dangerous, satanic connotations through the villain character, who is identified with the notion of "Hell", fire and destruction and embodies oppression. Satanic evil, which includes forms of "power over the Other," (Merriman 40) begins by imposing an oppressive narrative and culminates in murder and even genocide.

Human sacrifice appears as the source of political and religious power. Gull dwells on the history and myths of executions and blood-spilling at the Tower of London (Merriman 26-27) and muses on how this violence has exerted its influence throughout the centuries, maintaining the structure of power. Human sacrifice as the source of oppressive power is also at the core of Blake's indictment of Druidism, Deism and war, which he conflates with satanic evil. The role of London as the centre of this structure is inspired on Sinclair's psychogeographic notions, which are directly in dialogue with Blake's imaginative charting of the British capital city. Moore adopts Sinclair's idea that Blake's perception of the significance of the city and of the oppressive effects of urban organisation in general is still valuable in a Postmodern world (Larrissy, *Blake* 95).

In short, the influence of other contemporary writers such as Sinclair inspired Moore's interpretation of Blake's notion of evil. His emphasis on independence from belief systems and their absolute truths, derived from countercultural discourses in Postmodern magic, goes back to Blake's centrality of the human capacity to create myths. Moore's distrust of the discourses

of power and his identification of oppression with human sacrifice also draw on Blake's antinomianism and opposition to deism and war. In the next section I will apply the Blakean distinction of contraries and negations to the depictions of good and evil in Moore's works.

5.2. Blake's Contraries and Negations and the topic of evil in Moore

There are three different stages or attitudes that could be identified throughout Moore's works with respect to the topic of evil. In works such as *Swamp Thing*, from the early 1980s, evil is primarily a product of social conventions while natural energies, conventionally considered evil, are always good and allow humanity to improve, to become active and creative. These ideas, which recall the functioning of contrariety in *Marriage* and to a lesser extent in *Milton*, evolve as Moore studies Blake more closely. In *From Hell*, towards the 1990s, while the mutual definition of contraries is still useful as an antidote against the corruption of the natural energies, these become potentially dangerous and susceptible to dominating the individual. Finally in *Promethea*, from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, he returns to the contrariety of good and evil. In *Neonomicon* and *Providence* he continues experimenting with materialist points of view that emphasise terror, going back to the focus on evil showcased in the period when he wrote *From Hell*.

In this section, I will analyse several passages from Moore's works in the light of the notions of contrariety and negation. These include, from *Swamp Thing*, the advice of the Parliament of Trees to Alec and the riddles of the Shadow to the characters. From *From Hell*, the Ripper's letters, Gull's reversal of hierogamy rituals, the Druidic and Egyptian imagery in association to human sacrifice and the coach ride during which Gull persuades Netley to collaborate. From *Promethea*, Promethea-Sophie's irruption in the Temple, the transformation of the demon Asmodeus, the crossing of the Abyss of Daath, the doubleness of Marie and Babalon, the serpent imagery derived from the occult and the contrariety symbolised in the warring Christian and Muslim Prometheas. From *Neonomicon* and *Providence* I have analysed the subterranean orgy of the Beeks cultists, Suydam's explanations of evil to Black, the *Kitab* prophecy, the Ghoul's defence of the acceptance of the abject and Cthulhu's conception and birth. This analysis will support the argument of Blake's conception of good and evil (and other opposites such as reason and energy or man and woman) as contraries rather than negations was a source of inspiration for Moore.

In Moore's *From Hell*, the historical dimension achieves more importance as the narrative turns bleaker. His earlier understanding of evil is shown as useful still, but not as a lasting solution when it comes to dealing with the ordinary world. At this stage, Moore, like Blake, shows that evil is the dominion of the discourse of power based on opposites, whereas the mutual definition of contraries is the antidote against the corruption of the natural energies that otherwise run the risk of becoming hostile and destructive. Thus, in Moore's work, misogyny results in the historical dimension of the narrative from a view of the world where gender becomes a relationship of domination between opposites rather than an axis of positive difference. In the mythical dimension, however, Moore's narrative maintains an amorality that responds to a degree of relativism that goes beyond Blake's more ironic adoption of a diabolic perspective. I will return to this difference in the section of this chapter dedicated to *From Hell* (5.2.2, p. 154).

Later, in *Promethea*, good and evil are defined as different manifestations of the human, beyond narrow conventional moralistic definitions that place them outside and beyond it. This goes back to Blake's rejection of conventional moral categories based on abstractions. Diabolic evil is used in Moore's late twentieth century context to oppose the tendency to project evil onto an external other and the intolerance that this projection breeds. Moreover, *Promethea* revises the opposition matter / spirit. Both Blake and Moore fluctuated throughout their works regarding their views on mind and matter, though their revisions of the notions of good and evil correspond to their critical attitude towards traditional dualism that contrasts matter as the site of evil and mind or the soul as the site of good. Although defending the visionary potential of sense perception, they also depicted the world of matter as terrible and nightmarish when it is beheld through a perspective that separates and privileges mind over matter. Diabolical evil in its association with the animal and the primitive seem to carry more positive connotations for Moore than for Blake.

The subsequent analyses will detail all these similarities and differences, and the changes over the course of Blake's and Moore's illuminated books and graphic novels.

5.2.1. *Swamp Thing* and the meaning of evil

In *Swamp Thing*, Moore attacks conventional morality and sexuality. Abby is a human whose partner, Alec, is a vegetable humanoid, the Swamp Thing. The narration invites the reader to understand Alec's mode of being as foundational rather than marginal (see ch. 4, p. 108). The relationship between humanity and a "monstrous" nature is presented as necessary for the progress towards a "higher paradise" (Abrams 261). This "paradise" is the state of organised innocence, where, unlike in the conventional Judeo-Christian one, the complementarity of contraries is the source of creative power (260-261). The narrative encourages empathy with the monstrous, which is identified in this series with the socially rejected aspects of nature and that opposes the utilitarian version of civilised progress. The defence of the relation with the monstrous as a new and potentially better mode of being implies the embrace of different conceptions of morality based on ecological balance and connectedness.

In *Swamp Thing* there are passages that question our classification of natural processes as evil. Issue 47, "The Parliament of Trees" showcases an ecological questioning of traditional concepts of good and evil. The trees, a group of elder elemental entities of the Swamp Thing's kind, teach Alec an ecological morality that he struggles to comprehend: "If you wish to understand evil, you must understand the bark, the roots, the worms of the earth. That is the wisdom of an Erl-King. Aphid eats leaf. Ladybug eats aphid. Plant feeds upon soil… Is aphid evil? Is ladybug evil? Is soil evil? Where is evil, in all the wood?" (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 4; 125). Here, the vegetable characters question the human concepts of good and evil, suggesting that they are meaningless from a natural perspective. Furthermore, the series represents other points of view than those of the trees on the nature of evil. Several characters express good and evil as mutually complementary contraries. Good is not wholly known if evil is not experienced as well, and vice versa. Sargon the sorcerer says: "In my life, I have embraced both good and evil, that my knowledge of each should be complete" (4; 169).

These reflections are framed in a wider story arc involving Alec's involvement in an attempt to stop the plans of the Brujería, a society of South American witches that plan to release the "primordial shadow" (4; 172) on the universe and precipitate its end. The power that would

be released goes beyond the conventional Christian notion of evil. In this episode, Moore uses mythical imagery of evil such as the primordial Shadow, but much of what the Shadow represents is social oppression and environmental destruction, not only a primordial entity. Hell in this episode is also different from traditional religious representations; the demons are comical entities that revel in the carnivalesque and grotesque, reminding the reader of Hyeronimus Bosch's imps. Hell is divided into two main factions, with some demons helping Constantine against the Shadow and other demons that wish to see the whole universe destroyed, even heaven and hell themselves. As demon Etrigan puts it, "the baser fiends look forward to the show [universal annihilation], while higher cadres tend to side with me in favoring the devil that we know [Hell]" (4; 175) Etrigan himself is presented as a grotesque but likeable character that ultimately helps the protagonists.

In the context of this story arc, contrariety is opposed to negation. There is a rejection of the opposition between good and evil in favour of re-envisioning their mutual connection. The demon Etrigan supports God because he wants to maintain contrariety, whereas the Brujería are negations: if they succeed, everything but them would disappear (4; 190). In issue 50, "The End", the characters try to placate evil by finding its meaning. As we will see, definitions that establish oppositions and incur in negation, of either evil or good, do not deter the Shadow from swallowing everything; only complementarity activates creativity and makes a fuller experience of human nature possible. The story reveals interesting parallels with concepts from Blake such as the relationship between reason and energy, the Prolific and the Devourer, Beulah and Eden. When the Swamp Thing proposes a relationship of contrariety between good and evil, inspired by the Trees, it succeeds. The following paragraphs analyse the passages from *Swamp Thing* connected to *Marriage* and *Milton* from this perspective.

When confronted with the dark force awakened by Brujería, the Swamp Thing realises the sense of the Trees' meditation on the meaninglessness of the concept of evil in nature. Materialising as a vast black snake or worm[46] that swallows all, the Shadow poses a riddle to the different characters that are helping Constantine and the Swamp Thing against the Brujería. Etrigan is the first to try to solve it:

> [SHADOW.] Before light I was endless, without name or need of name. Witnessing its otherness I suffered my first knowledge of self, and all contentment fled. Tell me, little thing, tell me what I am.
> [ETRIGAN.] Your name… Your name is evil, absence of God's light, his shadow partner, locked in endless fight.
> [SHADOW.] The fight is to be endless, then" (4; 198).

Here the Shadow reacts against its association with utter darkness opposed to divine light. It seems to be seeking for a meaning different from its negative traditional association with "[f]atalism" and "inevitability" (4; 198).

Doctor Fate defines evil it as abject, which earns him a failure worse than Etrigan's:

[46] The description of the shadow as having this shape has interesting implications for the comparison to the illuminated books, where the serpent (pp. 162-163) and the worm (p. 170) crucially express the duality of vital and hopeful yet potentially destructive forces.

> [DOCTOR FATE.] …a quagmire of ignorance that would drag us back as we climb towards the immortal light. A vile, wretched thing, to be scraped from the sandals like dromedary soil.
> [SHADOW.] Am I so low, then, and is he you serve so high that there can be no possibility of respect between us? Little thing, you have taught me contempt" (4; 203).

Doctor Fate reproduces the idea that there is a spatial and hierarchical opposition between good and evil, light and dark energies, and the Shadow responds to the way it has been conceptualised over time by the hegemonic moral discourses in the West. If the characters change the way they see the Shadow, it will also change from merely destructive negation to a diabolic type of evil that enables good to exist as well. The Shadow fits in the concept of it each character has. It is vindictive because so far it had been "taught" to be revengeful. This is manifest when the Shadow reacts to the Spectre, one of the heroes in the team, and his definition of evil as a reason for revenge: "And what of the tortured eons I endured, unable to broach this maddening brilliance and quiet the pain it woke in me? Do they not demand retribution? Little thing, you have taught me only vengeance" (4; 210).

It is the Swamp Thing's intervention that allows for the possibility of a different meaning of the Shadow. The Swamp Thing's definition of evil, which is an important part of what the Shadow represents and includes, comes as a long-meditated reflection on his encounter with the Parliament of Trees: "Perhaps evil… is the humus… formed by virtue's decay… and perhaps… perhaps it is from… that dark, sinister loam… that virtue grows strongest?" (4; 214) Unlike the Spectre that establishes punishment as the *raison d'être* of the Shadow, Alec establishes life and growth as the ultimate effects of its interplay with light. The principle of contrariety inspired on natural processes thus enables him to placate the Shadow. Whilst in Blake the physical and biological aspects of nature can have a restrictive effect, here these materialistic aspects are beneficent, as it is she that redeems from moral oppositions. Instead of trying to negate evil, as the other characters did (especially Doctor Fate) the Swamp Thing asserts its necessity and its underlying connection to good.

The purpose of evil in "The End" and the purpose of the Devourer in *Marriage* should be to incorporate the excess of the Prolific, instead of blindly destroying parts of it. This is established in the corresponding passage of *Marriage*:

> 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 (*MHH* 16; E40).

The Devourer is wrong in imagining that the portions it takes are the whole, and must understand it should acquire the capacity to receive:

> Reason is still only the outward bound or circumference of Energy, and still fancies that its reductive idea of existence is the whole, rather than a part, of the Human. But the productive Prolific would cease to be itself, would stifle by its own exuberance of invention, if the Devourer ceased to be a primal sea of forms

> into which the excess of Prolific delights could be received (Bloom, Introduction 17).

Without its conflict with the Devourer, the Prolific is destroyed: "whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence. Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two." (Blake, *MHH* 16-17; E40). Bloom stresses the importance of this passage in Blake's illuminated book and its significance to the philosophy of contraries, confirming the function of the Devourer as an evil that strengthens good and incorporates excess.

Just when the Swamp Thing offers his understanding of contrariety, the snake-shaped pillar acquires the form of a dark, monstrous, but human, hand clasping the golden, shining hand of supreme good. The anthropomorphic shape of good and evil is finally revealed in a visual depiction of the union of contraries (4; 216-217). As in the case of "Rite of Spring", the visual depiction of the Shadow and the Light joining in human form can be compared with the examples of visual complementarity and symmetry in *Marriage.*

In Plate 1 from *Marriage* we can see the anthropomorphic allegorical figures of Heaven and Hell embracing. While in other plates, such as plate 16, Blake speaks against the reconciliation of opposites, because in his view that is the aim of religion, here he defends the relation between contraries. In plate 2 two figures collaborate in gathering fruit or climbing a tree. In copies G and I of the book, the woman standing at the foot of the tree wears a robe of blue, the colour of heaven, and the one on the branches wears a red one, characterising her as the former's contrary, possibly hell. Moore's pages show a similar gesture: the women representing heaven and hell seem to be clasping their hands to help each other or sharing a bunch of grapes.

The relation between the figures in Plate 1 can be contrasted to other negative relations, such as the one between the Angels in Blake's print entitled *The Good and Evil Angels* (1795-c. 1805). Here the presence of water and fire lends the visual image the same contrast between the red and the blue, evil and good. The difference between the depictions in *Marriage* and *The Good and Evil Angels* is that the good and evil figures in the latter are presented as conventional and therefore as opposites and unable to mutually improve through contrary actions that trigger a creative reaction in the other; opposites (negations) can only negate, destroy, and cancel out each other.

Blake's plate 4 of *Marriage* shows the image that would inspire *The Good and Evil Angels*. According to Mellor, this plate shows Blake's passage from his initial optimistic idea of revolutionary energy to his belief that this energy could be corrupted into an instrument of oppression (*Blake's Human Form Divine* 159-160). In her view, neither the evil angel nor the good angel are to be trusted with the child, as they are both trapped in rigidly rational, religious, absolutist selves (160). The good angel seems to represent hypocritical holiness, a passive-aggressive self-righteousness; and the inhuman expression of the "evil" angel seems to represent a blind and inhuman energy. *Swamp Thing*, on the contrary, highlights the relationship between contraries: "In the heart of darkness, a flower blossoms enriching the shadows with its promise of hope… In the fields of light, an adder coils, and the radiant tranquillity is lent savor by its sinister presence" (4; 220).

In "Return of the Good Gumbo", the last issue (no. 64) of the series scripted by Moore, Alec realises that the intervention of superior forces in human affairs would be wrong, because

evil is embedded in humanity. He decides that the best he can do is to patiently wait for a time when humanity faces the challenges of its own evil.

In the fallen world, good and evil are pitched against each other by conventions. The corollary of Alec's epiphany is the idea that the superior forces must not intervene to eliminate evil. Evil must enter into a relationship of contrariety with good. Establishing contrariety between internal good and evil would enable humanity to take the next step and actively repair the evils they have caused by continuing to consider their evil and good negations. It is this that is given more emphasis in Alec's reflections.

Blake defined two different heavens: Beulah, the moonlit garden, and Eden, the sun-bathed city. Beulah and Eden reflect the cyclical rhythms of repose and struggle respectively (Frye 230). In Beulah the inhabitants of Eden find mild repose and wait, in a similar way in which Alec will wait until "mankind … learn[s]… to manufacture… glories of its own… and to atone… for all its sins… without my prompting… or my aid. It is… the only way… they'll grow…. The way of the wood" (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 6; 198). In Eden, the heavens that open up for humankind after apocalypse are not those of passive, dreamy Beulah, but those of active, reality-forming Eden, where they would be ready "To build the Universe stupendous: Mental forms Creating" (*M* 30.20; E129). This notion of the ideal state of humankind as dynamic material activity (manufacturing glories) and not only dream-like inactivity (the Edenic state the inhabitants of Gotham experience when the Swamp Thing decides to create a natural heaven on earth for them) is reiterated in Moore's later performance-based work *Snakes and Ladders* (2001), where the necessary balance between daydream and more proactive creative power is formulated in Kabbalistic terms. While in *Swamp Thing* this pattern seems to not derive directly from Blake, it is probably this similarity in concepts that probably made Moore rely so much on Blakean inspiration later. *Snakes and Ladders*, conceived after Moore's research on Blake for *From Hell* reads very much like a reworking of this pattern, but this time under the direct influence of Blake's ideas of Eden and Beulah and the Kabbalistic concepts of Yesod and Tipheret. Although it may seem contradictory that the Thing and Abby retire to rest in *Swamp Thing*, this is not so (Green, "Everything's" 113-114). After the "mental fight" (Blake, *M* 1.13; E95) in which they have been involved, it is the right time to rest and enjoy their own kind of happy ending in the bizarre gigantic nest built by Alec on a tree. Like Beulah, this ending signifies the retirement of the protagonists into a realm of peace, love and pleasure where they can recover from the strife implied in creativity.

5.2.2. *From Hell* and alienated Contraries

In *From Hell*, the contraries are often identified with men and women, or the masculine and the feminine. The villain protagonist sees the main women characters as opposites and their behaviour as deviant, excessive, dangerous and irrational; they occupy the scapegoat position in Gull's satanic myth. This leads him to murder them in order to impose his idea of social order (Merriman 25). In Gull's theory, Reason, men and the light (which he thinks he represents) must prevail over insanity, women and darkness (which he thinks his victims represent). The main storyline, though, shows them as normal women, despite Gull's belief that they act as Diana's priestesses, bent on bringing chaos and overthrowing civilisation.

This graphic novel constitutes an evolution from the relationship between good and evil as we see it in *Swamp Thing*, which draws from the provocative tone of *Marriage* to present a

more positive meaning of evil, to a more sophisticated idea. This new concept is influenced by later works by Blake like *Visions* and the later prophetic works, where the problem of the relationship between good and evil is described as more painful and profound than in *Marriage*.

Blake's and Moore's criticism of instrumental Reason leads them to identify evil with "an excess of scientism, the detachment of subject from object, and obsessive rationalism" (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 18). In Blake, the paradigmatic case of this kind of evil is Urizen. In *Urizen*, the separation between creation and eternity brought about by the Zoa of reason takes the form of a tent and "curtains of darkness" (19.5; E78). The tent is built around the character of Reason itself, Los and Pity (Enitharmon), preventing their communication with the other Eternals. This web, identified with Science, separates perception from vision.

The reference to *Visions* in *From Hell* to allude to Gull's misogyny also takes us to consider how *Visions* pervades the idea of morality in *From Hell*. In *Visions*, the patriarchal evil Bromion, Theotormon and Urizen represent is intimately linked to the Urizenic concepts of Reason and science that Blake developed later in in *Urizen*.[47] Bromion speaks about science and technology as instruments of domination, and of the natural world as subservient to the male, imperial subject:

> Knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
> to gratify senses unknown? Trees beasts and birds unknown:
> Unknown, not unpercievd, spread in the infinite microscope,
> In places yet unvisited by the voyager. and in worlds
> Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown: …. (4.14-8; E48)

Moore must have been aware of these associations between imperialism, patriarchy and certain uses of scientific discourse in *Visions* when he devised Gull as a character that employs said discourse continuously to disparage women and the feminine.

Gull commits the same sin and error in Moore's *From Hell*: over-reliant on his rational powers and knowledge as a brilliant doctor, Gull forgets that the order and Reason he wants to protect will collapse, both inside and outside himself, if he disavows and tries to destroy everything he deems irrational and obscure. As we have begun to surmise in the previous chapter, these dark energies cannot be separated from rationality and light. Satanic evil in *From Hell* signifies the extremes of Reason that, by forgetting irrational energies, let unreason possess the subject (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 12-13). The configuration of the relationship between the diabolic and the satanic, irrationality and reason, through the relationship between male and female representations will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The violence of the satanic is in *From Hell* often attributed to repression of natural energies, which are then turned dangerous and destructive. In chapter 9, page 35 Abberline starts to speak about the numerous letters Scotland Yard received, signed by Jack the Ripper. In the next page, people of all kinds are represented, writing letters as Jack the Ripper. The murderer has now become a collective consciousness, fed by the perversions of the whole nation. One after the other, the panels include an image of the person with a sentence of the letter in his or her handwriting; in page 36, a larger panel concludes the page, including the signature "Jack the

[47] I have developed this relationship in full in my article "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*" (2019).

Ripper." The image conveys the aforementioned idea of the Ripper as an egregor[48] of repressed psychic materials, generated by so-called civilisation, with its supposedly high moral standards: "Gull represents the sexual domination of women not by isolated madmen, but by 'civilized' society in general" (Brigley-Thompson 82). When Abberline receives the unending stream of letters, he asks: "[W]hat kind of men, Godley? What kind of men write stuff like this?" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 9; 35) The mask of the Ripper enables everyone to enact their most perverse fantasies: "Jack the Ripper's views may be extreme, but, according to Moore, they represent an undeniable aspect of attitudes to women in patriarchal societies" (Brigley-Thompson 82).

Gull's murders are motivated by a perverse fascination with the female principle. He appears as a Black magician or priest who misinterprets "Heiros Gamos" ([sic.] "sacred union" or eroticism as a path to enlightenment) as prostitution and mocks the ceremonies of the *unio mystica*. Prostitutes, whom he calls Diana's priestesses, are for him mere commodities that he can possess and control. As Zoe Brigley-Thompson points out, *From Hell* highlights this as part of the conditions of life for women in Victorian London: "Moore suggests that hetaerism (as described by Johann Jakob Bachofen) still exists in the treatment of women in nineteenth century London, where the bodies of prostitutes are the property of any man with a few coins" (Brigley-Thompson 80). Moreover, Gull's jokes about marriage are a dark parody of hierogamy, which ironically suggests that marriage in patriarchy is a means to enslave women:

> [GULL.] Polly, tonight the stars shine just for us. The fates have brought us both towards the place, at the appointed time... whence our names shall go forth together into history.
> [POLLY.] Sir, you make it sound as if we're to be married! Ha ha ha.
> [GULL.] Ha ha! Why not? (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 5; 27)

Gull repeats his parody of hierogamy or alchemical wedding when Anne Chapman offers to go to a hidden place, as he says: "And once then, what then? Shall we be wed? …. You're all my brides" (7; 22).

The "perversely amorous nature between the killer and his victims" (Miettinen 93) is encoded in the reverse hierogamy rites he performs. For some authors the relationship between sex and murder is mere parody (Miettinen 93); however, it also suggests Gull's own degenerate way of fulfilling his aspirations and repressed erotic desire. The climax of the inverted *unio mystica* attained through Gull's black arts takes place at the point in the narrative when in his deranged mind, he has "purified" the women he killed, saved them from their miserable lives and turned them into immortal characters of legend: "Do you understand how I have loved you? You'd have all been dead in a year or two from liver failure, men, or childbirth. Dead. Forgotten. I have saved you. Do you understand that? I have made you safe from time, and we are wed in legend, inextricable within eternity" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 10; 23).

The theme of prostitution as treated in *From Hell* inevitably leads us back to *Visions* and Bromion's branding of Oothoon as a harlot for having expressed her sexual desire for

[48] Egregore (also egregor) is an occult concept Chaos Magic and other types of modern magic take from traditional Golden Dawn magic, representing a "thought-form" or collective group spirit, an autonomous psychic entity made up of, and influencing, the thoughts of a group of people. This usage of the term developed when the idea, developed by Dion Fortune, passed on to her disciple W. E. Butler, who coined the term and explored the concept (see his article "The Egregore of a School", 1970).

Theotormon. The same as Bromion uses this accusatory word against Oothoon as a tool to enslave her and rape her, Gull takes advantage of the stigma of prostitution weighing on the female protagonists to dehumanise them, which allows him to legitimise his murders. He could not have dehumanised other women as easily as prostitutes, already despised and looked down upon by the rest of society, and blamed by it through the myth that certain women fell into the situation out of their own inherent propensity to vice, rather than due to social inequality and misfortune. Thence Gull's wallowing in women's oppression by quoting Blake's *Visions*: "ENSLAV'D, the Daughters of Albion weep: a trembling lamentation" (1.1; E45), whereas in Blake, the line is meant to evoke sympathy. The brand of harlotry also chains Oothoon in the illuminated book to Bromion, as an indissoluble chain of subjection (the literal chain tying Oothoon, often to Bromion himself, in the illuminations) that could not only be a visual metaphor for a power relation, but also of the oppressive aspect that marriage bonds could acquire in the past. This perverse bond is understood by Gull as a mystical union and therefore, also a sort of marriage that he effects with the victims. Gull does not rape his victims, but the conflation of prostitution, rape and marriage serves, as in *Visions* to reveal the covert relationship between accepted social contracts and their more overtly criminal counterparts. In Victorian times, Bachofen's theories promoted the idea that in ancient times *all* women were common property, which is why Gull seems to talk of any sort of women and prostitutes interchangeably. For him, as for many real life misogynists, all women are property.

Gull's aim is to offer the Whitechapel murders as a bloody sacrifice to the sun God, much like Blake's Druids would. But whereas Gull talks very approvingly of the Druid's cruel practices, Blake calls them "Satans Druid Sons" (*M* 11.7; E104), the epitome of satanic evil: authoritarianism, corruption and oppression. In chapter 10, page 3, Gull lights a candle on Marie's bedside table and prepares to mutilate the body. There is a parallelism between Gull's procedure and Blake's description of the ancient goddesses of Albion's ritual sacrifices:

> The Daughters of Albion clothed in garments of needle work
> Strip them off from their shoulders and bosoms, they lay aside
> Their garments; they sit naked upon the Stone of trial.
> The Knife of flint passes over the howling Victim: his blood
> Gushes & stains the fair side of the fair Daug[h]ters of Albion...
> They take off his vesture whole with their Knives of flint:
> But they cut asunder his inner garments: searching with
> Their cruel fingers for his heart, & there they enter in pomp,
> In many tears; & there they erect a temple and an altar …. (Blake, *J* 65.17-29; E218)

The daughters of Albion act of extracting the heart reappears in Gull's fixation with certain organs as the liver. Gull's favourite rhyme ("If I Were a Tailor..." and its relationship to Cleopatra´s Needle, appearing in chapter 4, page 21: "They call it Cleopatra´s Needle. He who'd wield it would the BEST of tailors be") also connects Gull with the Daughters of Albion as weavers and wearers of garments of needle work. As a "tailor", Gull uses a pattern to cut up tissue and refashion it into something else. The tailor's needle is a phallic object metaphorically associated to the obelisk, which is the type of monument Cleopatra´s Needle is, and also stands for the knife, the weapon of sacrifice that he shares with the Daughters of Albion. Finally,

turning a body from a living being full of energies into a sacralised but lifeless and empty temple is what both Gull and the Daughters of Albion seek to do in their quest for purity.

In the same way that the daughters of Albion substitute the physical heart by a cold temple and altar, Gull tries to abstract and spiritualise the organic reality of his victims. This can be seen for instance in the way he believes Polly's womb is "full of light" after murdering her (5; 33). This aspect of sacrifice, deeply connected to the body and sexuality (Whittaker, *William Blake* 164), will be further developed in the next chapter.

The coach ride in chapter 4 leads the reader to the same shock Netley receives: that of assimilating the fatal convergence between Gull's mythical narrative and reality. Gull's definition of sorcery defines himself: "Myths are the key to our Right Brain; the World of Gods, that, like Atlantis, sank beneath the waters of the Age of Reason. That drowned realm of the mind; those intellects that dive the deepest, salvaging its treasures, we call sorcerers." (4; 19). His powerful rhetoric pervades his barbarous ideas (Merriman 38). His interpretation of history is so powerful that it can affect reality itself. His narrative, like Urizen's webs of religion and science, imposes one interpretation of reality over the others. Moore confronts us with a grand master narrative and invites us to mistrust this sort of discourses (Merriman 39). Gull's persuasive language conveys the obsessively detailed character of his use of an esoteric system of correspondences from which nothing escapes. This is a system based on negation that acts as an example of the fascist social manipulation in which what is not solar and male is lunar and female, from buildings to the organs of the body.

In Blake's *Marriage*, references to "The Voice of the Devil" (in the title of many sections), the identification of Jehovah with "he who dwells in flaming fire" (6; E35) as well as the announcement of the forthcoming "Bible of Hell" (24; E44) as a new prophetic text are to a great extent ironic radical strategies to destabilise conventional morality. However, Moore employs a greater relativism in *From Hell*. While at the historical level Gull's actions are clearly depicted as atrocious and evil, some passages assume the perspective of an indifferent universe, detached from both the bleakness of modern society that alienates the characters, and from the manifestations of Gull's evil. This is clearer in the scenes where Gull ascends to the Gods (14; 22), and they limit themselves to calmly direct him to Marie, where she scares him off from her house. He finally ascends into the blank emptiness of the Godhead, an ambivalent ending insofar as it responds to Gull's ultimate mystical goal at the same time that it understates his grand purpose of attainment of divinity as a his mere recycling into the nothingness of the cosmos and the emptiness of the white page (see 14; 24).

Characters such as the women or Lees the psychic, apparently by chance, fall into places in Gull's mythical symbolic connections. Even if these connections are made up or non-existent, an incredible coincidence is narratively put in place to create the effect that Gull's prophecies are fulfilling themselves. From this point of view, the illusion created is that of magical energies "working" independently of the characters, and independently of any moral considerations, as this illusion sometimes favours Gull's intentions, and at others, the illusion favours his enemies. Lees, the psychic, accuses him before inspector Abberline only to humiliate him publicly, although he is unaware that Gull is really the culprit (9; 27). This he does by improvising a vision that brings together the imagery of Gull's symbolism. Lees attains success just by the same means Gull does: by a combination of sheer luck, and insistent adherence to a fiction. This is directly related to the "power of bullshit" the American showman talked about in an earlier chapter (6; 16), that is, the power of imagination or of fiction as it

intertwines with reality. Marie jokes about her and her companions' pitiful state: "Her with her STARVATION, you with your PLAGUES an' Polly with her DEATH-THREATS. We're the four Whores of the Apocalypse" (3; 15). This she says just before Christchurch, thus defying one of the symbols of Gull's network. The phrase "Whores of the Apocalypse" refers to the figure of Babylon, and suggests their potential agency to bring about the end of the patriarchal order they live in. In chapter 9, page 55, Marie will meet a woman at "The Horn o' Plenty", another mythical reference in the name of a pub that connects the women to their archetypal counterparts. These are just a few instances of how the connections Gull uses are sometimes deadly and at others seem to align with characters opposing him. At this level, there is less definition in terms of good and evil in Moore.

The difference between the concepts of good and evil in Blake and Moore could be summarised in the following way: in *From Hell*, Moore, like Blake, establishes precise boundaries between good and evil. Nonetheless, while Blake uses diabolism in an ironic way to attack moral hypocrisy, in Moore there is, additionally, a suspension of judgement about evil deeds when the narrative centres on the magical and mythical level (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 18).

Moore's combination of multiple narrative levels in *From Hell* determined by diverging points of view allows the reader to become conscious of the different historical and mythical levels of the story and to position herself at a distance from the social moral hypocrisy that would see Gull as a freak instead of a result of its inherent cruelty. Gull's depiction and its contrast to other perspectives in the story also warns the reader against the fascination of the spell of evil. Finally, through the narrative developing the link between fiction, magic symbolism and the manipulation of perceptions on reality, the reader is led to understand that Gull's narrative power could be used in ways that foment contrariety.

5.2.3. *Promethea* and the acknowledgement of the inner Satan

This section will be dedicated to an analysis of *Promethea* alongside passages and plate images of Blake's *Marriage* and *Milton* with relevant parallels with *Promethea*. I will first focus on the role of diabolic evil in *Promethea* and compare how Blake and Moore tried to challenge moral conventions in the mentioned works. I will then move on to the analysis of fragments where the conventional representations of evil are presented as illusory (which already happens in Blake's early illuminated books). The third step will be to explore the passages where evil is associated with intolerance in Moore and how it correlates with the notion of negation and tyranny in Blake. Finally, I will compare their ideas on the conquest of evil through acknowledgement of one's inner Satan. In later illuminated books, such as *Milton*, Blake developed this idea of acknowledgement that appears in Moore's *Promethea*.

In *Promethea*, evil appears mostly in its diabolic form. A Christian mob call Promethea's father a "devil worshipper" and a "devil" (1; 1). Henry Royce, the leader of the group, calls Promethea "Harlot of Revelations"; and the Temple call her "devil" and "witch" and state that they are defending the world from the "Whore clad in scarlet and gold" (2; 3). A member of The Temple refers to her as a demon: "that demon's enchanting you" (2; 3). The Temple fears the disruptive implications of Promethea's apocalyptic nature. They cannot imagine the possibility of a new world beyond the one they have contributed to create.

The turn of events in *Promethea* could be compared to the innocence-experience contrast and irony in Blake. This contrast and irony can be found in Blake's illumination representing three children riding a serpent in *Thel* (plate 6) and *America* (plate 11). According to Tristanne Connolly ("He" 240-242), the illumination in Blake's plates suggest that harshness and aggression can be overcome by playful innocence, rather than by more aggression, which comes from negation. Innocence triumphs over an apparently threatening evil represented as serpent in this book. Innocence establishes a relationship with evil that is different from that which experience would establish. In that sense, innocence triumphs over the serpent of evil, but also surpasses experience by confronting evil without fear and dismantling the perceptions that make it more fearful in the world of experience. The mechanism is the same used by Blake in the contrast between the threatening Tyger and his rather harmless and almost child-like representation in the illumination. Promethea arrives to the Temple thinking she will find powerful, evil sorcerers, but she finds a children's birthday celebration. In *Promethea*, while adults fear that Promethea, the lady carrying serpents around her staff, will end the world, children go beyond these prejudices and understand that there is nothing to fear, because Promethea rules the realm of fantasy and fairy-tale.

The Manichean conventions of superhero comics that oppose absolute evil to absolute good are challenged in the aforementioned passage by showing that the divide between good and evil characters was illusory. Instead of opposition, there is a realisation that evil is only caused by fear of the unknown in human creatures that are at least in principle quite harmless and innocent. The Christian fundamentalists are depicted as hypocritical and dogmatic, while the Temple members are only helpless, misled individuals, rather than embodiments of evil. They cannot recognise the divinity of Promethea because she does not fit into their narrowly Biblical, literal, idea of holiness. In fact, the story reveals that it is they that have hired Benny Solomon to unleash the devils of the Goetia on her. Again, a hidden complicity between the conventionally good (the self-righteous fanatics) and the radically evil devil-summoning black magician is revealed. Promethea's intervention evidences their misunderstanding of Christianity and spirituality in general:

> [PRU.] Th-they're children. In Christ's name, don't harm them…
> [PROMETHEA.] You dare? You dare invoke the name of Christ? When you have murdered? When you have made compact with hell? The lord Christ is more kin to me than you could ever comprehend. We are both sacred… (2; 3)

The confusion of the children's birthday party with an evil ceremony provides a subtext for the utopian dimension of *Promethea* where the playfulness of imagination (and sex, as we will see in the next chapter of this thesis) vanquishes prejudice and violence, together with hypocritical, conventional or simplistic ideas of good and evil. The author addresses the necessity to overcome conventional moral labels, as spirits, good or evil, are finally revealed in Moore's graphic novel as different manifestations of the human in all the dimensions that make it complete:

> Know that the scorched-black demons and the pristine, fluttering seraphs are in some sense naught but you yourself unpacked, unfolded in a higher space from whence the myriad gods unfurl, not bygone legends but your once and future selves, your attributes blossomed into their purest and most potent symbol-

> forms. And these, with all their beast-heats, crowns and lightnings, all their different colours, are become combined into the single whiteness that is Godhead. That is all (5; 6).

In the image, demons and angels intertwine in a garland between the multiplicity of gods and the ultimate source of divinity.

In both Blake and in Moore, the satanic point of view is judged as erroneous because it imposes single vision. Every opinion or idea presented as just and valuable must include the possibility of dialogue and understanding with its contrary. In Moore, the dialectics between angels and diabolic devils follow this pattern. In *Promethea*, the protagonists engage in a discussion of how the nature of angels and demons determine their perspectives: "We can only see in others what we recognize from ourselves, okay? Now, I'm an angel. We look at life, an' that's all we see, man. Angels." Asmodeus, as a devil, can only think that "the angels are running a scam" (3; 6). This passage counteracts the idea that there is a single vision by presenting a celestial and a diabolic point of view as dependent on perceptions, rather than on intrinsic moral qualities. Asmodeus is presented in a diabolic mode, which makes him a contrary to the Angel Boo-Boo rather than a negation. Boo-Boo exemplifies how an Angel can understand the devil's point of view, and not only his own. The angel Boo-Boo teaches the protagonists that angels and demons are actually contraries, the two sides of the same coin: "part of the same thing." Boo-Boo seems to like and feel attracted even to Asmodeus and says he "ain't so bad" (3; 6).

In the eighteenth issue of *Promethea*, "Life on Mars", the passage I have already referred to illustrate the topics of perception and vision is also adequate to explore the topic of evil. The protagonists accidentally access the "other side of the tree" (3; 6) of life while they are visiting the sphere of Geburah, the severity of God. Barbara's guardian angel, Boo-Boo, explains that Good is "sacred energy" and "meaning", metaphysical evil is the absence of this energy. This "other side of the tree" is composed of shells instead of spheres: "The Qlippoths are generally understood as Hells, although the word means 'husks' or 'shells'. It's what remains when the sacred energy of things has departed. The sacred energy is meaning" (3; 6).

The definition of good as sacred meaning and of evil as absence of it (which is a classical definition of evil), however, only holds with respect to the mythical dimension of the narrative. Instead of questioning the reality of evil, as the Parliament of Trees did in *Swamp Thing*, *Promethea* redefines evil in the everyday world as a result of the fear of the unknown. It shows that it is not *Promethea* who should be feared, but the consequences of fanaticism. Evil is in the intolerance of fundamentalism.

The representations of Moore's two warring Prometheas in chapter 24, "Cross, Star, Moon, Shapes in the Sand (Everything Goes Wrong)" can be compared to Blake's *Good and Evil Angels*, where two characters at opposite sides of the picture fight over a child. Moore's Prometheas are Sophie, recently returned from her travels in Immateria, and Stacia, her friend. While Sophie was away, Stacia had stayed as a Promethea on earth to substitute her. On Sophie's return, Stacia has fallen in love with Grace Brannagh, one of the previous Prometheas, who Stacia can summon into herself for instruction about Promethea's magic. This power is only granted while she is substituting Sophie, but when Sophie returns, Stacia does not want to abandon the role and stop meeting Grace in the Immateria, inside her dreams. Both Sophie and Stacia seem to have forgotten their lessons on contrariety and engage in a violent confrontation, each trying to impose on the other. The narration goes back to medieval times, when the

Christian and the Muslim Promethea clashed and negated each other. The whole issue experiments with symmetrical structures, blue and yellow complementary colours and mirror images to underscore the characters' contrariety.

Blake's drawing emphasises the contrariety through colour and background motifs; the evil angel has reddish skin tones, whereas the good angel's complexion is white. The evil angel is bound and tries to spring out of the fire, while the good angel hovers over ocean waters. The main theme of the angels fighting over a child also connects Moore's chapter to Blake's drawing, as the common spirit of Promethea shared by her two incarnations is said to be a child several times and depicted as such in chapter 6 of volume 4. In the next episode "A Higher Court", King Solomon, appearing as another character from the Immateria, resolves the conflict between Stacia and Sophie by ascertaining who of the two characters has more right on the Child basing his verdict on their respect for the integrity of the Child rather than desire for its possession. He does this by offering to divide the Child into two, so that each character can have a half of the spirit of Promethea. Sophie refuses to accept this solution and is prepared to renounce possession of the powers to guarantee the unity of the spirit, for which reason Solomon concludes it is Sophie that deserves to incarnate the spirit of imagination; the spirit of Promethea should not be coveted merely for the power it bestows. In both Blake and Moore, the child represents the vital and spiritual energies that should not be objectified, because of which none of the Angels in Blake could possess it and Stacia is deprived of it. In Blake, the image and the title convey the questioning of conventional moral categories, whereas Moore focuses on the overcoming of religious intolerance. In the text of the previous issue, Sophie and Stacia'a conflict is likened to that between the medieval Muslim and Byzantine Prometheas:

> At last, tiring of the world, Promethea dwelled with Saints and Houris amongst sweet Paradise gardens of the Right and Only God. Likewise, Promethea quit eventually this mortal realm for palaces of Heaven, with the One True Lord there to abide. And they knew nothing of each other, both in differing Elysiums that did not conceive of a dominion save their own. And so the spirit of Promethea was divided in herself and did not know it (4; 5).

Moore presents the child as a common spirit of humanity that goes beyond the differences between religions. In this sense, he is presenting a figure that partakes of Blake's notion of the human form divine, the universal love and imagination whereby all humanity is the same great human self in unity with nature and in a visionary state.

Plates 17-20 of *Marriage* contain descriptions that provide us with clues about the nature of devils that expand Blake's descriptions and characterisations elsewhere. The Angel and the poet see their fate in an abyss:

> … the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us at an immense distance was the sun, black but shining [;] round it were fiery tracks on which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey; which flew or rather swum in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption. & the air was full of them, & seemd composed of them; these are Devils. and are called Powers of the air (18; E41).

St. Paul (Eph. ii, 2) follows the traditional association between the element air and the devils as Blake recalls: "The Bible says that God created Nature perfect, but that Man perverted the order of Nature, since which time the Elements are fill'd with the Prince of Evil, who has the power of the air" (Blake qtd. in Frye 131). The frightening description of the Abyss and the Leviathan uses conventional language such as fire imagery to describe infernal torment. Though some elements may have esoteric meanings, such as the black sun and the insects and the vermin (often found in alchemy), the vision is illusory, provoked by the Angel's notions of morality. The black and white spiders and other elements recall, according to Damon, traditional ideas of good and evil and natural morality (240). The vision of one of the hells or qlippoth in *Promethea* is remarkably like this Abyss: in chapter 6 of volume 3 (individual issue 18), Promethea and her friends fall into the qlippoth of Geburah[49], a fiery red abyss of fury full of spiders ascribed to the demon king Asmodeus. This vision also proves to be illusory and caused by a conventional idea of evil.

As in Blake's Leviathan passage from *Marriage*, in *Promethea* the metaphysical journey takes the heroines to the Abyss. In Moore, the Abyss is that of Daath, a collapsed invisible Kabbalistic sphere that stands at the gap separating the higher faculties of the human soul from the supernal triad of the Godhead and the absolutes they represent. The passage of Daath is also a fall into an abyss with an ocean at its bottom, a "clifftop leap into this dark, great sea" (4; 2). In the illuminated book, the vision of the hellish abyss is said to have been merely an "appearance" (19; E41) caused by the Angel's imposition of his own metaphysics. In the graphic novel passage, the Abyss is a place where the characters are under the illusory impression that they are walking on a desert, the secret Sephira, which does not really exist but in their minds, as evidenced at the end of the issue: "Nothing else, none of the rest, was true, save this interminable drop" (4; 2). This is not however, the product of any imposition on one another, but a creation of the mind to survive the fall. This reveals that Daath is a virtual place. Their own psyches have created the desert where they are walking, because the endless fall into the Abyss is unbearable for their minds. For this reason, it appears less as a result of an intellectual metaphysics than perhaps a view of the universe as barren but mentally more comprehensible. However, there are no textual clues as to what is the exact origin of this vision, except mental survival, whereas in Blake the poet explicitly blames the Angel's metaphysics. In Daath, the vision of the desert is necessary to go through the Abyss and survive; in the Blakean Abyss, it seems the vision prevents mental integrity rather than preserving it. Both in Blake and Moore's passages the sea-like Abyss is an illusion. However, whereas in *Marriage* the Abyss is the product of an imposition of single vision, in Moore it is the individual mind itself that creates this mirage for self-protection.

The appearance in Daath of vaguely Lovecraftian,[50] phosphorescent monstrous forms resembling prehistoric sea creatures represents the chaotic elements of the universe that did not make it into material existence (4; 2). They are the refuse left after the transition from the original universe where God and Man were one to the fallen creation where they are separated. In Moore's interpretation of Kabbalistic narratives, creation is a manifestation of the original divine energy into material existence. However, this flow of sacred meaning from God onto the

[49] A Kabbalistic sephira or "heaven" ascribed to God's severity.

[50] The Lovecraftian allusion is explicit in the graphic novel, as one of the women refers to the creatures as "something H.P. Lovecraft pulled out of his nose" (4; 2). The atavistic nature of Lovecraft's monsters is replicated in Moore's Daath, as they all have a mixture of marine, insectoid and reptilian forms resembling the animals found in prehistoric fossils.

earthly plane collapsed at some point. Some divine meaning came down to Earth (often symbolised through Sophia, Promethea or Christ), but another part of it remained unmanifested, hidden in these supernal spheres the characters visit. The monsters represent these elements that could not take form. The parallel between Blake's passage of *Marriage* and the monsters in Moore's depiction of Daath can be seen in Blake's Leviathan emerging from the waters: a marine creature coloured, like the swirling creatures of the Abyss, in otherworldly hues like crimson, green or purple (18; E41), represented in the illumination of plate 20 of copy H. In Blake's plates, Leviathan is connected to conventional imagery of Hell, which is directly a product of the imposition of the Angel's metaphysics, therefore satanic; here the human who follows his or her own energies is punished. In Daath, however, the moral connotations are absent from the theme. There is no imposition, or at least not a direct and conscious one, and not from one individual on another. If only, there can be a vague cultural logocentric or rationalistic notion of understanding at play in the characters' minds that prevents them from assimilating the Abyss as such. However, they gradually discover a new, intuitive and experiential way of understanding the place. Rather than traditional imagery of hell, we are presented a rendition of the unmanifested as described by occultists like Kenneth Grant, who tried to focus on the contrast between conscious and unconscious, without associating them with good and evil.

Angels like Boo-Boo or supra-human spirits like Promethea cannot accompany the protagonists through the Abyss: the human women must survive the test of the Abyss alone. The characters are now traversing a realm that goes beyond the spheres that represent the human qualities. As in *From Hell*, the everyday human, the moral sphere is left behind once the narrative enters a more abstract mythical dimension. The place symbolises a type of knowledge away from ordinary empirical, logic and even linguistic notions of sense and meaning. This is indicated by the references to unconsciousness, unreality, absence of concepts, in-betweenness, negativity and incomprehensibility. At the end of the vision of Daath, Barbara and Sophie witness the scene of Crowley invoking the demon of dispersal, Choronzon. When he appears, the women undergo an experience of annihilation, although it proves to be an illusion that could represent, as Spare tells the women, a knowledge of self or consciousness through its absence, a "knowledge knowable only by its absence" (4; 2). This is a negative sublime, represented through the paradoxes Spare communicates to Sophie and Barbara. The paradoxes help convey the unpresentable and total or partial incommunicable nature of this sublime. Sophie and Barbara's illusion of annihilation is an experience of the idea of non-being they find so hard to understand. This incommunicable negative concept is a more Postmodern sublime, that has less in common with Blake, and where we can see the influence of other authors such as Borges[51], to whose Aleph Moore had already paid homage in *Swamp Thing* 62, "Wavelength" (ch. 6 in vol. 6).

These two passages show the contrast between Blake's use of conventional imagery of evil to denounce the satanic and Moore's attempt to depict imaginative realms that would be completely independent from these codes. Thus, in Blake it is the Angel who imposes the fear

[51] Borges's short stories often deal with the incommunicability or insolvability of certain riddles that inoculate the mind with a sublime conducive to derangement, especially by contraposing elements such as eternity and time, the infinite and the finite, the all and nothingness, truth and forgery or temporal paradoxes. Thus, in "El Aleph" (1945), the protagonist remains silent after his perturbing vision of a prodigious object that condenses all visions into one single moment in time and point in space.

of certain imagery of evil and hell as a place of punishment for the energetic. He is presented as a figure who would trap man in a limited, contracted world, as Satan would do in later poems. In Moore the fearsome atmosphere represents the way the unpresentable disturbs the mind, rather than any conventional Gothic imagery of Hell, and the only Angel, Boo-Boo does not act in opposition to it. The illusion is not provoked by her specific metaphysics, but by both characters, and it eventually fades, not by understanding that the conventional representation of evil is illusory, but rather by acquiring a different way of intuiting and experiencing non-being.

A more decisive similitude between Blake and Moore is their criticism of the morality of conventional religion. Blake communicates a deeper sense of justice beyond hypocritical concepts of good and evil in *Marriage* in the "Memorable Fancy" where a devil converts an Angel to Hell's cause by revealing the diabolic nature of Christ's rebellion against law and previous tradition:

> … if Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbaths God? murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery? steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate? covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules (23-24; E43).

Green suggests the duality of Babalon-Marie in Moore can be compared to Blake's portrayal of the figure of Christ in *Marriage* as a reprobate: "Christ himself is kept on the margins of *Promethea*, but the messianic role that 'The Wine of Her Fornications' accords to the double-vision of Babalon ⁄ Marie can be read as a female version of the contrasting descriptions of Christ given by the Angel and Devil on plates 22 to 24 of *Marriage* (E43)" ("She" 746) In Blake, it is the Angel's assertion that mortal men are "fools, sinners, & nothings" (23; E43) that prompts the devil to argue, against the Angel's idea of holiness, that the divine is immanent in the human and that Christ was a man and indeed a sinner. In *Marriage*, Blake's devil argues for the identity of great men and God; in "The Wine of Her Fornications", Moore argues for the identity of woman and God, even in her conventionally more abject, sinful, destitute or even bad selves: as a slave, a prostitute, and as Babylon / Babalon herself: "About the markets of the World I am sent bare, until the worst of creatures may lie down with me" (4; 3). In this respect, Moore goes beyond the point Blake could go in his time, by transforming Babylon and reintegrating her with Marie, thus undoing the false patriarchal opposition between the satanic Harlot and the Virgin Mary. It is also possible to see this process at play in Blake, but it is much more debatable than in Moore, especially considering the influence of more traditional readings, and the contradictions and difficulties Blake faced to treat gender topics. I will continue analysing this question in the next chapter (ch. 6).

In earlier issues, devils appear characterised as gangsters (1; 2). They behave and are portrayed, except in their human avatars, very much like in the Goetia and Medieval texts, as creatures a mixture of animal and human. The card of "The Devil" appears in chapter 7 of volume 4, standing for the forces of the state that control agents Ball and Breughel. In issue 12,

"Metaphore" (chapter 6 of volume 2), Moore used the Devil Tarot trump to explain the historical damage caused by materialism and the Industrial Revolution, more satanic than the devils of the second issue. This use is indebted to Blake's later Satans,[52] which referred to the same alienating forces of political institutions and the philosophies legitimising them.

In his early illuminated books, Blake employed the figure of Satan in a diabolic sense – as an image of rebellion, desire, passion and heroic, primeval energy – rather than as a negation, as he did in *Milton* (Damon 357). The most important example of Satan's symbolism in early illuminated books is the comparison between him and Christ in *Marriage*. Blake equates Christ ("Messiah") with the Giants or the Titans, "Messiah or Satan or Tempter was formerly thought to be one of The Antediluvians who are our Energies" (17; E40-41), precisely because he sought to maintain contrariety, and not destroy it, and because like the Greek Titans he was an energy repressed by a sky-God (Bloom, Introduction 18). Blake compares Christ to Satan because he set Christ apart from conventional religion; nonetheless, he "did not wish to unite but to seperate them [the Prolific and the Devourer], as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword" (17; E40). This reading of Christ as a rebel like Satan can be associated to Promethea, a redeeming spirit that is often seen as evil by characters such as the Temple members.

The serpent, traditionally a Satanic figure, is also used by Blake and Moore in ways that underline these ideas about the diabolic and the satanic. In Moore, it is a positive emblem (in *Promethea* no. 32, "Wrap Party," chapter 7 of vol. 5, the word "nechesh" [serpent], has the same Kabbalistic numerical value as "messiach") and connotes the type of diabolic evil that Blake attributed to Christ in his early illuminated books. The serpent in Moore stands for magic and for the natural impulse of bodily life to rise above earthly material existence and become also alive in the world of the spirit (see issue 23, "The Serpent and the Dove" [4; 4]), as opposed to the dove, a symbol of spiritual being sacrificing eternity to live in the material world. Druidic serpent temples are usually a symbol of satanic evil for Blake, with exceptions such as plate 100 of *Jerusalem*, where Avebury appears as a magical device to resurrect Albion, operated by Los and Enitharmon in perfect harmony (Whittaker, *William Blake* 185-186). Orc, the spirit of revolution sometimes transformed into a snake, increasingly turns into an ambivalent figure as Blake throughout the years modulated his views on political revolution. Orc is, according to Frye, "a serpent bound on the tree of mystery, dependent upon it, yet struggling to get free" (136-137). While Blake's Orc in a serpent form tries to get free from mystery, from nature, the serpent in Moore, despite rising above earthly existence *is* organic life, the DNA coil itself, trespassing the frontier between flesh and spirit to become alive in both worlds. It does not want to get free from itself, but rather from the abstractions and limits that govern the ordinary sphere, like Orc tries to get rid of religious mystery and Deist natural law.

The Orc cycle solves the apparent contradiction in the meaning of the serpent by defining Orc and Satan as different stations in the cycle (Frye 137). However, Frye often overemphasises Orc, who actually disappears from many books such as *The Book of Ahania* (1795), where he is replaced by the character of Fuzon, Urizen's son. Frye's theory is useful to make sense of the ambivalence of Orc and his serpent symbolism, yet it goes too far in the implications of the correspondences he establishes by giving Blake's myths a final form when he actually had not achieved a solution to the problems of revolution. Ultimately, this could mean that the

[52] In pp. 140-141 I have offered a detailed analysis of the figure of Satan in Blake, and in pp. 164-166 and 171-172 I will deal with the similarities and differences between him and the characters in Moore.

transformation of Orcian revolutionary energies into Urizenic tyranny does not necessarily describe an eternal return, as Frye concludes.[53] In terms of serpent symbolism, therefore, this means that the snake forms of Orc, while retaining certain ambivalence, do not always necessarily point to a negative, satanic eternal return. The serpent symbolises the fallen body (136), but before the fall the serpent was "a creature of terrible strength and beauty like the tiger, its scales glittering precious stones, its head crested with gold, the image of tyrannical pride, like Milton's Satan when his form had not yet lost all her original brightness" (137). In Moore's *Promethea* the serpent as a symbol of material, fleshly, organic life is given the attributes of the unfallen aspect of the serpent. There is more emphasis in the "original brightness" of the serpent, identifying it with bodily life as holy and good in itself.

In other representations of snakes in Blake, their position with respect to human figures helps interpret their value. For instance, snakes coiling around human figures normally suggest satanic evil, such as in "Job's Evil Dreams", plate 13 of the Linnell set of his *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (composed in 1823-1826; although there is a similar one in the Butts set, from 1805-1810) or "The Temptation and Fall of Eve" from his *Illustrations to Milton's Paradise Lost* (both the 1807 Thomas and 1808 Butts sets). This is not the case in Moore, where the serpent coiling around a female body almost invariably refers to the Tarot trump of the Universe, which he interprets as the creative combination of imagination (the woman or celestial goddess) and matter or material life (the snake, which he compares to the spiral structure of DNA). Moore does adopt the Ophite meanings of the serpent Blake does not usually adopt (Whittaker, *William Blake* 124-125), which raises the likely possibility that he was aware of Blake's attitude towards the serpent as a religious symbol, and the questions whether his own choice indicates a will to swerve or complete Blake's legacy, or even if he consciously adopts this interpretation of serpent imagery contrary to Blake's.

A parallel scene to Promethea's realisation of the conventional origin of the horrors of the qlippoth of Geburah happens in the ordinary world when Sophie-Promethea accompanies her friend Barbara up the Tree of Life after her passing to the afterlife, in quest of her beloved Steve. Stacia and Grace must learn the true way to conquer demons by acknowledging them as internal, as Sophie and Barbara do in the metaphysical realms. Stacia reflects on the nature of demons:

> You're the eternal evil within mankind, didn't you say? It's the "within" part that interests me. You're part of us somehow, aren't you?
> [DEMON.] … we're clearly a part of you that you can't control.
> [STACIA.] No. We can't. Not until we stop pretending that you're some force outside us …. Not until we're prepared to own you. … the opposite of disowning you, pretending you're not part of us. You, for example, Vepar. You cause turbulence. You kill men, cruelly. I've done that. I accept you, Vepar. I own you (3; 6).

Meanwhile, in the Immateria, Sophie argues that they must acknowledge their own evil

[53] This has been discussed by Christopher Z. Hobson in "The myth of Blake's 'Orc Cycle'" (2015). Hobson develops a radical criticism of the whole theory of the Orc cycle. While his assessment of the gaps in Frye's theory is very valid, I only follow his criticism insofar as there is no indication in Blake that the cycle is an eternal recurrence. As regards the hidden identification of Orc and Urizen, there is evidence from Blake's books (such as the parallels in the depictions of Orc and Urizen) that incline me to preserve that aspect of Frye's theory.

side:

> [BARBARA] Sophie, it's scum! Demons, they're $%&ing scum, they're filth, they're…
> [SOPHIE] No, Barbara. No hate, no fear. No anger. It just chews that stuff up and feeds it back to us. Lord Asmodeus, we've trespassed here, and treated you without respect. Forgive us.
> [ASMODEUS] That's better. In fact, that's much better" (3; 6).

This passage combines the idea of surpassing conventional notions of evil, as in Blake's passage of *Marriage* where the poet and the angel see the abyss of Leviathan, with the overcoming of the tendency to negation. Where in the Parliament of Trees in *Swamp Thing* or earlier issues of *Promethea* such as the aforementioned issue 18 (ch. 6 of vol. 3), it is suggested that evil is an illusion created by moral conventions (although causing the pernicious effect of turning positive energies into negative), in this issue of *Promethea*, it is not so. The devils are evil in themselves, not the effect of turning vital energies into negative forces; even so, they are conceived as a part of humanity and not something external to it. Stacia's insight constitutes an example of how self-awareness, rather than self-righteousness or the abjection of an external evil (without realising one's own), leads to an understanding of dark energies. This is how devils in *Promethea* can be transformed from satanic into diabolic.

Stacia's acknowledgement of her own evil drives, and her realisation that to deny evil in herself will make it stronger holds another Blakean reminiscence. We can observe a similar dynamics of acknowledgement in Milton's refusal to destroy Satan in Blake's *Milton*. The poet discovers that the only way to triumph over satanic evil is to acknowledge that it is an integral part of oneself. What compounds the problem of evil is externalising one's evil tendencies. Evil is intrinsic, which is the reason why it can only be overcome through a self-annihilation that implies the destruction of the idols of natural religion:[54] "The Idol Virtues of the Natural Heart, & Satans Seat / … in all its Selfish Natural Virtue …." (38.46-47; E139):

> Satan! my Spectre! I know my power thee to annihilate
> And be a greater in thy place, & be thy Tabernacle
> A covering for thee to do thy will, till one greater comes
> And smites me as I smote thee & becomes my covering.
> Such are the Laws of thy false Heavns! but Laws of Eternity
> Are not such: know thou: I come to Self Annihilation
> Such are the Laws of Eternity that each shall mutually
> Annihilate himself for others good, as I for thee
> Thy purpose & the purpose of thy Priests & of thy Churches
> Is to impress on men the fear of death; to teach
> Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject selfishness
> Mine is to teach Men to despise death & to go on
> In fearless majesty annihilating Self, laughing to scorn
> Thy Laws & terrors, shaking down thy Synagogues as webs
> I come to discover before Heavn & Hell the Self righteousness
> In all its Hypocritic turpitude, opening to every eye

[54] See *There Is No Natural Religion*.

These wonders of Satans holiness shewing to the Earth
The Idol Virtues of the Natural Heart, & Satans Seat
Explore in all its Selfish Natural Virtue & put off
In Self annihilation all that is not of God alone:
To put off Self & all I have ever & ever Amen (38.29-49; E139).

Once evil is acknowledged as inherent, the poet can fight against the works of evil, which consist in: "to teach / Trembling & fear, terror, constriction; abject selfishness" (38.38-39; E139). Only then, the process that involves the reintegration with his female emanation Ololon can begin. The whole process involves an apocalyptic change that entails expansion and triggers the regeneration of humanity. Milton attempts to liberate his Emanation from Satan, who is only satanic, pure negation itself. When Satan disappears (since negation has been overthrown) Ololon appears and a part of her transforms into a dove that enters Milton's soul, and the rest of her transforms into the bloodied garments of Apocalypse. Ololon was, like other Emanations, trapped inside Satan, the same as happens with Jerusalem, the lost emanation *par excellence*:

I also stood in Satans bosom & beheld its desolations!
A ruind Man: a ruind building of God not made with hands;
Its plains of burning sand, its mountains of marble terrible:
Its pits & declivities flowing with molten ore & fountains
Of pitch & nitre: its ruind palaces & cities & mighty works;
Its furnaces of affliction in which his Angels & Emanations
Labour with blackend visages among its stupendous ruins
Arches & pyramids & porches colonades & domes:
In which dwells Mystery Babylon, here is her secret place
From hence she comes forth on the Churches in delight
Here is her Cup filld with its poisons, in these horrid vales
And here her scarlet Veil woven in pestilence & war:
Here is Jerusalem bound in chain (38.15-27; E139).

Separating the devils from oneself in Moore's story involves committing Urizen's mistake and initiating an endless chain of separations and falls. Trying to annihilate the other is Satan's mistake, one that would turn Milton or Stacia into negations, perpetuating the vicious circle. Once negation is rejected in oneself, the diabolic can be liberated. Self-annihilation, then, must be understood as a refusal to impose one's vision on the other, a rejection of Selfhood, the "innate selfishness with which we are born" that can develop into the Spectre and one's Satan (Damon 356-357). Damon's definition leaves out any ideological components of Selfhood, whereas Frye defines Selfhood in Blake as man's natural essence, which was used to justify tyranny (58). It is a state of "animal self-absorption" (58) out of which humanity should develop. In states of tyranny, this instinct of self-preservation is defended as the right to power of some individuals over others. Blake associated this notion of the human self to the faculties of memory and reflection (Frye 58), when their pre-eminence creates an empire of single vision. Many other characterisations of Satan in the illuminated book present him as the spirit of imposition and as concealing the destructive nature of his acts behind an appearance of fraternal concern and affection. Palamabron, who represents the compassion of the prophet, says:

You know Satans mildness and his self-imposition,

> Seeming a brother, being a tyrant, even thinking himself a brother
> While he is murdering the just …. (*M* 7.21-23; E100)

Although the explicit references remain in the background, the analysed examples from *Promethea* prove Blake's influence on Moore's treatment of good and evil in this graphic novel. Blake uses the codes of Christian tradition, while Moore tries to establish other parameters, such as the esoteric and psychoanalytic views on manifestation and the unconscious, to structure his universe. Both Blake's and Moore's characters battle the imposition of teachings of fear of death and constriction. In Moore, the limits preventing knowledge of the universe are not evil in a moral sense, they are the result of a sublime meaning of absence in creation that must be assimilated. Both Blake and Moore fight against forms of contraction, that is, of entrapment in matter, but there is no specific enemy in Moore, and the idea of infernal punishment is discarded. The conventional idea of evil is rejected as an illusory projection in the passage of *Marriage* where the poet sees the Abyss; the same as happens in Moore, but Blake increasingly tends use more clear cut ideas of good and evil, while Moore is more relativistic. The idea of evil in later works by Blake and in Moore corresponds to tyranny as the imposition of a single vision and of self-preservation in the inner sphere. In the external sphere of Blake's fictional world, there is an ideological component of self-preservation that is used to justify authoritarian institutions and that reinforces the disfunction of faculties. In Moore's *Promethea*, imposition of a single belief is connected to intolerance, a fear of the unknown rooted as well in blind self-preservation and its ideological use, in response to global politics after 9/11. The remedy proposed in both cases begins by the acknowledgement of one's potentially imposing and selfish nature, one's devils or Satan.

5.2.4. The Gothic representation of evil in Moore and Blake

In this section, I will compare some passages from Moore's *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, on the one hand, and from Blake's *America* and *Urizen*, on the other. I will explain the concern with freedom running through these works and their use of the Gothic to portray the evil consequences of the liberation of energies in the pursuit of absolute freedom. Both in Blake and in Moore, horror often expresses anxiety before the pursuit of freedom, which in these narratives appears as a problematic concept that equally inspires hope and fear. In the case of Blake, it is fear before revolution; in the case of Moore, before the liberation from ordinary notions of reality. Revolution in Blake and the radical change of a hegemonic definition of reality in Moore appear dramatised as apocalyptic scenarios.

I will first examine the terrifying consequences for humanity of the liberation of repressed energies in Moore's Lovecraftian works where the idea of absolute freedom not only involves liberation from conventional moral conceptions, but also originates the possibility of unrestrained evil. I will then consider Blake's change of attitude towards revolution and the consequent Gothic metamorphoses of character and place in the aforementioned works. Thirdly, I will analyse examples from Blake and Moore where monstrous transformations reflect fear of unrestricted liberation of energies. A fourth part of the discussion will deal with the apocalyptic as liberation of repressed energies, which is inseparable from a sense of potentially terrific sublime and always announced through a prophetic discourse. A fifth part will deal with the symbolism of the figures that embody the liberated energies, more

particularly, with the similarities and differences between the figures of Moore's Cthulhu and Blake's Orc, both of which have Christ-like and Satan-like attributes at different moments, which creates an uncanny ambiguity about them.

In recent times, Moore's works have adopted a more pessimistic position that would seem to counterpoint his playful and colourist reading of Blake in *Promethea*. *Neonomicon* and *Providence* are immersions in a world of ideas and sensations that are repugnant to good taste and common sense. Both are graphic novels based on Lovecraft's works where the protagonists experience great revelations in the encounters with the monstrous, the fearful, and the diabolic.

There is a shift as regards the connection between freedom and radical transformations in both Blake's bleaker experiments in the Lambeth books (such as *America*, *Urizen*, *Europe* and *Song of Los*) and in Moore's Lovecraftian graphic novels.[55] In *Urizen*, the poetic voice became more ambivalent towards the revolutions in France and America, having realised that they had increasingly turned to violence. Blake had expressed enthusiasm about revolution, but these social and political events, which had initially signalled for him a moment of great spiritual awakening, now seemed to him new forms of oppression. Blake reflected this new attitude through the imagery and the tone of his books. The creative and vital energy that he celebrated in *Marriage* had been perverted, he believed, by Deism and war. Moore shows a similar change of attitude towards the liberating energies of utopia from the uplifting views shown in *Promethea*, where psychedelic aesthetics and magic are used in a celebratory and utopian mood, to the more pessimistic perspective in *Neonomicon* that reflects disillusionment towards the 1960s' countercultural movements. This new attitude has partly to do with the upsurge of cults and dangerous individuals such as Charles Manson, but also, more importantly, with the incapacity of countercultural utopia to overcome the dominant values of hegemonic culture and prevent the distortion of its ideals. Moore himself confessed having been victim of a naïf faith in utopian countercultural discourses. But, even though in his Lovecraftian works Moore hints at the mercantilisation of countercultural movements, this deeper cause of distortion of ideals remains of secondary importance for him.[56]

In *Promethea*, the Age of Aquarius is described as a period with some downfalls albeit one that, in the perspective of history as a whole, is still one of advancement of rights and freedoms. Even if in the end the original revolutionary impulse was domesticated, became mercantilised, or channelled dangerous forces, it did not leave the world as it was before. Some positive changes have taken place. In *Neonomicon*, however, Moore focuses on the downfalls: counterculture was impotent before consumerism and the hippie promise of imaginative liberation was emptied out and turned into a means to objectify others through glib interpretations of the sexual revolution. Moore reacts to this with a pessimistic, though not a sceptical vision as regards the utopian ideals themselves. He continues to refer to the core

[55] Building from the fundamental connections pointed out in chapter 4 between Blake and Lovecraftian cosmic horror, despite their apparent disparity, Blake and Lovecraft are linked through the themes of imaginative vision, the transformation of perceptions, apocalypse and terror-inducing materialistic points of view (the latter being experimental or momentary for Blake, rather than his habitual stance, like it was for Lovecraft).

[56] Another important element in the New Age culture originated in the 1960s was the development and expression of the self (Heelas, *New Age Movement*), and the interest in the search for the deepest core of the individual self through different techniques (such as Fritz Perls's workshops or Werner Erhard's Seminar Training, all derived from Reichian psychoanalysis) This search resulted in the discovery that the essential centre of identity is almost nothing, (see *Century* 13:29-15:48, 31:14-34:42).

utopian elements of the 1960s as a good idea in their origin, but he also speaks of his own and others' naïve faith in utopias that could not resist the test of reality.[57]

Moore reveals depravity nesting where higher ideals used to be and in what was left of a brighter Neo-Romantic utopia. In order to show these depraved or utopian possibilities, Moore uses the Gothic theme of a horrible dimension lying under our reassuringly familiar reality. As in Lovecraft, the worst lies in the possibility that the nightmare is more real than the waking world.

The liberation of repressed energies has dangerous consequences in *Neonomicon*. Chapter 2, "The Shadow out of America", confronts the reader with the violent implications of the idea of absolute freedom. This episode reverses the utopian aspirations to liberation and, more specifically, the 1960s hippie and New Age expectations, by using the dangerous side of Blakean liberation in a similar way in which Dibdin used it in *Dark Spectre* (Larrissy, *Blake* 93). The activities of the characters take place in the (metaphorical) underground, a surrogate of the unconscious, where libidinal energies have turned hostile, brutal and aggressive. The heroine, Brears, and her colleague, Lamper, infiltrate a group of occult adepts that seek the liberation of sexual energy by celebrating orgies with the humanoid sea creatures they summon. The absolute freedom the adepts enjoy in the Gothic labyrinth below Salem, away from everyday society and its rules, ends up breeding horror when they discover the infiltrated protagonists are FBI agents and decide to rape Brears and murder Lamper.

Another consequence of the freedom enjoyed below Salem is codified in Brears' trauma deriving from rape and other terrible events lived in the underground such as the murder of her colleague Lamper and the encounter with a strange sea-dwelling humanoid creature. Through Brears trauma, the Romantic sublime returns in darker forms.[58] As a consequence of her trauma, she reinterprets her rape as a sort of annunciation that signals her as a chosen woman.[59] From an ordinary point of view, the idea that Brears is gestating the legendary Cthulhu, whose birth will bring a radical change into the world, is only a fantasy; this is what happens when she speaks to her manager, who ignores what really happened. But since the narrative establishes that dreams will constitute reality while ordinary reality will descend to the category of dreams, her "fantasies" come true and she really becomes the mother of Cthulhu. This change of dreams into reality and vice versa, which was pictured as good in Moore's earlier work, in *Neonomicon* and *Providence* is shown to have at best uncertain consequences, and at worst to cause senseless annihilation. I have already mentioned the reference to Aldo Sax's crimes in the first issue of *Neonomicon*. Issue 12 of *Providence*, "The Book", also show how at the moment of apocalypse, the signifying systems of the new reality are gruesomely incompatible with human existence. When arriving at the asylum where they expect to find Brears and Sax, the remaining FBI team finds a worker celebrating apocalypse and playing the guitar to mangled heads and hands, "the pieces who can listen and applaud" (12).

[57] See, for instance, Khoury's interview.

[58] This refers to Fletcher's notion of Postmodern Gothic that I have discussed it in chapter 1. This type of Gothic tends to foretell how the legacy of Enlightenment degenerates into "an obscure Satanic narrative" (Larrissy, *Romanticism* 7), a tendency that Fletcher analyses as a convergence between Gothic and dystopia caused by the concern with a return of a repressed dark past under the form of a dark future (Fletcher qtd. in Larrissy, *Romanticism* 7).

[59] The ambivalence of political and spiritual revolution (as both liberating and traumatic) is treated by Blake and by Moore very often through the traditional imagery of rape, which threatens to contradict their emancipatory purposes. For its implications for the gender and sexuality angle of the problem, see chapter 6, throughout which I comment other passages involving sexual violence.

Blake's change of attitude towards revolution could be said to begin in *America*, where Orc's birth and its violence and monstrosity (depicted from the poetic narrator's point of view, and not only from the Angel of Albion's) condenses the frightening revolutionary energy. Orc's mother, in later books identified as Pity or Enitharmon, is attributed the death-bringing powers of evil, because she has bred Orc, who is energetic, but also deadly. The ambivalence of these representations is also present in Moore. Terror is attached to both Orc in *America* and to V in *V for Vendetta*. However, while Orc either takes the world to the brink of an uncertain and violent apocalypse or is punished by Urizen, V lets his successor Evey take his place, thus substituting his own destructive symbolism by Evey's creative implications.

The fear this destructive potential may cause is represented in Blake by Orc's transformations into animal or monster forms, and by the monstrous apparitions that gradually replace reality in Moore. Cthulhu's conception and birth in *Neonomicon* and *Providence* abound in reminiscences of Orc's transformations. Orc's birth, the product of a rape, like Cthulhu's, is described as monstrous, horrible and shocking. This is in part due to Blake's obsession with childbirth.[60] According to Cogan (129-130), Blake introduced anatomical perspectives to produce horror and criticise the implications of an empty and materialist naturalism. As the spirit of the revolution, Orc is a vital and hopeful force, but also potentially a monster, a cruel, terrible spirit in the shape of a worm or a serpent, that has in itself the possibility of degeneration into the druidic serpent that Blake identifies with totalitarian forces in *Europe.* In *America*, Orc threatens the oppressive institutions of the Angel of Albion (a precursor of Urizen), but he also brings unprecedented destruction and danger. The poetic voice that acts as narrator in the first plates after the "Preludium" describes Orc as a horror-striking vision:

> Red rose the clouds from the Atlantic in vast wheels of blood
> And in the red clouds rose a Wonder o'er the Atlantic sea;
> Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as the wedge
> Of iron heated in the furnace; his terrible limbs were fire
> With myriads of cloudy terrors banners dark & towers
> Surrounded; heat but not light went thro' the murky atmosphere (4.6-11; E53).

The impact that the disasters of war had on Blake appears in images of war, destruction, and despair, as in plate 3 that shows a family group running away from the fire. The terms used for the descriptions of Orc's "abhorred birth" (9.17; E54), are equally frightening and grow much more terrifying when expressed through the point of view of his opponent the Angel of Albion:

> Ah terrible birth! a young one bursting! where is the weeping mouth,
> And where the mother's milk? Instead, those ever-hissing jaws
> And parched lips drop with fresh gore …. (9.2-24; E54)

The liberation of energies symbolised by Orc or Cthulhu's birth is apocalyptic. The prophecy of the *Kitab* (the prophetic book from the seventeenth century that guides the occult adepts in the story) in Moore's *Providence* clarifies the nature of the event foreshadowed in

[60] Possibly due to a trauma caused by Catherine Blake's miscarriage, a biographical episode that has been explored among others by Connolly (see *Blake* 106-109), but stands unconfirmed to date.

Neonomicon and draws an uncanny connection with Moore's previous renditions of apocalypse.[61] Moore's apocalypse plays on uncertainty. Like Blake when faced with the problem of presenting an (unpresentable) post-apocalyptic world in *America* or *Milton*, Moore at the end of *Providence* leaves us at the brink of the revelation of a different reality, but we are not told what to make of it or what the place of humanity in it will be.

In Moore's narrative, apocalypse entails a reversal of the customary order of the universe. In *Providence*, the *Kitab* announces "a Redeemer, by whose byrthe the great disorder of our worlde shalle be putt right when that which is below shalle once more be above" (2; p. 10 of Suydam's pamphlet, after Black's common book section). The announced change entails a rearrangement of natural energies: what is below (the repressed) shall emerge to the surface. Thus, issue 8, "The Key", focuses on the world of dreams that will be brought to life according to the prophecy, and the giant ghoul's speech to Black in issue 7, "The Picture", reverses the conventional abjection of rot and death. Everything has a purpose, even being eaten by the worms becomes a meaningful part of the totality of the universe. This redemption of the macabre and rehabilitation of elements relegated from the conventional idea of a holy creation is indebted to Blake's earlier visionary reflections on the value of abject animality in numerous passages about vermin and insects such as plate 27 of *Milton*, where all manner of lowly creatures "Dance … [and] rejoice with loud jubilee / Around the Wine-presses of Luvah":

> Timbrels & violins sport round the Wine-presses; the little Seed;
> The sportive Root, the Earth-worm, the gold Beetle; the wise Emmet;
> Dance round the Wine-presses of Luvah: the Centipede is there:
> The ground Spider with many eyes: the Mole clothed in velvet
> The ambitious Spider in his sullen web; the lucky golden Spinner;
> The Earwig armd: the tender Maggot emblem of immortality:
> The Flea: Louse: Bug: the Tape-Worm: all the Armies of Discase:
> Visible or invisible to the slothful vegetating Man.
> The slow Slug: the Grasshopper that sings & laughs & drinks:
> Winter comes, he folds his slender bones without a murmur.
> The cruel Scorpion is there: the Gnat: Wasp: Hornet & the Honey Bee:
> The Toad & venomous Newt; the Serpent clothd in gems & gold:
> They throw off their gorgeous raiment: they rejoice with loud jubilee
> Around the Wine-presses of Luvah, naked & drunk with wine.
>
> There is the Nettle that stings with soft down; and there
> The indignant Thistle: whose bitterness is bred in his milk:
> Who feeds on contempt of his neighbour: there all the idle Weeds
> That creep around the obscure places, shew their various limbs (27.11-28; E124).

These apocalyptic visions shatter the conventions that automatically associate death and decay with abjection and open the mind to a way of seeing capable of perceiving these processes as necessary parts of a sublime universe. Another instance of Blake's redemption of abject creatures through vision is his image of the worm. The ghoul's defence of necrophagy in Moore

[61] Those familiar with *Promethea* might expect a happy ending, even if involving overwhelming experiences at some points, in defiance of Lovecraftian pessimism.

is reminiscent of Blake's various references to the worm. The worm as a symbol that condenses the basest and the sacred is fundamental in *Thel*. The Cloud decides to call on the Worm, so that he can tell Thel how important her life is for him: "Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of the skies, / How great thy use, how great thy blessing! Every thing that lives / lives not alone nor for itself" (3.25-27; E5).

The sympathetic attitude towards beings that are ordinarily abhorred and that we have observed in Moore's previous graphic novels such as *Swamp Thing* corresponds to the Cloud's ecological conception of being as interrelation. In *Providence*, though, the ghoul's Postmodern discourse is ironic, parodic and grotesque, and interrelation is not as relevant as in Blake's humanised universe. God cherishes both Thel and the Worm, whereas in the incomprehensible, unpredictable universe that surrounds the embrace of abjection in *Providence*, the acceptance of the macabre does not carry the same existential and ethical import.

In *Providence*, the protagonist's fate exemplifies how an initially good process of liberation is thwarted by social conditions, and it only finds expression in madness, another form of apocalypse. Black, a Mid-West journalist and aspiring writer of Jewish background[62], often serves to showcase, on the one hand, the richness of inspiration, and on the other, how oppression turns his dreams and poetic ideas into traumatic nightmares. The terrible pressures he suffers due to the loss of his lover and to having to conceal his sexual orientation result in horrific visions; but his prophetic dreams foretelling the Holocaust, do not only result from his personal life but also from the climate of repression that dominates America as a whole. These forebodings of large scale events are related to the visions of the Holocaust in *From Hell*, where this event appears as an explosion of the violence, racism, prejudice and materialism that already existed in society. Since the energies repressed by social conditions are not allowed to return in their positive forms, their liberation takes the form of nightmares. For this reason, all the expressions of absolute freedom we see in the graphic novel result in violence and social and political terror.

In Black's commonplace book, Satan and Cthulhu appear as symbols of the repressed that will return in apocalypse. The underwater nature of Robert's Satan, whose heroism is emphasised through a reference to Milton (*Providence* 3), foreshadows Cthulhu. In issue 10, "The Haunted Palace," the line: "To think those feet once trod the steep lanes of Providence" (10) is an echo of Blake's first line in the prefatory poem to *Milton* ("And did those feet"). The phrase could equally allude to Lovecraft's own person and his presence in the city of Providence. The use of "And did those feet" associates Christ, Cthulhu, and Robert's underwater Satan.[63] Christ, as well as Cthulhu in *Providence* are beings that preside over the apocalypse. Cthulhu's association to Satan in Robert's imagery links him to the repressed that would return in the event of apocalypse.

These figures that embody the apocalyptic liberation of repressed energies in Bake and Moore share symbolic attributes that emphasise their uncanniness and ambiguity. In early

[62] In fact, his surname sounds as if it concealed another story, as if it was changed at some point from Schwarz or Svarz to Black, a literal English translation, intentionally or not, to sound less Jewish. Moreover, the underlying racial themes of the story encourage the association with black people, and the discrimination, prejudice and intolerance both them and Robert suffer for different reasons, although all based on white supremacy. Even if he was not Jewish, as a queer character he is a threat to white supremacist fantasies of racial domination, which are based on war, but also on breeding. Non heterosexuals have often been seen as both the product (and the cause of) the supposed degeneration of a race.

[63] Although Blake originally referred to Joseph of Arimathea in this line, the popular notion prevails that they refer to Jesus Christ. I assume that Moore either works in the knowledge that most readers will think the feet are Christ's, or perhaps that is his own belief.

Blake, these attributes connect figures that are traditionally opposite, namely the Messiah and Satan. The Blakean conflation of the Messiah and Satan in *Marriage* and the ambivalence of Orc from *America* onwards find a parallel in Moore's account of Cthulhu as equally both redeeming and frightening. Robert's presages and the way they conflate figures conventionally associated with good and others conventionally associated with evil highlight the uncertainty of the story and of the consequences of the apocalyptic event.

Cthulhu's birth is likened to that of Jesus, but of a type of Jesus that combines terrible irrational violence and Blakean vision:

> [CARL.] Your baby… it'll mature into some kind of gigantic monster? ….
> [MERRIL.] I-I think a very specific monster. You know, of all the pantheon, I'd always wondered why he was most humanoid.
> [CARL.] I-I think I know who you're talking about. **Jesus**, Merrill…
> [MERRIL.] **Y-yeah, but more extreme**. … He's going to be their hierophant, dreaming a new planet…
> [CARCOSA.] Yeth. Exithtenth ith a little thtep from the thublime. You thee how eathily it all thlipth away? How it thubmitth before a thtronger ficthion? (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 12, emphasis mine)

Irrational violence, vision and Christ-like features combined characterise Orc, who is nailed to a tree, like Christ is nailed to a cross. In certain respects, Moore's characterisation of Cthulhu includes traits that can be found in Blake's Christ. Like Christ in Blake, Moore's Cthulhu is identified with imagination and with the human form, although this form includes monstrous features. Cthulhu's dreams will shape the new world, the same as Christ does in Blake's works, but Cthulhu's dreams imply a darker sublime.

The creature is described by Joshi – a reputed Lovecraft scholar that Moore introduces to witness the final scene – as resembling an octopus, a dragon and a human caricature and Merril as a "folded jewel" and a "cabbage" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 12). These physical forms contribute to signal the creature's symbolism as a messiah that opens human imagination to the post-human dimension of an incomprehensible universe. The focus on the new-born Cthulhu nursed by his human mother (12) is a Christian element reminiscent of the Nativity that creates a tension between Lovecraftian cosmicism and the human sphere. This means that unlike in Lovecraft's universe, in some aspects of Moore's narrative (such as this Christian element in Cthulhu's birth), the human being has some meaning or plays some role. However, this momentary respite for the human species represented by Merril's importance ends when the characters engage in a conversation on the lack of a place for humans in the new reality. This generates a curious contrast between the centrality of the human (Merril) and the general disorientation of other characters, caused by the incomprehensible cosmic forces that have changed the universe forever. The Lovecraftian creatures never cease to praise Merril and remind her that her service to them will be remembered, though we are never told when or how this reward will come.

The symbolism of Cthulhu contains important parallels with Orc who also appears sometimes as a man and sometimes as a dragon or other animals. The combination of the dragon and the human form serves as a bridge between the human and the posthuman world in Moore. The imagery of Orc's birth in Blake connects birth with death (Connolly, *Blake* 111), meaning, in the particular case of *America*, the potential destruction brought by a revolution. Nonetheless,

when Orc turns into a snake this is not only as a sign of his corruption into Urizenic forms, but also when he is punished and crucified by his father Urizen for his disobedience. The ambivalence of serpent and reptile imagery with which Orc appears is reinforced by the association with the events in Genesis where the serpent was, on one hand, the tempter and, on the other, the entity whose intervention made redemption necessary. Though in Moore the serpent tends to acquire positive meanings (see pp. 155-156 and 162-163), *Providence* constitutes an exception in this tendency, as here the meaning is much more ambivalent and troubling.

In synthesis, Blake's *America* and *Urizen* and Moore's Lovecraftian narratives manifest the similarity between Blake's antinomianism and Moore's countercultural heterodoxy. The liberation of energies, be them revolutionary, in the case of Blake, or repressed psychic or sexual forces, in Moore's case, is the source of horror in the works analysed here. In Blake, the satanic evil embodied by the Angel of Albion and Urizen oppresses diabolic forces that fight for liberation. In Moore, Satan does not embody satanic evil; rather, it is an image of the repressed that will return to the world, and therefore diabolic, like Blake's Orc. Cthulhu is a terrific version of Blake's Christ in a similar way in which Orc is a violent version of the saviour. In both cases, the structure behind the characters is the same, even though Moore associates with Satan that which is diabolic in Blake. The common element of a prophecy announcing a sublime and dangerous liberation of energies that will reverse the oppressive order that rules over humanity is tinged in Moore with Postmodern parody and irony. This tone questions the confidence that releasing the energies and getting rid of the old world will make existence more meaningful. This refers to Moore's doubts with respect to the outcome of the 1960s revolution, but also to doubts regarding the position of humanity in the universe. In Blake, there is a similar doubt as regards political revolution, but he continues to the end of his life to reflect in his works on the possibility of a truly transformative apocalypse in which the human remains the central creative figure.

5.3. BLAKEAN *KATEGOROI* IN MOORE'S GRAPHIC NOVELS

A special point of convergence in the Blakean notion of evil and in Moore's is the figure of the *kategoros*. The most important *kategoros* in Moore's graphic novels is undoubtedly Gull in *From Hell*. There is an important similarity between Gull's error and Theotormon and Bromion's in Blake's *Visions*. Both Blake's and Moore's characters fall by becoming negations. I have already compared Blake's notions of energy and reason in *Marriage* to Gull's ideas of the irrational Dyonisiac and the rational Apollonian (Marchetto Santorun, "War"). The side of energy / Dyonisiac forces is evil in a diabolic sense and the side of Reason / Apollonian forces, which in both works seeks to impose and dominate, is satanic, and its proponents become *kategoroi* when they try to destroy their contrary (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 5-6). Contrariety and negation make the figures either diabolic or satanic. That which opposes is diabolic, but that which negates is satanic.

Blake's illuminated books and Moore's graphic novels have in common the trope of fire as energy. In both cases, the fire of the *kategoros* is associated to a corrupt form of lust (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 14). Theotormon's fires torment slaves in *Visions* and Gull claims the fire from the male sun must purify the water of "dissolute" femininity. Theotormon's fires should not be confused with the flames of the diabolic hell, whose effect is the opposite: to

liberate eternity from superficial contradictions; and Gull's fires have nothing to do with Promethea's fire of the imagination, which is diabolic and brings inspiration rather than destruction. The eye may also be a symbol of the repressive power of the *kategoros*. One example of this imagery in Blake's plates is the shape suggestive of an eye in the sky in the frontispiece to *Visions*. Although it is interpreted by Lussier as an expression of anger that he attributes to "the political unconscious" empathising with Oothoon's complaint (Lussier qtd. in Bundock and Effinger 25), this anger could rather be the anger of a tyrant deity before Oothoon's disobedience of the chastity ideal. Whittaker suggests an interpretation more in line with this identification of the eye with the *kategoros*, as he comments on Blake's use of the red sun, here forming the inner part of the "eye" in the sky, as a symbol of religious sacrifice (*William Blake* 175-176). This can be contrasted to the close-up of Gull's eye in chapter "Gull, Ascending" where the eye of the authoritarian persecutor is rendered impotent: though wide open, it does not see but his own inner delusions.

In *Providence*, Suydam, like Gull, perversely misinterprets diabolic evil. Suydam, the occult scholar Black visits to find out more about the Stella Sapiente, seems both kind and rational, but secretly traffics children. His identification of Melek Taus, "the Yezidi peacock angel" (2), with Satan as being both rebellious angels points at the notion of diabolic evil. Suydam rejects Robert's hasty labelling of devil worship for the adoration of Melek Taus or, by implication, Satan, explaining to him that Satan is just a symbol of "the tyranny of the material world" (2). For Blake, Satan is precisely the tyranny of the material world, something to be condemned, whereas it is not so for Suydam. Suydam reflects Gull, both embodying the dangerous implications of a misunderstanding of energy and of its liberation. As Larrissy suggests, Blake's earlier defences of liberation make him attractive to Postmodernists who distrust authority (*Blake* 93) and often ignore or disregard Blake's contradictions and vacillations towards the idea of energy and his later reassessment of the problems with the liberation of energy. Some diabolic (V) and satanic characters in Moore (Gull, Suydam), point at the problem involved in simplifying Blake's defence of freedom, as it could lead to "malleable ethics" and "offer a hidden opportunity for unhinged malevolence" (Larrissy, *Blake* 93). Both Gull's and Suydam's simplifications of Blakean diabolism act as justifications for their cruelty. This evidences the fact that they are not mouthpieces for the author's view on Blakean diabolism, but rather representatives in Moore's works of the distortion of Blake's message of liberation.

5.4. CONCLUSION

Blake's diabolism brings about a greater good beyond existent conventions; Moore's diabolism also implies a greater good through transgression of existing conventions. The acts of Blake's heroes (such as Oothoon) are often presented through the eyes of an adversary as sinful, evil or socially unacceptable, while elsewhere, their reasons are explained and legitimised for the reader. In Moore, the heroine Promethea is a pagan demoness for the Christian fundamentalists that oppose her advent, while the demon Asmodeus is presented as a noble creature that reflects the openness of his perceiver's mind. Through diabolism, worldviews and perspectives outside conventional morality are adopted. For example, Abby's story in *Swamp Thing* shows how her behaviour is reviled by conventional and hypocrite moralists, but it is defended by the narrator and point of view as part of a transcendental freedom. This element makes vision and the

salvation of the planet possible. The power of imagination and desire to transgress boundaries is established as the precise reason why satanic power and law prosecute activities inspired by them.

Despite his reformulations of the idea of energy, Blake continued defending to the end desire and imagination. Moore also changes his attitude as regards the complete liberation of energy, which he finally depicts as a dangerous process. The danger of this process of liberation is the possibility that the subject loses its meaning in a new reality that he or she cannot grasp. The unpresentability of new realities is an element that had also posed a challenge to Blake, and concerns Moore in *Providence* especially.

After his change towards a more nuanced stance, Blake develops the figure of Satan as pure negation, which can only be fought through acknowledgement, self-annihilation (as seen in *Milton*) and creative effort. It is this that makes possible to confront the damage caused by satanic negation and its institutions. The antidote against negation both in Blake and Moore is the union of opposites. In *Promethea*, these take different shapes, such as Beast and Whore, imagination and nature. Moore's reading associates negation with instrumental Reason and contrariety with the idea that evil makes virtue stronger. Evil is thus made a necessary part of the process of regeneration and re-enchantment of the self and the world. This would be a diabolic "good" type of evil as opposed to characters and situations where destruction is absolute and senseless, which represent negation.

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6. ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY[64]

6.0. INTRODUCTION

The change in perception explored by Blake allows the individual to go beyond conventional notions of good and evil and achieve a visionary state in which conventional notions of gender polarity are overcome. In other words, the relation between contraries allows a renewed understanding of gender and gender relations, including a transformed (and transforming) vision of sexuality. Hagstrum gives "The Divine Image", plate 18 from *Songs of Innocence* (1789), as a good example of how Blake transgresses the traditional gender patterns. The poem teaches that man can become God through Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love, while the illumination shows at the left corner on top God becoming human in the figure of a woman as he descends a curving plant leaf, and on the lower right side Christ lifting two human figures from a cave to their divine origin. Here, the divine has a female impersonation. "Mankind is presented as a man and a woman, while God is presented at the bottom as Christ and at the top in female form. The presence of both sexes reminds us that one of the four divine attributes is Love, that Blake's Innocence is a world of natural sexuality" (Hagstrum 3618). Later critics also interpreted Blake's depictions of gender as revolutionary and unconventional, but challenged the notion of sexuality reflected by previous criticism. Thus, they showed that Blake's idea of sexuality went beyond the "natural" and his sensitivity towards the sexual oppression women suffered in his times: "[I]n Blake's day … aggressive male behaviours in sexual intercourse were more normalised than would be acceptable today … Blake deplores such behaviour, and represents positively forms of female sexuality that do not involve penile penetration" (Jackson-Houlston qtd. in Green "She" 748).

This transformed notion of gender relations includes redefining masculinity and femininity in ways that challenge traditional discourses based on binary moralistic concepts. As Bruder says,

> he [Blake] constantly reworked his 'theory' of the female emanation, redefined the nature of Beulah, re-examined the meaning of the female will and offered us not just the 'nurturing Jerusalem' and the 'seductive Vala' but a whole range of female characters who utterly invalidate the virgin - whore paradigm many of these writers seem tacitly to work with" (31).

[64] In this chapter I will make references to my article "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*". María Cecilia Marchetto Santorun, Department of English and German Philology, Research Group Discourse and Identity (GRC 2015/002, GI-1924, Xunta de Galicia) Universidade de Santiago de Compostela. Complete reference: Marchetto Santorun, María Cecilia. "'The War 'twixt Sun and Moon': Evil and Gender in William Blake's Early Illuminated Books and Alan Moore's *From Hell*." *English Studies*, vol. 100, no. 4, Routledge / Taylor & Francis, 2019, London, pp. 387-406. DOI: 10.1080/0013838X.2018.1555983. ISSN: (Print) 0013-838X (Online) 1744-4217.

Blake did not only challenge the dominant ideas of femininity of his time, but also radically shifted the place attributed to sexuality and sex in culture and society.

Some of the changes that early Blake introduced are proto-feminist, according to Alicia Ostriker (156). This is the case of certain aspects of the characters of Oothoon or Thel as analysed, for example, by Bruder (*William Blake*). Nonetheless, as Ostriker has pointed out, especially in later phases, Blake's work began to diverge from this anti-patriarchalism and pose numerous contradictions with his initial line of thought (156). In *America*, for instance, the defence of woman begins to acquire a more secondary place, (see Bruder 123-132); in *Europe* the figure of Enitharmon begins to be defined in more negative and repressive terms (Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148), and finally, in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* the daughters of Albion turn into deities of sacrifice and cruelty (Whittaker, *William Blake* 135-136) and the tyrannical Female Will makes its apparition (Essick 615-616).

Moore's attitudes towards patriarchy as part of the system of oppression affecting both our hearts and our politics have determined his reading of Blake and led him to explore the more feminist Blake and engage with the darker implications of the gender aspects of Blake's oeuvre. Moore's ideas about sexuality and culture are reflected in his essay *25,000 Years of Erotic Freedom*: "[s]exually progressive cultures gave us literature, philosophy, civilisation and the rest, while sexually restrictive cultures gave us the Dark Ages and the Holocaust" (39). Di Liddo, in the afterword to the series of essays *Sexual Ideology in the Works of Alan Moore*, presents a very complex picture of the topic of sexuality in Moore's works. Sometimes, his ideas successfully support feminist or queer agendas but at other times they fail to do this and produce problems or ambiguities (202).

In order to gauge how these ideas have affected Moore's use of Blakean signifiers, this chapter will focus on the analogies between *Thel* and *Visions* and Moore's works. Moreover, the chapter will comment on some examples from *Marriage*, *America*, *Urizen* and *Milton*, where a number of passages deal with gender conventions, sexual violence, childbirth and the transformation of characters on the basis of their attitude towards gender and sexuality. One example of this is Milton's union with Ololon, which signifies his reconciliation with the idea of woman, which, Blake thought, Milton had not understood during his life (Damon 307). The works by Moore that will be dealt with are mainly *Swamp Thing*, *From Hell* and *Promethea*, which revolve around topics that were vital in Blake's poetry, such as gender togetherness, patriarchal aggression, and the female figures associated with apocalypse and vision. Some selected extracts from *Neonomicon* and *Providence* will also be examined for the importance of sexuality in these graphic novels.

The ruling idea will be the transformation of the idea of woman into a more wholesome and liberating idea of the feminine that does not coincide with the patriarchal idea of the "good" woman. This idea of the feminine includes many aspects that, according to Blake and Moore, are suppressed as perverse in the traditional idea of the female. Namely, the desiring dimension of women's subjectivity and, more specifically, female sexual desire not necessarily in the service of procreation or male satisfaction. Moreover, notions of desire, love, affection, passion, attraction and lust, are reinterpreted as the original site of spiritual development, instead of rejected as the source of all evil. Finally, Blake and Moore also explore, as pointed out the previous chapters, darker and even monstrous materialist notions of sexuality.

Both Blake and Moore sometimes fall into contradictory positions regarding the topics of gender and sexuality. The analysis will address problematic passages that have been taken as

proof that their narratives and characters are, after all, detrimental to the cause of women's liberation or even misogynistic. The subsection "Blake's and Moore's contradictions and problematic depictions of gender" deals with these problems. I will try to avoid simplification by situating the contradictions and problems in their historical context and placing them in the poetic network of associations to which they belong.

The first section of this chapter (6.1) will offer an analysis and a comparison of the selected extracts that best exemplify the complexities of Blake and Moore's philosophies of gender, their idea of woman, of desire, monstrous sexuality, sexual repression and the contradictions in association with these topics. These contradictions will be given special attention in section 6.2. The third section (6.3) will provide a recapitulation and conclusion to the whole chapter.

6.1. WOMEN AND MONSTERS: EROTICISM, GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN BLAKE AND MOORE

This section offers an analysis and a comparison of the selected extracts that best exemplify the complexities of eroticism, gender and sexuality in both authors. I will follow the development of this topic in Moore's graphic novels from *V for Vendetta* to *Providence* and explore the significance of Blake's influence in these works. In the first subsection (6.1.1.), the subject will be *V for Vendetta* and *Swamp Thing*; I will explain their ideas about gender and sexuality and the similarities and differences between the attitudes towards sexuality expressed in them and in Blake's *Marriage, Visions, Urizen* and *Milton*. Section 6.1.2, will analyse gender in *From Hell* from the perspective of the Blakean philosophy of contrariety. In 6.1.3, I will discuss *Promethea* and the parallelisms between the duality of the female characters in the graphic novel and in Blake's *Milton*. In 6.1.4, I will discuss the disturbing depiction of gender and sexuality in *Neonomicon* and *Providence* and the similarities and differences between the portrayal of this topic in said graphic novels and Blake's *America, Urizen* and *Milton*. Finally, in 6.1.5, I will explore the contradictions of the author when they deal with the topics of eroticism, gender and sexuality together with Blake's difficulties to maintain a consistent attitude towards the topics in *Visions*, *America*, *Urizen* and *Milton*.

6.1.1. *V for Vendetta, Swamp Thing* and the Blakean influence on their depiction of gender and sexuality

In this section of the analysis I will first go through *V for Vendetta* and the dangers of Blakean energy as embodied in the figure of Bishop Lilliman. Secondly, I will explain the attitude towards sexuality in *Swamp Thing* and how it contains echoes of Blake's early imagery and defence of transgression and improvement of imaginative perception.

Like Blake's figures, Moore's characters must confront the fallen and distorted versions of sexuality they encounter in the ordinary world. In the case of *V for Vendetta*, the heroes embody revitalisation though dangerous diabolic energies and fight figures whose satanic qualities derive from the misunderstanding of energy. In contrast to more utopian, psychedelic or even namby-pamby readings of Blake's works, Bundock and Effinger mention, among others, *V for Vendetta* as an example of Blake's Gothic afterlife (1-2). One of the first quotations from Blake introduced by Moore is the second stanza of the hymn "Jerusalem", taken from the prefatory poem to Blake's *Milton*. In the graphic novel, it is sung by the anarchist hero V in chapter 6, "The Vision", in a context that links the hymn significantly to the topic of corrupt sexuality. In this episode, the teenage female protagonist, Evey, helps her saviour and now master V by

serving as a decoy to murder a paedophile clergyman, Bishop Lilliman. While Evey distracts the paedophile, V sings the lines as he picks the rose he will leave by the corpse of the abuser. Tellingly, the words of the third stanza are precisely those connected to desire: "Bring me my bow of burning gold, bring me my arrows of desire, bring me my spear, O clouds unfold, bring me my chariot of fire… I will not cease from Mental Fight… Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand… Till we have built Jerusalem… In England's green and pleasant land" (Blake qtd. in Moore and Lloyd 48). In "The Vision", the religious sexual repression that induces perversion (personified in Bishop Lilliman) is ironically juxtaposed to the Blakean bow of burning gold with arrows of desire, a reference that suggests sexual energies and their use to create Jerusalem.

Although direct allusions to Blake were not very frequent at this stage of Moore's career yet, the bishop's sermon contains many elements that remind of Bromion and Urizen. Lilliman speaks of God the Father "who sent the fire … who purged the wicked with his sword …. One race, one creed, one hope in thee" (Moore and Lloyd 44). Blake's target of criticism was always the punishing God of the Old Testament as figured in Urizen, who imposed "One King, one God, one Law" (*BU* 4.40; E72). In the following chapter, "Virtue Victorious", Lilliman is revealed as a libertine; Lilliman is regularly procured children by an organisation, which, he thinks, has sent Evey to his house, however, she has infiltrated with V's aid to murder him. It is clear from this context that he expects to have sexual contact with her or force it if she resists. He tells Evey "we should never ignore our primal impulses" (50) to justify what he is about to do: rape her. To make this otherwise acceptable statement with the intention to corrupt an underage person in the scenario depicted denotes the kind of decadent amorality many late nineteenth century authors such as Swinburne associated Blake with. Lilliman is characterised as an energetic man, but an oppressor, a theme that would be fully developed in *From Hell* thanks to the study of Blake. Before Gull supports his violence with misread Blakean verse, Lilliman misunderstands acknowledging instinctive energies with entitlement to abuse power and release violent compulsions indiscriminately. An opposite Blakean pattern is found in V, who refuses to abuse his power, realising he must disappear and be substituted by Evey to preserve contrariety.

In *Swamp Thing* it is the protagonists' relationship, both emotional and physical, that allows them to change the world. As I have explained in chapters 4 and 5, the love scenes between Alec and Abby, especially issue in 34, "Rite of Spring", are examples of Moore's treatment of eroticism. The dissolution of the divide between subject and object in the erotic encounter appears as a path towards the opening of perception and spiritual enlightenment.[65] This liberating union goes against the established order; in *Swamp Thing*, the lovers are perceived as monsters and criminals by a society that cannot see beyond conventions and rules. As Eagleton explains in *Holy Terror*, sexuality is one of the forces that can potentially destroy society but is at the same time necessary to produce or maintain it (7). As Eagleton suggests, "a law founded on the repression of desire simply strengthens its [desire's] sway over you" (10).[66]

[65] We have already analysed the parallelisms between this union and the marriage between heaven and hell in Blake (see pp. 112-114).

[66] It is necessary here to clarify that the psychoanalytic influence present in Eagleton's development of this topic might lead to seeing the other as a mere projection and situate conflict inside the subject himself. In this sense, I use the notion of desire in a sense more akin to Rosi Braidotti's idea of desire (inspired by Luce Irigaray and Gilles Deleuze) as a force that puts us into contact with the external world and makes us change (99). Braidotti's approach ties in with Eagleton's explanations of desire as a life-giving and death-dealing quality, in the sense that the interconnection with the world established by desire questions and even threatens the structures of power and of the system of oppression that organises civilisation.

While the logic of opposition leads to oppression, the logic of contrariety opens up a path to freedom. In the same way that "the enjoyments of genius" are seen as "torment and insanity" by the weak in Blake's *Marriage* (6; E35), love is seen as perversion and immorality by the establishment in *Swamp Thing*. From Georges Bataille's perspective, this can be interpreted as an example of how deviant sexuality momentarily dissolves the barriers between individuals and establishes interconnection beyond cultural norms. Brian Johnson applies the Bataillean notion of eroticism in his analysis of sexuality in *Swamp Thing*. Eroticism overcomes "the subject's essential 'discontinuity'" (Johnson 22) by returning to a "primal" state of continuity which is made "manifest as a desire to push past the taboos (limits) that society has thrown up to defend itself" (22). This highlights the questioning of "conventional understandings of personhood" by the ontological conundrum of Alec's identity (23). By becoming a plant, but not relinquishing humanity entirely, he reinforces the Bataillean "insistence upon the reign of the limit" (Johnson 25).

To understand Moore's views on sexuality and gender and how they were reflected in *Swamp Thing*, it is necessary to consider his previous poem *The Mirror of Love*, originally published in *AARGH! (Artists Against Rampant Government Homophobia)* in 1988 and republished separately in 2004. As outlined in chapter 2, Green points out the importance of Moore's involvement in protests against the homophobic Clause 28 through the publication of *AARGH!* The poetic itinerary of *Mirror of Love* through the history of persecuted sexualities begins by questioning the supposedly natural origins of heteronormativity. It finishes in a diabolic acceptance of hell, if it means to "be refused a heaven crammed with Popes; Policemen; Fundamentalists, and burn instead, quite happily with Sappho, Michelangelo and you" (Moore qtd. in Green, "End" 100).

Conventional forms of sexuality are portrayed as hypocritical forms of living and haunted by the monstrous and the satanic. In issue 29 of *Swamp Thing*, "Love and Death", Abby is raped by her uncle, Arcane, who masquerades as her partner Matt. It is vital to note that this rape happens in the context associated to conventional relationships: they marry, they buy a house, and on the wedding night, they have sex. In contrast, the relationship that takes place in the swamps, without any social sanction, outside any legal framework, is the one where there is happiness and fulfilment. In fact, this relationship is a way of overcoming the violence of the previous rape (Johnson 23) and the imagery of insects and worms is given a new meaning in the context of the mystical visions Abby experiences with Alec.

Issue 40, "The Curse", exposes the institutions of patriarchy as enslaving to women. This is done through the story of a wolf woman; it begins with a reflection on the taboo blood of menstruation, which announces the blood shed by the wolf woman's retributive violence. The narration resorts to the tribal societies that seclude menstruating women as a symbol of the oppression of women that continues in modern society despite the appearance of progress. The sun appears as a masculine element that symbolises this oppression when the narrator describes the tribeswomen coming out of the lodge where they are locked up: "they were led out blinking into the harsh and masculine glare of the sun" (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 3; 150). In the contemporary storyline, the wolf woman prowls the city. She discovers that the Red Lodge (the seclusion lodge) is everywhere around her, for example, hidden as a bridal gown in a shop window. The negative sun symbolism can be found in Blake's *Visions*, as analysed in the previous chapter, and in *From Hell*. The first panel of the page 151 illustrates another passage from the wolf woman's escape (Moore et al., *Swamp Thing* 3; 151). The title of the adult

magazine “Sins of the Flesh” points at the traditional association of the female body with abjection and of sex with uncleanliness. The rest of the scene on the page showcases the mechanism whereby sexual repression engenders perversion. The female monster violently bursts out of the back of the shop where a man asks for more “unusual” pornographic material, ostensibly to satisfy an increasingly violent inclination. The furious wolf woman attacks this particular perversion, but later, as she gives up her hope of victory, she affirms that the whole world is the Red Lodge; the violence of the man at the shop corresponds to violent social structures. Patriarchy appears to be inescapable. In that scenario, self-destruction seems to the wolf woman the only escape and she leaps at a steak knife display at the supermarket. The image of the wolf woman returns in issue 50, “The End”, analysed in the previous chapter of this thesis. The episode uses the image to formulate the question of violence in terms of opposition between genders: society must stop setting “gender against gender” (4; 187) and organise itself on the basis of a relation of contraries instead.

The nodal point of *Swamp Thing* and its criticism of the imposition of the sexual norm begins in number 48, “A Murder of Crows” (vol. 4, ch. 6) where Abby is arrested for “crimes against nature” (5; 15), as they are called in issue 51.[67] From the point of view of the authority figures, she is a sex offender. The erotic forces beyond the bounds of society are incarnated by Alec. The full panel of Alec emerging from the wooden floorboards as a thorny rose bush (5; 47) in “Natural Consequences” (issue 52, in ch. 5 of vol. 5), creates an image of revolutionary, libidinal energy akin to Orc’s. Orc is the “generate Luvah” (29.34; E127), as the poetic voice qualifies him in *Milton*; Luvah is the Zoa of emotions, especially love and hate (Damon 255). Magnus Ankarsjö explains that this means Orc is the “lower aspect of Luvah” (140), and the consort of the Shadowy Female, a lower form of Vala (140). Orc, therefore, somehow belongs to or is intimately associated with physical nature, like Swamp Thing. The Swamp Thing is also associated in the imagery to symbols of passion and love, which strengthens the similarity between him and what Luvah and Orc represent. These symbols are juxtaposed with the monstrous appearance of Alec, recalling the combination of Orc’s monstrous transformations into dragons and animals, and his association with passion and lust. The red roses of the Swamp Thing associate love and beauty to the monstrous energies suppressed by urban civilisation and highlight their erotic nature (see Johnson 25). Although it is not likely that Moore had read *Milton* when he composed this comics series (as I have already stated in the previous chapter of this thesis), this comparison can be useful to explore a priori affinities and motives that Moore will develop in full after studying Blake more to write *From Hell*. Blake is mentioned multiple times in the context of a discussion of sexuality and sexual passion as an imaginative force that at once breaks conventions and creates new unrestricted modes of living in Moore’s later essay about pornography “Bog Venus vs. Nazi Cock Ring”, originally published in 2006 in *Arthur Magazine* and re-published in 2009 as a separate volume entitled *25,000 Years of*

[67] It is important to remember here that *Swamp Thing* is connected to Blake in at least two ways: in the second annual special, “Down Amongst the Dead Men” (1985) Moore repeats (as he did three years earlier in *V for Vendetta*) a playful reference to the Preface to *Milton*, which he might have known, like the majority of the population of Britain, as the hymn “Jerusalem”. This is a line spoken by the demon Etrigan, a lesser, slightly humorous diabolic character who always talks in verse. In issue 43, “Windfall” (1985), he visually and thematically alluded to Huxley’s explorations *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*, heavily inspired on *Marriage*. It might be relevant to point out that the story arc from issue 47, “The Parliament of Trees” to issue 50 “The End” (both 1986) revolved around Hell breaking into two different parties, one pursuing the total annihilation of Heaven, Hell and Earth by the Shadow, an entity more ancient and abstract than evil or Hell, and another party attempting to continue in a relationship of contrariety with heaven. I have already explored in the previous chapter how these themes echo Blake’s *Marriage*.

Erotic Freedom. Here, he cites the destruction of Blake's more erotic drawings and pictures as an example of how society remains stagnant by closing itself to the beneficial effects of giving dignified, even artistic forms to the sexual expressions of the imagination. In the same text, he also acknowledges Blake's influence on the hippie sexual revolution. Both here and in *Swamp Thing*, sexuality is a force that is disavowed in the public sphere, but secretly supports society. This idea is already present in Alec's disruption of social order in Gotham and his discovery that his natural monstrosity is the very hidden foundation of the metropolis it seems to threaten. After reading Blake, with his Luvah and Orc symbolising the same ambivalence of natural Eros he has embodied in the Swamp Thing, Moore returns to Blake again to explore similar problems.

Abby and Alec's struggle to defend themselves against authorities and be back together starts a process of transformation that ends up affecting society. Fallen sexuality is subverted in issue 53, "The Garden of Earthly Delights" (vol. 5, ch. 6). As explained in chapter 4 of this thesis, in this issue, the Swamp Thing's revenge on Gotham city consists in regenerating all the hidden nature pulsating under its concrete surface: plants, trees, and animals burst and grow free in a Postmodern version of the Romantic *reverdie*. This transformation has a sexual aspect that is reinforced in different scenes, such as when a male police officer expresses his attraction for same-sex colleague after trying the fruit from the Swamp God's garden (5; 64). In this new scenario of innocence, a shift in the status and perception of sexuality takes place. In volume 5, page 69, perverted and sick visions of sex ("bad" pornography, as Moore would later label it in *25,000 Years*)[68] are turned into harmless, innocent fantasy, visually conveyed through the lilies growing on a derelict sex cinema while children play weddings in the forest nearby. This story arc connects, according to Green, sexuality, ecology and anarchism through the "apocalyptic power of the natural world" embodied in the Swamp Thing (Green, "Everything's" 113). Before this power, everyday authority may collapse (113).

Although some coincidences with later prophetic books cannot be attributed to a direct influence at the time *Swamp Thing* was written, they help understand that these pre-existing patterns in Moore's works led to the sort of reading of Blake we find later in *From Hell*, *Promethea* and other works.

6.1.2. Gender contrariety vs gender negation in Blake's *Visions*, *America* and *Milton* and Moore's *From Hell*

In *From Hell*, Blake's influence is much more conspicuous than in the case of *Swamp Thing*. In this section, we will analyse how these defend women against patriarchal abuse.

In *From Hell*, the protagonist and the focaliser throughout a great part of the graphic novel is the misogynistic villain, who brutally murders the group of women appearing in the story. The narrative exposes patriarchal violence as a source of oppression and alienation that intersects with other kinds of oppression to form a complex system of domination in the Western world.[69] In "Theorising Sexual Domination in *From Hell* and *Lost Girls*: Jack the Ripper versus

[68] See Di Liddo, *Alan Moore* 155-156.

[69] It is worth noting that other contemporary Postmodern British authors were at this time using the Gothic to explore the theme of sexuality and criticise patriarchy. Probably the best example would be Angela Carter, for whom Moore has declared his admiration, for instance, in *25000 Years* (Moore qtd. in Di Liddo, *Alan Moore* 156). Di Liddo identifies Moore's attitude towards pornography as that of the "moral pornographer" proposed by Carter in her essay *The Sadeian Woman* (*Alan Moore* 156), published in 1978. Her work often engaged critically and creatively with Blake's, especially in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977).

Wonderlands of Desire", Brigley-Thompson argues that *From Hell* unveils the causes of male violence:

> Moore … probes for the causes of physical, psychological, and sexual violence against women from the perspective of both male perpetrators and female survivors … Moore is not afraid to ask hard questions or to offer complex answers. Writing from the perspective of female survivors of violence, Moore is at his most appealing; though his writing about sex and brutality can verge upon the exploitative, he sometimes reveals an unexpected sympathy with dominated women (Brigley-Thompson 76).

Brigley-Thompson uses the theory of psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin to argue that Moore's achievement is "to redeem what has been devalued in the women's domain", "to conquer the territory that has been reserved to men for women" (Benjamin qtd. in Bigley-Thompson 76) and "to expose violent sexual domination and present a more positive alternative" (Brigley-Thompson 76). *From Hell* does not offer a utopian narrative of liberation; rather, it shows us the evils of patriarchy.[70]

In Blake's *Visions*, male characters also embody repressed masculine desires and the degeneration of erotic drives into "violence and hate" (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 198). Bromion's attack, his subsequent qualification of Oothoon as a harlot, and Theotormon's jealousy are clear references to patriarchal mechanisms of control that are imposed on women that do not conform to repressive ideals of modesty. Like these patriarchal figures, Gull inhabits a narrow moral world, where women can only be good or bad, creative or dangerous and destructive like queen Boudicca (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 15) who "gathered the Iceni, howling to her mother goddesses for vengeance, and burned London to the ground, its gutters heaped with steaming heads. She left a stripe of ash, a cold black vein in London's geologic strata, token of one woman's wrath. Mark it, Netley. Mark it well, and fear it" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell*, 4; 8). In *Visions*, Oothoon is also labelled as a bad and dangerous woman by Bromion. She does not only suffer at his hands for having shown a sexually active behaviour, symbolised in her picking the Marygold, Theotormon's eagles also rend her flesh (see illumination on plate 3) to purify her from the defilement of rape (Bruder, *William Blake* 78). Similarly, the women in *From Hell* are violently punished for not fitting into Gull's moral categories (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 19), and in *Promethea* the protagonist is shown the image of the vultures preying on Prometheus to warn her of the dangers of bestowing all her sublime love to mortals (Moore et al., *Promethea* 2; 1).

Self-righteousness in the moral sphere is bound up with a sense of masculine pride. Gull believes that the feminine principle of water "will of necessity flow downhill" (*From Hell* 2; 10) unless his masculine fire transmutes it into steam. Through the male characters of *Visions* Blake criticised the Calvinist doctrine of sin and depravity because he thought that it caused an incapacity to recognise the visionary in others and prevented generous acts of self-annihilation. Bromion and Theotormon cannot realise that they have set themselves as Elect (like Satan in

[70] This choice of focus might be due to questions of genre and to thematic patterns in Moore's works. The narrative of *From Hell* is encoded in the conventions of horror and noir; rather than conveying its message through a rational argument, it relies on the Gothic to produce emotional impact. This might be due to a Postmodern distrust in utopias, though in *Promethea* and *Lost Girls* Moore offers brighter perspectives. Brigley-Thompson suggests that *From Hell* can function as a counterpart of *Lost Girls*. *From Hell* would be the pole of domination and terror – the women fight for survival, and sex for them is only a fleeting comfort in a world full of violence– and *Lost Girls*, the pole of freedom – women who suffered sexual oppression undergo a healing process and find liberation and fulfilment of desire in each other's company (Brigley-Thompson 86).

Milton or Gull in *From Hell*) and therefore cancel any possibility of improvement for themselves (Whittaker, *William Blake* 151), which would require admitting their mistakes and acknowledging Oothoon's innocence and vision.

In order to justify his violence against women, Gull argues that it was necessary to replace female power with male power to overcome barbarism and create civilisation. Women, though, are identified in the text with symbols of resistance, not of barbarism. Brigley-Thompson analyses Gull's ideology as sustained by the old assumptions and prejudices that underlaid Victorian anthropology:

> Gull's philosophy reflects nineteenth century ideas about matriarchy reminiscent of Bachofen, suggesting that human history has been a battle between men and women. Gull explains, "'Tis in the war of sun and moon that man steals woman's power; that Left Brain conquers Right… that reason chains insanity" (4, 21). Gull's imagery recalls Bachofen's comment that "With the sunrise ancient religion associates the idea of triumph over the maternal darkness" (114). Like Bachofen, Gull organizes his ideas about matriarchy and patriarchy in relation to a series of binary oppositions which privilege masculinity and its associations with power, order, and reason (Brigley-Thompson 81).

Gull is trying to steal power from a hypothetical primitive matriarchy (like it was supposedly done before him by ancient priest-kings) and thus he aims at establishing male order in the universe. In his hansom cab ride Gull tries to set the whole city of "London, its society and culture" (Brigley-Thompson 81) on his side, by explaining its symbols as a way to bind the female energy. Similarly, Bachofen also justified "even abuse … [as] a lever of progress" towards patriarchal order (Bachofen qtd in Brigley-Thompson 82). Like many modern fascists and extremists, Gull thinks what he proposes is a painful but necessary sacrifice for a great cause.

Moore includes scenes where the link between the female characters and the symbols of femininity becomes active. These are scenes of few but significant moments in which women feel more hopeful and momentarily safe. In chapter 3, page 7, Marie has an important conversation with Long Liz about the buildings in London, and how they affect their states of mind, mentioning precisely some of the buildings Gull praises for their potential to enslave people psychically. The two women exchange their life stories, and we learn that Liz had been sexually abused by a rich gentleman whom she had served as a maid in Sweden. Then they toast for the "curse" to come, referring to menstruation as a sign that they are not pregnant and, therefore, relatively free and safe: "Here's to next month's blood, Long Liz. Here's to the curse" (3; 7). In the story's symbolism, the toast activates the forces that women represent. The scene comes after Gull's lecture on his theory, so that one cannot help to see the symbolic meaning of the fortuitous act. Like water, blood is opposed to Gull's destructive fire and the taboo of menstruation has a magical power that fuels the curse against oppressors. From the physical point of view, it signals their independence as women who have not produced children and, in that sense, have resisted to serve patriarchy by becoming mothers.[71] Here lies the "anti-phallic" power Brigley-Thompson associates with Moore's Willendorf Venus in his essay *25000 Years* (Brigley-Thompson 85).

[71] The word "curse", here referring to menstruation, also refers us back to Marie's curse on the Queen and her successors, who represent oppressive powers in the narrative, and in fact are the ones who set Gull against the women (1; 7).

In chapter 9, page 17, the female body is opposed both to the idealised and to the pornographic images which society has used to represent it. The explicit image of Mary drinking in bed naked, is set in a stark contrast against the immediately preceding panel depicting Hogarth's engraving *The Reward of Cruelty* (1751) and to the different panels showing Victorian pornographic prints. One of these shows a semi-naked woman riding a chariot (8; 17), an image that recalls a warrior woman (like Boudicca) in her war chariot,[72] but debased to a sexual object. Moore's depiction of Marie's body, on the contrary, is sympathetic and human. Hogarth's work shows a surgical inspection of a corpse's entrails in a college theatre, which foreshadows Marie Kelly's horrific fate (Di Liddo, *Alan Moore* 45-46) and reminds the reader of the rest of depictions of the women butchered by Gull. Moore's panel proves that the representation of a naked, unglamourised, and unfetishised female body can be more shocking than the great amount of eviscerated corpses or hypersexualised images that populate the genre of comic books.

Marie tries to forget that she is in imminent mortal danger through alcohol and debauchery. While in *Lost Girl*s Moore "calls for a shameless sexuality, where the erotic can be explored without fear of abuse or violation" (Brigley-Thompson 87), in *From Hell*, he denounces the fact that for centuries women have not enjoyed this right, and their involvement in sexual activity has been full of anxiety. Marie's sexual activity is shown very explicitly, but not depicted in an aesthetically pleasing or pornographic way, as it clearly does not aim at an arousing effect; on the contrary, it has a disturbing effect, tinged as it is with her fear of imminent danger. Marie's attitude makes her lover extremely uneasy and scared at her sexually bold behaviour.

On page 18 of chapter 9, the focus shifts to a picture of a little girl praying. The contrast between the frankly sexual image of Marie and the picture of the innocent little girl suggests the transformation Gull intends to operate on women: from their bodily, complex, troubling and adult real selves to sexless, pure, powerless and infantile selves. The contrast of the images gives clues to the motives of the murders. This motive could be understood as an intention to castrate and "purify" women of their sexual natures. For Gull the women are water that must be purified by the fire of masculinity, and the images of Marie drunk and undressed and of the little praying girl convey the before and after of the process. This change is operated through the women's bodies precisely because they are the site of the sexual desire Gull sees as unacceptable in women. According to Brigley-Thompson, in Moore's narratives the female body is "a talismanic extension of women's desire" (86-87). In this sense, Gull's goal is to refashion femininity symbolically by reshaping women's bodies, and, ultimately, to completely erase female desire through murder.

Gull's violent language emphasises an exploitative masculinity through certain symbols that resemble the imagery Blake associates to male aggression: "Our grand symbolic magic chaining womankind thus must often be reinforced, carved deeper yet in History's flesh, enduring 'til the Earth's demise... when this world and its sisters shall at last be swallowed by a Father Sun grown red and bloated as a leech" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 4; 25). The imagery in this quotation insists on the deadly masculine symbol of the sun. Gull uses the same solar trope that Blake uses for Theotormon in *Visions* when he defines himself as a "fearful star in mankind's inner firmament" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 14; 15). He had previously defined the star as a "distant sun" (4; 21), and the sun is his recurrent symbol of masculinity, ultimately associated with fire, like Bromion and Theotormon in *Visions* (2.7-10; E46).

[72] Queen Boudicca had previously been identified by Gull as a matriarchal destroyer (see p. 184)

Aggressive masculine sexuality in *Visions* and *From Hell* results from misdirected libidinal energy. Tyranny is associated with the violent use of libidinal energy for domination and annihilation of others, a topic present in Gull's parodic allusions to hierogamic imagery (see ch. 5, p. 152). Though the sun in *From Hell* has the same symbolism as in *Visions*, it is more strongly attached to the phallic and narrow rationality reigning over imagination.

This conflation of sexual violence and masculinity is also present in Bromion and Theotormon's patriarchal concept of the sexual relationship. According to Helen P. Bruder, this association reflects normative representations of sexuality in the eighteenth century (*William Blake* 77), which insisted on the masochism of women and their need to be violently assaulted. Bromion uses this kind of discourse to spite Theotormon and gain power over him; Theotormon fatally enters Bromion's power game treating Ooothoon as if she had wilfully engaged in sex with Bromion or wanted to be assaulted by him. The issue thus becomes a question of male rivalry. Oothoon's sufferings are ignored by the two male figures; possession and pride are the only cause of Theotormon's despair. This is expressed in the language used to describe his reaction: "Then storms rent Theotormons limbs; he rolld his waves around. / And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair" (Blake, *VDA* 2.3-4; E46). Instead of pitying Oothoon, he thinks of rape as adultery and becomes prey to jealousy. In the image in the frontispiece, Oothoon and Bromion are bound back to back, while Theotormon crouches in despair.

In the pornography of the times rape was normalised and explicitly depicted. In *Visions*, the rape is not explicitly presented; there is no aesthetic, visual or verbal recreation in rape (Bruder, *William Blake* 78). In *From Hell* the sexual violence is explicit, but it is justified as a strategy to shock the reader into awareness; its bleakly graphic character and style does not leave room for pornographic enjoyment. As Moore explains, "What I wanted to do was to actually make this a genuine horror book, if you like, in that I wouldn't allow the readers that escape. If they wanted to see what it was like to cut up women, then I wanted to show them the plain and awful truth of it, unadorned" (Moore qtd. in Smith 255). Perhaps for this reason, Gull is shown as not enjoying sexual perversion, he is dispassionately fulfilling a duty. Thus he explains the procedure to Netley just as if it was an ordinary surgical operation: "Now this is a Liston knife. A Crimean battle-surgeon, Liston had legs on the sawdust in less than a minute with these blades. Remarkable. So, Netley… Left to right" (Moore and Campbell, *From Hell* 5; 31). Neither visually nor verbally is there any aestheticisation. Like *Visions*, *From Hell* ultimately implies that true union and love are impossible in a patriarchal social order that structures human relations and whose violence Gull takes to the extreme.

Both in Blake's *Milton* and in Moore's *From Hell* there are positive aspects in the representations of women. In chapter 14 of *From Hell*, at the end of Gull's visions, the very same gods Gull worships show him Marie Kelly alive, fiercely confronting him and defending her daughters: "ye auld divil I know that ye're there, and ye're not havin' these. Clear off wit' ye" (14; 22). This implies that, despite all his magic, his own fear has conquered him. Gull has not achieved his goal in the way he expected; on the contrary, the feminine "anti-phallic power" (Brigley-Thompson 83) he feared lives on and can still overpower him. Brigley-Thompson also compares the visual aspect of this scene, with its ample natural spaces, to the scene where Marie Kelly has intercourse with a customer in an alley, where narrow boxes predominated visually reinforcing the oppressive signification of the event (Brigley-Thompson 83). According to Miettinen the countryside and nature are associated to women in the final revelation in Gull's

vision, where Marie Kelly and her daughters appear; in the context of nature Gull is powerless, and Marie can authoritatively ward him off (Miettinen 92-93).

The passage in which Gull's spectre visits Marie, who ends up shooing him away, reverses the final plates of Blake's *Milton*.[73] In plate 36, Ololon, Milton's female emanation, descends unto Blake, whereupon the poet describes himself imploring Ololon to heal his wife:

> Thus are the Messengers dispatchd till they reach the Earth again
> In the East Gate of Golgonooza, & the Twenty-eighth bright
> Lark. met the Female Ololon descending into my Garden
> Thus it appears to Mortal eyes & those of the Ulro Heavens
> But not thus to Immortals, the Lark is a mighty, Angel.
>
> For Ololon step'd into the Polypus within the Mundane Shell
> They could not step into Vegetable Worlds without becoming
> The enemies of Humanity except in a Female Form
> And as One Female, Ololon and all its mighty Hosts
> Appear'd: a Virgin of twelve years nor time nor space was
> To the perception of the Virgin Ololon but as the
> Flash of lightning but more quick the Virgin in my Garden
> Before my Cottage stood for the Satanic Space is delusion
> …….
> Walking in my Cottage Garden, sudden I beheld
> The Virgin Ololon & address'd her as a Daughter of Beulah
> Virgin of Providence fear not to enter into my Cottage
> What is thy message to thy friend: What am I now to do
> Is it again to plunge into deeper affliction? behold me
> Ready to obey, but pity thou my Shadow of Delight
> Enter my Cottage, comfort her, for she is sick with fatigue (36.8-32; E136-137)

The parallelism between Ololon's and Gull's irruptions consists in the similarity of the scene: in Blake, a female spirit appears before a man; in Moore, a masculine spirit appears before a woman. In *Milton*, the visitor brings imaginative improvement, in *From Hell* the visitor brings destruction. Blake welcomes Ololon and asks her to heal his wife; Marie banishes Gull, to protect her daughters from him. Rather than fearing Ololon's revelation and opposing her, Blake humbly admits his errors and, like Milton, practises self-annihilation. Here, a male figure (Blake) welcomes the female vision who has come to help him realise Milton's errors, which he has interiorised (Ankarsjö 146):

> So Ololon utterd in words distinct the anxious thought
> Mild was the voice, but more distinct than any earthly
> That Miltons Shadow heard & condensing all his Fibres
> Into a strength impregnable of majesty & beauty infinite
> I saw he was the Covering Cherub & within him Satan
> And Rahab, in an outside which is fallacious! within
> Beyond the outline of Identity, in the Selfhood deadly

[73] This reversal of Blake's scene clearly underscores Gull's wrong perspectives on gender, in part derived from his misprision of Blake's texts, in which there is an acceptance of the feminine and a correction of masculinist errors.

> And he appeard the Wicker Man of Scandinavia in whom
> Jerusalems children consume in flames among the Stars[.] (37.4-12; E137, punctuation added)

After this, Milton appears and can defy Satan through Blake. In the passage in *From Hell*, hegemonic masculinity is characterised as satanic; this is highlighted by the allusions to Blake as a figure that defended the relation of contrariety Gull did not understand. The deities appear immediately before Gull's descent onto Marie Kelly's cottage, pointing with their fingers to the earth where Marie's house stands, presumably indicating the way to the last lesson he needs to receive (14; 22), but he fails to interpret the situation and, unlike Blake, he achieves no realisation. Gull has become an enemy of humanity,[74] because he has failed to realise the necessity for the male and female reciprocal activity needed for regeneration (Ankarsjö 148-149).[75]

6.1.3. Blake's redemptive female Emanations and *Promethea*

In *Promethea*, the feminist point of view of the protagonist is used to criticise a male constructed world. This point of view can be classified into a feminism of difference. As Di Liddo argues, "the mystic and Kabbalistic discourse that underpins the entire work is closely connected to the femininity of its main character. As a woman, Sophie / Promethea is more naturally prone to welcome knowledge, compassion, and understanding … that are key elements of the final apocalyptic revelation" (Di Liddo, *Alan Moore* 110). The archetypal symbolism that underpins the esoteric content of this graphic novel favours the idea that some qualities are more "feminine" and others more "masculine", although these are used in fluid ways, with female characters displaying characteristics belonging to the "masculine" esoteric principles and male characters adopting the "feminine". These qualities are not considered superior or inferior. Strength, for instance is not more glorified than compassion. According to Green, the book tries to develop a new consciousness of femininity and masculinity and to transform the traditional terms in which we think about sexual identity: "the text seeks to decouple the masculine and feminine from the male and female, deploying the language of heterosexual binaries in a self-deconstructive manner" (Green, "She" 746). The heroine "triumphs over outmoded masculinities and embodies a celebration of sexuality as a magical act" (748-749). As we will see, this is confirmed throughout most of the work, although critics like Green have also commented on problematic passages and the contradictions they entail (see section 6.2, pp. 208-209).

The apocalyptic theme of *Promethea* is supported by subplots that emphasise the importance of love to achieve regeneration. This idea has a Romantic origin, which has been commented by critics such as McGillis. The Romantic visions of apocalypse are described by McGillis as "a vision of a renewed Earth, a marriage of Heaven and Hell, a release of Promethean energies in an epithalamion such as we have in act 4 of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. This apocalypse unites the various facets of the Romantic vision: self-consciousness, ecological harmony, and dream and reality" (McGillis 203).

In *Marriage*, Blake tries to transcend the opposition body vs. soul. The body is considered

[74] According to *Milton*, the Immortals become enemies of humanity if they enter the Polypus, unless they take a female form; hence, Ololon appears as a twelve-year-old girl.

[75] From a Blakean point of view, V, who becomes more than a man but rather an ideal, as he tells Finch before being shot by him, is a destructive Eternal. He must be substituted by the female Evey to acquire a female, creative and nurturing form, one that is not an enemy of humanity.

the tangible dimension of the soul: “Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses” (4; E34). Blake had to reconcile his own criticism of the conventional religious rejection of the body as inferior and his Christian belief in the Fall. This difficulty determined in great measure his adoption of a “visionary materialist” perspective, i.e. not an entirely mystical one neither a purely empiricist one (Green, *Visionary Materialism* 1-3); in fact he criticised writers and intellectuals when they went to the extremes of these positions (Swedenborg on the mystical side, Locke on the empiricist).

In Blake, the Fall has caused an opposition between the world of matter and the eternal world of spirit. This opposition has attributed to matter all the negative meanings of mortality. In *Thel*, for example, the female protagonist decides not to trespass the frontier between the innocent world of spirit where she resides and that of matter and experience. While Blake considered the bodily a precious dimension of existence, he had also an acute awareness of the consequences of experiencing this dimension when it is reduced to mere materiality. Through Thel, Blake expresses, rather than his own position as regards the body, his sympathy for the female subject doubly trapped in the opposition between matter and spirit by cause of the gender conventions that delimit her as merely a body (virginal, sexual or maternal) that exists for others and not for itself. Thel goes down to the realm of the Clod of Earth, but does not descend into the grave of mortality, alerted by a voice from the depths of the grave that says:

> Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
> Or the glistning Eye to the poison of a smile!
> Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
> Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
> Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
> Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
> Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
> Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright.
> Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
> Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire? (6.11-20; E6)

Ana Elena Gonzalez-Trevino comments that in *Thel*, “going underground is an invitation to experience a primordial organicism that is both sensuous and grotesque – something like Milton’s ‘wilde Abyss’ of Chaos, ‘The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave’” (Gonzalez-Trevino qtd. in Bundock and Effinger 23). Gonzalez-Trevino uses Milton’s concept of the “Abyss” of Chaos to explain the meaning of the grave’s message to Thel. However, for Blake, at the moment he wrote *Thel*, bodily existence is not in itself chaos unless we look at it as a merely material biological phenomenon. As he established in *Marriage*; matter is a crystallisation of spirit. Gonzalez-Trevino states that Thel flees from “the body’s porosity, from its very receptivity to a nature that is in equal parts creative and destructive, prolific and devouring. Yet the voice from the grave reflects on the impossibility of shutting experience out, the futility of resisting impressions and sensations, or the impossibility of evading embodied existence” (Gonzalez-Trevino qtd. in Bundock and Effinger 23-24). Here the destructive aspect of nature comes into play, but Thel’s story implies that by rejecting this danger we also reject the creative possibilities of nature.

The relationship between matter and mind in *Promethea* is similar to Blake’s definition of the body: “Matter is that part of being that has crystallized, where the mind’s light has petrified

to concrete substance" (1; 5).[76] Other works by Moore, such as *Providence* and *Jerusalem*, also define the physical world as the discernible part of a much vaster whole.

Other Blakean books contain a much more problematic relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. Unlike in *Marriag*e, Blake's point in *Thel* is that the protagonist is understandably terrified of descending into the world of matter, into the body and into sexuality, given the language suggestive of aggression used by the voice from the tomb. According to Bentley, Thel is dared to undergo a ritual initiation by fire ("From Sketch" 139) from which she flees. This is not necessarily reason to despise Thel's behaviour, as some critics have done. Blake would probably dislike the idea of her needing to be "purified" by male fire. We can observe this if we study *Visions*, which, although it was composed four years later and includes other underlying themes such as colonial exploitation, exploitative uses of scientific discourse and slavery, maintains certain continuities highlighted by scholars such as Damon, Frye, Erdman, Bloom or Michael Ferber (Bruder, *William Blake* 209, n. 5). Bruder criticises this view because it implies for most of these male critics that Oothoon overcomes the cowardice they believe characterises Thel (*William Blake* 55). It is possible, though to see the narratives as continuous without considering Thel's flight a coward behaviour, but rather a disobedience to go into the roles dictated for women in a patriarchal world (57). This escape from oppression does not preclude the possibility, suggested by the voice from the grave, who enigmatically questions the limits imposed on desire, that women can own and pursue their erotic desires. In that case, Thel's flight away from the grave of submissive femininity does not necessarily go away from sex and desire back into a prelapsarian existence, but could actually be the beginning of Oothoon's flight towards Theotormon to fulfil her physical love.

As we see in *Visions,* Oothoon's flesh is rent by Theotormon's eagles to purify her from Bromion's rape; however, Oothoon's act of offering herself up for Theotormon's preying birds can be an attempt to win Theotormon's sympathy or an effect of the interiorisation of his prejudice, rather than Oothoon's own masochistic wish or a painful initiation into more conventional womanhood. Oothoon's interventions and the Marygold make it very clear that she is not guilty or in need of purification, because "… the soul of sweet delight / Can never pass away" (1.9-10; E46). In Moore's graphic novel, there is a positive view of sexuality expressed in the female characters' readiness for love (which is, in this case, not always heterosexual), whose limits reside only in the limits of perceptions in the ordinary world and the conventions and prejudice that abound in society. We can see how these factors prevent Dennis Drucker to accept Promethea's love. We have already commented on the image of Prometheus in *Promethea* and its use, similar to Blake's in *Visions*, to show the problems Promethea's divine love and desire finds when it reaches mortals, bound by conventions, limits and laws. In *Promethea,* we have also seen how female characters such as Barbara embody a more joyous view of the world of matter, the body and sexuality, as happens in *Promethea* 4, chapter 5, "The Serpent and the Dove". In this issue, Barbara and her husband Steve, once reunited in the highest Kabbalistic sphere, go back into the mortal world, thus embracing mortal existence.

Blake used the idea of a marriage and of the return of Albion to his bride Jerusalem as imagery of apocalyptic vision; again and again *Promethea* refers to love and erotic union as ways to experience oneness with the universe, and therefore a transformed worldview. Blake's

[76] Note the presence again of cabalistic and alchemical symbolism of darkness, cold and contraction vs. radiance, heat and expansion like that which Blake used in *Urizen* (see ch. 4 of this thesis, pp. 122-123, esp. n. 35).

apocalypse, in line with Romantic ideals, "reveals an eternal and ongoing struggle for the perfectibility of humanity" (McGillis 201). Milton and Ololon's quest for each other in *Milton*, like Barbara and Steve Shelley's in *Promethea*, participate in a narrative that is similarly based on a Romantic gender union utopia (Ankarsjö 123). Albion and Jerusalem replay the myth at a macrocosmic level (Ankarsjö 2). The *Promethea* characters are committed to bringing this kind of apocalypse to the world, especially through art, in a way that recalls Blake's vision of art and love, especially in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, as the ways to liberation and true humanity. According to Green, the apocalypse in *Promethea* is achieved through "a change in perception that is itself inaugurated by an endorsement of sexual transgression akin to the celebration of 'sensual enjoyment'" ("She" 740). The thematic association between "sexuality, imagination and redemption" (741) is one of the key elements Moore has in common with Blake. Part of the plot of *Promethea* involves Barbara and her quest for her late husband through cabalistic paths towards the Godhead from where they are reborn as twin siblings. In the end, the earthlier love between Sophie and her boyfriend shows ordinary human love as magical. Kraemer comments that Sophie and Carl's final kiss, in the context of the mystical journey Sophie has just gone through, appears as a microcosmic manifestation of God's love, of a "God/dess reuni[on] with Herself" through the two characters (157). The encounter is holy in its very same quotidian nature and keeps the passion and intimacy of previous passages of more exalted fantasy.

As critics such as Green have noted, an important characteristic of *Promethea* is the imagery of female sexuality and childbirth (Green, "She" 744). This is most salient in the chapter "The Wine of Her Fornications", where the characters visit the kabbalistic realm of Understanding, "Binah" in Hebrew, pertaining to the female aspect of godhood according to this tradition. This takes place as soon as Barbara and Sophie reach the end of the ocean at the bottom of the Abyss of Daath. As they come out of the waters, they see a landscape resembling a reclining female body with an archway between her legs and as they enter, both women comment they feel as if they had been there before, but "comin' the other way" (4; 3). Inside, under a rock formation suggestive of a vaginal opening (4; 3), Sophie finds her new Promethea robe, which has turned from white and gold to red, symbolising the "maternal blood" that accompanies the birth of a new world. This blood carries during this episode the same connotations that the fire of inspiration and desire had in previous episodes (Green, "She" 746). In the issue, the blood is represented pouring from two different chalices on the world, one ending in the "Vision of Sorrow" and the other in the "Vision of Compassion", two visions that imply two different ways of understanding the mythical meaning of the feminine. The "Vision of Sorrow" shows the idea of woman as exclusively receptive, maternal, and dependent on the Virgin / whore binarism as self-destructive and a spiritual dead-end. The "Vision of Compassion" implies an idea of woman as autonomous and imaginatively creative, appearing as a child that represents affection, strength and inspiration. Finally, as Barbara and Sophie are coming out of Binah along the Empress Tarot path, they see the manifestation of the female principle as luxuriant nature. Moore had already broken the taboos of the representation of childbirth in *Miracleman* (former *Marvelman*). In this superhero comic, labour and its graphic depiction are used to narrate the birth of the daughter of the hero and his wife (an ordinary woman), and to connect the superhero's godlike qualities to the human, even to the animal in the human (Green, *Alan Moore* 11-12). The imagery of childbirth was also important for Blake. Thus, the female figure giving birth in plate 3 of *Marriage* became an important symbol in the

Blakean mythical narrative, which begins with the figure of the Eternal Female in the "Song of Liberty" at the end of *Marriage* (plate 25) and continues in illuminated books like *America*.

On the whole, *Promethea* is a counterexample to *From Hell*; in this graphic novel, the union (for instance, Promethea and Jack Faust's tantric ritual) is a means to enlightenment. However, love does not appear as perfect and devoid of conflict. Promethea's love for humankind is an important subject in certain parts of the narrative, such as the events involving Bill Woolcott and Dennis Drucker. Bill was a male artist in the 50s, able to channel the spirit of Promethea. Dennis, an FBI agent, takes him for a woman, because Bill's magical identification is so intense that he sounds and looks like a woman, perhaps the woman he really is inside. Dennis falls in love with Bill, but when he finds out Bill has a male physical body he shoots him dead. A mental breakdown follows and Dennis is sent to an asylum. This topic is introduced by Bill to Sophie to teach her that love between an imaginary deity and a mortal human can be dangerous, as mortals are subject to mental limits that spiritual entities surpass. Bill also shows Sophie the image of Prometheus preyed on by vultures, as a reminder that her love can be a blessing, but also a curse to the extent that the rules and limits of the human world prevent it to have a proper accommodation. Being a visionary, like Blake's Oothoon, entails the risk of having to suffer cruel tortures at the hands of the Elect. Promethea's love, like Oothoon's desire, takes forms that often disrupt the established order and can lead to disasters like Bill's murder or the rape of Oothoon. Dennis is forever trapped in the limits of ideology; Bill and Sophie's consciousness of gaps in it allows them to go beyond traumatic history (Petrovic 167), that is, beyond the pain humanity experiences when its ideas about the world are suddenly shattered (for instance, during historical periods of change). This is reflected in the graphic structure of the episodes: Promethea can move through spaces and gaps, whereas Dennis remains inside borders (Petrovic 167-168).

Promethea's first self-presentations connect imagination and sexuality: "Art's fiercest spark... I am all inspiration... all desire. Imagination's blaze in mankind's dark..." (Moore et al., *Promethea* 1; 1). Art and inspiration come from a primal notion of desire, which can be traced back to the Romantic idea of the association explained by Langbaum between primal instincts and lofty aspirations. In *Promethea* the positive rendering of the fire of desire opposes the fire of Gull's violence in *From Hell*: "I bring you fire!" (Moore et al., *Promethea* 1; 1). In this graphic novel the emphasis falls on the creativity of fire and its power of destruction only appears in the background as the other side of Promethea's emancipatory force. Sterile destruction is portrayed in the double page drawing in volume 1, chapter 5, portraying on one side a military man flanked by a crow, a sword, a tombstone, an American flag and a Soviet hammer-and-scythe symbol launching missiles from his open fly to the other side of the double-spread. There, the same battlefield stretches on, populated by walking helmets (men without bodies from the waist up with a helmet on), a great tombstone with a swastika, different country flags and bloody torsos hanging from a tree. These symbols allude to ideological fanaticism and ideas of nation and masculinity that encourage aggression. At the background loom three crosses symbolising the conventional religion that promotes war, while a frame of bloody red roses surrounds the vision, alluding to the destruction of life and beauty, but also to the perversion of the passions that turns Eros into Thanatos. This is a visual metaphor that stands for the repression and corruption of sexual energies due to the domination of hegemonic masculinities, which channel these forces as aggression and the need to manifest strength and power in war pursuits.

6.1.4. Unnameable couplings and heavenly cominglings: Blakean influence on the treatment of sexuality in Moore's Lovecraftian graphic novels

In *Neonomicon* and *Providence* sensual enjoyment is often violent and disturbing. In *Providence*, love appears as something distant and lost forever, which leaves the protagonist, who mourns his lover, vulnerable before the terror of a cruel cosmology where the human is completely decentred. The necessity of love in human life is stated at the beginning of the novel, in "The Yellow Sign," where the protagonist meets Dr Alvarez.

The doctor is undead, a word that is never used in the text, but it becomes gradually clear that he is after he speaks to Robert of the four "methods" to "prolong the life", including the "reviving of cadavers" (1), that he found in the *Kitab*, and says that he decided to investigate how to prolong life with his late colleague, Dr Estes. This colleague is probably himself before the experiment, as he died just the same year he says his "illness" started (1), and he clarifies that "For morality, we test our procedures on ourselves. Dr. Estes was not lucky" (1). He has a strange cooling system both mentioned and visible in the room, allegedly a treatment for the Doctor's illness: "It is for my health" (1). However, it is actually one of the techniques to keep him from decaying and dying. When Robert asks about the smell of ammonia, the Doctor says "It is for the cooling system. In the cold, my symptoms are eased" (1). The dialogue is peppered with often ironic hints and clues that he is a cadaver: "Her husband (Mrs Ortega's) **also** is dead a long time now" (1, my emphasis), or "life does not trouble me" (1) among others. He even confesses he has a secret (1), but of course this is hidden in plain sight for the reader. Robert's remarks in his commonplace book take the irony of his oblivion to the extreme as he compares Dr Alvarez to a dead body without realising he is indeed dead:

> He's so burdened by his illness, with his skin a pale, unhealthy grey … I kept thinking that he'd passed away while I was talking to him and was only reassured when he next spoke to me … It was almost as if I was in the company of Poe's M. Valdemar, perhaps sustained by the frost-bite inducing temperature rather than by the means of mesmerism (1).

All this evidence is finally confirmed when in chapter 6, "Out of Time", Robert has access to the treatise and learns more detail about the reviving methods: "four means with the capacity to much protract the lifespan of a man so that he might be numbered with the old ones of his tribe. … The second is of warmth or cold, for there is no true death save in material decay" (6). Although he recognises the methods mentioned by Dr Alvarez, he does not realise Alvarez's treatment for his illness, his appearance and the strange coincidence of his colleague's death and his illness clearly point at the fact that he has used this method to prolong his physical integrity beyond death.

The Doctor tries to tell Robert that what keeps him alive is his love for his assistant Mrs Ortega. He decides to talk about it when he notices Robert is terribly embarrassed, because the young journalist realises that his visit has interrupted a sexual encounter between the doctor and his lover. At this point in the scene, the Doctor introduces a humanistic element (love) that clashes with the materialist world of Lovecraftian myth: "Love is the only substantial thing. It is noble in its odours and its noises, I think. From where I look at this, to not love is to waste the existence. Even life is a small matter beside it. You see, it is not interrupted by death. Without it, this world cannot be endured" (1). The impact of his words is highlighted by the point of view, as we can see the Doctor's face and neck as if we were in Robert's position, while Dr Alvarez's eyes pierce him. Behind him, on the wall, an anatomic picture of an open torso reinforces the allusions to the materiality of the body (dead in the picture, but alive in the

Doctor's references). The questions we could ask ourselves about this passage are: does the word "love" have same referent for both characters? Is the Doctor speaking of sex, of romantic attachment, or about love including its emotional and physical manifestations? As Robert (and at first, the reader) does not know that the Doctor is undead the Doctor's words can be interpreted idealistically, rather than as referring to merely physical acts. But when the Doctor says that love can go beyond the frontier of death, as he has proved in his own flesh, he seems to be talking about sex, rather than emotional attachment. The uncertainty in this chapter allows Moore room to stick to the materialism of the Lovecraftian subject matter while also allowing other points of view to be used to interpret it.

The dilemma of mortality that affects Black at some points in the narrative have interesting reminiscences of Blake's *Thel*. Like Blake's Thel, Robert also escapes from living his fleshly existence; for both him and Thel the implications of this experience are unbearable. In Moore's *Providence* Robert escapes from the astonishing underground vision of a female ghoul-like creature he identifies as Lilith and with his guilt for the death of his lover in issue 2, "The Hook." Although he feels deep inside that he should refuse to connive with societal oppression, he cannot help but repress and hide his non-heterosexual desire.[77]

Robert acts like Thel, both trapped in their own sphere. Though he does enter the realm of subterranean, repressed sexuality, he ends up committing suicide, unable to get rid of his guilt over the loss of his beloved and leap forward onto a new imaginative world. Moore's narrative implies that this is not Robert's fault. This does not mean that his actions in the story are ideal, but rather, that he finds himself in positions that limit his freedom and even take him to his tragic end. In the cosmic level of the story, some things in the fallen, material universe are irretrievably lost. Terrible gods reveal themselves as coming from the depths of the human mind, but at the same time they are the ones in power over us, therefore the individual loses all power. Although this cosmic de-centring of the human should be a problem worked out by the protagonist (other characters seem to be able to maintain better their psychic integrity after this discovery), the oppressive and destructive social conditions he suffers make it impossible for him, infecting his imagination, his inner worlds, with the oppression and loss he experiences in ordinary reality. They prevent him to heal and create new meaning in his life, as his failure to complete a whole work of literature proves; he can only produce a collage of scattered poetic ideas and diary passages.

Moore's reading of Lovecraft brings out the hidden sexual connotations of the Cthulhu mythos. However, there is a Blakean apocalyptic resonance in the way the energies of Eros and Thanatos end up bringing about the collapse of ordinary reality as a consequence of the violent sexual union of a woman and a monster. In *Neonomicon*, as in *From Hell*, the Gothic parody of hierogamy is present in the rape of Merril. Brears is presented as an ex-sex addict struggling with a crippling sense of shame. In issue 2, she is kidnapped by the cultists led by the Beeks and gang-raped by them and the Deep One they lure.[78] This confrontation with the darkest side

[77] This conflict arises precisely after the death of his lover, a young man (and transvestite by night, or possibly a closeted transsexual woman) nicknamed "Lily", who, the narrative crucially tells us, was hurt by Robert's conformism. Robert's sense of guilt is founded on the belief that he has somehow killed their relation; and that not only did he drive Lily to commit suicide, but also and more importantly that he still keeps Lily "undead", like Žižek's living dead (see Žižek 22-23), in between haunting memory and grievous absence. Robert's vision of Lilith takes place underground, and Lilith has the appearance of a skeletal female being; she appears after Robert's descent into this underground place where he sees a strange pillar of gold around which many bones are scattered, and also a strange pier made of fantastically carved black stone. These visions suggest the entrance into a different world, perchance the world of death, given the underground, cavernous structures and the macabre imagery.

[78] It should be noted as well that Moore's recreation of Lovecraftian myth pays attentions to questions of race. In the example discussed here, the cultists are no other than gun-toting racist Americans who do not hesitate to shoot a black man (agent Lamper); and while they lock up Merril, they could kill her and choose not to do it.

of sexuality leads to her conversion to the side of the monstrous so that, after repeated attacks by the monster, she learns to communicate with the creature. During these encounters, the creature has made her pregnant of non other than the legendary Cthulhu. When the *gargouille de la mer* recognises her as the mother of the god, he realises that Merril must fulfil her destiny of bringing about apocalypse,[79] immediately ceases his assaults, and helps her find a way out of the cultists lair, where she had been locked. This individual trauma begins a change in reality at large. Brears gives a new direction to her life and Cthulhu's birth commences the breakdown of consensual reality.

The imagery of rape in *Visions* is connected to Oothoon's description of the consequences of repression, including how it affects reproduction and family relations, corrupting them from their inception:

> Till she who burns with youth. and knows no fixed lot; is bound
> In spells of law to one she loaths: and must she drag the chain
> Of life, in weary lust! …
> ……
> … bound to hold a rod
> Over her shrinking shoulders all the day; & all the night
> To turn the wheel of false desire: and longings that wake her womb
> To the abhorred birth of cherubs in the human form
> That live a pestilence & die a meteor & are no more.
> Till the child dwell with one he hates. and do the deed he loaths
> And the impure scourge force his seed into its unripe birth …. (5.21-31; E49)

This imagery in Blake is not limited to *Visions* and *America*. In *Urizen*, Los himself, the Eternal Prophet, rapes Pity, a prefiguration of Enitharmon, and from their union Orc is born. This encounter is one of the darkest Blakean depictions of sexuality. As commented in chapter 4, it is the focus on the mechanicism and materialism of the fallen world that brings Blake's and Lovecraft's a priori disparate points of view closer. When Blake imagines a fallen world of mere matter dominated by a demiurgic Urizen, sex and reproduction become distorted, corrupt, pathetic and terrifying. To explain this, it is necessary to start introducing the conflict with gender that runs through Blake's works, on which I will focus fully in the next section.

In Eden, the human form divine is androgynous: "For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations / Which stand both Male & Female at the Gates of each Humanity" (*J* 88.9-10; E244 [Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148]). But this vision enters into contradiction with the ways in which Blake seems to be trapped into depictions of the female gender as more subservient (Fox 507). The Female Will is the main negative feminine metaphor in Blake that sabotages his gender utopia visions. Female characters related to this metaphor are portrayed as denying men sensual pleasure by refusing to be sexually available, all with the purpose of controlling them (Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148). As a result, female figures become trapped. They are good if they remain passive, but bad if they are active and demanding of love (Fox 518). As a result they are bad whether they restrain love or whether they demand it.

In Blake's Eden, males and females do not have separate existence, and whenever a female (like Vala) tries to have independent power, the unity is ruined (Fox 509). Whenever the Female Will appears, the original androgyne is divided; this, Mellor argues, reinforces the Biblical or Miltonic image of woman as Adam's rib, and Blake implied that the separation comes from the

[79] As Promethea had to fulfil it in the homonymous graphic novel.

selfishness of the Female Will ("Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148). The problems with female autonomy in Blake can be attributed at least partly to the influence of *Paradise Lost* (1667), in which Milton deals with the problem of individual autonomy by using the Narcissus myth to explain the "original-image" association between God, Adam and Eve (Barbeito Varela 27; my translation). In Milton, the "narcissistic relationship with one's own image" (Barbeito Varela 27), motivated by a yearning for autonomous unity and plenitude, is forbidden (27), as it threatens the original unity with God. The drama gets more complicated because Eve is Adam's image, one more step removed from God, and he is in danger of forgetting he is God's image and being absorbed in his own image through Eve's (27). Eve has as well the desire to contemplate her own image, thus forgetting both Adam and the original creator (27-28). In Bakhtinian terms, the "vertical" axis between God, Adam and Eve is what transmits Adam and Eve's images divine life and essence. Adam and Eve are urged to take the ascending route towards God whenever they contemplate his image in created things (28). The "horizontal" intersubjective contemplation between Adam and Eve leaves them without essence, in a game of appearances and shadows (28). Contemplation of one's own image is what precipitated Satan's fall: in love with his own idea, Sin, he describes a movement opposite to the gradual ascension towards divine essence through contemplation of God's image in creation (28).

Blake attempted to avoid these contradictory implications by presenting gender difference and thus the gender abstractions implied in his metaphors as a product of Urizen's fallen creation (Fox 517). Therefore, in the ideal world brought by apocalypse, there would be no sexes, which implies it was impossible for him to conceive of sexes as equal, without sexual hierarchy and dominance (517). This conflict unequivocally manifests an "uneasiness" (518) about the topic in Blake's mind. While he recognised society has a mistaken concept of the sexes and their difference, he was affected by those prejudices as well (518).

In *Urizen*, Pity refuses the sexual encounter with Los, according to the poetic voice, with some malicious intent, like the figures representing modesty and female sexual repression. Like other female characters in Blake, she is pictured as denying sex to control Los (Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148). Her "perverse and cruel delight" might be having Los under her thrall and moving him towards war. Yet Los pursues her despite her refusal, an attitude that on one hand reflects the patriarchal power dynamics that dominate the fallen world, but on the other hand also reflects Blake's conflicts with female sexuality. As discussed above, Blakean females are bad if they deny pleasure, but they are also bad if they demand love (Fox 518); therefore, Pity is also trapped by the demand to love Los exclusively in the terms laid out by Los, otherwise she becomes an evil Female Will. The subsequent reproductive consequences, however, are described as monstrous, perhaps indicating that the product of Los's insistence is after all unwholesome:

> 1. But Los saw the Female & pitied
> He embrac'd her, she wept, she refus'd
> In perverse and cruel delight
> She fled from his arms, yet he followd
> 2. Eternity shudder'd when they saw,
> Man begetting his likeness,
> On his own divided image.
> 3. A time passed over, the Eternals
> Began to erect the tent;
> When Enitharmon sick,

Felt a Worm within her womb (19.10-20; E79).

This encounter is the product of a gender division produced not by God, but by the corrupt Demiurge Urizen, for which reason, it will be even more doomed than Adam and Eve's sin in *Paradise Lost*. Blake engages in the Miltonian use of narcissism by setting Los as an Adam that falls deeper by begetting his own likeness (Orc) on "his own divided image" (that is, Eve / Pity). Los gets absorbed in contemplating Pity, but he does not have the redeeming option Adam has to ascend to God by contemplating God in created things instead of himself, given that the vertical connection to Eternity has been severed by Urizen's separation and his self-proclamation as one true God. Instead of a true God to look up to, Los only has a parody (Urizen). There is no good "vertical" path, and horizontal identifications are also contaminated. Los resembles Adam and Satan at the same time, as Pity, like Satan's Sin, gives birth to a being marked by animalistic ("Worm") and monstrous connotations. This also highlights that, where Adam and Eve found some kind of sublimation of their narcissism through sexual reproduction, being able to reproduce their own images through it (see Barbeito Varela 28), Los and Pity have lost this possibility as well, further removed as they are from Eternity through the interventions of the false God Urizen. The conception of the revolutionary and monstrous Orc appears thus as the product of multiple errors and divisions from Eternity, caused by rape and surrounded by trauma and pain, as would later be the case with Moore's interpretation of the conception and birth of Cthulhu. Orc will appear as an embodiment of violence as a reaction to injustice, but these origins and his destructive nature curse him and bind him to failure and pain. Cthulhu, appears, unlike Orc, like a twisted but sublime undoing of the misfortunes of Merril's life and society in general.

These Blakean images have transmitted part of their meaning to Moore's long list of woman-monster encounters: Abby and the Swamp Thing in *Swamp Thing*, Pan and Selene in *Promethea*, Merril and the Deep One in *Neonomicon*, in all cases the sexual encounter between "Beast and Whore" harbingers revolution and revelation. The result of these human-monster unions fascinated both Blake and Moore who were obsessed with childbirth imagery[80] and experimented with monstrous depictions of it, especially when the childbirth is the product of rape. Although these can be reworkings of ancient myths, both Blake and Moore give them an apocalyptic meaning and interpret apocalypse as a matter of perception rather than external transformation as in much of the exoteric Christian tradition.

Neonomicon both begins and ends inside Merril's womb. Although at the beginning the nebulous, warm-coloured cloud can be interpreted as an outer-space landscape, this proves wrong when we see it again at the end of the book. On the first page, the image is accompanied by the prophetic lines "It's the end, and the beginning. He's beneath the waters now, but soon, in only a few months, he will come forth. And until then he sleeps. And dreams" (1). A bit of umbilical cord is visible, but it is difficult to identify as such without more context. Although it

[80] Childbirth, as outlined in the previous chapter of this thesis (5, see pages 168-169), is also a crucial image in *Providence*, and had been present in earlier works such as *From Hell*, where the conception of a child between a royal Prince and a prostitute begins the conflict, and the villain's obsession is to murder women to extirpate their wombs and other organs. Given the meaning of Gull's imperialist and racist ideology of instrumental reason, this might recall historical cases of public enforced control of (primarily non white and female) sexuality and parenthood to get rid of "unfit" population, such as socially excluded people, paupers, addicts (See, for example, MacKenzie, "Eugenics in Britain" for an overview of eugenic theories in Britain) and in the case of *From Hell*, prostitutes. Perhaps incidents of controlled parenthood specifically targeting women are more abundant in the US. Examples include a wave of state-sponsored sterilisations, forced primarily on women, starting in the 1930s due to the Virginia Sterilization Act of 1924 (Kluchin 17-20), down to as recently as 2010, when 148 female inmates of two California prisons were sterilised without having consented to the procedures (Stern and Platt). Given Moore's awareness and interest in American history and politics, it would hardly be surprising that he had cases like these in mind when re-telling Gull's murders as an attack on female sexuality and procreative powers specifically.

is not obvious that the waters are not oceanic, but amniotic, especially to the Lovecraft fan for which the Cthulhu allusion is transparent enough.

Another parallel between Moore's interpretation of Lovecraftian prophecy and Blake can be found in Albion's sleep and its Atlantean associations. Blake understood the collapse of Atlantis as another myth of the Fall from visionary powers (symbolised in Atlantis) into ordinary senses (Whittaker, *William Blake* 31). For Moore, the Lovecraftian R'lyeh is a sort of Atlantis, an Eden before God and Man separated (or when the individual was one with the mother's body). It is the place where Cthulhu sleeps, and a powerful symbol of the deep unexplored psyche. After her dream of R'lyeh, Merril experiences reality in a darkly visionary way beyond ordinary perception. This applies especially to the idea of time: she sees that all moments in time coexist. The waters of the ocean, where the Deep creatures come from, and the amniotic waters are associated to the sunken ruins of R'lyeh, which Merril visits during her dream while unconscious at the cultist's hideout (Moore and Burrows, *Neonomicon* 3). In her dream she sits on the black colossal ruins of a city by the sea. Carcosa approaches Merril, walking on the water, and conveys a message to her in a cryptic pun: "What thith ith, ith you're a nun, thee, Athian Merry?" (3), literally "What this is, is your Annunciation". Besides, he reveals that the place is the Lovecraftian R'lyeh and that "R'lyeh ith in you" (3). The last pages of the book confirm this: R'lyeh is the uterus where Cthulhu is being gestated (4, 5). Carcosa departs with a blessing: "Your nakedneth ith the glory of the thecret thtarth" (3), which recalls Blake's proverb "The nakedness of woman is the glory of God" (*MHH* 8.25; E36).

In Blake the (sometimes sexual) union of the male and the female overcomes the fallen state of ordinary perception and imaginatively recreates the universe. In Moore there are recurrent references to sexual practices as a means to achieve altered states of consciousness beyond ordinary perception that imply an imaginative recreation akin to Blake's. A topic that counterculture has often associated with Blake is the magical use of sexual energies, and more recently, Marsha K. Schuchard and other researchers[81] have found evidence that Blake knew diverse doctrines of the cultivation of certain sexual practices to achieve mystical states, such as heterodox interpretations of Christianity like Moravianism, or Asian Tantra. Schuchard suggests that the whole gender dynamics of reunion in Blake could be based on this more esoteric type of spiritual eroticism.

Blake was probably acquainted with Tantrism through antiquarianism; moreover, his mother was a Moravian devotee and might have passed on to her descendants the Moravian sacralisation of ritual sexual acts and a certain openness concerning sexuality (see Atwood, "Christ" and Sklar, "Erotic Spirituality"). Blake's temporary Swedenborgian leanings might have also prompted some interest in a mystical interpretation of sexuality. Swedenborg wrote extensively and with a great degree of anatomical and scientific exactitude about his experiences and Blake studied them while he was interested in Swedenborgianism (ch. 6). Schuchard's 2006 study *Why Mrs. Blake Cried* explores the sexual aspect of Blake's path to spiritual vision. Schuchard mentions Blake's acquaintance with Richard Cosway, an instructor at Henry Parr's Drawing School who had interest in Moravian, Swedenborgian and Falkian practices and was connected to some figures from these circles (11). Swedenborg himself experimented for a time with Moravian and Sabbatian teachings (Schuchard 5). According to Schuchard, Blake made references to Moravian beliefs based on heterodox Kabbalistic doctrines about the hidden sexual nature of the sacred. These were built on the idea that in the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem there was a golden sculpture of male and female cherubim guarding the Ark of the Covenant. The Kabbalists claimed that these cherubim were

[81] Like Kripal ("Reality"), Atwood ("Christ") or Sklar ("Erotic Spirituality").

entwined in intercourse, forming the emblem of God's marriage with his female emanation, the Shekhinah (or Jerusalem). When the Temple was sacked by pagans, the statue was paraded through the streets to ridicule the Jews (2) Schuchard suggests Blake made some references to the myth of the defilement of this relic of Jerusalem, such as "Thy Tabernacle taken down, thy secret Cherubim disclosed" (Blake qtd. in Schuchard 23). According to Schuchard, this was the basis of the Moravian belief that ritual intercourse symbolically repaired the destruction of this temple, although this union could also occur in the mind of the believer (2). However, whether Blake was really involved in these practices or not, remains to be confirmed.

It would not be strange for a writer explicitly interested by these occult theories like Moore to read this kind of ideas concerning eroticism in Blake. Regardless of Blake's actual connections with esotericism, his ideas of energy and sensual enjoyment were later interpreted in esoteric terms as metaphors for energies variously known as orgone, vital magnetism or the yogic kundalini. In *Neonomicon*, the controversial passage of Beeks's orgy contains some references to the magical use of sexual libido. As Merril later explains to Perlman, they were trying to accumulate "[o]rgone energy. That's what the whole show runs on" (4). Moore took the term "orgone" from Wilhelm Reich's psychoanalytic theories, according to which libido had a physical manifestation he called orgone energy. However, this energy was based on mystical notions of energy (Hunt 4) rather than on sound physical evidence: Albert Einstein himself refuted Reich's theory (C. Turner, *Adventures* 5-6). Later on, the American writer Normal Mailer adopted and popularised Reich's psychosexual theories of orgone in his essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster* (1957), thus introducing Reichian concepts in *hipster* counterculture (C. Turner, *Adventures* 429-431) that would later develop into esoteric New Age beliefs and alternative medicinal practices from the 1960s onwards. It is worth remembering that this counterculture was also deeply interested in Crowley's and Spare's views on sexual magic and Eastern Tantra. An example of this is William S. Burroughs's, a poet who was also profoundly interested in the occult. In his 1970 article, "All the Accumulators I have Owned" (C. Turner *Adventures* 266-267), he comments on his experiences with orgone accumulators. At the same time, a psychedelic and esoteric construct of Blake was being developed by writers like Ginsberg, for whom Blake had a meaning of sexual liberation in tune with the Reichian views on sexuality that were taking root in counterculture. The festival hall the characters in Moore's graphic novel access through the underground tunnels under their shop in Salem (just a chamber with a pool of river water) is built, according to them, like a "big orgone accumulator" (*Neonomicon* 2). During the orgy, Beeks talks often of orgone attracting the presence of Deep Ones (such as the creature later appearing). He also calls this energy "Vril" (2), a name invented by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in his racist-occult novel *The Coming Race* (1871), contributing to the racist connotations that are given to these characters. Beeks announces later that "Looks like we got a groove happening. The air's blue as they say," (2) which fits the description of this energy in the pamphlet Robert reads in *Providence*.

In *Providence*, it is particularly taboo forms of sexual activity that bring about disturbances in perceptions, something we start surmising in chapter 1 during the Doctor Alvarez incident and which is further developed in chapter 2, "The Hook". Suydam gives Robert a pamphlet that describes the story of the founders of the Stella Sapiente and records the sexual nature of their magical experiments. The pamphlet mentions that the *Kitab* contained a section called "The Azure Garden" (Moore and Burrows, *Providence* 2)[82] giving instructions for "specific carnal acts conducted in specific settings as a means of harnessing essential occult energies" (2). In letters, Hekeziah Massey, one of the co-founders, describes to another, Étienne Roulet, how

[82] For the comments on "The Azure Garden", I have used the (fictional) pamphlet reproduction page numbers, instead of counting the novel pages themselves, as the numbers provided are already useful.

during these rites, as a result of "prohibited excitements" the air turns blue, and certain unnamed presences are encouraged to appear (2), just as happened in *Neonomicon*. The *Kitab*'s techniques involve, according to the pamphlet, necrophilia (which explains Dr Alvarez's practices), zoophilia (which explains partly the events in *Neonomicon*) and incest (present mainly in chapter 4, "White Apes"). Roulet alleged his mother had practised incest with him using a device whose description in the pamphlet clearly recalls an orgonic chamber (2). The writer of the pamphlet (Suydam) suggests parallels between the Stella Sapiente techniques and Tantric sexual rites, though with "insurmountable dissimilarities" of "purpose, method and philosophy" (2). Hekeziah's contact with non-human visitors, Merril's dream of R'lyeh, and the subsequent changes in her perception of reality are examples of the disturbances in perception caused by these sexual practices. Not all kinds of transgression of ordinary perception are morally acceptable; these practices in fact increase the potential of these characters as sources of horror.

In *Providence*, some passages explore the connection between transgressive sexual practices and the alteration of perceptions of the kind Blake explored during the time he was interested in Swedenborg and other heterodox sexual teachings. In issue 9 of Moore's *Providence*, "Outsiders", Black has an erotic encounter with Howard Charles. Charles is a descendant of Japheth Colwen, the third of the founders of the Stella Sapiente. The two men have sex while Black contemplates a strange meteorite found in the outskirts of Manchester (New England). Here, the Blakean announcement of the achievement of visionary states through sensual enjoyment meets Spare's influence and his use of sexual energies. It is the combination of the extreme mental state of orgasm, the taboo nature of the act (sodomy) and the contemplation of an ominous object that stirs up Black's subconscious, recalling K. Grant's interpretation of Spare's techniques as "atavistic resurgence" (see chapter 2 of this thesis). The dialogue during the sex scene evidences that something out of the ordinary is happening, as Black asks "Does everything look blue?" and his partner remarks "I can see things in the stone" (9) while he is close to climax. This gives way to Black's vision in the following issue, "The Haunted Palace", which I described in chapter 4. Magical sex does not always have negative consequences, given the example of *Promethea*. In *Providence*, however, sex magic is used by the occultists, but only to fulfil the prophecy of the *Kitab*. When they have done this, the effect of their dark magic is actually repressive. Robert and Howard Charles are actually being duped by the occultists. They are using them to bring back Japheth Colwen's spirit. Charles does not want to pursue his association with Robert after the sexual encounter for fear that his homosexuality will be discovered. This social implication is connected to the magical side of the argument: by conforming, he allows the evil magicians to win, and the next time Robert sees him, Howard looks, dresses and speaks exactly like his ancestor Colwen. Moore is actually criticising conventional norms, even if he associates transgressive practices to the unscrupulous members of the Stella Sapiente. Charles' conformity is externalised as the substitution of his identity for Colwen's identity. America is going back to the past. The passage underlines the consequences of the magical use of sex by groups dominated by old patterns of repression. Robert, in Moore's *Providence*, seems to suffer these consequences when the visions caused by the previous ritual intercourse with Japheth Colwen's descendant finally break his sanity. Blake's warnings against Swedenborgian sexual doctrine also suggest that these practices can cause mental derangement, but in Moore the risk is associated to the social conditions the characters are suffering, and not to the esoteric use of sex in itself.

Moreover, the vision of Robert's encounter with Carcosa has important parallels with Blakean homoerotic visual metaphors for inspiration, such as the encounters between Blake and Milton or Blake and Los in *Milton*. The same act in Moore is made extremely unsettling

due to the hostile historical moment that is being portrayed as well as Robert's difficulties to accept his sexuality. Carcosa's (Nyarlathotep's) visitation can be interpreted as akin to Los's apparition to Blake. The full-page illuminations of *Milton* show Robert and William Blake receiving the inspiration from Milton as a star entering through their feet. They feature the figures in a bodily position and an attitude that Hobson has termed "sexual ecstasy" and "sexual exaltation" (*Blake* 130), the latter of which is more than merely a suggestion, considering the discernible erect phalluses in both pictures (*Blake* 130). The description of plate 47 of *Milton* in the Blake Archive highlights the sexual nature the encounter between Los and the poet has for some commentators, for whom the image depicts oral-genital contact (Eaves et al., Illustration descriptions, pl. 47, *William Blake Archive*). Essick noted this might convey the intensity of the relationship between the artist and imagination (Essick qtd. in Hobson, *Blake* 130-133). Blake's passage in the text of *Milton* does not mention oral-genital contact between the male figures, the text instead depicts Los's fond gestures of blessing, binding Blake's sandal and kissing him. There is no clear reason as to why Blake would have represented them in a sexual attitude. Hobson suggests that Blake might have chosen a stronger image that condenses the intensity and intimateness of the relationship in a more sexual form (Hobson, *Blake* 133). Other references to Blake's union with Los include the poet statement that "I became One Man with him arising in my strength" (*M* 22.12; E117); but that is the closest in the text to any physical union between them, making any sexual interpretation only possible in symbolic terms. Rather than as a depiction of a literal sexual act, it can be a symbolic passing on of sexual energies from Los's genitals to Blake's mouth or face (Hobson, *Blake* 135). The creative symbolism of genitals functions here as a reference to a spiritual type of inspiration that is not sanitised into angel metaphysics.

Occult sexual rituals appear in both Blake and Moore as problematic, subject to misinterpretations that divorce sexuality from the rest of areas of life and treat the body as a mechanism. The passages by Moore suggest, on one hand, his fascination with Reichian theories, Tantra and other visions of sexuality in occulture; but, on the other, his graphic novels reveal how atrocities are perpetrated as a consequence of a literal interpretation of esoteric spiritual doctrines. The awareness of this important caveat recalls Blake's own problems with the radical sexual teachings of Swedenborg, which he expressed in the lines "Embraces are Cominglings: from the Head even to the Feet; / And not a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place" (*J* 69.43-44; E223). In these lines, Blake rejects sexuality as merely genital and the power dynamics associated to conventional religion applied to a sexual relationship (the male "Priest" enters a "Secret Place", instead of uniting with another whole being). The lines also criticise the ritual formulation of the erotic in favour of more spontaneous expressions. This associates the rigidity and lack of imagination of certain interpretations of spirituality with satanic evil and a disregard for ethics. Moore also conveys the potential problems with the view that morality is independent from the practitioner's belief system and magical techniques, as it can be twisted into a justification for unethical acts. In Moore's Lovecraftian works a materialist, soulless, mechanistic application of these ideas in the realm of sex yields monstrous results. The deeper implication (explored, for example in *Promethea*) is that in real life emotional, ethical, and imaginative components are indispensable to make sexuality a meaningful way to transform larger realities.

Moore's reflections mark a distance between the theory of free love and sexual liberation developed in the 1960s and the reality and complexity of human psychology and relationships in the area of sexuality. While *Mirror of Love*, *Swamp Thing* and *Promethea* project an Aquarian utopianism on the concepts of free love and sex, works such as *From Hell* and *Providence* reflect misgivings about the innocence of countercultural proposals of free love and Tantric

practices. The 1960s theories of free love were still based on an Enlightened notion of the individual as someone always in rational control of passions, and their simplistic enactment always risks incurring into translating old forms of repression and objectification into a new form. These practices can be distorted and corrupted. Thus, the racist cultists in *Neonomicon* have tried to materialise a sexual utopia, but the result is brutal violence and objectification of others; the goals they pursue with their sexual magical techniques and their own enjoyment are more important than human lives. In the form they are depicted in *Providence*, these practices appear as materialistic: the magicians that appear in the graphic novel use them as systematic bodily procedures to achieve an incredible power. Their practices have not afforded them any illumination or improvement as human beings, in fact they do not show any empathy for the characters they abuse or deceive. With their sexual-magical acts, these adepts in fact bring about and maintain the systems of oppression and terror the characters are depicted as suffering. In short, without spiritual growth, these practices become materialistic and dangerous.

6.2. BLAKE'S AND MOORE'S CONTRADICTIONS AND PROBLEMATIC DEPICTIONS OF GENDER

In this subsection, the main problems of Blake's depictions of gender will be commented upon and contrasted to Moore's passages where, whether due to the influence of Blake or other factors, Moore's gender politics are also highly problematic and contradictory with the feminist goals of the authors. This subsection will focus on *From Hell*, *Promethea* and *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, which contain important parallels with works by Blake such as *Visions*, *America*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* regarding the problems associated to gender and sexuality.

Despite the considerable overcoming of many patriarchal ideas that both Blake and Moore achieve in these works, certain representations of women and of sexuality contradict their defence of the autonomy of women. This has been previously discussed in the case of Blake by feminist Blake scholars such as Susan Fox and Mellor, as I have more briefly commented in the previous section. Blake's wide use of the term "Man" puts into question the androgynous nature of the Human Form Divine and sabotages his image of genderless human perfection (Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 153). The characteristics of Beulah, a positive feminine state which is, nonetheless, limited and must be overcome to go to Eden, and the idea of the Female Will, a corrupt and unnatural impulse to domination, also undermine Blake's general ideal of the contrariety between equals that he wanted to apply to gender as well (Fox 507). The Female Will also represents the idea of "the materialistic world as self-sufficient" and insists in the traditional association of woman with this materialistic world, Nature (Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148). Any female figure that does not embody the nurturing qualities of Mother Nature, according to Mellor, and that shows strength and independence, creates an obstacle to vision because as an embodiment of materialistic nature she will enthrone the five senses and deny imagination (148). The consequence of the idea of the Female Will is that, in Blake's poems, women should not have an independent existence (Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148): "In Eternity Woman is the Emanation of Man; she has No Will of her own. There is no such thing in Eternity as a Female Will" (*VLJ* 85; E552). This leads Blake to depict a universe where females are either passive and good or active and destructive (Fox 509). The latter is especially the case of Leutha, Tirzah and the Shadowy Female, whose actions lead to disaster and are anyway either imitations of the actions of males or need the intervention of males to be complete (515).

Blake tried to escape the contradiction of his vision with the patriarchal prejudice he reproduced, but seemed to be trapped by the basis of the system as he laid it out in his first books (Fox 507). When he wrote *Milton*, his doctrine of contraries was solidified, and he sought

to amend the inferiority of the female figures, by presenting Beulah as an abstract metaphor (510). Beulah is a place where all the weak and weary souls go to rest, and they acquire feminine characteristics as a metaphor for their weakness, but it does not mean that all (or only) women are in this weak state (510). As Fox puts it, "he does not say that all females are weak, but he does say that all weakness is female" (516). Similarly, the Female Will becomes more abstract interpreted as a metaphor, as a genderless tyranny, a "destructive urge for dominance which knows no gender" (516) even if the particular imagery is always associated to characters like Enitharmon and Vala. It is this supposed sexlessness that many previous critics considered a sign of Blake's gender progressiveness, as was the case of Irene Tayler and Ferber, who regarded Blake's metaphors as positive: "most of Blake's female figures are symbols of mental states or their projections that can be found in any mind, male or female." (Ferber qtd. in Mellor "Blake's Portrayal of Women" 148) Nonetheless, the Female Will is so harmful that it puts the responsibility for the fall on many of the female characters, making balance impossible to achieve: Leutha causes the fall of Satan, Vala causes the fall of Albion, or at the very least, the torment of Luvah; Babylon is condemned for destructing the divine union, and even Ololon at some point confesses to having tried to defeat Milton (Fox 516). Otherwise a figure that could almost repair Blake's conflict with gender, suffers a fate different than that of her male counterpart Milton. While his self-annihilation affords him the entrance in Eternity, Ololon divides, part of her reintegrating with Milton under the form of a dove, and the other descending on Felpham as a "Moony Ark" (42.7; E143), "In clouds of blood, in streams of gore, with dreadful thunderings" (42.8; E143). She finally turns into garments dipped in blood that clothe Jesus. While the description seems to suggest the apocalyptic value of Ololon, it is unavoidable to associate the bloody disintegration of her figure and the reintegration of parts of her with Milton or Jesus as a remainder of the old idea that females cannot have independent existence.

In this light, Blake's vision of gender union is undermined in his poetry. Blake tried to substitute patterns of gender confrontation and domination with reconciliatory dynamics (Fox 511), but there is still an association between femininity and weakness, for which reason, he only partially repairs the problem. Fox concludes that while Blake's problems with gender might very well be a normal consequence of the education he received and the society and historical moment he lived in, they also express a contradiction between the egalitarian concept he tried to transmit and the heavily gendered metaphor he was using for it (518). Other institutions of religious power and political ideology also structured life and constituted the reality Blake lived in as much as patriarchy, and he resisted them. He adhered to many patriarchal modes of thinking, even when they compromised the consistency of his vision. While he succeeded in breaking away from received ideas and values in political, philosophical and religious terms, the question of why gender was so problematic to him lingers.

The greatest point of interest with respect to the comparison of the topic of gender in the relationship between Blake and Moore is Moore's *From Hell*, its inspiration in Blake's *Visions* and the question of whether *From Hell* stands successfully as a narrative against patriarchy, given certain contradictions generated by the focus on the villain protagonist.

Visions, the book by Blake that is specifically mentioned in *From Hell*, is fraught with ideas and passages that have been difficult to interpret from a gender perspective. Thus, in Blake's *Visions*, Oothoon fails to shake guilt off from Theotormon by humouring him with erotic fantasies:

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

> Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first born beam,
> Oothoon shall view his dear delight, nor e'er with jealous cloud
> Come in the heaven of generous love, nor selfish blightings bring (7.23-29; E50).

These lines exemplify how Blake's female sexual liberation often slides into the interests of male gratification, responding to patriarchal modes of thinking (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 197-198). In contrast with this, the passage of Moore's *From Hell* where Marie's sexual behaviour overwhelms her lover shows the gap between patriarchal pornographic fantasies and the unglamorous reality of sexual acts under a state of oppression (Marchetto Santorun, "War" 15-16). This passage contains criticism of patriarchal conventions, however Moore's narrative presents women's use of the anti-phallic power against patriarchal aggression in an unconscious way. This prevents female characters from achieving a fuller, conscious use of their potential that matches Gull's violent agency. The failure to portray the female characters as more conscious of their possibilities (regardless of whether they survive or die) in contrast to the villain's might makes Moore fall somewhat short of his feminist objectives.

Another striking example of Blake's conflict with female sexual liberation can be seen in the imagery of plate 17 of Blake's *America*, which suggests a process of transformation in which woman is presented as object rather than subject. On the lower section of the plate, some burning feminine figures, possibly representing American women, are seized by the revolutionary fire of Orc. On the right side of the illumination, under the text, they are naked and huddled against each other in fear, surrounded by flames; on the left, there is a bunch of grapes accompanied by other vine stalks and a feminine figure, also surrounded by flames, stretching upwards as if starting to float. Further up, the female form seems to continue her ascent, but her limbs seem to transform into branches and vegetable forms; at the top, there is a hunching woman with her head buried in her lap, at the foot of a young tree on which a bird perches. This transformation is problematic insofar as it seems to portray an awakening that leads to another type of slumber.

Blakeans have often associated these failed attempts to portray female liberation with "a perennial tendency among male prophets of women's liberation to limit that liberation to the sexual sphere" (Mee qtd. in Bruder, *William Blake* 20). Thus, Bruder describes the passage as one where women "remain objects rather than agents of change" (*William Blake* 130). The text on this plate recounts how all the Angels representing England's regions and cities fall and are infected by the plagues sent in Orc's fiery winds. Albion's Angel turns into a scaly monster, scaring his own Angels, and so do other figures that represent the spiritual enslavement of the people: "The doors of marriage are open, and the Priests in rustling scales / Rush into reptile coverts, hiding from the fires of Orc, …" (15.19-20; E57). The revolution acquires strength, not only in political, but also in gender and religious terms. Priests, the guardians of the feminine virginity, modesty and decency, are depicted as snakes or ignoble reptile creatures that flee from Orc, and marriage as a prison that bursts open. Orc liberates women and they revive, the vine both in text and image symbolising resurrection, allegorically represented in the illumination. But the organising and redeeming subject is male and, as Bruder argues (*William Blake* 131), the female desire is still tinged with connotations of male erotic gaze and pleasure:

> … the fires of Orc,
> That play around the golden roofs in wreaths of fierce desire,

> Leaving the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth
>
> For the female spirits of the dead, pining in bonds of religion,
> Run from their fetters reddening, & in long drawn arches sitting,
> They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times
> Over their pale limbs, as a vine when the tender grape appears (Blake, *Am* 15.20-26; E57).

Orc's fires strip the women naked for the enjoyment of the male sight. Moreover, women do not enact their own liberation but were awakened to their new state by the masculine force of Orc. Their feelings of replenishment and desire are stated, but they do not speak or act at all. They are just like dry plants that recover their colour and are revitalised by an external agency, like the vegetable imagery in the illumination. Unlike in Blake's *America*, in *From Hell* there are no male saviours that liberate women, with the only possible exception of prince Edward Albert, who tries to warn Marie of the danger, and might be responsible for Marie's hypothetical escape (although there is no concluding evidence that she actually manages to escape). Unlike Orc, the prince is not heroic at all, and his masculinity is presented as unconventional and decidedly queer.

Some elements suggest that Blake was somehow aware of these limitations. Bruder notes how Blake's authorial voice, unlike contemporary discourses of the American Revolution, does not always unambiguously reflect on Orc's masculinist exploits (*William Blake* 129-130). For instance, at the beginning of the prophecy the revolutionary Orc rapes his emanation the Shadowy Female, in the same way that contemporary political caricatures portrayed British colonialists raping America (see, for instance, "The Able Doctor; or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught" [Bruder, *William Blake* 128]). This is combined with the different ways in which Blake begins to present Orc's fury and destructiveness and his connection to Urizen. David Aers, Ronald Paulson and Barton R. Friedman have pointed out at the similar bodily position of the images of Orc and Urizen in plates 8 and 10, and the fact that Urizen's illumination stands just on the words "I am Orc" in the body of text (Blake, *Am* 8; E54.1 [Bruder, *William Blake* 129]). This would explain the contrast between the illuminations that suggest the limits of the gender and political aspects of revolution and the celebratory and triumphal tone of the text. Blake may have chosen to represent only a partial liberation and not a hope of higher emancipation, possibly for the same reason that the images represent revolution as a force that also brings chaos and terror.

In Moore's *From Hell*, women are central, but not always in a positive way. The emphasis on the figure of the terrible mother pervades Moore's novel, haunting even the villain himself, who thinks she is more powerful than him and omnipresent in different shapes. She appears as Boudicca (Brigley-Thompson 81), the prostitutes, the ocean, and nature. Gull wants to explore this archetypal feminine oceanic world, but he does not approach it with love and seeking collaboration, exactly the opposite as Sophie and Barbara and the way their respectful attitude towards Asmodeus makes the demon more human. Gull's quest can be compared to Jack Faust's resignification of the Grail Quest, which serves as a mythical resignification of female sex in the *Promethea* narrative:

> The vessel between woman's thighs is the cup's highest aspect. The Chalice. The Grail of divine compassion. It takes in. It receives. The Holy Grail is female

> … Then this is what all those Arthurian knights were seeking, riding off on their quests… with their lances held high. Yes. It's obvious when you think about it. Can you blame them? That sacred cup… brimming with the wine of stars. With the deep-pressed vintage of the soul (2; 4).

Even though Faust's Knights of the Round Table are more humane than Gull, whose insane and perverse obsession makes him destroy what he wants to know, they are aggressively masculine. There is in Gull a mixture of adoration and repulsion for the feminine that showcases a patriarchal attitude towards women sublimated in Faust's sympathetic Jungian reading of Arthurian myth. In Brigley-Thompson's terms, Gull is scared of "an all-engulfing women's power" (85), which impulses him to domination. He acts obeying a patriarchal conception of opposites determined by "[a] knot that ties together masculine rationality and violence, as well as class warfare against the lower orders in the pursuit of power" (Whittaker, "*From Hell*" 201). Moore is aware of the limitations of Faust's application of archetypal symbolisms on social issues like gender conflict, as he is ultimately critic of the rigid adoption of esoteric doctrines (see *Fossil Angels*). In the same work other examples demonstrate this. Bill's sexual identity is fluid, and Faust himself is flexible towards gender in other occasions, for instance when he explains the fact that the magician is symbolically considered masculine at the beginning of his path and magic is symbolically feminine, conducing the magician to an allegorical process of transformation from male to female as he becomes one with magic itself. He presents this process as independent of the gender of the practitioner in their ordinary life. Yet this nuanced attitude does not transpire sufficiently when the female protagonist does not question the problems of his interpretation of esotericism in terms of gender in the case of the reference to the Arthurian knights, for example.

Preeminent and powerful female figures like Boudicca have parallels in mythical beings from Blake's illuminated books that contain stereotypes about femininity that give very negative connotations to female power. Enitharmon, a character that embodies most of Blake's ideas about femininity, sometimes appears a necessary and good counterpart of Los, but at other times she is an oppressive female, especially in *Europe*, where she instigates war and institutional religion. The principle she represents of a powerful queen that exerts a negative influence on humanity is present in the mighty but destructive and fearful image of Boudicca Gull describes. Although she is the queen of heaven, Enitharmon destroys love by behaving like an old mother that forbids enjoyment to her sons and daughters. Consequently, her daughters become capricious and cold courtly love ladies that taunt men and then close themselves up in chastity in order to direct the male energies towards war. In *Milton*, Enitharmon appears as "nameless Shadowy Mother" (34.27; E134); she is a spirit, found in Ulro weaving the world out of the bowels of five female figures:[83]

> Then view'd from Miltons Track they see the Ulro: a vast Polypus
> Of living fibres down into the Sea of Time & Space growing
> A self-devouring monstrous human Death Twenty-seven fold

[83] In plate 34 of *Milton*, Alla, Or-Ulro, etc. are, at the same time, places and parts of the body. This could be interesting in light of Blake's knowledge of Eastern practices like Tantrism (via his acquaintance with the work of antiquarian societies and with Swedenborg's works on similar practices). Especially Or-Ulro, which is "terrible" and provokes "wondrous Imaginations" (34.13-18; E134). Moore's interest in Tantrism and related doctrines (see pp. 200-202) may have influenced his reading of Blake.

> Within it sit Five Females & the nameless Shadowy Mother
> Spinning it from their bowels with songs of amorous delight
> And melting cadences that lure the Sleepers of Beulah down
> The River Storge (which is Arnon) into the Dead Sea:
> Around this Polypus Los continual builds the Mundane Shell (34.24-31; E134)

This is Enitharmon and the Shadowy Female, also known sometimes as "Nameless", at the beginning of *America*, other examples of female figures that Frye identified respectively with the archetypes of the virginal celestial goddess and the impersonation of physical nature (127), both indifferent to man, severe and castrating.

Enitharmon's "spinning" activity connects her to the Daughters of Albion, who represent the feminine in *Jerusalem* and are spinsters like her. In *Jerusalem*, the daughters of Albion cease to be the victims of patriarchy treated with sympathy by the narrator (as happened in *Visions*) and become powerful and fearful deities, as we can see in the illumination of plate 25. The impressive illumination portrays them sacrificing Albion by cutting a thread streaming from his navel, or possibly his genitals. Traditional criticism has associated this kind of female figure to Blake's Female Will, a mother figure that lures and entraps man in a sphere of child-like passivity and oblivion (Frye 75). Moreover, one must notice that the daughters of Albion in J*erusalem* are powerful and dangerous while the Daughters of Beulah, their benign counterparts, are somewhat passive.[84] Except for their virginity, they are similar to the version of ancient goddesses Gull believes in: powerful tyrannical, cruel and cold deities who cause frustration, strife, violence and death among male gods and mortals. Helen of Troy might well have been a classical mythical blueprint for this idea (Frye 132).

All of Blake's Zoas are fallen because they are divided from their female Emanations. Blake's poems revolve around this loss of primeval union (Ankarsjö 3). Blake's Zoas are invariably masculine, whereas Emanations are always female and their nomenclature indicates their subservience to and derivation from their masculine counterparts, which makes us wonder to what extent Blake's vision of gender utopia is based really on equality. Insofar as the hierarchical relationship is a result of the fallen condition, the concept of Zoas and Emanations would not compromise equality, as repairing the consequences of the Fall is the goal of Blake's works. Insofar as there is no positioning towards this hierarchical relationship, or its fairness is not questioned, there is room for gender criticism of the concepts of Zoas and Emanations. In *Promethea*, Moore makes his female figures the main, stronger, side of the coin as often as the male figures, making equality much clearer and easier to see.

However, there are problematic passages in *Promethea*, like the exchange of magical knowledge for sex. Green finds that the achievements of the book are marred by the conditions through which they come:

> Book two, chapter four, where she [Sophie] exchanges sex for magical instruction by the ageing and slovenly Jack Faust makes for uncomfortable reading, both because of the element of coercion involved (Sophie/Promethea has good reason to believe that her life is in danger) and because in contrast to

[84] Blake was most certainly basing these spinning figures on the ancient Norse Goddesses (specifically, the *Nornir*) and the Greek *Moirai*, who cut the threads of mortal lives. It is important to note that for eighteenth and nineteenth-century antiquarians like William Stukeley, a source of Blake's ideas about the Druids, the Goths, Norse and Celtic peoples were very often considered culturally the same. In late Blake, after *Visions*, the Daughters of Albion are the ancient goddesses of Britain, who are the castrating and virginal feminine counterparts to the cruel Druidic gods of sacrifice.

> the decoupling of gender from sexed-bodies elsewhere in the text, here the genitals not only become the most salient aspect of identity but the association of 'woman' with 'cup' and 'man' with 'wand' appears universal (Green, "She" 749).

What saves to a certain extent Jack Faust is that his goal is not merely to have intercourse with young Sophie / Promethea, but also to continue her training. He tells Sophie ''you got about a thousand years of books to read... I mean, this ain't college. You don't graduate just because you screwed the tutor'' (2; 4). He recognises that that sex after all is not the decisive factor that transforms Sophie into a magician (Green, "She" 749), but rather her will and her hard work. Her constant references to the books during her visits to the Immateria confirm that it is her learning and magical practice that has allowed her to progress, and not the favour of a man.

The duality that characterises some mythical female figures in *Promethea* has revealing parallels with Blake's works. These are undoubtedly problematic, as these binary patterns risk falling into the patriarchal structure that mercilessly divides women into good and bad, damaging the image of woman as a human being with faults and virtues, spirit but also body with needs that should not be demonised. What follows are some attempts to make sense, refute or criticise this duality. The passage from plate 33 of *Milton* against the jealousy and mystery that separates God from Jerusalem appear especially distressing if read in the context of Blake's biographical episode in which he tried to convince Catherine to allow him to take other lovers:

> … thou O Virgin Babylon Mother of Whoredoms
> Shalt bring Jerusalem in thine arms in the night watches; and
> No longer turning her a wandering Harlot in the streets
> Shalt give her into the arms of God your Lord & Husband (33.20-23; E133).

These attacks against the jealousy of Babylon and exhortations for her to allow the Lord to have his bride Jerusalem can be read as a justification of his interests at the aforementioned biographical episode. It is revealing to contrast this polygamous interpretation of Babylon and Jerusalem to Blake's reactions to Milton's opinions on female sexuality in Milton's *History of Britain* (1670). Milton censored the behaviour of pre-Roman British women, for whom it was socially acceptable to have several male partners and failed to argue against the astute reply of the wife of chief Argentocoxus to Empress Julia (see Whittaker, *William Blake* 134). Julia had despised British women on the basis of their "looseness," but the Briton retorted: "Much better do we *Britons* fulfill the work of Nature than you *Romans*; we with the best men accustom openly; you with the basest commit private adulteries." (Milton qtd. in Whittaker, *William Blake* 134) Milton simply asserts that polyandry is unnatural, but for a man to have may wives is natural (Whittaker, *William Blake* 134). Blake did not share Milton's outrage, but agreed that Boudica, the Brigantes and the Caledonian women should not usurp "male aggressivity" (Whittaker, *William Blake* 134). In *Milton*, Blake refers to the anecdote in Milton's *History* when Los reproaches Elynittria for her jealousy: "whence is this Jealousy running along the mountains / British Women were not Jealous when Greek & Roman were Jealous" (10.14-15; E104). Blake tries to defend polygamy, but shows it as polygyny instead of the polyandry practised by the British in pre-Roman times. In *Milton*, after Los's persuasions, Elynittria finally shares her partner with Leutha. He probably intended the passage as an "Edenic vision of polygamy" (Whittaker, *William Blake* 134), but the result is problematic, as the women are coaxed by males and do not have many male partners themselves; Blake is trapped, after all, in a patriarchal understanding of polygamy.

Nonetheless, for Blake, Babylon and Jerusalem represent in a mythical form two different

aspects of woman (also as cities, it is perfectly possible for them to be the same place in different states) rather than the essential character of individual entities.[85] Therefore his descriptions of Babylon and Jerusalem demand a reading that avoids relaying on biographical detail. Rather than a mere substitution of one for the other, Blake seems to suggest a transformation of the same female figure from a state of corruption to one of imaginative freedom. This might sound dangerously close to an idea of purification that is actually patriarchal and oppressive, but in reality it is different from this. It is true that Blake became trapped by his use of Biblical tropes. Jerusalem is hid inside the evil female Babylon, who in turn is found inside Satan, in a sort of Chinese-boxes trope:

> I also stood in Satans bosom & beheld its desolations!
> A ruind Man: a ruind building of God not made with hands;
> Its plains of burning sand, its mountains of marble terrible:
> ……
> Arches & pyramids & porches colonades & domes:
> In which dwells Mystery Babylon, here is her secret place
> From hence she comes forth on the Churches in delight
> Here is her Cup filld with its poisons, in these horrid vales
> And here her scarlet Veil woven in pestilence & war:
> Here is Jerusalem bound in chains, in the Dens of Babylon[.] (38.15-27; E139, punctuation added)

Jerusalem is bound in chains (like Oothoon, and both like Prometheus) in the dens of Babylon, and Babylon dwells in Satan's domes. This Babylon that enslaves Jerusalem is a traditional vision of Babylon as Rahab the Harlot of Revelations. Susanne Sklar's analysis of the figure of the Harlot Babylon in the watercolour *Vision of the Last Judgement* (1808) shows that her garments symbolise the entrapment of female sexuality inside the evil forms of jealousy, chastity and modesty, which act as a "covering" for unrepressed sexuality. Covering is a word that is often used to refer to Satan, inside whom are trapped both Babylon / Rahab and Jerusalem. When Rahab appears naked (or Vala), without her hypocrite garment of conventional, modest femininity, this mythical being is ready for regeneration and reunion with the Lamb (Sklar 136). In the following extract from *Jerusalem*, Jerusalem and Babylon appear as states inside characters' minds and emotions rather than as people or characters themselves:

> So spoke Orc when Oothoon & Leutha hoverd over his Couch
> Of fire in interchange of Beauty & Perfection in the darkness
> Opening interiorly into Jerusalem & Babylon shining glorious
> In the Shadowy Females bosom (18.39-42; E112)

Not only are Babylon and Jerusalem states, or ways to speak about appearance (illusion, covering) and essence. In plate 61 of Blake's *Jerusalem,* Babylon and Jerusalem are presented as principles that flow into each other rather than as rigid categories univocally associated with good or evil. In this visions of Joseph and Mary communicated to Jerusalem by the Divine Voice, Joseph initially repudiates Mary because she has committed adultery:

> And Mary said, If thou put me away from thee
> Dost thou not murder me? Joseph spoke in anger & fury. Should I

[85] "[M]any doubted & despaird & imputed Sin & Righteousness / To Individuals & not to States, and these Slept in Ulro" (*J* 25.15-16; E171).

> Marry a Harlot & an Adulteress? (61.4-6; E211)

Mary questions the false dichotomy of sin and therefore of female sexuality as well:

> … Mary answerd, Art thou more pure
> Than thy Maker who forgiveth Sins & calls again Her that is Lost
> Tho She hates. he calls her again in love. I love my dear Joseph
> But he driveth me away from his presence. yet I hear the voice of God
> In the voice of my Husband. tho he is angry for a moment, he will not
> Utterly cast me away. if I were pure, never could I taste the sweets
> Of the Forgive[ne]ss of Sins! if I were holy! I never could behold the tears
> Of love! of him who loves me in the midst of his anger in furnace of fire. (61.6-13; E211)

Her words remind Joseph of the prophetic dream where an Angel announces the true miracle: not that of an immaculate conception, but of Joseph's power to overcome himself and the moral righteousness inculcated by conventional religion. Blake does not advocate purification because Joseph forgives Mary, thus saving her from becoming a pariah, and accepting that every human being, including her child, a bastard, can be the Child of God:

> Ah my Mary: said Joseph: weeping over & embracing her closely in
> His arms: Doth he forgive Jerusalem & not exact Purity from her who is
> Polluted. I heard his voice in my sleep O his Angel in my dream:
> Saying, Doth Jehovah Forgive a Debt only on condition that it shall
> Be Payed? Doth he Forgive Pollution only on conditions of Purity
> That Debt is not Forgiven! That Pollution is not Forgiven
> Such is the Forgiveness of the Gods, the Moral Virtues of the
> Heathen, whose tender Mercies are Cruelty. But Jehovahs Salvation
> Is without Money & without Price, in the Continual Forgiveness of Sins
> In the Perpetual Mutual Sacrifice in Great Eternity! for behold!
> There is none that liveth & Sinneth not! And this is the Covenant
> Of Jehovah: If you Forgive one-another, so shall Jehovah Forgive You:
> That He Himself may Dwell among You. Fear not then to take
> To thee Mary thy Wife, for she is with Child by the Holy Ghost (61.14-27; E211-212)

Pollution and sin are given a meaning, and Joseph's divinely-inspired forgiveness of Mary, whom he has just called adulteress, illustrates the overcoming of the moral law instead of being carried away by jealousy to accusation, punishment, and violence. Mary rejoices and transfigures as multitudes inside her rephrase Mary's argument: "Am I Jerusalem the lost Adulteress? or am I / Babylon come up to Jerusalem?" (61.34-35; E212). This passage demonstrates that Blake does in this instance at least overcome the notion of purification present in Bromion, Theotormon or Moore's Gull.

In the Babalon-Marie passage in *Promethea*, where God is divided into the pure Marie and the lewd Babalon, the two are identified as being one and the same, making the division between them a product of our imperfect perceptions, when there is actually no such division. The duality of Babalon-Marie in *Promethea* also refers to different states rather than individuals. The figure of Promethea is explicitly and graphically counterposed to the traditional dichotomy between Madonna (Jerusalem) and (sacred) whore (Babylon). Promethea emanates from *both* Marie and Babalon, who are the same goddess. *Qua* Promethea, she cannot be divided and her duplicity

as mortal (Sophie) and goddess (Promethea) has no moral connotations; there is only a difference of power. In short, both authors present an initial duality that is a product of illusion or error, and after the necessary imaginative expansion, it is repaired into a more harmonious vision. This is, nonetheless still an open question, given that even after the expansion has taken place, especially in Blake, there is always a reassuring return to the "good" female figure, Jerusalem, while Babylon disappears. In Moore, however, even though the vision reveals Marie as the true identity of Babalon, Babalon reappears in later moments (for instance as the new mayor of New York, Uvula Cascade) to bring about apocalypse. Promethea herself, the bringer of apocalypse, is also far from the virginal appearance and conceptual imagery of the celestial Marie. Moore's version of the goddess tries to overcome the duality and integrate elements demonised by conventional religion with more traditional virtues. The name Babalon is taken from Crowley's version of Babylon, a figure that, at bottom, does not have a solid or profound meaning beyond being Crowley's incarnation of male sexual fantasy. While it is good to recuperate female sexuality as a fundamental part of woman, instead of repressing it, it seems like it was convenient for Crowley to celebrate this, at the expense of any other sides of the divine feminine that cannot be used to please the male adept. It might be this Crowleyan aspect that retains patriarchal and exploitative aspects in Moore's characters, despite the attempts to liberate the feminine principle. This is the case of another female figure in *Promethea*, Selene.

These passages in *Promethea* contradict the dismantling of repressive ideas of gender and sexuality. In issue 22, "Et in Arcadia Ego," the heroines Sophie / Promethea and Barbara arrive at the sphere of Chokmah (in Hebrew "Wisdom") and learn about the more masculine properties of the deity. The classical myth of Pan's rape of Selene is used to explain the beginnings of the universe: "Pan. Pan and Selene. The myth, where Pan rapes her, although... it's almost like she wanted that. Like he had to. It's like Babalon riding the beast. The celestial goddess and this chaotic animal force. It's the primal scene" (4.4). From a gender perspective, if what the myth has to teach is that women want to be raped, this is an extremely misogynist lesson. Understandably, the passage has prompted criticism, even from the scholars whose interpretation is most favourable in considering *Promethea* a progressive work in terms of gender. Green, for example, observes that "[p]ositioning such an act of sexual violence as the final stage on progression to the godhead is unsettling as it proposes – albeit hesitantly – a link between sexual violence and the ongoing creation of the universe. Moreover, it appears to reinscribe heterosexual intercourse as an absolutely antecedent norm" (Green, "She" 751). Green suggests an alternative interpretation of the rape as an act of transgression, rather than the enactment of a norm:

> the scene with Pan and Selene evidences both an inversion of structuralist kinship theories, situating transgression rather than prohibition as an inaugural act, and a parallel, for here too heterosexual relations appear to proceed as a structural necessity for the act of transgression, mirroring the 'forms of normative kinship' that, in Butler's words, 'proceed as structural necessities from [the incest] taboo' (*Antigone's Claim* 30) (751).

Even if the first option offers an alternative to structuralist interpretations of the origin, the criticism of the passage still stands, considering how the characters experience the scene.

Something like this can be said of the imagery of rape as metaphor for revolutionary violence in Blake. Pan and Selene form a picture similar to the rape of the Shadowy Female in *America*:

> The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;

> Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting struggling womb;
> It joy'd: she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile;
> As when a black cloud shews its lightnings to the silent deep (2.2-5; E52).

In this passage, the female figure enjoys the intercourse as she suffers the "limb rending pains" (2.15; E52) of Orc's "fierce embrace" (1.10; E51). Here the enjoyment appears as the cause of "her first-born smile", which Moore's characters understand in the case of Selene as if she "almost … wanted that."[86] There is of course a difference between a smile expressing inevitable sexual enjoyment (which is what Blake seems to refer to) and a smile expressing a will (what Selene "wanted" in Moore's narrative), perhaps an invitation to intercourse. But both scenes show women's enjoyment of being dominated, whether they want it or not.

It is true that there are more meanings encrypted in the images of the human / non-human intercourse than male sexual abuse. As we will see in the analysis of gender and sexuality in Moore Lovecraftian narratives, this is a recurrent motif, perhaps underlining transgressive aspects. In fact, in the Lovecraftian graphic novels, monstrosity can occasionally be read as a mechanism to expose the making monstrous of racialised communities or individuals. In these cases, animality and monstrosity do not necessarily legitimate violent male domination. From a theological perspective, Kraemer, for instance, thinks that what goes on between Pan and Selene is not rape in the human, ordinary sense as "forced sex", but an expression of the divine love, which is "utterly without malice", in its "forceful, wild, shameless, and hungry – dangerous" way (161). This does not invalidate gender criticism, though; as Green writes, the scene is an "aporetical representation" ("She" 753), "subject to interpretative struggle while resisting an absolute assimilation within discourse" (752).

In *Neonomicon*, the power Merril acquires comes from a state that is similar to the destitution Evey experiences in V's lair, a complete humiliation and dispossession of worldly ties or comforts that prepares her to make a sacrifice that no person with human attachments could carry out. Merril's conversion caused outrage in many internet commentaries and blogs, as Di Liddo points out ("Afterword" 203). They thought the sexual violence and Merril's ulterior statement "I feel good about myself, about all this. For the first time … I got no problems with my self-esteem" (Moore and Burrows, *Neonomicon* 4) shows the authors' misogyny. It is for sure a problematic message, whose implications need more than just being attributed to misogyny. Merril's story confirms Green's interpretation of the imagery of prostitution in "The Wine of her Fornications": "while on the one hand their works expose the manifold and unjust processes by which the female body is degraded, on the other hand they seem to suggest that the very fact of being denigrated imbues the flesh with a force comparable to the 'weak Messianic power' of which Benjamin writes" (Green, "She" 742). Evey's destitution or Merril's rape can be better understood through the concepts and antithesis that characterise the sublime according to Eagleton. In *Holy Terror*, the sublime is defined as a power that contains a great potential for danger but also for awe and regeneration, comparable to the idea of God before modernity (Eagleton 44), the source of all life but also of an unspeakable terror. It is "a glimpse of infinity which dissolves our identity" (44). Eagleton studies the example of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) as a narrative where weakness and vulnerability can turn into power (Eagleton 137-138), because when the individual is stripped of all ordinary sense of identity and value, he or she is reduced to their most basic humanity where the inner sublime Eagleton writes about is found. As in the interlockings between pagan tragedy and the Christian concept of sacrifice, in these fictional examples there is a power that transcends the subject, that annihilates her but at the same time confers her an ineffable status

[86] As Moore's Pan, Orc also adopts animal forms (eagle, lion, whale or serpent).

(43-44). In this sense, most of these representations of rape would just aim at giving suffering and violence a meaning, a place in the greater scheme of things; this fictional violence and suffering have a meaning and a purpose, and finally result in either good or transcendent outcomes, as opposed to real life violence that is absurd and senseless.

In Blake, problematic aspects of mystical sexuality can be found in *Jerusalem*, for instance. Los describes what looks like a sexual union in Beulah; the quotation shows that the result of the union is Self-love, Law, Generation and Death, which are negative aspects of the fallen world:

> In Beulah the Female lets down her beautiful Tabernacle;
> Which the Male enters magnificent between her Cherubim:
> And becomes One with her mingling condensing in Self-love
> The Rocky Law of Condemnation & double Generation, & Death (44.34-37, E193).

In these lines, Blake objects to imposing religious concepts, rules and systems (such as ritual) on sexual practise, in response to Swedenborgian prescriptions.[87] In personal communications, Blake also expressed his doubts concerning Swedenborg's views on sex, which Blake knew in detail. Schuchard interprets Blake's lines "parts of love follow their high breathing joy" (*French Revolution* 10.185; E294) as a reference to the combination of genital stimulation and breathing techniques to achieve certain states of consciousness as described in Swedenborg's writings (Schuchard 18). In his writings, Swedenborg notes that the difficulty of the exercises and the intensity of the results caused an enormous psychic strain (Schuchard 6). Schuchard attributes to Blake a comment, in which he supposedly stated that Swedenborg's "sexual religion" was "dangerous" (Blake qtd. in Schuchard, Introduction) and associates this to Swedenborg's warning of the danger of mental derangement that these esoteric sexual practises could cause. She also compares Milton's apparition to Blake with Swedenborg's description of the results of these psycho-sexual exercises (Schuchard 22). While Blake's suspicion of Swedenborgian mystical sexuality might be justified, his own vision of hierarchically differentiated feminised and masculinised heavens (Beulah and Eden, Zoas and Emanations) makes it difficult to see his theory of gender togetherness as completely satisfactory in terms of equality.

6.3. Conclusion

Both in Blake and Moore the body is the material aspect of the soul that allows it to exert power over the environment and even over itself. Their works represent the advancement towards a way of thinking that does not reject the body, but embraces it as an enabler of soul rather than

[87] Blake's objections to imposing religious convention or system (and therefore ritual) on sexual practise, among other philosophical incompatibilities, led Blake to distance himself from the Swedenborgian adepts. Schuchard suggests that the incident of Blake's request to Catherine to tolerate another woman in the household was caused by the radicalisation of the Swedenborgian Church by the influence of Swedish members (14). However, Blake gave up his initial intention when he saw his wife was heartbroken and eventually rejected the radicalised doctrine of sexual practice. There was a division in Swedenborg's New Church, a group that called themselves Universalists (The New Jerusalem Church), who accepted Swedenborg's sexual teachings in a spiritual sense and not a literal one (Thompson 140). Blake's general preoccupation with the danger of literal interpretation goes in a similar direction. Blake's writings borrow or invert expressions from both the New Church and the Universalists publications in ways that suggests he became equally critical of both, and of sectarianism in general (Thompson 141-145). Although he seemed to remain sympathetic to the interpretation of certain specific members like Bénédict Chastanier, who made sexually liberal interpretations of Swedenborg, the evidence is not completely satisfactory. Even the Universalists began to adopt right-wing views with which Blake disagreed (Thompson 171), which generally decreased the importance of Swedenborg in Blake's poetry.

its obstacle. It is important to note as well the ways in which the works analysed deal with embodied existence, particularly with the realm of sexuality, as sometimes problematic.

Moore's narratives, from *V for Vendetta* to *Promethea*, present feminine figures who break the vicious circle of power in which male characters are trapped in Blake. Blake thought that a transformation of the relationship between the genders could heal humanity, despite the fact that he often associated the vicious circle of power to natural cycles, for which representation he chose the fallen organic functions of regeneration. This resulted in the use of imagery of sexuality and reproduction as processes caught up in fallenness. In Moore's *Swamp Thing*, which takes up the Romantic idea of the recovery of an organised innocence, sexual energies are presented as natural forces that underlie civilisation, on one hand maintaining and nourishing it, and on the other threatening to disrupt and even destroy it. This apocalyptic aspect of sexual energies is what makes them revolutionary.

Moore applies Blake's call for contrariety to the issue of gender by developing an anti-phallic power that counteracts domination and rejecting negation. In *From Hell* this power undermines even the male supremacy of the *kategoros*. This idea was already latent in *Milton*, where the role of Ololon is essential to counterbalance the male characters of Milton and Blake. Like other feminine figures, she makes the necessary self-annihilation and apocalypse possible. Without this, negation would prevail over reciprocal activity. However, these figures still appear too often as passive and do not have a complete conscious mastery of the powers that they represent thus not achieving all their possibilities.

While disturbing sexual imagery often expresses revolutionary violence in Blake, in Moore it emphasises issues of unpresentability of realities that fall beyond social conventions and constructs of reality. This is the case of the rape of the Shadowy Female in *America* and of Selene in *Promethea*, respectively, to mention two examples. In both Blake and Moore, the depiction of violent and monstrous aspects of sexuality can underscore how in the fallen world politics, institutions and cultural constructs distort sexuality. In the sense that they criticise social and cultural distortions of originally good aspects of human existence, some of these representations can be read in an emancipatory way. One example is Los and Pity in *Urizen*, or Black's experiences in *Providence*. Nonetheless, others in which this critical aspect is not present (like Pan and Selene) continue to be problematic from a gender perspective, as they reinforce the normality of the domination of women.

Both authors were deeply intrigued by their respective occultural contexts as sources of sexual liberation and both opposed literal and superficial interpretations that define sexuality according to overly rationalistic perspectives. Sexuality is acknowledged in both authors as a core component of the human self, and conceived as not separate, but vitally interrelated to emotions, imagination and potentially corrupting social influences they were not naïve about. For these reason both authors reflect in their works a strong interest for mystical vision of sexuality, yet also mark a distance with excessively mechanistic and ritualised forms such as Swedenborgian sexual practises (in the case of Blake) and views of sexuality that ignore that an uncontrolled release of energies is not always good, such as 1960s approaches to free love. Free love and sex magick are also problematic, as Moore reflects in his last Lovecraftian works, where these are instrumentalised by certain groups to oppress and objectify others, as the Stella Sapiente does to Black. Even Moore's reading of Lovecraftian sexuality continues to be tinged with his affinities with Blakean ideas about system, his antinomian morality, his defence of imagination and his view of sexuality as a more central force in our lives and identities than the Enlightened narratives concede.

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7. CONCLUSIONS

7.0. INTRODUCTION

This thesis has revealed an underlying thematic link between Blake and Moore: the idea that visionary imagination divinises and expands the self beyond social conventions. My aim was to situate Blake and Moore in the Western process of secularisation by exploring the aspects of nature repressed by the discourse of power, and to understand their projects for the re-enchantment and regeneration of the world.

I have argued that both Blake and Moore conceive the divine as an immanent creative and transgressive force and attempt to overcome the split between the material and the spiritual dimensions. Blake situates this divine creative and transgressive power in the human form divine, which he sees as constituted by a relation of forces represented by mythological figures in conflict in the fallen world. Moore attributes the imaginative divine power to material life, to which he extends the notion of creativity he attributes to humanity.

Blake moderated his focus on materiality and substituted his more material idea of energy for that of imagination; while he used the idea of energy to fight the moralistic assumptions that derive from dualism, the idea of imagination overcomes the problem of violence his concept of energy generated. Moore proposed language and poetic creativity as the means for the mind to affect reality, thus making his own attempt to overcome the divide between matter and spirit; in some cases the result of this manipulation of language in his stories was positive or utopian, in other cases, negative or dystopian.

In the first part of this thesis I have discussed the general aspects of secularisation, the ideas of imagination and re-enchantment in Blake's and Moore's structures of feeling and the theoretical tools used to analyse these structures. In the second part, I analysed the themes of perception and imagination, the themes of good and evil and the theme of sexuality.

A comprehensive view of Blake's and Moore's attitudes towards Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Postmodernism had to be achieved to avoid common misinterpretations such as seeing in Blake the same characteristics generically attributed to Romantics, or seeing Moore as a sensationalist occult writer. In the first part of this thesis, I have explored Blake's and Moore's relation to the traditions of Romanticism and Postmodernism. Blake responds to the Industrial Revolution and to the modern process of secularisation by divinising man and his natural creative energies and instincts conventionally considered bad. Moore responds to the Postmodern world and its technological changes not only by divinising the poetic creative capacities of the human self and putting Eros and the unconscious as the sources of human visionary capacities, but also by recovering a sacred sense in the strangeness of non human nature and its connection to our own unknown interiority.

Blake's re-enchantment combines myth and Enlightenment to rescue and liberate imagination from instrumental Reason and religious convention. Moore's re-enchantment is

shaped by Romantic inheritance and the centrality this awards to the poetic and creative energies, its relationship with nature, and its criticism of the exploitation and dehumanisation brought about by instrumental Reason. In contrast with the Romantic, Moore's divinisation of the human is more egalitarian in terms of gender, and shows more acceptance of bodily materiality than the Romantic; moreover, his idea of divinity is less Christian and more eclectic.

Blake's position towards Enlightenment was complex; on one hand, he criticised the rationalist rejection of myth but, on the other hand, he engaged in Enlightened strategies to criticise power and oppression. This critical and ambivalent position favoured the Postmodern interest in Blake and his use of myth to create new meanings beyond the rules imposed from authorities or institutions. Postmodernism questions universal truths and deconstructs grand narratives. Blake believed in universal truths but rejected conventions and institutions that presented their discourses as universally true. Moore sometimes uses Postmodern irony to approach Romantic transcendentalism and sometimes challenges the postmodern banality, superficiality, and commercialism that characterise late capitalist cultural forms.

The analysis has been aimed at answering the questions that are implied in the objectives of the thesis: to what moments in the process of secularisation do Blake's and Moore's re-enchantments respond? What are the notions of nature produced by Blake and Moore? In what secular terms is the possibility of regeneration presented? What are the particularities of Moore's interpretations of Blake's ideas?

Blake's re-enchantment appears in a stage of the process of secularisation between Enlightenment and Romanticism when Blake tried to emancipate human beings from religion while still using myth for utopian potential to criticise power. Moore writes in an era of expanding secularism that, rather than leading to further disenchantment, stimulated re-enchantment (Partridge 1-2). Moore tries to re-enchant the world without falling into the violent fanaticisms and castrating, lifeless religious conventions that re-emerge around us.

Blake and Moore expand the concept of nature to include imagination as a natural capacity, when it is conventionally opposed to non-human nature. In both authors, imagination is continuous with nature and the forces of desire and vision connect body and mind. Blake's representation of clouds, stars, animal and even inanimate creatures in human form oppose the realistic perspective that hinders human empathy with nature, based as it is on the opposition between the human and natural spheres. Moore's monstrous, animal, sacred, and diabolic representation of human bodies remind us that we are also nature and invite to accept these dimensions of the self.

The authors' ideas of regeneration are presented in terms of an emancipatory project that is based on Enlightened values, but is also critical of them insofar as the defence of imagination and myth opposes them. Blake's ideas of regeneration and re-enchantment and his defence of myth in anti-mythical times are understood as a radical attempt to give power back to human beings, rather than a pull backwards to the safety of a conventional religious universe. This indicates there is a contradiction in Moore between his criticism of anthropocentrism, which he sometimes uses against power, his attempts at empowering the oppressed human beings in his narratives through a Blakean idea of imagination.

As regards Moore's interpretation of Blake, this thesis has proved that Moore's reading is considerably more rigorous than many vague popular, occult or countercultural understandings of Blake; it is imaginative, playful and radical in a way that, though informed, does not merely copy Blake's original messages. Unlike the original Blake, in Moore's utopian moments Blake

inhabits a world where "all the Lord's people [are] Prophets" (Numbers 11:29, qtd. by Blake in *Milton* 1; E96). Thus, in *Swamp Thing* the heroes and their friends spread ecological awareness, at the end of *V* the oppressed become revolutionaries, in *Promethea* humanity becomes aware of more realities in eternity, and in *Neonomicon*, a woman with a sexual social stigma becomes the visionary that changes the world.

The comparative approach has revealed philosophical positions common to Blake and Moore and lines of influence and reception that helped me find the motivations behind Moore's references to Blakean patterns such as Contraries and Negations, Self-Annihilation, and Eden as eternal collective human creation. I refer here to the transmission of Blake via Huxley, Ginsberg and others, and to Moore's use of Blake in response to them to support similar countercultural ideas of artistic, political and sexual rebellion.

The theoretical concepts of structures of feeling, instrumental reason, Eagleton's arguments about reason, law, the sublime and freedom, Gothic monstrosity, and Romantic diabolism, satanism and the notion of the *kategoros* figure have helped to show nature as visionary in the works of Blake and Moore. The study of alternative spirituality in Blake's and in Moore's contexts shows where their ideas of liberated imagination and instinctive natural forces as good came from. Adorno and Horkheimer's and Eagleton's theories show that in these more chaotic powers of nature there is a potential that reason should listen to in order to produce a more just and Enlightened world. The concept of monstrosity reveals that what appeared as monstrous in nature from a conventional perspective is not really so from other perspectives. Diabolism, satanism and the notion of *kategoros* shed light on how discourse can attach moral judgements to the natural, and how different narratives can challenge them.

The analysis has shown that in both Blake and Moore nature is a visionary, internal, immanent power, and its connection to female archetypes. Blake's notion of nature is inseparable from the notion of the divine. Nature is a force that must be acknowledged as ours, an attitude that opposes conventional views of it as abject. Nature (with a small *n*) has the power to regenerate into new unpredictable forms; without this, there is no poetic genius. Moore's notion of nature is also visionary, and it also seems monstrous when exploited and seen through a utilitarian lens.

In Blake, the union puts more emphasis on the human, whereas Moore challenges the humanistic idea of the subject; the confusion of boundaries between human and nature criticises it. The Neo-Romantic patterns are disrupted in Moore's graphic novels by posthuman perspectives.

7.1. RESULTS, RELEVANCE AND FULFILMENT OF OBJECTIVES

My contribution to the line of research that I have summarised in the introduction is to expand and deepen it by applying the insights in Green's, Whittaker's and Whitson's texts to a larger corpus. In this way, the evolution in Moore's works of the influence of Blake can be seen across his creative output. I have described his early references to Blake, analyse their meaning through the context and through the contemporary influences on Moore, reaching the conclusion that they are highly influenced by counterculture and Romantic diabolism. I have corroborated that *From Hell* is the turning point where Moore's interpretation of Blake changes from a heroic diabolism to a more artistic and prophetic vision of Blake, and finally have

identified the impact of the study of Blake in subsequent works, even when these works explore unrelated influences and apparently un-Blakean themes.

This thesis achieved insights on Moore and the motivations for his interest in Blake. What Moore finds relevant in Blake is that he rejected the oppression of state religion without disenchanting the world. Blake tried to emancipate human beings from religion with the weapons of religion. Rather than rejecting myth, like other Enlightened radicals, he saw its potential to criticise power. Blake thought priesthood annulled the human capacity to see the holy in all things by imposing the power of a few to know the divine natural laws and impose them on humanity. By transforming religious myth into poetic tales that break with the discourse of priesthood, Blake reversed the conventional separation of humanity from nature. Whereas religious myth conceals natural elements behind abstract deities, Blake's use of myth as poetic narrative shows the imaginative selves of particular beings (as opposed to their idealised abstractions), which are ordinarily invisible to our senses petrified by convention. Moore writes in an era of expanding secularism that, nonetheless, stimulated re-enchantment (Partridge 1-2). Moore tries to re-enchant the world without falling into the violent fanaticisms and religious conventions that re-emerged around him.

Another achievement in this sense is finding out that Moore's central belief in the redemptive power of art and imagination is the impulse that leads him back to Blake and also prevents him from transforming Blake into a Postmodernist, feminist or Satanist, which he never was. In works like *From Hell*, Blake is used to criticise rigid, hierarchical, overly literal and obsolete approaches to the occult and defend creativity. Moore's interpretation of Blake changes from a rather conventional countercultural reading to a more elaborate identification with Blake as a poet-prophet. Moore's focus on the poetic does not entail a depoliticisation or deradicalisation of his stories. Faith in Blake's "Human Form Divine" (*SI* 18.11, 18.15; E12-13) is a radical belief in the equality of all men and women beyond hegemonic forms of hierarchy and power.

This thesis is relevant for the study of the contemporary significance of Blake and Cultural Studies. This dissertation has proved that Moore takes from Blake patterns such as Contraries and Negations to balance the critical and the mythical in his graphic novels. My working hypothesis was that Moore was highly interested in Blake as a poet who combined Enlightened criticism and Romantic rejection of rigid classical patterns and rules. This dissertation has shown the complexity of the attitudes towards Enlightenment in Blake's works. Moore's combination of a Neo-Romantic defence of imagination with didactic and emancipatory strategies suggested his identification with Blake's position (Green, "She" 739-740). By considering reason and imagination as contraries, rather than erecting Reason as a Negation, Blake and Moore combine Enlightened positions and mythical thought. This thesis also complements Green's pioneering comparison of Blake and Moore in his article "'She". In this essay, Green explores the strengths and the limits of Blake and Moore's emancipatory discourses. As I have discussed in the analysis sections, many pattern coincidences found by Green between *Marriage* and *Promethea* acquire significance in other works by Moore.

In my analysis, I have proposed solutions to the difficulties of interpreting Moore by understanding better Moore's influences (the occult authors: Spare, Crowley, K. Grant, for example), considering all the points of view present in the narratives, and reversing the implications of narratives such as *From Hell* to discover what would be the utopian dream concealed under the Gothic nightmare. These processes helped outline the transformative

implications of Moore's darker mode of vision. The ecological and feminist discourses in Moore's works tend to alternate between utopian and dystopian, and mix fantastic, mystical and poetic modes, dark parody and horror modes, which makes it difficult to read in his works the proposals for re-enchantment and regeneration, due to the darkness of many of these modes of representation and the changes from one to the concealing where the implicit author stands.[88] In *From Hell* and the Lovecraftian narratives, for example, nature seems hostile and gender and sexual relations seem bizarre and enslaving; this sometimes represent a conventional view that makes the natural seem monstrous; at other times, it is oppression that appears monstrous, and this indirectly pushes the reader towards an alternative, or towards identification with oppressed nature made monstrous by convention.

An important contribution is the conclusion that Blake's and Moore's proposals for regeneration and sacralisation of nature do not seamlessly correspond to canonical Romanticism and Postmodernism. Blake was influenced by the confluence of a very specific set of eighteenth century countercultural heterodox beliefs such as Swedenborgian mysticism and Theosophy. The reinterpretation of these beliefs in the 1960s and in the following decades determined the reception of Blake in many aspects. Swedenborgian mysticism and Theosophy influenced New Age occultism. In this occultural landscape, Blake acquired specific psychedelic, rebellious and esoteric meanings[89] that inspired Moore. Moore, however, remains critical and inquisitive, his reception of Blake more reflective, original and productive than that of many of his contemporaries.

This thesis has contributed to explain the authors' proposals for the regeneration of the relation between man and nature. For both authors this requires placing imagination at the centre of the human faculties to re-enchant nature and blur the modern opposition between the human being and an inert alienated nature. Art, myth-making, and storytelling liberate imagination do this. While Blake tends to emphasise the vision of nature as human, calling the individual to empathise with the world around her, Moore breaks with the conventional ordinary notions of nature and distinctions between nature and culture by emphasising the animal and natural in the human, opening a way to redefine the human as well. Moore uses Blake to emphasise this expansion of the human to include forms of being beyond what we consider rational. In this way, he continues Blake's legacy by adapting it to an era when ecological disasters start to evidence that, as Mark Fisher stated, the future is cancelled for the human subject. Moore tries to say that perhaps we are not what we thought we were. That is why there is a contradictory relationship between his adoption of Blake's defence of human imagination and his embrace of the cosmic alienness that engulfs characters in *Neonomicon* and *Providence*. Blake's and Moore's notions of nature try to embrace the aspects of nature they believed the discourses of power do not encompass. Blake explored nature to find the forbidden parts that scientific and religious discourses cannot explain. He rejected the conventional notion of Nature and attempted to dissolve the frontier between the human and the non-human, to unify nature and imagination rather than opposing them, to expand the limits of being by creating entities that can transform into several animals, anthropomorphised landscapes and holy worms. Moore

[88] The unexpected parallels between Blake's and Moore's more Gothic aspects, which stand out in Moore's more dystopian works and in Blake's representations of mental slavery and satanic evil, contribute to explore in more depth Moore's reception of Blake in the line Green and others have begun in Alan Moore (2013).

[89] Swedenborg's influence is still present through his impact on Theosophy, which originated modern esoterism; see Heelas 41-42.

proposes a radical redefinition of the human that he started putting forward in *The Swamp Thing*.

This dissertation has shown the similarity between Blake's and Moore's works as regards ideas of perception and vision. For both, ordinary perceptions are limited, and abstract reason and social conventions stifle imaginative modes of understanding the world. They both struggle to break these limitations by awakening the divine poetic and creative capacities of humanity. These findings complement Green's "End". Green shows the affinity between Blake's illuminated books and Moore's comics and the correspondence between their philosophical positions and stylistic choices. Although the focus of this thesis primarily emphasises content, the examination of pictorial technique and formal details is also relevant in this respect. The aid of previous research in Blake and Comics Studies terminology was invaluable when addressing technical questions of form or visual style. Blake and Moore's atypical and experimental association of words and images make this task difficult because he relationship between the verbal and the visual relationship is often loose. My results, based on the larger cultural contexts and literary movements, complement Green's more formal comparison between Blake and Moore. My contextual analyses confirm his conclusion that Blake's rejection of the tyranny of single vision and his idea of multiple forms of vision had an impact on Moore's way of conceiving comic book writing. In a similar way, by applying Kraemer's perspectives on religion on books he wrote after *Promethea*, I have also revealed how Moore used the Blakean ideas of vision in his early career and how he developed them afterwards.

With respect to this topic, my contributions include the explanation of differences between the authors. Perception and vision can go from utopian to Gothic in both Blake and Moore. Nonetheless, the use of drugs has occasionally appeared as a way to achieve this expansion of perception in Moore, for instance in *Swamp Thing*, where the hallucinogenic fruits of the Swamp Thing disturb perception, and *V for Vendetta*, although here it is imagination that makes the drug experience meaningful. In Blake, as I have explained in chapter 4, there is no mention of drugs as an aid in the process of transformation of perceptions; it is art that reveals "the infinite which was hid" in *Marriage* (14; E39). The language used in in these representations is also different. Moore tends to use less allegorical language than Blake. The weakening of Blake's figures in *Urizen* symbolises the shrinking of their imaginations under the Urizenic net; but the women in *From Hell*, literally fall ill and die under the influence of patriarchy; rather than metaphors of female victimhood they are realistic portraits of the historical victims of the Ripper. Blake used imagery from the scientific discourse to talk about the fallen world as, for instance, in the description of Urizen's anatomy in *Milton* and *Urizen*). Finally, Moore uses popular pseudo-scientific beliefs, such as the left-right brain division of faculties to talk about imagination and reason (*Promethea*). Moore also uses metafictional representations of revelation (the characters that can come out of the comic strip, like Agent Breughel in *Promethea*), while Blake's Thel, Oothoon, Orc, Los or Milton, never suspect they are just myths or stories; their revelation remains at the level of the narrative inside which they act.

With regard to Moore's darker visions, the difference resides in the qualities and origin of the unconscious forces and the vision that results from them. The higher reality of vision tends to appear as a more ideal realm in Blake, while some of Moore's works, such as *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, suggest the possibility that this "higher" reality resides in the secret, repressed underworlds rather than in sublimated, lofty dreams, as we can see in Blake's descriptions of Beulah and Eden in *Milton* and in *Jerusalem* (see chapter 4). They are light and beautiful

celestial realms, even if sometimes plaintive and as sad as Beulah can be, or as demanding as Eden can be. Part of the difficulty with Moore's dark visions is also in the fact that Moore often focuses on ambiguous characters (like V) or evil ones, like Gull, exploring and using their relativistic points of view in the story, and showing how they arrive at justifications for their violent acts, even if other points of view present in the stories prove them to be problematic or even perverse. Moore follows Blake's rejection of traditional concepts of morality, but Blake dramatised the conflict between reason and energy, or between different faculties in the mind, showing all of them as characters that strive to improve humanity, in better or worse ways, and all have a good or unfallen aspect that can potentially redeem them.

I have also achieved the conclusion that the Blakean distinction between the diabolic and satanic evil explained by Whittaker is applicable to Moore. Whittaker's perspective was applied to a wider sample of works. This has revealed continuities between Blake's diabolism and Moore's countercultural rebellion. The relation between Blake's Contraries corresponds to the relation between good and evil in Moore, and Blake's Negation to Moore's depiction of uniformising modes of thinking. In Moore's graphic novels, Gull, Bishop Lilliman and Suydam are Blakean *kategoroi* and represent a misunderstanding of energy, especially sexual energy. My analysis has shown that Moore clearly changed from *Swamp Thing* to *From Hell* where, after deeper study of Blake, he opposes the poet prophet to the satanic *kategoros* and his deluded, literal and superstitious belief in the supernatural. Moore takes a similar turn to Balke after *America*, when he ceased to focus on the notion of diabolic energy, paying more attention to imagination and relegating the use of demonic figures to represent satanic evil. Blake's Urizen anticipates Gull's initial rationalistic form of negation and its fall into the madness he purportedly opposes. Gull's paranoid threads of myth and antiquarian history, with which he ends up twisting reality into his deranged fantasy correspond to Urizen's nets and webs of science and religion, with which he intended to control the chaos of the fallen world. Both authors crowned their career with a tendency to distrust the faith of certain naïf emancipatory discourses in the unchecked and undirected liberation of energies. This change to a more cautious way of thinking did not change, however, the fundamentally political points of view of the authors. With these reflections on evil, both Blake and Moore criticise the imposition of a hegemonic idea of reality. Yet, Blake centres his criticism on the idea of self-preservation as the justification for oppression according to the ideology of reason, whereas Moore centres it on intolerance. Blake reacted against versions of Enlightened discourses that legitimated exploitation by invoking self-preservation as the ultimate and unavoidable motive in human decisions, and Moore against the perverse consequences of international anti-terrorist politics.

This thesis also contributes to confirm that both authors oppose patriarchy and its hegemonic practices and beliefs, but also that their defence of woman is not always as solid and consistent as their opposition to oppression in general. In this aspect another contribution has been to constate that while in Blake the female metaphor dominates and compromises Blake's vision of gender utopia, Moore's works remain more vocal on issues of patriarchal violence, but the ways in which violence against women is used to represent sublime cosmic events in certain works remains controversial, as discussed by Green in "She". In other words, both Blake and Moore's feminist aspects have grown weaker and more conflicting, although to different degrees.

Both authors connect gender, sexuality and eroticism to imagination and condemn as ideological the rationalistic views of the self, the body, and sexuality. Both Blake and Moore

distrust the sexist conventions of organised religion and are interested in mystical perspectives on sex, although they distrusted these doctrines when they became conventional.

I have shown that Moore's reading of Blake's struggle to free sexuality from religious morality and their defence of the importance of "sensual enjoyment" (Blake, *MHH* 14; E39) is a product of these countercultural interpretations. But I have also shown Moore's awareness of the shortcomings of the 1960s sexual revolution, a caution similar to Blake's realisation that radical mystical approaches to sex in esoteric sects failed to overcome convention. Sexual energies can be perverted by wrong manipulation, as when they are contaminated by a drive to possess the other.

Blake's ideas about sexuality were determined by his conception of body and of material world. For Blake, the body is the visible and tangible part of the soul without which there is no real creation, connection or life, and therefore it is not an abject vessel. The making monstrous of the body (especially female) in religious convention is opposed to the monstrosity of Blake's characters. For example, the monstrosity of Enitharmon and Orc in *America*, represents their ambiguous deadly and life-giving nature that threatens power with the transformation of reality and society. In Moore's works, the body is the instance that resists the imposition of rules and conventions, which often entails the representation of the body in grotesque and abject ways that break the rules of taste as *Swamp Thing* does.

While they are aware and critical of patriarchal domination, Blake and Moore produce representations that risk supporting sexist norms. We could see this tension already in *Thel* and *Visions*, and how in later works, such as *Europe* and *Jerusalem*, Blake portrayed women as evil or weak. Blake seems to limit female freedom to the sexual sphere and later gradually abandons his defence of women in favour of a more conventional idea of the reintegration of the feminine in the masculine. Thus, the Emanations of Zoas are dependent and hierarchically inferior to their male counterparts; similarly, in the hierarchy of heavens, the female Beulah is inferior to the active and creative state of the masculine Eden. Moreover, Blake always presents powerful female figures in a negative way (with few exceptions that are, however, in some way punished or weakened in the end), identifying them with frightening, luring and enslaving terrible Nature. Moore tends to use archetypal notions of femininity that, on one hand, portray difference as positive but, on the other, run the risk of universalising archetypal patterns where women are dominated. Thus he has depicted women too, paying little attention to the power they could wield against phallic oppression. In *From Hell*, women are victims and in *Neonomicon* and *Providence*, Merrill is the chosen one but also cursed and victimised. The representation of rape as a foundational act may be transgressive, but women inevitable passive victims in it, and too often, especially in Moore's case, denigration and destitution appear as places for the self-discovery and re-emergence of the female self. Although this may be interpreted as an attempt to give poetic meaning to women's ordinary senseless suffering, but such an explanation does not answer the question of the fixation of this in an archetype of female martyrdom. Moore's parodic, transgressive and horror forms take precedence over feminist messages in some works. Thus, if a representation of rape helps him to convey the terror or violence of the universe, or the destitution of the self-preceding its sublimation, the gender implications of this become relegated to a secondary place in favour of the expressive value of the image.

7.2. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

During the research for this thesis, I have encountered several unanswered questions and unexplored fields of great interest for the study of Blake reception that, however, lay outside the scope of the present study.

The achievement of mapping of the countercultural lines of influence connecting Blake to Moore has drawn my attention to questions such as Yeats's esoteric reading of Blake and its influence on later authors interested in esotericism. More research is needed to determine the connection between Yeats' studies of Blake and psychedelic, Modernist authors like Huxley, particularly in his *Perennial Philosophy* (1945). As we have seen, the tendency to combine esotericism and Blake was also found in Moore, which suggests that a comparison between Yeats's and Moore's readings of Blake could yield more answers as to why Moore and other writers have connected Blake to the occult. Studies of this kind could open an area of wider research on Blake in countercultural artistic expressions in popular culture.

The insights on the figure of Blake as a predecessor suggest the idea to explore esotericism and alternative spiritualities in popular literature, media and film, where these references are so common. The trend to represent the esoteric and alternative spiritualities in literature and other arts has been recently increasing, as attested, for instance, by the critically acclaimed film *Midsommar* (2019), directed by Ari Aster. A wider study could be made to include comics such as Moore's and other artistic expressions that focus on magic, modern neopaganism or satanism to draw conclusions that apply also to other media and arts, and how Blake as a predecessor shapes these modern manifestations of dissent. This would expand the contributions of this thesis to the role of occulture in the transmission of Blake.

My conclusion on Blake's and Moore's combination of the visual and the verbal as a way to put their ideas of vision into practice indicates that the topic of Blakean influence and references in the world of comic books and graphic novels would deserve attention, as little has been explored apart from the above mentioned studies on Moore and a few others on G. Morrison. However, both famous comic artists such as Jack Kirby and independent comic books have been inspired by Blake, which is another good thread to continue research in the line of this thesis.

Along those lines, another possible study worth undertaking would be that of the references to Blake in the work of G. Morrison. I have already outlined in chapter 2 the interest of this topic and have briefly explored it for the contextualisation of Moore's work and to contrast his attitude towards the Blakean poet-prophet and other uses of this figure in the world of comics. However, this thesis only focused on a few representative examples, whereas a longer study could reveal more specifics of Blake reception in Morrison's works.

To deepen the insights in this thesis about the visual aspects of nature, the body and monstrosity, a comparison of Blake's mythological characters, especially the Zoas, who are superhuman but flawed entities, with superheroes of the crisis era[90] could also be productive. Because the visual representation of the heroic body would be an important dimension of said study, for these future studies it would be necessary to develop procedures tailored more specifically for the comparison of visual representations. Green's use of Thierry Groensteen's methods of graphic analysis, which he applied in "End", combined with Chris Gavaler's

[90] As I pointed out in chapter 2, I refer to the trend begun by Lee and Kirby's 1960s characters and consolidated in the 1980s with Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*.

analysis of the body of the superhero could be an excellent means if adapted to analyse larger corpora.

This thesis comparative approach has produced interesting results that could explain how contemporary artists reappropriate Blake's patterns to defend their countercultural ideas. The Blakean imagery and its reappearances in contemporary music and film, just to mention some of the more widespread popular media, could be analysed according to these findings. They could be applied to other American and British underground writers and poets, musical, and film creators that have identified with Blake in ways that resemble Moore's.

The reflections developed in this thesis about the topic of representations of the monstrous can be useful to study, for example, the similarity between Blake's *Ghost of the Flea*, Moore's *gargouille de la mer*, and more recent figures in contemporary film, such as the amphibian man in Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* (2017). While many aspects of this figure have already been studied (for instance, in Erle, "From Vampire to Apollo"), its impact on popular film, comics and other contemporary media has not been explored yet.

My contributions to explain the function of Blakean references in contemporary popular culture could also be applied to the vast quantity of works by Blake and Moore that remained outside the corpus of this thesis. They could be explored in the future to corroborate and expand the findings in this thesis. Moore also writes novels where he makes references to Blake. *Voice of the Fire* (1997) and *Jerusalem*, especially the latter, stand out as still largely unexplored works that could reveal more about those aspects of Blake that Moore highlights and the reasons behind these rewritings and allusions.

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9. APÉNDICE: PUBLICACIÓNS PROPIAS MENCIONADAS NA TESE

Relación de artigos:

Marchetto Santorun, M. Cecilia. "'Terrible monsters Sin-bred': Blakean Monstrosity in Alan Moore's Graphic Novels." *Palgrave Communications*, vol. 6, no. 91, Springer Nature, 2020. DOI: 10.1057/s41599-020-0451-2.

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