



1. An ancient story in modern guise

Theoretised by C.G.Jung (1875-1961) and given a new meaning in Andrei Codrescu's (1946) novels and essays, the modern concept of spiritual transformation or self realization originates in the work of William Blake (1757-1827). The modern history of this concept intermingles with the life story of the modern cultural paradigm. However, the concern for the realization of the self – seen not only as increased self awareness, but mainly as genuine spiritual transformation which implies the unification and sublimation of all aspects of one's psyche – has motivated many a literary, philosophical, and even scientific works as early as pre-Socratic times. *Rosarium Philosophorum*, a compilation of alchemical texts first printed in 1550 in Frankfurt from previously extant manuscripts, is just one such example of a work concerned with the unification and sublimation of the self. In what follows we will explore several questions regarding the situation of the postmodern paradigm and how it relates to the issue of self realization, as well as the origin of Blake's concern for spiritual transformation in alchemical texts.

2. Preliminary questions

Relying almost entirely on reason, modern people seem to have coined an ideal of progress based on the assumption that 'developments made in the arts, technology, knowledge and freedoms would benefit humanity as a whole' (J.-F. Lyotard, 1983). Needless to say, the outcome of progress in many cases deepened rather than solved the problems that humankind faces. Do Blake's warnings against the dangers triggered by one's spectre have any bearing on moderns' minds, tormented as they are by over-inflated egos? Is there any connection between the hyperactivity of the individual and collective egos and the numerous imbalances at the level of individuals and social groups?

Exploring Blake's concept of awakening and some of the actors involved, one may wonder what *awakening* really means to Blake. A glimpse at *Jerusalem* (1803), centered on the plight of Albion at having stopped any communication with - and even having banished - his Emanation, a feminine archetype within himself, may help us realize, by contrast, what awakening is **not**. It is not disintegration, nor fragmentarism; nor is it excessive self assertion, nor extreme emotions. Despite the major part played by feminine powers in reviving Albion to eternal life, it is some other feminine entities that, in different disguises, take pains to pull Albion back to the un-visionary state of arrogant ignorance.

Can these ambivalent feminine powers in William Blake and the whole range of figures connected with Albion's "awakening" in *Jerusalem* be interpreted both as masks that the poet sets on his concern for raising his audience's level of awareness to spiritual matters? Or do they impersonate the obstacles that hinder this process? In what way does this preoccupation of Blake's for shocking his readers into 'a perception of the infinite' (Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 13) foreshadow the debate concerning the re-formation of the self or self realization going on in the 20th century? May Los' repeated urges for Albion to raise from his fall into division - and shed away the unnecessary burdens that clog his vision of the whole - link his work to the contemporary discussion regarding the fate of the postmodern paradigm and its inherent fragmentarism? Unsurprisingly, many a readers of Blake may be very tempted to read his work in a postmodern key. Blake's combination of image and text, defiance of style standards, disrespect for institutionalized dogmas, his attempt at recapturing and re-signifying the past would, no doubt, justify such a postmodern reading. But is this all that connects Blake with our contemporaries? However, his texts undermine one of the basic attributes of postmodern writing. For Blake

there is a way out of fragmentarism; and unity is achievable. How does this unity come about and what are its consequences? Is this Blake's own idea or has he borrowed it from other sources?

To the above, we can add several other questions that this paper will attempt to address: Does Blake's by-passing fragmentarism suggest that postmodern fragmentarism itself may see its last day some time before long? Does this suggest that postmodernism has lived its day or will soon have? If this is so, then what name shall we use to describe the post-postmodern cultural phenomena?

Feminine energies play a central part in Albion's regaining his unity. Do similar forces have any role to play in surpassing postmodern fragmentarism?

Implicitly, this essay also addresses some questions regarding the role of literature, namely whether the primary role of literature is solely to entertain or rather to instruct while entertaining or while providing cathartic experiences? Are literary texts bound to reveal truths or to set the reader in quest of his/her own truths? Can literature cause any change in the self of the reader? Does literature ever go as far as to precipitate one's self-realization?

3. Modernism, Postmodernism and Beyond

3.1. Etymologically, the noun and adjective *modern* – from which the concept of *modernism* derives - was coined during the Middle Age, from the adverb *modo* (meaning "recent", "right now"), following the pattern of *hodie* ("today")>*hodiernus*. *Postmodern* is a bizarre adjective, referring not to the future, as its component words might suggest (post- modern / after now), but rather designating a strange period that belongs to a time subsequent to present, an after-today that is, however, not tomorrow (Calinescu, 1987). If one is to take Marjorie Perloff (1993) seriously when she interrogates the usability of the postmodern label when one talks or writes about contemporary cultural and literary phenomena, postmodern and contemporary seem to be no longer synonymous adjectives: Can the term **postmodernism** [...] apply both to the 60s and the 90s? Can we simply invert that big **6**? Or do the post-post days we are now witnessing prefigure a phase for which we don't yet have a name and whose postpeople we can't quite conceptualize? (Perloff, 1993).

Let us now step back for a while and look at postmodernism from the perspective of someone living in the twenty-first century. There is no doubt that postmodernism has overruled dichotomies, setting up pluralities and Bahtian dialogism, thus facilitating the erasure of esthetical and ethical boundaries. If we were to imagine it as a cultural place, it may certainly be conceptualized as a post-historical *topos* of dilemmas and uncertainties such as Ernst Jünger's *Eumeswil* (1980), where everything goes. Thus, it comes as no surprise that authors such as Michel Foucault (1994) warn against the dangers of extreme postmodernism and hold that, as a result of excessive attention paid to linguistic games, 'man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine even brighter upon our horizon' (Foucault, 1994, 386). If the focus continues to be language and discourse, as it seems to be the case of most postmodern studies, 'man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (1994, 387).

3.2. Seven "sins" and "virtues" of postmodernism

In what follows, we will briefly list what we believe to be the seven "sins" and "virtues" of postmodernism. When talking of the "sins" of postmodernism, most critics agree that the ones below have caused not little discontent with postmodernism: (1) To the esthetic confusion and the refusal to make distinction between the esthetic and non-esthetic pointed out by Jameson in 1979, they often add the rather tiring (2) ideological confusions triggered by abolishing the difference between eternal truth and contingent truth, between matters of language and facts, between the subjective and objective (Rorty, 1991). (3) Moreover, as a result of replacing truth criteria with concord criteria and abolishing the Platonic distinction between beliefs or opinion and knowledge, *doxa* and *epistémé* (Malita, 1998), many a logical confusions came about, establishing agreement as the threat of mutual annihilation. (4) However, despite well-spread distrust with metanarratives (Lyotard, 1979), authors such as Prigogine, (Prigogine, 1991), suggest a way out of the postmodern explanatory impasse by resorting to the principle of *complementarity*. To these, one may add three more reasons of discontent with postmodernism, namely: epistemological atomization, cultural stress (Snow, 1964), and a feeling of insuperable radical uncertainty which has brought about epistemological nihilism (Calinescu, 1987).

Nevertheless, there are equally numerous reasons of praising postmodernism for having established epistemological anti-dogmatism (W.V. Quine, 1951), for having abolished the border lines between countries, fields of investigation, art forms (Rorty, 1991), for encouraging both multiculturalism and diversity, and encouraging the individual to shape/ and collate his/her own identity. Having hedonism as a central value, with postmodernism, enjoyment becomes the imperative of ethics and esthetics, thus making way for double coding (Calinescu, Brian McHale, Jencks, Hutcheon), multiple coding and overcoding (Scarpetta, 1985). Moreover, postmodernism may be given credit for attempting to restore to world and science the enchantment and sense of the miraculous that modernist rationalism tried to shed away (Prigogine, Stengers, 1984). This runs parallel with attempts at re-evaluating the past that modernist and avant-garde artists disregarded or rejected. No longer seen as bearing authoritarian and dominating, irrational and hierarchical connotations (Calinescu, 1987), the past is recovered as a dialogic area of (self) understanding. This is so partly because, for the postmodern, time stands for a reservoir of motives, themes, ideas, as well as inventive and creative solutions to permanent problems. This comes down to saying that, while un-unifying and un-simplifying our (modernist) set image about past, the postmodern artist re-invents and re-interprets the past (Calinescu, 1987).

4. Towards a new concept

The "sins" and "virtues" of postmodernism outlined above reinforce the questions announced earlier, namely: Is postmodernism a concept no longer functional for describing all aspects of present day cultural phenomena? Has postmodernism become an extinct concept or idea?, thus underlining once again the need for a new concept and the fact that there is a strong feeling of expectation of a new concept in the air of theory.

A fictional correlative of the uneasiness with postmodernism and the expectation of a new concept voiced by Perloff (1993) and Bauman (1997), Andrei Codrescu's [Messi@h](#) (sic!) quite powerfully points out some of the drawbacks of postmodern cultural paradigm. Not surprisingly, all his characters in *Messiah* (1999) are defined by their expectations. Everybody is envisaging some crucial experience or event that would give meaning and coherence to their tormented postmodern lives: Felicity Odette LeJeune is looking forward to an authentic erotic experience. The Shadows or Neotribals are awaiting a savior who, through a mirroring process, would render their own selves and identity. Major Notz is anticipating the "redeemed" humankind that would emerge after Armageddon. The spiritual leaders gathered in the Jerusalem nunnery are waiting for the revelation that the Millennium might grant them. As already suggested above, the feeling of generalized expectancy that imbues [Messi@h](#) stands for the fictional correlative of what happens in the field of theory, critique, and society as well, namely the need of a new concept (and a different mental outlook) that would encompass phenomena that - no matter how broad is the apparently boundless concept of *postmodernism* - cannot be listed under the *postmodernist* heading. This may well be what we have called *metamodernism*, which attempts to theorize the necessary transformation that Blake and Codrescu envisage.

The concept of *metamodernism* suggests a step forward, or rather beyond modernism and postmodernism, surpassing both of them. It designates the attempts to outrun the ideological and cultural tendencies of post-capitalist and post-communist societies and paradigms. It can be safely said that its integrated outlook has been heralded by Ortega y Gasset's protests against the barbarism of extreme specialization, by several encyclopedic minds of the mid-20th century and by the pluralism of interdisciplinary investigation. As a global phenomenon, metamodernism represents the result of cultural mechanisms of self-defense and self-adjustment that bring about an age of globalization and holistic approaches after an age of excessive specialization.

5. Continuities and discontinuities with previous period terms

5. 1. Postmodernism and metamodernism

As opposed to postmodernism, which has been equated with the cult of artificiality (Calinescu, 1987) and the loss of innocence (Eco, 1984), metamodernism represents the worship of the natural, the innocent and simple. Moreover, contrary to modernist (Huysmans, 1928) and postmodernist belief in determining nature to deviate from its norms (Calinescu, 1987), metamodernism stands for an attempt to investigate (and appropriate) the laws of nature, society etc., to understand them and to act in agreement with the coordinates of inner and outer nature.

Rejecting the aberrant, metamodernism seeks the beauty of the unsophisticated, and repels the kitsch satisfactions provided by the means of mechanical reproduction (Calinescu, 1987; McHale, 1992). Postmodern mediated lives (by TV, computers or cyberspace; McHale, 1992) are being gradually replaced by the metamodern search for unmediated experience, as hinted at by Andrei Codrescu in *Messi@h*, *The Dog with the Chip in His Neck* (1996) and *Zombification* (1994).

Metamodernism apparently brings about several changes in the postmodern outlook: The modern concept of time as a line stretching from a beginning towards the future (pictured as 'the arrow of time') and bound to reach some final stage, allegedly following a certain progressive course of development, is being gradually replaced by a concept of time seen as a spiral. Thus, the end of history (Fukuyama, 1992), a postulate of postmodernism, may be contrasted with the metamodern postulation of an open world (Prigogine, 1991).

5.2. Metamodern esthetical and ethical values

Théophile Gautier suggests that each age has its own standards and criteria of the beautiful (*The Fine Arts and Civilization. About the Antique Beautiful and the Modern Beautiful*, 1848). The same idea is present in Baudelaire (*The 1846 Art Exhibition*), who takes it a step further, holding that 'there are as many types of beauty as many ways of looking for happiness'.

In the light of Gautier's and Baudelaire's positions, the metamodern way of looking for happiness may be read as being characterized by a search for balance, for innocence and truth. This is the quest that most of Codrescu's protagonists in *Messi@* undertake. Therefore, mirroring Gautier and Baudelaire, one of the metamodern esthetic criterion can be defined from the perspective of the reception of the artefact: beautiful is that which carries the vibration of purity, equilibrium and truth and/ or helps the audience get closer to these ideals.

The ethics of proximity is no longer appropriate, states Hans Jonas (1974) in his *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*: The morality we have inherited from pre-modern times (the only morality we possess) is one of 'proximity' which norms our relationship with people near us: neighbours or relatives. This morality of proximity is almost completely inadequate in a society in which distance stands for a major coordinate of any important act, and in which major decisions can affect people thousands of miles away.

Conversely, metamodernism endeavors not only to recuperate some of the ethical and moral values that modernism and postmodernism have ignored or shed, but also to extrapolate to a global scale some universal aspects of the ethics of proximity. Returning to the set of moral ideas or values that used to support and inspire humankind, metamodern writers (such as Codrescu, 1999 and Roy, 1997) try to identify those *inborn taboos* (or moral commandments inherent to humans as social beings) that cannot be ignored if we are to be wholesome human beings.

While postmodern authors record state of affairs and pose relevant questions, metamodern writers go a step further in an attempt to get to the root of contemporary tribulations and suggest (practical) ways out. The vicissitudes that the inhabitants of the contemporary world have to face daily, along with the subsequent types of mental and physical slavery, are both experienced and deconstructed by the protagonists of *Messi@h* (Codrescu, 1999) and *The God of Small Things* (Roy, 1997).

6. Metamodern mind

6.1. Analytical intelligence vs. emotional intelligence

Needless to say, modernity and postmodernity recognize and praise a single kind of intelligence: the one that fosters analytical thinking, other types of intelligence being either ignored or disregarded. But, according to William Blake, analytical thinking is the function of one's *spectre*, i.e. the part of one's mind responsible for the ego or self consciousness. This represents the greatest enemy of one's spirit and the source of most evils in society, Blake holds. The only way to get rid of the *spectre* hindering one's "awakening" is to integrate the emotional side (*emanation*) within one's conscious psyche. This is achieved with the metamodern emotional intelligence, unifying intelligence and sentiments, as the Rahel-Estha couple (Roy, 1997) or the Felicity-Andreea-Ben trio in Codrescu's *Messiah* (1999).

Thus, as opposed to 'artificial' intelligence based on computer-like analytical mental processes, the metamodern outlook is characterised by emotional intelligence, a synthesis of man's emotional (Blake's *emanation*) and intellectual (or Urizenic) tendencies. As an alternative to the post modern mind-set, arrested in its growth and entangled in uncreative pursuits or lost in the maze of cyber-space (Codrescu, 1996, 1999), the metamodern outlook impersonated as Codrescu's Felicity (1999) and Roy's Rahel (1997) is an attempt to recover spontaneity, authentic intellectual joy and innocence to one's mental frame.

6.2. Metamodern man as *homo universalis*

Due to globalization and international mobility, *homo metamodernus* is a new *homo universalis* who attempts not merely to list side by side, but rather to reconcile the opposites: American individualism, European universalism and respect for tradition, as well as Asian search for equilibrium gather together in various degrees to shape the complex personality of *homo metamodernus*. Paraphrasing Nietzsche (1899), *homo metamodernus*

can be defined as a free spirit, believing in fate (or destiny), but not overwhelmed by it, realist and practical, yet cherishing a certain idealism and humanity which, as is the case with Codrescu's collective *Messiah* (1999), allow for a redeemed humankind. Believing in the unity of the whole (vs. postmodern fragmentation), this 'awakened' individual would not withdraw from life by means of artifice, substitute worlds or ersatz realities such as virtual worlds or television, but would rather advocate a return to normality, common sense and equilibrium as a result of an individual search for one's own self, voice and identity (Codrescu, 1999).

7. Metamodern prospects

While modernism asserts the particularities of the individual's mind and consciousness, and - on the ideological level - postmodernism lays the stress on minorities and (ethnic, cultural and other) groups, metamodernism assimilates these tendencies and, preserving their gains, re-establishes a common ideal, shared – consciously or not – by most contemporary people. This comes down to saying that, as far as its relationship with modernism (the thesis) and postmodernism (anti-thesis) is concerned, metamodernism incorporates their achievements, but surpasses both in a type of synthesis.

The shared ideal mentioned above points to a dream of universal brotherhood of all people envisioned by William Blake more than two centuries ago. One step towards achieving this dream is represented by replacing postmodern fragmentarism with metamodern tendency towards globalization and integration of several central humane values while respecting the otherness, too. Roy (1997) enacts this shift from fragmentarism to unity with Estha, the autistic Indian boy, whose disintegrated personality gradually unifies, thus recovering his normality, in the presence of Rahel, his twin sister.

Novels such as Codrescu's and Roy's reinforce the idea that the present is characterized by an exhaustion of the postmodern paradigm. At the same time, an increasing number of authors realize the necessity of authentic spiritual transformation, often perceived as a type of equilibrium brought about by the unification of feminine and masculine energies, like in Blake's Albion-Jerusalem couple and later in Roy's Estha-Rahel and Codrescu's Felicity-Andreea- Ben.

8. How does the metamodern paradigm come into being?

In what follows, I will argue that the shift from a postmodern mental frame to a metamodern outlook is made possible through a process of transformation involving the deepest and the most subtle levels of one's spiritual being. Known as self-realization since the times of C.G.Jung, this process was described by William Blake as 'awakening' in his prophetic book *Jerusalem* (1803) and hinted at in most of his work. According to the latter, 'awakening' or 'raising [...] into a perception of the infinite' is not only possible, but also necessary. It is possible due to a subtle body of channels through which spiritual energy flows (*Jerusalem*, J:1): 'Fibres of love from man to man'. It is necessary because otherwise, Blake suggests, humankind risks transformation into machine-like beings; 'Humanity shall be no more; but war & pryncedom & victory' (J:1). Blake never tires to advocate his idea that everyone needs integrate all the archetypes of one's psyche and realize their unity under the governance of one's spirit (not to be mistaken for reason) provided that egoism and materialism blind one's vision. This intricate process of self realization is meticulously described through the tribulations of Albion, the key character of *Jerusalem* that stands for both (contemporary) humankind and the individual in search of their true identity. Seeking the harmony of Albion with the numerous mythological-like figures in *Jerusalem*, Blake states quite explicitly the need for people to recover a global outlook beyond the limits of one's own ego, to regain an enlarged vision that would allow them to seek the welfare of humanity at large.

It is now high time we stepped back and wondered where has this concept of self-realization as unification of major psychic energies sprung from? Was it in Plato's *Banquet* that we first encountered the ideal of a unified self, represented as the myth of the androgyne? If we are to believe the philosophical alchemists who trace the origins of alchemy to old Chinese, Indian and even Mesopotamian or Sumerian texts, myths of the adrogyne - as well as that of individuals of godly nature who lived on earth - seem to imbue the earliest mythologies recorded. There is no doubt anymore that Blake was conversant with Asian mythology and he was quite intent on reading hermetic philosophy, especially Jacob Boheme and Paracelsus. Milton O. Percival (1997) sums up Blake's intellectual background as having included:

The Orphic and Pythagorean tradition, Neoplatonism in the whole of its extent, the Hermetic, kabbalistic, Gnostic, and alchemical writings, Erigena, Paracelsus, Boehme, and Swedenborg. . . . Anyone who undertakes to do Blake's reading after him will respect his prowess as a reader. . . . When Blake, in an impetuous moment, referred to himself as a "mental prince," he uttered no more than sober truth. (Percival, 1997, pp. 1-2).

Given his interest for hermetic texts, Blake could not have missed the 18th century English translation of *Rosarium Philosophorum* (now in MS Ferguson 210, at the Department of Special Collections Glasgow University Library), originally printed as part II of *De Alchemia Opuscula complura veterum philosophorum*, Frankfurt, 1550. His attention was, undoubtedly, drawn to the twenty woodcuts accompanying the text, a fact which accounts for the striking similarity in design between plate 25 of his *Jerusalem* and woodcut nineteen of *Rosarium Philosophorum*.

8.1. Transmutation as awakening in *Rosarium Philosophorum* and William Blake's *Jerusalem*

Due to its own obscurity and the separation between chemistry and hermetism, alchemy was doomed to disappear gradually in the 18th century. Nevertheless, it was then that the writings of famous alchemists such as Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme became widely known and readily available. In his love for medieval tradition, William Blake attempted to counteract the mercantile Urizenic and rationalistic tendencies of his age by resorting to alchemical symbols and ideas that invited introspection rather than futuristic projections, intuitive understanding (usually associated with feminine-like mindsets) rather than analytical thinking. However, the pressing imperative of one's turning to feminine-like modes of perceiving reality is made clear in Blake's distancing from several alchemical set images (such as woodcut nineteen of *Rosarium Philosophorum*) to make room in his world for feminine archetypes, energies or emanations that were gradually being shed away from the collective psyche of his age.

In a desperate endeavour to recapture a type of sensibility still alive in alchemist writings, especially their openness to symbols and symbolic representations of psychic realities, Blake attempts to open his contemporaries' eyes to the necessity of spiritual transformation and to the significant part played by feminine archetypes in the process of self realisation. This effort of his is illustrated in plate 25 from *Jerusalem*, whose contrast with the nineteenth alchemical engraving from *Rosarium Philosophorum* (see front page image)– representing 'the Three and the One' (Jung, 1996) - i.e. Father-God, the Son, Holy Ghost and the spirit of the aspirant - reveals, despite obvious similarities, a shift in sensibilities within the antinomian tradition.

Although presenting a symbolical crowning ceremony, a supposedly joyous occasion, the seriousness on the faces of the anthropoid protagonists in the alchemical quaternity (*anima*, Father-God, Son and Holy Ghost) dispels the expected feeling of elation. The feminine figure about to accept the crown expresses resignation and dejection as if her part in the cosmic drama were an inescapable tribulation. Pain and dismay emanate as well from Blake's engraving (*Jerusalem*, 25) representing a quintessential episode in the drama of the soul in search of itself. It points, no doubt, to the difficulty of achieving both the spiritual realization or 'awakening' envisaged by Blake and the completing the alchemical work, that stand for apparently disparate aims that can be proved to converge. A reversed mirror image of the medieval alchemic engraving, Blake's etching is centered around a masculine figure surrounded by a trinity of feminine characters, whereas the alchemist plate portrays a feminine personage between two male archetypes and above whose head hovers a dove, symbol of the Holy Ghost. Despite quite similar layout and comparable attitudes of the characters in the two pictures, there are obvious dissimilarities between the two images. Can these be accounted for by the medieval alchemist's and Blake's different approaches to the issue of spiritual realization?

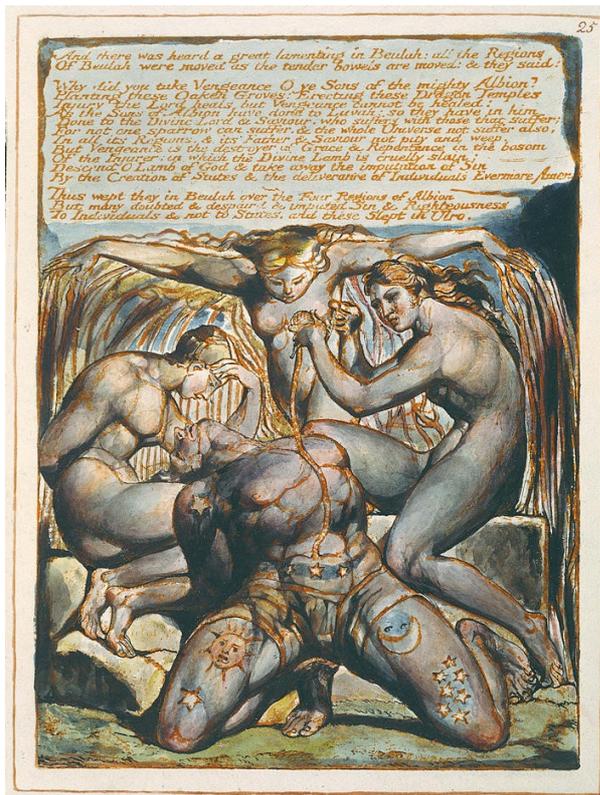
Whereas the alchemical engraving seems to portray the drama taking place within one's soul, with *anima*, the central feminine archetype as a protagonist, Blake's illumination is more concerned with the feminine energies redeeming (or dooming, according to authors such as Paley, 1991, 169) mankind at large. The two male archetypes: God the father (*Patre*) and Jesus (*Filius*) flanking the female figure (*suror*) being honoured in the alchemical image are connected through the gesture of holding the emblematic crown signifying the completion of the process of self realization. In Blake's engraving, however, the male protagonist undergoes excruciating pain as one of the distinct female figures seems to pull (does she really?) a symbolic string from his belt decorated with celestial bodies.

8.2. Torture or redemption? Morton D. Paley's interpretation.

The received interpretation of the image on Plate 25 of *Jerusalem* is that it represents a druidic sacrifice perpetrated on Albion by three women: Rahab, Vala and Tirzah (Paley, 1991, 169). Considering their respective parts in the Blakean drama, it is quite likely that these three feminine figures should perpetrate such a crude and cruel sacrifice. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that the meaning of the acts performed by the characters in each plate and their very identity are to be interpreted in the overall context and layout of the plate.

Blake did not attempt to make things easier for his critics as he was seldom intent on clarifying the meaning of his verse or illuminations in texts he meant for public perusal (perhaps, with the exception of *A Descriptive Catalogue*). The reality that contrasting interpretations find equal grounding in his texts and his ubiquitous

ambiguities notwithstanding, he made it quite clear that every word and line was in its rightful place and nothing was fortuitous: Every word and every letter is studied and put into its fit place [...] (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 3)



Therefore, it would be rather difficult to admit that the illumination on one plate may illustrate the lines on another. This is, however, the surprising claim that Morton D. Paley (1991, p.169) makes when he puts forward the idea that the scene on plate 25 actually illustrates several lines from plate 66 (26-27): ‘They take off his Vesture whole with their Knives of flint:/ But they cut asunder his inner garments [...]’. Or, even less plausible, some lines from plate 67 (24-25): ‘Tirzah sits weeping to hear the shrieks of the dying: Her knife/Of flint is in her hand: she passes it over the howling victim.’ In M.D.Paley’s interpretation of the plate, Albion is being tortured by the feminine figures surrounding him, one of which seems to be extracting his bowels with the intention of winding them into a ball. Albion’s posture, quite similar to that of ‘The Blasphemer’ being stoned to death does entitle M.D.Paley to associate the scene on plate 25 with lines describing physical pain and torture. Nonetheless, the suffering and sorrow obvious in Albion’s posture and in the attitude of the female on his left are of a nature different from mere physical pain.

8.3. Animus and Anima’s contribution to Albion’s awakening.

Indeed, the tears in the alleged torturer’s eyes, not crocodile tears (as Paley’s interpretation would suggest), to be sure, point to the plight of the feminine figure on Albion’s left. Standing for a projection of Albion’s feminine energies, a representation of his *anima*, she seems to express the sorrow at his undergoing the pain of casting his emanation away or the agony endured during the process of ‘awakening’. A painstaking effort, awakening is accompanied by a symbolic attempt at rising from the prostrated position. All the three figures around Albion seem to assist him in this effort. The more restrained figure on Albion’s right seems to suggest a kind of sobriety becoming of a male character, the *animus* perhaps, witnessing the process but not participating, i.e. not getting emotionally involved. However, it is on the lap of this more muscular figure - that looks like either a man or a well-built teenager - that prostrated Albion rests his anguished head. The moon and sun on Albion’s left and right thigh, respectively, are bound to clarify the role of the two figures flanking Albion, reinforcing the idea that they stand for impersonations of Albion’s *anima* and *animus*, that is his readiness for emotion and compassion, and the propensity to act and analyze. In un-awakened and divided Albion these tendencies are seen as separate, and, most likely, at loggerheads, tormenting Albion’s personality with their opposing impulses. The two characters flanking Albion attempt, however, to bring about his awakening, to pull him from his state of prostration or spiritual slumber. This is the significance of *animus* supporting Albion’s head while *anima* seems to wind into a ball a thread that emerges from Albion’s belt.

The thread represents, from a symbolic standpoint¹, the agent that connects all states of existence, linking them to their principle, thus bridging the gap between the perceptible world and the spiritual level of existence. Evoking Ariadna's thread helping Theseus out of the labyrinth of ignorance, it is interpretable as the thread that leads the hero from the darkness of an un-awakened state towards the light of spiritual awareness. This meaning accounts for Albion's expression of pain as the plight of the one still possessed by a state of un-visionary consciousness, fighting his way out to the light of awareness and spiritual joy. Albion's attitude also suggests surrender to the figures around him, as if, having renounced or annihilated his selfhood, he allows his inner energies to carry out the process of awakening.

The decorations of the belt are suggestive as well, pointing again to the fact that it is not the pain of disembowelment that Albion experiences, but rather a spiritual kind of agony. The belt is divided into three regions, evoking the three realms of spiritual reality, traditionally divided as hell, earth and paradise or the three tendencies of the psyche: the propensity towards emotions, action and analytical thinking, and the search for spirituality. These have been conceptualised in alchemical texts as *Luna*, *Sol* and *materia prima*. The first two (*Luna* and *Sol*) occupy Albion's left and right, respectively, it is only natural that, if the aspiration for spirituality is to be attributed a location, this should be in the centre. Incidentally, the thread that the representation of Albion's feminine energy holds traverses the centre of his trunk, thus elucidating its symbolism as the central path of awakening. To stress once again the importance of the centrality, the *aurea mediocritas* or the 'golden middle way' celebrated by the ancients, Blake draws his readers' attention to the middle stripe of the three that make up Albion's belt. Of greyish blue, thus distinguishing itself among the two sepia upper and lower stripes, the middle stripe is decorated with celestial bodies. This suggests that the thread emerging from the belt pertains to spiritual rather than corporeal matters, to things above the veil of appearance, rather than mere physical torture. This, once again, points to the fact that Albion's suffering is by no means the mere pain of disemboweling.

8.4. Forgiveness, redemption and the feminine mindset of the Lamb of God.

Whereas the aspiration for spirituality, the attempt to raise from the slumber of Ulro (the world of materialism and delusion) is symbolically represented by the rather robust thread pulled by the feminine figure on Albion's left, the whole process of 'awakening' seems supervised by another feminine character that seems to protect the giant that impersonates humankind, so vulnerable in his/its un-awakened state. The liana-like threads - which emerge from the fingers and thumbs of the blond female and cover the whole scene - fall to the earth in a movement that, apparently, reverses the ascending motion of Albion's spiritual thriving symbolized by the thread. While there may be voices that claim that it stands for a luring disguise of a covering cherub or of a cruel female such as Vala, Rahab or Tirezah, we think that we are more entitled to hold that it impersonates quite a different state. We have established that the ascending thread symbolizes the aspiration for spirituality. Then, the illumination representing a feminine figure whose arms extend cloche-like over prostrated Albion and the other spiritual states or archetypes alike can be interpreted as representing either the culmination of the process of awakening or the grace showered on the aspirant, or both. Its privileged position above all the others figures in the scene and at the upper end of the string of spiritual quest would justify the former interpretation, while the descending liana-like threads enveloping the three other figures and covering the backdrop justify the latter. The two figures on the side and the ascending thread symbolize states or regions of Albion in Beulah, seen as the stages in way of humankind back to a heaven of equilibrium, unity, and fulfillment. To bring further evidence for the fact that the lines are being illustrated by the illumination on that very plate (J:25), let us look at some of the text. The accompanying verses reinforce the idea of resurrection, conspicuous in our reading of the illumination, yet not present either in Paley's (1991), or in Erdman's (1974): 'Descend O Lamb of God & take away the imputation of Sin/ By the Creation of States & the deliverance of Individuals Evermore Amen' (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 25: 12-13), in which God's grace as the Lamb is invoked to this specific end: to create the states that would allow the individuals to be delivered of their sins. Appeal is made here to qualities of forgiveness and tolerance. These are specific, no doubt, to a mindset informed by compassion and love, which is not the province of female minds alone, but of souls - whether belonging to men or women - in which the feminine part is allowed to have a say.

In the previous lines of the plate, a collective character, perhaps the Daughters of Beulah, addresses the Sons of Albion, impersonations of the rationalist tendency to criticize, accuse and revenge. As opposed to meek Jerusalem, who desperately tries to save Albion from the grip of his Spectre, the Sons of Albion stand out as

¹ Ostriker, 1973, p.1053. Rahab stands for 'the Whore of Babylon, also called Mystery, the seductive, cruel and corrupt Church as opposed to true Christianity'. She and Tirezah are degenerate forms of Vala. Together they comprise the Daughters of Albion and impersonate the female will. Derived probably from *veil*, Vala's name suggests the film or veil of matter that hides reality, separating Man from God and preventing the triumph of the spirit during the process of self realisation. A degraded form of Vala, like Rahab, Tirezah (Heb. *delight*) personifies the female will; she is the cruel and beautiful mother that binds humans to the physical world.

arrogant self-absorbed (inner) enemies of divided un-awakened Albion. The lesson the Daughters of Beulah try to teach is one in forgiveness: ‘Why did you take Vengeance O ye Sons of the mighty Albion?/ Planting these Oaken Groves: Erecting these Dragon Temples’ (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 25: 3-4). After reproaching the Sons of Albion their vindictive attitude that consolidate their spectruous ego rather than help find a way out of its grasp, the Daughters of Beulah seem to turn to the reader, imparting, in a casually meditative voice, some eternal truth:

Injury the Lord heals but Vengeance cannot be healed:
As the Sons of Albion have done to Luvah: so they have in him
Done to the Divine Lord & Saviour, who suffers with those that suffer:
For not one sparrow can suffer, & the whole Universe not suffer also,
In all its regions, & its Father & Saviour not pity and weep.

(Blake, *Jerusalem*, 25: 5-9)

Then the voice assumes prophetic undertones:

But Vengeance is the destroyer of Grace & Repentance in the bosom
Of the Injurer: in which the Divine Lamb is cruelly slain (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 25: 10-11),
that culminate with the invocation in lines 12 and 13 quoted above.

Quite as in the case of *Rosarium Philosophorum*, the story told by the text and the one suggested by the woodcuts or illuminations, respectively, are quite different. In Blake’s plates, as in *Rosarium*, it is the illuminations that tell the story of spiritual realization in a more outspoken and clear way. Nevertheless, whereas the text and images of *Rosarium* can be read or interpreted independently with some benefit, the Blakean text requires both image and written text to convey its full meaning. Even if apparently unrelated occasionally, the lines accompanying an illumination reveal dimensions and depths of meaning that the image alone could not convey, and the other way round.

The lines on plate 25 of *Jerusalem* shed some light on the meaning of the whole plate as dealing with issues of spiritual realization or ‘deliverance of sins’ in the regions of Beulah. Here it is the image which reveals the instrument of ‘awakening’, the four regions of Albion – the “regions” of feeling, action, reason, and the domain of spiritual aspiration, with its hoped-for fulfillment. The lines, however, set the general mood of the plate and suggest forgiveness as the requisite of any spiritual ‘awakening’. Humility brings about forgiveness and allows for the manifestation of the grace of the Divine Lamb, too. Strangely enough, the visual correlative of grace in the text seems to be the feminine figure save-guarding the process of Albion’s awakening. Even more surprising, if we take the time to compare plate 25 of *Jerusalem* with the nineteenth woodcut of *Rosarium*, with which it displays striking layout similarities, the feminine archetype above Albion’s head may well be identified with a feminine hypostatization of the Holy Ghost.

9. Conclusions

Even if unimpressed by the chemical part of alchemists’ experiments, Blake seems to have taken up some of the mystic philosophy behind them. Thus, both alchemical and Blakean texts seem to be informed by an underlying belief that the envisaged goal of their authors’ respective works was a shared ideal of innocence and wholeness. This ideal could not be achieved prior to a rather painstaking process that could be equated with a second birth. The excruciating woe suffered by humankind gives rise to purged new identities both at individual and at collective level, the new selves that arise being describable in terms of meekness, kindness, humility, respect and awe for the highest spiritual entity: ‘the Cruel has become an Infant’ (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 81: 8) and ‘Humanity is become/ A weeping Infant in ruind lovely Jerusalems folding cloud’ (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 81:13-16).

Since she impersonates compassion and spirituality, Jerusalem acts as the agent of this transformation. But, when disregarded and despised, she cannot play her part as the cohesive agent of both humankind and human psyche: ‘For Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations/ Which stand both Male& female at the Gates of each Humanity’ (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 88: 10-11). Her role is to teach and to inspire:

Albion gave me to the whole Earth to walk up & down; to pour
Joy upon every mountain, to teach songs to the shepherd & plowman
I taught the ships of the Sea to sing the song of Zion. (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 79: 36-38)

She also kindles visionary approaches to reality and produces a race of innocent able to cherish God’s love:

[...] the Lamb of God met me there.

There we walked as in our secret chamber among *our little ones*

They looked upon our loves with joy: they beheld our secret joys:

With holy raptures of adoration rapd sublime in the *Visions* of God. (Blake, *Jerusalem*, 79: 42-44)

Nevertheless, despite the joy she engenders, achieving the state in which the soul is ‘rapd [...] in the Visions of God’ is far from being easy or painless. As suggested in Plate 25 of *Jerusalem*, it may entail a preliminary disintegration of the aspirant’s self into constituent parts. Comparable, perhaps, with postmodern fragmentarism and many a schizophrenias that mar our lives, this crumbling represents a risky endeavor since the integrity of

one's psychic life is at stake. The process involves the danger of self-annihilation if one does not possess sufficient spiritual strength, stamina, and above all, grace; for neither the protagonists of alchemical texts such as *Rosarium Philosophorum* nor Blake's Albion can be "saved" without the momentous intervention of God or Los, that is without the intervention of forces lying beyond the grasp of rationality, beyond the control of one's reason.

The ideal of doing away with disunity within one's psyche and achieving a state of wholeness, equilibrium and peace with one's self and, subsequently, with the world around, is expressed as Blake's 'humanity divine', which one may discover within as a result of awakening. The phrase 'humanity divine' suggests not only the possibility of union or communication between the divine and the human realms of existence, but also their mutual intermingling, an idea present in earliest alchemical texts that would mention gods inhabiting the contingent world. To pinpoint once again Blake's indebtedness to hermetic literature, let us cast a cursory glance at Plate 99 of *Jerusalem*. The idea of intertwining human and divine realms comes into play with a feminine figure, most likely Jerusalem herself, Albion's emanation, abandoning herself in the bosom of God in order to 'awake into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality'. Undoubtedly, regaining the state of unity with the divine is, for Blake, the goal of human existence. Within this frame, set by descent of the soul from the transcendent with which it seeks to reunite, life and experience represent an interlude. This interlude is meant to lead one along the paths of self discovery until s/he learns 'to bear the beams of love' (Blake, 'The Little Black Boy') so that, eventually, one's soul achieves the strength and rapture necessary for a contemplation of the infinite in everything.

Returning, once again to the initial question regarding Blake's concept of awakening, we are now able to see how, by enacting it in *Jerusalem*, he proposes several definitions to it. One of these is a gradual approximation of a state of equilibrium and wisdom, characterized by an ability to perceive the vision of reality. This comes about, no doubt, as a consequence of integrating the feminine energy of the emanation within the ego.

Having foreseen much of the development inherent to modern and postmodern culture, Romantic William Blake suggested that a possible only viable way out of the complexities and malaise of modernity is to be found as a result of a genuine search for equilibrium between reason (impersonated as his character Urizen) and imagination (Jerusalem) in the individual. One's becoming aware of psychic activities other than the rational may be equated with a kind of "awakening" (W.Blake, 1804, 1991), i.e. a process of self-discovery that was later to be called 'self realization' (C.G. Jung, 1933) or 're-formation of the self' (M.W. Alcolm, Jr. and M. Bracher, 1985). The hopeful claim that Blake and Jung make is that, should a significant fragment of humankind experience an actualization of self-realization, this would mark the beginning of a new paradigm whose mental outlook may be quite different from the modern one. As it would stand for a step forward in the collective evolution of mankind, this new mental (or rather, spiritual) transformation - whose main prerequisites are the harmonization of intellectual and emotional aspects of the self - makes way for a cultural paradigm that may quite rightfully be labeled as *metamodern*.

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