AWEN, BARDDAS, AND
THE AGE OF BLAKE

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

William Neal Franklin, Jr., B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

May, 1997
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Studies of William Blake’s poetry have historically paid little attention to the Welsh literary context of his time, especially the bardic lore (*barddas*), in spite of the fact that he considered himself to be a bard and created an epic cosmos in which the bardic had exalted status. Of particular importance is the Welsh concept of the *awen*, which can be thought of as “the muse,” but which must not be limited to the Greek understanding of the term. For the Welsh, the *awen* had to do with the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, and beyond that, with the poet’s connection with his inspiration, or genius, whether Christian or otherwise.

This study explores the idea of inspiration as it evolves from the Greek idea of the Muse, as it was perceived in the Middle Ages by Welsh writers, and as it came to be understood and utilized by writers in the Age of Blake.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: RUNES FROM THE EMBERS

I began this book years ago while still working within the corporate environment of Mitchell Energy. I found that life unfulfilling and needed intellectual and spiritual diversion. My entry into the study of poetics came early from a study of rhetoric with Jake Kobler. I wrote from the driver's seat of a company car in those days, yellow pad on the seat as I traveled between negotiations, sometimes with O'Neal asleep beside me coming back and forth from Mena's house. I explored, driving that spring through the oak woods of North Texas, the aspects of metaphor that allowed me to clothe my rhetorical ideas in stories of driving to and fro. Thunderstorms played a powerful part in the imagery; thundergiants as creatures of air.

The real catalyst came the next Fall in Hugh Kirkpatrick's Pearl Poet class, where I translated Sir Gawain and the Green Knight from the original fourteenth-century West-Midlands dialect. In looking that closely at words, I came to realize that there were categories of thought which transcended the map of any singular language, and that embedded in certain classes of morphemes there arose consistent archetypal imageries. Metaphor was becoming metanarrative for me.

In particular, I noted a connection between the Middle English word Dryȝyn, meaning Lord in Anglo-Saxon, and the Greek word ὅρυξάν (druidan), or druids. I
proposed to the class an etymological connection between the two, suggesting that the
idea of God for the writer of Gawain included somehow the sense of the Druidic.
Kirkpatrick's response was a curt "NO!" I set out to prove my point, and that path has
led from that day to this through a series of archetypally-driven explorations in the Greek,
Roman, Anglo-Saxon, West-Midlands, Chaucerian, Old Welsh and Blakean
metanarratives.

The primary image which drove this archetypal search was the tree as controlling
metaphor. It began most mysteriously. That season I was cutting and gathering dead
wood along the roads. Oil leases were my business, and I drove the land often in my title
examinations. When a well was drilled, trees had to come down. I carried a saw, and
when I passed a pile of road-kill, I would cut firewood. I hated the cutting of trees, but I
figured I might as well make use of their energy.

I would go home, cut and stack the wood, and sometimes I would build a fire in a
ring of stones I'd brought over from Jack County. I'd stand in the smoke and cool mist,
staring into the embers and obsessing on the subject of words. Like Odin, I began to see
runes in the shadows of branches. And the more I looked at it, the more convinced I
became that buried deep in the original sense of a lot of words were implications of "tree-
ness."

It began because I could not find dryglen in the dictionary, or at least not in the
Middle-English spelling I had. I searched further and found a lot of words that came
close, but none right on. I switched to the Greek lexicons and searched. There I found
the word for tree: δρυς. It means “oak,” and it was as close as I could get. The “u” in upper case became “Y,” so I figured I had three letters at the root if I didn’t have the whole word. I looked around to see what else I could see with a dry- root.

I began to see the tree in a vast system of morphologically connected metaphors with wisdom as its tenor. I noticed that order of the root morphemes or the particularity of letter seemed not to negate the context, and soon I had a list of tree-rooted words. Included were the following:

dry3ten, druidan

true, trowth, trick, trammes, trauma

straight, street, strong

lord, sword, ordain, word, bard, ward

Days and weeks went by, and the list grew and grew. The leaves turned red and yellow, then dropped to the earth, and Gawain became for me a word-hoard of magical dimensions. It wasn’t true of all words, and there were plenty of reasons to suspect it was all illusion brought on by obsession, but I became convinced that a group of metaphors of the tree was central to the earliest formation of language, dating back to a time before the Tower of Babel.

It was coming on Christmas one afternoon when I built a Yule fire. A cold wind whistled down the chimney. Writing hard against a deadline, I had collected all my evidence and was ready for a salvo on Kirkpatrick. I stacked wood for a long fire, and in
the roasting radiation of its light, I sipped tea and wrote of good knight Gawain and the
Green Giant of Wales. I laid out my morphemes and types. I stoked the oak logs and
wrote, staring into the glowing, shimmering energies for inspiration in between
paragraphs. A vision of ancient Wales and druids and drityens and wizards and spells
came alive in me, and when I had finished I had constructed a vision of language in which
leaves and letters were inextricably interwoven with a lost mythos of trees and inspiration.

Kirkpatrick liked the essay, but he never conceded that I had proved my point.

Since that time, I have become more convinced of the controlling metaphor of the
tree in a long discourse about wisdom. But I have likewise come to understand
Kirkpatrick's problem with my raw and very naïve linguistic contextualization. What I
observed from my cozy and illusory vantage was not so much evidence of etymology as
evidence of meaningful coincidence suggestive of etymology. My approach was not
scientific, but intuitive. I had no structure from which to launch my arguments. I was
constructing my tree cosmos out of an imaginative and intuitive desire, constructing a
sense of Welshness out of the terrain of my imagination. In so doing, I was unknowingly
emulating some of the least credible characters in the history of linguistics.

The characters of whom I speak worked in the eighteenth century, preceding Sir
William Jones, founder of the modern science of linguistics, by decades in their efforts to
understand the connection of words and languages linked by similarity of sounds. Their
linguistic conclusions are often totally unbelievable to our more practiced eyes, and they
stay largely unknown in the background of a canon which privileges Johnson and Pope
and Coleridge. I came to know of them only by hard searching, for even when their names are known, as with Thomas Gray, they are known in terms of a canon which praises their mainstream works while it ignores the embarrassments of their enthusiastic failures. Only recently have scholars begun to uncover and discuss their less well-known works, and there seems to be no very easy way to get to them, for they are seldom given more than passing mention. The discussions tend to stay on the important works by writers with big names, and important questions and speculations are shunted aside.

I believe these lesser literary characters need a canon of their own, and it is my intention to do that with this book.

Before I introduce the writers of this “Old Welsh” canon, some things need to be put in place so as to define the metanarratological structure that I call The Age of Blake when I’m not calling it the Dark Age of Gawayn. I call this the Age of Blake not so much because Blake was a central influence of the time; he was virtually unknown and influenced almost no one until long years had passed following his death in 1827. I call it the Age of Blake because it suits me to think of his intellect as one of the primary lenses through which all of the influences of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth came into focus for modern poets.

When I use the word metanarrative, I mean a system of codes whereby we may understand a particular poetic cosmos. The Blakean metanarrative, then, is the system of codes whereby all of the images in Blake’s grand epic may be understood.
Metanarratives may also be thought of as the collective diegesis (world-making) of a grand epic, or as bodies of stories set within a consistent world. I used to want to use the word *myth* or *mythos* for this, but found myself constantly having to qualify the term so as to dispense with the association of *myth* as fable, falsehood, or lie. A metanarrative is a mythic world presented in narrative inasmuch as it hangs consistently together as a coherent whole, whether real or imagined or some combination of both. I will also use the term *diegesis* in this sense.

Blake made use of a number of metanarratives in constructing his own. Among them are the Christian, the Classical, the Swedenborgian, and the Miltonic metanarratives. There are overlaps as well as inconsistencies and paradoxes between these systems of symbols. Blake accepted all of no system, and some he outright rejected, such as deism and empiricism. Others, however, he embraced, and what I will be calling the Welsh metanarrative was one with which he was very compatible.

These bodies of words and their meanings can be read at a variety of levels, and I find an application of Joseph Campbell’s version of the Kundalini Paradigm, primarily as set out in his series of lectures published under the title *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, to be most useful for sorting out some of the various discourses of the narratives. I apply these levels of consciousness in conjunction with some of the categories of Northrup Frye’s Archetypes as set out in his book entitled *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. My adherence to the doctrines of either of these paradigms is quite flexible and governed as much by my imagination as by my sense of rationality. I modify freely as
needed. I may be driven by a desire for rational understanding, but I am likewise aware that knowledge is not always so easily clarified. Thus I proceed with a healthy respect for intuition, and insofar as I can, I will allow intuitive leaps even as I struggle to retain a healthy sense of real boundaries. I know it is not the way of modern academics to wander from the scientific path, but I am not always satisfied with the soul-less renditions of mere academic reason. I was a poet before I was a scholar, and the proper aim of scholarship should be to enhance my sense of creative poetics, or else it is worth nothing.

The next section will set out these parameters more carefully with an effort toward understanding some of the complexities of each of the levels of consciousness, especially as they apply to certain key characters within the bardic diegesis. Once the system of codes is in place, I will examine in depth the metanarrative of the Awenyddion.
CHAPTER II

KUNDALINI ARCHETYPOLGY

Of all the problems before us, none engages us more than the awareness of death. We learn at an early age that people die, and at a psychic level all of our lives are driven by some sort of relationship with that one universal. Poetry from the time of Gilgamesh to the present day has addressed that encounter; it is the reservoir of the human languages' attempts (among other things) to deal with death. Ever since Enkidu touched the gate into the Forest of Humbaba, a major job of poetry has been the quest for healing and understanding.

Religion is the application of a critical metanarrative to a body of sacred text, which is very often of a poetic nature. Exegesis is the critical exertion of effort not only on the sacred text, but on the structure of codes whereby the sacred texts are understood. Death's place in religious and exegetical interests is central, for nothing else drives the discussion of divine forces like the fear and wonder generated by the knowledge of our own impending doom.

Second only to Death as a central poetic concern is the Spirit. For many, religion is only a concern with getting the story right so as to transcend the death of the flesh. But for the Poet and for the Critic, there is an aspect of Spirit which has to do with the creation and interpretation of the metanarrative itself. Poets have long thought that the
stuff of poetry generates out of something beyond the immediate mechanism of the mind. They have thought in terms of levels of consciousness involving the human and its communication with some other aspect of spiritual consciousness residing outside the physical boundaries of the mind. The Poet creates, or rather recreates, a world in which the spiritual natures of life and death may be observed. The Critic creates a world within which meaning may be made of the poetic diegesis. The critical metanarrative is a malleable thing, and multiple structures of meaning may arise out of a single poem.

When a critical metanarrative involves spiritual reading of the text, and especially when that reading coalesces into a political tradition controlling others’ reading of the text, the result is religion. As William Blake tells it, the priests create “forms of worship from poetic tales” (*MHH* plate 11).

Blake had a deep suspicion of systems of belief. Yet he was endlessly engaged in creating his own system for understanding the nature of Death and Spirit. It is in many ways unique, but it is built out of the elements of a multitude of metanarratives. His diegesis is vastly complex, containing not only elements from the broad Christian metanarrative, but also from a variety of divergent interpretive traditions of Christianity. He was not Catholic, but he was not simply Protestant either. He argued with Swedenborg and Milton and others in the terms of their respective metanarratives, and in so doing he constructed his own unique Christian metanarrative.

The analytical model I described at the conclusion of the last chapter is a model I have come to trust, one I laughingly think of in terms of a New Age Zen. Like Robert
Pirsig, I decline to claim that what follows has much to do with the great body of Zen literature that grew out of the orient. I have never read it or studied it in its original languages. My exposure came from Alan Watts and Joseph Campbell, with *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* giving me the necessary vocabulary, especially grounding me in the concept of MU, mythos and logos. I have not these resources in hand; the concepts are long internalized and are here focused upon the Age of Blake, not because historically Blake knew of the Kundalini (which he may or may not have—we don’t know), but because it helps me to discern the levels of discourse running throughout his mythos.

First, some definitions: I’ll call anything a myth if it is part of a larger story, evoking the psychic realms as well as the empirical, and having at the head of its metanarrative an ideal—what Tom Preston would call a “transcendental signified.” As I noted in the previous chapter, I tend not to use this word because of the inclination of others to associate myth with things untrue. When I use the word, I use it in its Greek sense meaning “narrative,” and I use it specifically to indicate a narrative in which the psychological and spiritual aspects of life are given presence, in which there is an element of transcendence beyond the world witnessed by the words themselves. The empirical realm is that perceived with the five traditional senses; the psychic realm is that perceived intuitively through the imaginative eye.

A metanarrative is the body of myths and attendant stories held together under a controlling metaphor or collection of interrelated metaphors. The metanarrative shifts in accordance with the specificity of its elements. The Christian metanarrative is the
broadest term for all the stories of whatever nature with Jesus as the central character. The Catholic metanarrative is a more specific term, as distinct from the Anglican or Methodist metanarratives. The Blakean metanarrative is a much more specific term which includes his highly specialized encoding of a multitude of various Christian metanarratives, including all of the above and more.

Historicism and linguistics are good tools for understanding some of the empirical levels of metanarrative. Other tools work better for the psychic and transcendental levels of discourse. One of the chronic problems facing the critic is diagnostic, for the critic often wishes to use a favored tool even when the discourse is not well suited for that particular tool. The focus of this particular discussion, for example, is on the nature of the spirit and its involvement with the act of poesis, and particularly on the Welsh contribution to Blake's conception of genius. Historicism and linguistics both have helpful things to say about the problem, but neither is comprehensively useful, for neither is equipped to enlarge the understanding of the psychic and spiritual aspects of things witnessed and things said.

I use a method I call mythistoricism, after a word from Bailey's dictionary of 1721. Mythistoricism seeks to explore the psychic and spiritual aspects of narrative, but it seeks to do so with careful attention to historical parameters. I recognize the need to stay within the world of perceivable and demonstrable evidence, but I likewise insist upon acknowledging the realms of experience beyond the scope of proof. I recognize levels of
consciousness beyond the empirical, and I seek to understand these levels in a systematic way that makes use of intuitive leaps even as it balances itself with rational constraints.

So as to render these levels intelligible, I wish to employ a critical metanarrative based on Kundalini Yoga, which sees the human consciousness as being active at no fewer than seven levels. Begin in your mind's eye with the image of a person sitting in meditation. An axis of consciousness runs along the spine, and along this axis are seven subtle centers of energy. Where the spine meets the earth is the first level, which I call "root" consciousness. This level of consciousness has to do with the beating of the heart, the growling of the bowels, the unconscious breath. A center of consciousness is called a chakra.

I think of this chakra as a way of thinking mythistorically about the pre-cognitive structures of sound and other aspects of language. This is a level at which we encounter language as letters and sounds and icons, but before meaning. A holistic approach to the analysis of a poem may focus on things like the placement of certain letters, the patterns of that placement, the repetition of certain sounds, the use of margins and spaces, and so forth. This is first-level analysis, and it studies the structure prior to the meaning of the poem. This is the applicable level at which the stock of etymological studies resides, in the sounds and letters before other consciousness arises.
Consider the stained-glass window shown in Figure 1. This is called "The Tree of Jessye," and it was made in the thirteenth century for Chartres Cathedral (Grodecki and Brisac 11). At the root level of understanding, though, none of these words are operative. At the root level we notice that this artifact has two vertical lines and six horizontal lines which divide the window into twenty-one sections, seven high and three across. We notice lights and darks and shapes. What these shapes suggest, however, or the significance of seven and three as holy numbers, or the story of Jessye and the genealogy of Christ, all belong to other centers of consciousness, to other aspects of interpretation. At the primary level we notice the primary elements of art.

It is not altogether true that we assign no meaning at the first level of cognition. We notice threes and sevens because they are significant in the Christian metanarrative. The Trinity needs no explanation; the Seven is more complex, but no less familiar to one familiar with the Bible. What is freeing about first level analysis is that at this level one is able to notice also that sevens and threes are important in the Hindu metanarrative as well. Or the Buddhist.
The icon of the tree likewise is something we know to recognize because of the awareness of higher chakras. At the primary level of the experiential world, it is a tree of wood and leaf and root. At the primary level of the literary world, *tree* is a morpheme. In terms of metaphor, the tree is not yet a vehicle at this level, for it carries no meaning yet. But at more sophisticated levels of understanding, the tree will take on a multiple universe of meanings.

As William Blake says, “A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees” (*MHH* Plate 7).

The second level of the Kundalini axis coincides with the level of the genitalia. This level in literature has to do with consciousness of sexuality in a purely animal way. When I call something pornographic, it is not merely because the content involves sexuality, but because there is nothing more complex in its consciousness than that of merely gratuitous sexuality. It is not a term I will offer for Blake's erotic drawings and paintings; in his works other levels of consciousness are always involved, and only a dimly aware reader would construe his erotic figures as pornographic.

It is clear that there is a distinct difference between the first level of consciousness and the second. The first level sees threes and sevens in the “Tree of Jessye;” the second level notices the penis shape of the window and calls attention to a sexual reading of the form. Now perhaps this strikes the reader as a frivolous reading, but the use of it is that the application of the genital metanarrative yields results, wanted or not. As Freud pointed out, a great deal of meaning can be assigned by recognizing the role of sex in art.
More than merely sexual in its aspect, second level literature has to do with the consciousness of desire at the uncomplicated level of pleasure and pain. Sexual stories are second-level literature, but so are stories concerned with intoxication when that intoxication has no other attendant consciousness than that of pleasure and pain. The Age of Blake is a period of time characterized not only by the use of alcohol as an intoxicant, but of laudanum as well. In our exploration of the nature of poetic genius, we will see that many resorted to the use of these substances for inspiration. But at the second level, intoxicants must be seen in terms of a raw desire for pleasure, and for the muting effect they have on higher consciousness.

Likewise, there is a pure and unadulterated enjoyment of colored light that is more akin to the muting consciousness of chemical substances than it is to the exciting consciousness of sexuality. One may enter into the cathedral at Chartres with a clear head and a chaste mind and enjoy the Tree of Jessye at the second level simply by taking joy in the pleasure of a beautiful space.

The third level of the Kundalini is centered on the belly and may be equated with hunger and aggression. At this level of consciousness we get hungry, we kill something and we eat it. And we are concerned with more than hunger for food; at this level of awareness we are concerned with the machinations of power and conquest. Many hero stories are very active at the third level. But these stories are not generally thought of as great literature if all they concern are episodes of sex-and-violence without the involvement of compassion, intellect, or spirituality.
Consider this close-up of the third panel of "The Tree of Jessye."

First we observe it at the primary level as form and structure. We notice that the central panel is slightly wider than its flanking panels. We note also that if the flanking panels were brought to a common edge at the center, we would see a circle with two figures, one on either side of the circle. I have deliberately made this false-color illustration small for clarity of the major pictorial forms. What other meaning we get from this illustration will not come from clear images, but from inferences imposed by the Kundalini Paradigm.

At the second level I expect a reading dominated purely by pleasure. Nothing in the forms suggests itself as sexual, but I notice a raw sense of pleasure gotten from observing the symmetry of the window. Having learned to look for it, it is now undeniable. Art rarely leaves me indifferent. At the second level, I always respond with some degree of pleasure taken in the experience.

What I see at the third level is opposition and tension and balance, and this is imposed by sense of aggression in the metanarrative of the third level. And this is still in response to nothing more than structure, for the detail is totally inadequate to determine if there is truly a sense of opposition and tension in the window.
The fourth level of the Kundalini involves the chakra of the heart and is equated with compassion. At this level of consciousness, the animal cares whether its offspring is safe, and works to nurture its young. Crocodiles are conscious at the third level, but will eat their own babies if they can catch them. Likewise with fish, and many other "lower" animals. But what we call the higher animals are higher because they have an aspect of compassion to their consciousness. They protect their young and generally have taboos in place against feeding on their own.

In literature, the fourth level is characterized by emotional themes. What e e cummings and I. A. Richards both call "feeling" and the Greeks called πάθος dominates here, and it is, of course, one of the strong mainstream currents. The love of one for another has been thematic in literature since (I would guess) long before Gilgamesh embraced Enkidu. As for how this level influences our reading of the window, we can see the figures of the fourth panel not as opposing forces, but rather as harmonious and joined. There is a sense of coherence and community.

The fifth level of the Kundalini involves the chakra of the throat and is associated with eloquent speech. At this level we are intellectual beings, using complex languages to describe our world and communicating through a written language. We are amazing beings in the context of this planet, for not only are we capable of complex communication, but we are capable of transmitting that communication in written form, and of translating those words into other languages, and of storing those words in repositories called libraries so that others can access those words for their own use,
without having had to experience the cognitive processes that led to the formulation of that knowledge in the first place. No other creature has this capability of shared language, and we see ourselves at the pinnacle of creation for this command of understanding.

Fifth-level literature is primarily empirical. It makes use of all the experiences at all the levels of consciousness so far discussed, and it systematically renders these experiences as discourses that intelligently seek to capture the reality of the experience. Science is an example of a fifth-level system of language. It observes phenomena and seeks to explain that phenomena in demonstrable and provable ways. It seeks to take complex observations and render them in comprehensible ways. Accounting is another fifth-level system, and so is law.

At this level, we find the graphic representation of the “Tree of Jessye” to be minimally adequate to the task of telling its story. At this level of consciousness, we want details, and we want connections that elucidate the signs embedded within the window in terms of stories we know. We want to know the correspondence between the particular figure in the center of the fifth level of the window and all the other figures. We want to go beyond what is evident in the window to connections embedded in the larger metanarrative that informs our reading of the window. We want to know everything that is knowable about the painting, and we want to be able to prove it with evidences that can be clearly perceived by others.

It is one thing to know everything that can be known about the physical window and its historical characters. It is another thing altogether to understand the philosophical
and spiritual ideas implicit in the stories. Some things cannot be demonstrated by proofs and evidence. Some stories are meant to be taken literally; but when the requisite knowledge needed to understand the story has been transmitted by agents of the spiritual experience, they become sixth-level language. They become more than just stories; they become allegory imbued with spiritual or psychic meaning. They become part of the terrain of the mythic world, the groundwork upon which epics are built and religions constructed.

The chakra of the sixth level is associated with the Third Eye. This is the witnessing eye behind what Blake calls our "vegetable eyes." This is the witness within you/me who directs attention to these two-dimensional marks, who argues and struggles and puzzles out meaning, and who constructs the ever-changing world of meaning. Broadly speaking, this is the aspect of consciousness concerned with things that cannot be witnessed in terms of the empirical terrain. It is here that we read and attempt to understand symbolic texts. This is the literature in which humans express their faith and belief, and in which they explore aspects of perception beyond the provable and demonstrable. It is the world of thought involved with the mysterious aspect of existence.

At the sixth level, we transcend the reality of our poor representation of the window at Chartres and begin to see it in our mind's eye. Not only do we see the forms now, but we are alive to a variety of stories attendant on the genealogy of Jesus. Even where we do not see clearly the Tree of Jessye, we know the story of how the shoot arises from the stump of Jessye. And at this level, we know that neither Jessye or Jesus is a tree,
but that the tree is an age-old idea used in connection with talking about the House of David.

At this level, were we standing before this window at the proper time of day, we would experience some complicated response beyond pure pleasure taken from witnessing light shining into the vaulted nave of the cathedral. Perhaps we would think of all the thousands who have looked likewise at that shining light since that long-ago age of the thirteenth century when the artisans first conceived and executed the window. Perhaps we would catch a glimpse through centuries of time of a vague metanarrative when gods and trees were intertwined throughout stories meant to lift up peoples’ awareness to the divine and spiritual aspects of the woods around them. Perhaps we would be flooded by our own very complex understanding of the nature of Death and Spirit and the Divine.

The chakra of the seventh level floats along our axis of perception at some place beyond our reach. At the sixth level of consciousness we experience the divine; at the seventh level, beyond clear perception or explanation, is the divine.

The window of the “Tree of Jessye” places Christ in the highest panel, which is elongated on top to portray the haloed head. It is characteristic of the Christian metanarrative that the Christ would be at the seventh level, so in reading this window from the church at Chartres, we anticipate and expect the highest level to portray Christ. Yet under the Kundalini idea of the seventh level, we understand that this window is not Christ himself, but merely a representation. That is an important nature of literature, and indeed of all artistic forms—that it is representational, and not the divine represented in its images.
To use Coleridge’s imaginative metanarrative in conjunction with the Kundalini Paradigm, the seventh focal point along the axis of consciousness is that aspect of the Infinite I-AM with which the sixth-level consciousness is in secondary communication. It can never be expressed in human terms except through representation; it is this interface which is the focus of much of the best of the human efforts at art. And it is this interface which is the subject of our exploration of inspiration in the Age of Blake.

The window of the Tree of Jessye is full of images we recognize. Likewise, striking similarities can be seen between the Tree of Jessye window at Chartres and the High Altar window of St. Paul’s in London, and in other windows throughout the Christian world. Their forms exhibit numerous similarities, not the least of which is the proportion of three-by-seven panels capped by a semi-circle. But there are many other similarities in the types of images portrayed, which leads us to the next aspect of the mythistorical paradigm: archetypal categories.

Northrup Frye sets out categories of types in his book entitled *The Great Code: The Bible in Literature*. I have come to rely on the following types: divine; angelic; paradisal; human; animal; plant; mineral; form; non-forms; and monstrous. He uses other categories and paradigms in his analysis of myth, and so do I, but it is this basic system in conjunction with the seven levels of the Kundalini Paradigm that I find most useful to a mythistoricist approach. At the divine level of the Christian metanarrative (in its broadest sense) we find God and Jesus in the divine category, with a host of false gods and idols as well. The categories are not exclusively reserved for the good characters, but include the evil
characters as well. Under the heading of the angelic, we find Gabriel and Michael and Lucifer, to name only a few. The paradisal archetypes include Eden and Heaven, the desert and Hell and New Jerusalem. All of these mean different things, according to whether, for example, we are speaking of the Blakean New Jerusalem, the Apocalyptic New Jerusalem, or the modern Israeli New Jerusalem.

The human types in Christianity are many. Included in this category would be the king, the shepherd, the psalmist, the prophet, the mother, the father, the prostitute, the tax collector, the sinner, the Samaritan, the apostle, the betrayer, and on and on. Some of these titles have no real meaning in and of themselves, but to invoke the name of Judas is to call into the imagination not only the idea of the betrayer, but the entire metanarrative of Christianity.

The animal types are also many, and I will not catalogue them. But I will point out that to use the word *serpent* is not the same as to use the word *snake*, and the difference lies in archetypal perceptions. Furthermore, the Kundalini aspect shifts as the typal aspect shifts, so that an animal serpent is quite a different thing from a dream serpent which is quite different from an angelic or divine serpent.

The category of plants is most interesting to me. When examining the etymologies of tree words, I came to believe, as I mentioned earlier, that there was in the beginning an expanded context of meaning for a number of words growing not only out of the morphological aspects of the sounds themselves, but out of the stories in which they figured as well. An examination of trees in the biblical metanarrative could fill a book, I
am convinced. I will not go to that much trouble here, but it is worth briefly exploring one of the images used in the Bible.

The earliest trees in the Bible are featured in Genesis, particularly in the story of the Fall. The injunction given Adam and Eve had to do with the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Once Adam and Eve partook of that fruit, the fruit of the Tree of Life was denied them. To read this story at primary levels is to make note of the form of the tree in a literal way. But to read this story at the fifth level opens up avenues of inquiry into the physical nature of the trees, and to read at the sixth level opens up the symbolic possibilities of meaning. Each strategy of interpretation leads in a different direction, so that a fully considered reading of the story reveals a tree of multiple aspect.

Besides the trees of Genesis, there are many others throughout the Bible. Among the more notable trees and plants are the Burning Bush, the Stump of Jesse, the Holy Rood, and the Shining Trees by the Water of Life. I have left out many more.

Of the minerals I will say nothing now, and I will stay silent as to the non-forms and monstrous until later. For now it will suffice to point out that any of these archetypes has the power of calling forth in the reader’s mind the whole of the Christian metanarrative, and not only at a literal level, but at any of several levels of consciousness. So it is that when one sees the window of stained glass portraying images of trees and faces and other icons of the Christian metanarrative, one is prepared to expect not only the
explicit elements of the story as seen in the glass, but to imagine other aspects made implicit by contextualization.

Not knowing the age of the design of the stained glass window at St. Paul’s, but suspecting that it was a design familiar to William Blake, I put the question to the writers of the 18th Century Interdisciplinary Discussion List. I expected to learn that the original window had been destroyed in the bombings of World War II, but that it had been patterned after a design dating back to the era of Christopher Wren. It suited me to think that Blake had seen this design, to believe that it represented in his age the types found in the Christian metanarrative of eighteenth-century England.

It is a beautiful window. It is a triad of panels, the central one subdivided into seven ascending rectangles, each three panels high by seven panels wide. The rising sequence of images shows an altar at the root level; then a naked dead Jesus at the second; the faces of men standing over him at the third (with a skull in the center of the top row); a tomb with evergreen at the fourth; a
stonework archway at the fifth level; the feet of Jesus and two attendants in the six; the heads of these three in the seventh panel, with the face of Jesus in the center, and the top row bright and illuminated, as though he hung on a cross of light. Above the beam of light in Jesus’ hands is half a radiant sun--rising, I believe.

Another reading of the form of the window shows three sets of images in an ascending triad, suggesting Death, Burial and Resurrection. Set upon the altar is a panel six rectangles high with the skull at its head. Atop that is the burial vault, and atop that is Jesus ascending radiantly to the Sun. Clearly, at least two sets of form can be imposed on this visual poem. One looks for seven levels of the narrative, and the other looks for three. Neither is exhaustive or conclusive. Both are enlightening.

But something very important is amiss. In looking at the window of St. Paul’s Cathedral in the late twentieth century, we may believe that we are getting a glimpse of the Christian metanarrative of the Age of Blake--but we would be wrong. It turns out, according to the scholars Linda Troost and Ann Parrish, that the windows of St. Paul’s in the time of William Blake were clear glass. The anti-idolatry riots of the 1640’s would probably have targeted windows, and when the cathedral was rebuilt after the Great Fire, it would have been built following the fashion of the day, which favored a metaphor of clear light rather than an old Gothic fashion of stained glass. The windows of St. Paul’s as we see them today represent the Christian metanarrative all right, but they represent a modern idea of what people would like to believe a cathedral ought to look like, and not a historicist’s idea of what the restored cathedral should historically look like. The windows
of St. Paul’s are closer in typology to those of the thirteenth century designs at Chartres than they are to anything representative of the Age of Blake.

To get at the genius of William Blake, it is wise to clear the windows of our perception, to erase from our view canonized ideas of expectations. Yet that is not to say that we need to throw out all of the icons, for there are clues to be found in the images. We know without a doubt that the Blakean metanarrative is a Christian metanarrative. But it is a metanarrative of a radically different sort than that shown and implied in the window of St. Paul’s. We must make use of a number of metanarratological constructs so as to analyze his epic terrain.

We can think of these all together as a firmament, with constellations directing our attention to certain regions of the Blakean world. But rather than looking into the imagery of the stained glass view of eighteenth-century Christianity, we need to examine the paintings of William Blake so as to find the iconography best representing his window on the world. When we do so, we find that one of the most dominant images of the Blakean world is that of the Bard.
The image to the right comes from Blake’s water-color paintings of the poems of Thomas Gray. It is a detail of one of the paintings illustrating “The Bard,” in which the Old Welsh bard Taliesin is shown looking the viewer right in the eye.

Fig. 2-4. The Bard, from Blake’s Gray

The star above the Bard’s forehead is an icon of the Welsh Awenyddion. This indicates a Welsh metanarrative in which the Awen is at once a Muse and the Holy Spirit, in which creation is the function of the mind in conjunction with the divine. This Welsh metanarrative is most productive as a central focus for all the other analytical avenues because it is uniquely equipped with the concept of Awen, which better than any other constellation serves to focus the attention where it belongs: at the center of the poet’s mind.

The following chapter will deal in detail with the Welsh metanarrative. We will begin by examining the historical milieu of Welsh poetry with an overview ranging from the third century through the eighteenth. A discussion will follow of the various metanarratological codings of the concept of the Muse. We will conclude with an extended look at some of the works of William Blake and their role in revealing the Welsh influence on modern poetics.
CHAPTER III

THE MYTHISTORICAL WELSH

The historical Welsh metanarrative is a tricky thing to define. From the beginning, we must juxtapose at least three different strains. The first is an approach the empiricist would find satisfactory, one based on the evidences of history. The second comes out of the literature itself, combining historical persons, places, and events with imaginative narratives. The third finds a Wales that never was, but one fervently wished-for.

It would be helpful if the demarcations between these streams of metanarrative were clearly defined. They are not. They have been thoroughly mixed over the centuries so that it is impossible to know the historical from the imaginative with any degree of certainty. This is most uncomfortable for the historicist, and in the modern academic environment it has led to a marginalization of the whole field of study. Yet too much depends on this metanarrative to wholly dismiss it, and we must develop other tools if historicism will not serve.

I suggested in the last chapter that we use a mythistorical filter, one which examines narratives in the light of imaginative history. It is abundantly clear that literature influences its readers without regards to the rules of evidence. People are motivated by belief far more than they are motivated by fact. It seems to me that we must proceed with a large degree of tolerance for embellishment, for without it, most of the best of the Welsh
metanarrative simply dissolves, and we are left with nothing very helpful in our attempt to understand the part of the Welsh influence on the Age of Blake.

To begin with, we must erase from our minds the strict borders of Wales as we see them on the modern map. In speaking of the Welsh metanarrative, I am speaking of a body of literature preserved in a language characteristic of the ancestors of those people who ended up within the boundaries of modern Wales, but the literature itself came from people who might better be characterized by Blake’s term: the “Antient Britons.” These were Celtic peoples, represented in early literature by the extant works of Aneirin and Taliesin, as well as rumored in references to the lost works of others. Of these two, only Taliesin might have actually written from within the boundaries of what we would today call Wales. Aneirin’s epic concerns the kingdom of Gododdin, whose boundaries included the lands near Edinburgh.

We begin with Taliesin, who is thought by some to have been the earliest native poet writing in Old Welsh. Meic Stephens writes in his *Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* that Taliesin flourished in the Old North of Britain in the late sixth century and was named along with Aneirin in Nennius’s *Historia Brittonum* (Stephens 571). The Old North was considerably larger than modern Wales. It “lay to the south of a line from Stirling to Loch Lomond and extended southwards over Cumbria, much of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and eastwards to the Humber estuary” (437). From this association with Cumbria came the word *cymry*, the word the Welsh use to this day for “fellow-countrymen.” After the Battle of Chester in 615, the lands were severed, but in
the time of Taliesin and Aneirin, the people of Wales marched with the Cumbrenses people, and the literature of those early battles is preserved in sixth-century Welsh in Aneirin's *Y Gododdin* and in some of the battle poems and eulogies of Taliesin.

What we have in the way of textual evidence for Taliesin comes from something called *The Book of Taliesin*, or *Llyfr Taliesin*. It is "a plain manuscript ... with sober red and blue initials, belonging to a group of five written by a practiced scribe in a south or mid-Wales scriptorium in the early fourteenth century" (Stephens 47). Some of the poems are believed to have actually been written by Taliesin, but many more, Stephens tells us, are thought to have come out of a tradition of a "darker shamanistic side of Welsh poetry of which the Taliesin-persona came to be the chief representative." Modern scholars, making use of linguistic techniques, have made a case for attributing to the historical Taliesin a core of eight poems in praise of Urien Rheged, as well as a lament in honor of his son, Owain ab Urien. But the remainder of the poems, including three written in a contemporary dialect, are of uncertain authorship. Some of the poems seem to date from as late as the eleventh century. Some of the poems are based on the Taliesin legend; some are on biblical subjects; several concern heroes of the ancient world, including Alexander and Hercules.

While we have some idea as to the dates of these texts, it is only as a result of concerted linguistic effort over the course of the past two centuries. It is important to remember that in the Age of Blake there was no clear understanding of which text might be authentic or which might be of later origin. In our age, we suffer from some of the
residual problems of this, for in Blake's age the work of James Macpherson had just as much credibility as that of Taliesin. When Macpherson came under fire and fell into disrepute as a result of scientific attacks by Samuel Johnson and others, the ancient texts of Taliesin gained something of the same taint, even though there was no association between the two, other than some possibility that Macpherson was influenced by authentic texts of Old Welsh origin.

So in the Age of Blake there was abundant skepticism. But there was also abundant enthusiastic effort made toward reclaiming the ancient texts, and whatever came into currency, whether authentic or fabricated, came into the metanarrative of the Welsh antiquarians.

For that reason, it does not matter so much whether a particular text was actually written by Taliesin or whether it was simply written after the style of Taliesin. For many writers sympathetic to the Welsh point of view, Taliesin was real, and the characteristics of the Taliesinic poetry were associated with the ancient lore of the Welsh Bards.

One of the most interesting of the Taliesinic poems was a piece known as Armes Prydein, or The Prophecy of Britain. It is, Stephens tells us, "by far the most sustained and coherent example of early vaticination in verse" (17). This poem prophesied that "Cynan and Cadwaladr would restore the ancient glory of the British people and drive the Saxons into the sea" (Stephens 612). This is only one of many vaticinations extant in the poetry and prose of the Welsh metanarrative. The essence of almost all of these is that "the Welsh will regain sovereignty over the Isle of Britain under the leadership of a
messiah, known as *Y Mab Darogan* (The Son of Destiny), who is often Arthur or some other national hero, and the English will be defeated for all time" (613). For some, the truth of these prophecies was fulfilled when the Welshman Henry Tudor ascended the English throne. We see this clearly in Thomas Gray's poem "The Bard," in which the prophecy of the Tudor reign is made by the bard to Edward I. Thus it was that the vaticinal tradition had currency in the early age of Blake, and not only in the English language version of the legend put forth by Thomas Gray, but in the numerous manuscripts in the hands of the antiquarians throughout the English world.

To return briefly to the idea of Welshness in the Age of Blake, it is important to notice that historically the Welsh had considered themselves to be allied, as in the *Armes Prydein*, with their "Celtic cousins in Cornwall, Ireland, Brittany and the Old North, and aided by the Scandinavians of Dublin" (Stephens 17). When I speak of the Welsh metanarrative, it is not so much a purely Welsh entity as it is an anti-English entity, made up of the literatures of many people of many backgrounds, but given voice primarily in the preserved literature of the Celts of Western Britain.

Contemporary with the historic Taliesin is the bard Aneirin, to whom is ascribed the composition of *Y Gododdin*. This is a long poem which commemorates the heroic deeds of a band of warriors who fell in a disastrous attack at Catraeth (Catterick, Yorkshire). It is interesting as a heroic poem, but it is problematic for a number of reasons. The text is preserved as two texts (A and B) bound in one manuscript called *The Book of Aneirin* dated to about 1265 (Stephens 216). Evidence points to an earlier text
Book of Aneirin dated to about 1265 (Stephens 216). Evidence points to an earlier text written between the eighth and eleventh century, but it has never been found. No copy in the hand of Aneirin exists, and the text of the Book of Aneirin contains two quite different texts of the poem with many interpolations of extraneous material. It is agreed among the scholars that there was an early oral tradition in which the poem was preserved as a long song, but it seems that there were variants of the song, so that the two texts contained in the Book of Aneirin are equally vague in their historicity. No single line can be safely ascribed to Aneirin, though “opinion favours the belief that the original nucleus of the Gododdin was composed shortly after the event to which it refers, a battle fought a Catterick about the year 600” (Stephens 216).

As to the status of the Gododdin in the Age of Blake, it was virtually unknown except to a small group of Welsh scholars. The Welsh poet and scholar, Evan Evans, spent the years 1758 through 1766 travelling about the North of Wales, and during this time he went to the private libraries of anyone he could find who had ancient Welsh texts. He discovered both the Gododdin and the work of Taliesin, and spent a great deal of energy in their translation. He communicated with Thomas Gray around 1760 and 61, verifying for him the “authenticity” of the story Gray had told in “The Bard,” and giving him the material Gray would use for several poems written upon Welsh subjects, including “The Triumph of Owen” and “The Death of Hoël” (Lonsdale 233 ff). In 1764 Evans brought out his volume entitled Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Antient Welsh Bards. It was “the first substantial selection of early Welsh poetry to be published and it
and among them we may assume was Blake's master, James Basire, welcomed Evans' work; it "provided new material for the leaders of the Celtic movement in England at the end of the eighteenth century." Unfortunately though, Evans was not joined in his scholarly efforts by others of the Welsh community, and though he continued to produce credible translations, they remained unknown during the rest of the eighteenth century. They had been eclipsed by the work of James Macpherson, whose bard Ossian had taken England by storm.

One of the things that must be acknowledged is that in spite of the fact that there were genuinely ancient materials in Old Welsh, there was nothing very sophisticated about the science of language in the mid-eighteenth century. Much of what constituted the Welsh metanarrative had to do with popular songs sung in pubs among people with political axes to grind in an environment that was not very conducive to free speech. These people merited no great credence from the scholarly crowd (such as it was), and those persons interested in the resurrection of the bardic materials not only worked in a near vacuum, they had no tradition of rigorous scholarship to underpin their efforts. It was all too easy for someone like Macpherson to claim ancient manuscripts and be believed. His was a world wished for most fervently in the aftermath of the banning of the tartan and the fall of Charles Edward Stuart at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. That which was Welsh was inextricably intertwined with that which was Celtic, and in the popular mind, Ossian was the great ancient bard. The competition engendered here led to an
escalation of wild claims, and in the context of a growing awareness of scientific method, the Welsh linguists lost more and more credibility.

The historicists can but throw up their hands at the mess that was the study of Welsh linguistics in the eighteenth century. But the mythistoricist must persevere, acknowledging the part of fancy while seeking out the texture of the historical. With this in mind, let us turn our attention next to Gerald of Wales.

Gerald de Barri, known also by his Latin name, Giral dus Cambrensis, or Gerald of Wales, was born in Wales around 1146 and lived there and in England in the latter twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. He was well-educated, first at St. Peter’s Church School in Gloucester and then in Paris. He is one of the greatest Latin writers Wales has produced. Meic Stephens tells us that his works were characterized by “breadth of learning, a mastery of style and the ability to tell a lively story” (213). Though he wrote on many subjects, he is best known for books on Wales. Because of our particular interest in the nature of the Welsh concept of inspiration, we will turn our attention now to The Itinerary Through Wales: Description of Wales.

In Chapter XVI of the Itinerary, Gerald writes at length on the nature of the soothsayer of Wales:

There are certain persons in Cambria, whom you will find nowhere else, called Awenddyon, [sic] or people inspired: when consulted upon any doubtful event, they roar out violently, are rendered beside themselves, and become, as it were, possessed by a spirit. They do not deliver the answer to what is required in a
connected manner; but the person who skilfully observes them, will find, after many preambles, and many nugatory and incoherent, though ornamented speeches, the desired explanation conveyed in some turn of a word: they are then roused from their ecstasy, as from a deep sleep, and, as it were, by violence compelled to return to their proper senses. (Cambresis 179)

Gerald goes on at some length, but here I must draw attention to the footnote he appends to the word Awenddyon:

Awenydhhion [sic], in a literal sense, means persons inspired by the Muse, and is derived from Awen and Awenydd, a poetical rapture, or the gift of poetry. It was the appellation of the disciples, or candidates for the Bardic Order; but the most general acceptation of the word was, Poets, or Bards. (Cambrensis 179n)

In our earlier discussion of Taliesin, it was brought out that one of the characteristics of Taliesinic poetry is that it is often prophetic in nature. Gerald’s discussion elaborates on the nature of the prophecy, bringing to it a clearer sense of the tonality of the event. He says that these gifts of prophecy are “usually conferred upon them in dreams,” and that they “do not recover till violently shaken by other people; nor can they remember the answers they have given.”

The extended discussion by Gerald regarding the nature of the Welsh prophet reveals that he sees this phenomenon through the filter of a man well-versed in a variety of metanarratives. He cites the apocryphal Book of Esdras: “The Lord said unto me, open thy mouth, and I opened my mouth, and behold a cup full of water, whose colour was like
fire; and when I had drank it, my heart brought forth understanding, and wisdom entered into my breast” (Cambrensis 179-80). In this context, Gerald tells us that the Bards invoke, during their prophecies, “the true and living God, and the Holy Trinity.”

He also says that “these prophets are only found among the Britons descended from the Trojans,” and then he elaborates on Calchas and Cassandra, indicating a Virgilian metanarrative, with a Homeric metanarrative in the background. Then he moves on to speak of the kingdom of the Britons, and how “both Merlin Caledonius and Ambrosius are said to have foretold the destruction of their nation.” On he goes, invoking the names of Caesars and priests, of Peter and Jerome and Origen, until it is clear that he sees in the Welsh Awenyddion not someone “whom you will find nowhere else,” but someone experiencing something universally experienced.

What this says about the nature of the Awenyddion in Wales in the early centuries is not altogether clear. Gerald sees something that seems to be uniquely Welsh, yet he places it in a very broad literary context. How much of this is symptomatic of the Welsh and how much of this reflects the filter of his broad reading is beyond quantification. But one thing is clear: we may not simply insist on a pure Welsh origin for the idea of the Awenyddion. It must have been influenced by the metanarratives of every people who ever came into contact with the Western Celts of Britain. It is a hybrid whose uniqueness can only be seen through the filter of one who refuses to look beyond the desires for a pure Welshness.
More specifically, there is a clear connection to the Christian metanarrative and to the Homeric/Virgilian metanarratives. Whether or not Gerald got it right in making these connections in his analysis, it is clear that ever after anyone who read Gerald’s analysis would have to have included the sense of the awenydd as having the larger sense of the whole context.

Before exploring the Homeric and Virgilian aspects of the metanarrative, let us look at the context of Gerald’s influences from his own time, for he lived in a very creative period with regards to the building of the great Arthurian legend. When Gerald was born in 1146, Geoffrey of Monmouth was still alive, and as Gerald was being educated, the *Historia Regum Britanniae* was circulating into the popular (Latin) metanarrative an old story brought down in a number of forms and in a variety of languages from the sixth century: the story of King Arthur. Gerald lived in that period which saw not only the introduction of the Monmouth version of the Arthurian legend, but also of the *Perceval* of Chrétien de Troyes (ca. 1180) and the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, which dates from about 1210 (Campbell 210). By the time of Gerald’s death in 1223, the old Welsh Arthur had been transformed into the character who would in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries become the subject of the great Arthurian romances.

These stories were not concerned with historicizing the Welsh king of legend; they were creative narratives, vehicles for exploring the Grail legend. As Joseph Campbell points out, we have here a blending of two traditions: “the heroic one, which is the native one of Europe going back to the old Germanic Celtic spirit, and the applied Christian one”
The Grail motif involves the trope of the cup of the Last Supper, the same cup that held the blood of Christ after he had been taken off the cross. It is an emblem of something transcendent, of healing, of spiritual enlightenment. But mostly the stories are emblematic of the individual's quest for the transcendent. Campbell points out the following passage as epitomizing the the whole sense of the Grail symbology: "They agreed that all would go on this quest, but they thought it would be a disgrace... to go forth in a group, so each entered the forest at a point that he, himself, had chosen, where it was darkest and there was no path" (211).

This seems to me to resonate with the idea of the awenyddion described by Gerald, especially in his relating it to the quotation from Esdras about the "cup full of water." No ordinary water, its color is like fire and it brings forth understanding and wisdom. The modernization of the Arthurian tale focused upon the quest for that cup, but the tradition out of which it arose seemed to place that capability within the reach of the awenyddion without recourse to the cup. It was an innate ability which came out of a dream-like state.

It is not Arthur, after all, who is the focus of the bardic exploration, but the soothsayer who came to be known as Merlyn. How much Gerald knew of Taliesin and Aneirin is not clear; he does not mention either of them in the discussion of the awenyddion, but rather refers to "Merlin Caledonius and Ambrosius." In his discussion of Ambrosius, Meic Stephens tells how Geoffrey of Monmouth called the character "Merlyn Ambrosius" (Stephens 176-7). It is a complicated story, the long evolution of this
character, but it goes back as far as Welsh literature and can be traced through the keywords of Gerald’s phrase.

Merlin in the Old Welsh is Myrddin, whom Stephens calls “a fictional poet and prophet” (419). His presence is noted in a number of Welsh texts dating back to the era just following the lifetime of Gerald of Wales, and it is clear (if not demonstrable) that the legends from which he derives date back to the court of “Gwenddolau fab Ceido, who was believed to have been killed in the battle of Arfderydd in 573.” The tale gathered from a number of difficult texts says that “as a result of a terrifying vision which he saw during that battle, Myrddyn lost his reason and fled to Celyddon Wood [hence Merlyn Caledonius] where he lived as a wild man, communing with the animals and living in fear of the Rhydderch, Gwenddolau’s enemies. In his madness he received the gift of prophecy.” Geoffrey of Monmouth made use of some of these tales and incorporated them into his Vitas Merlini (420).

Stephens tells us that the most commonly accepted theory holds that “Myrddin is a fictional character from the Old North whose tale was relocated in Wales . . . rather than a historical early poet who turned into a prophet, as did Taliesin.” The two are associated with each other in Geoffrey’s Vita Merlini, but of more interest is the fact that they are associated in a work called Ymadiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin. Geoffrey’s Merlyn in the Historia Regum Britanniae is an invention of his own. Stephens says that “the Myrddin of the Historia is so different from the prophet of tradition that it must be assumed that
Geoffrey knew nothing more of Myrddin than his name at that time, but that he had acquainted himself with the authentic tradition by the time he came to write the *Vita*.

Gerald noticed the difference, Stephens tell us, and concluded that there were two Myrddins, which brings us to the tradition of Myrddin as captured in the work called *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin*. Literally, the title means “The Colloquy of Merlin and Taliesin,” (Stephens 41) and it is a poem found in the *Black Book of Carmathen*, or *Llyfr Du Caerfyrrdin*, generally considered to be the oldest manuscript in the Welsh language (670).

First, about the manuscript. It is a fascinating work, thought to have been written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though nothing is known of the manuscript’s history before the sixteenth century, when it came into the possession of Sir John Price. The contents are almost entirely poetry belonging to a period dating back perhaps as far as the ninth century. Fourteen of the poems are on religious subjects. An unspecified number of prophecies and poems contain elements of the Myrddin legend; eight poems are on legendary subjects, including some on Arthurian themes.

The *Ymddiddan Myrddin a Thaliesin* has been dated to the second half of the eleventh century, and thus reflects a currency in the Welsh tradition in the time of Gerald (670). Not only are Myrddin and Taliesin juxtaposed, but the subject is the coming together of the two prophets to exchange their knowledge, the former as a prophet, and the latter as a supernatural poet. Stephens suggests that this poem seems to have inspired
“the dialogue between Telgesinus and Merlinus in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Vita Merlini*, although the subject-matter of the conversation there is very different.”

What becomes clear in all of this is just how intertwined the Welsh metanarrative has become with the later metanarratives deriving out of the European traditions. So it is that in order to understand the nature of the awenyddion and the Awen, we can not rely solely on the Old Welsh tradition, however important it was in the framing of the perception. We must also explore the traditions which fed into the stories of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Chrétien de Troyes, and Wolfram von Eschenbach.

It is likewise clear that however old the origins of the Taliesinic character, most of what we have was written later. As was made clear in my earlier discussion of *Y Gododdin*, its origins might be in the fifth and sixth centuries, but the text is dated to about 1265, and as such cannot be said to be free of interpolation. Some of it might well be authentic, but given the license of poets, it must be acknowledged that the sensibilities of other times, and indeed of other metanarratives, is represented in the ancient texts.

In the next chapter, I want to explore the nature of the Awen, but from the point of view of a non-Welsh metanarrative. Evident in the earliest Welsh manuscripts is the application of this uniquely Welsh concept having to do with the imaginative potential of the poet. This potential is more than merely creative; it has to do with magic and prophetic abilities. The *Awen* is akin to the Greek Muse. I have also warned that there is something misleading in accepting a simple translation. To think of the Muse is to think in Greek terms. It is not altogether wrong, but it wants clarification. The metanarrative
shifts, and the Welsh tenor has thus been lost, or at least adulterated. So as to understand what it is that is unique about the Welsh Awenyddion, as well as what is borrowed, we must next look carefully at the Muse in the Greek metanarrative.
CHAPTER IV

THE MUSE IN THE HOMERIC METANARRATIVE

One of the fascinating aspects of epic literature in all ages is the presence of an ongoing discourse on poetics. It involves a complex coding, a variable yet consistent metanarrative which includes not only the concept of words set to music and sung by a singer, but of divine inspiration and the interface between the spiritual and intellectual aspects of the human creative capability. We have several metanarratives available to us to understand this by. We have, of course, the Welsh Bardic metanarrative with its concept of the mad prophet, the Awenyddion. We have the Christian metanarrative which holds that inspiration of the sacred text comes from God, via angels sometimes, or the word heard internally. We have the philosophical paradigms filtered out of many voices, many of whom were British, and not the least of which was that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who has taught us to think in terms of a Primary Imagination he holds to be "the living power and prime agent of all human perception, [the] repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (Coleridge 387). His is a useful paradigm, one which translates well from one myth to another because of the ambiguity, or rather the heteroglossic application of the idea of the "infinite I Am." It is valid especially for our exploration into the metanarrative of the Awen because we are
concerned not only with the Muse in its classical and biblical senses, but with the Awen as the repetition in the finite mind of something received of the infinite I Am.

In terms of the Christian metanarrative (not quite ignoring for the time being the connection with the Jewish tradition), the infinite I AM is the God of Moses, who spoke out of the Burning Bush in Exodus. More to the point, the infinite I AM interfaces with the human consciousness through the Holy Spirit. The Muse, for readers in Blake's time, was also highly influenced by Milton's ideas, which relegated the Muses to inferior pagan status. To be inspired by the Holy Ghost was good; to be inspired by the Muse was questionable at best.

So when we come upon such a poorly understood word such as awen, and we find it translated as the Muse, we have an immediate difficulty. It is a Welsh word; but what was the Welsh reading of the idea of the Muse?

Getting to that understanding requires an in-depth look not only at the history of the word in terms of the Welsh metanarrative, which we began to do in the foregoing chapters, but at the myths attendant upon the word as its meaning was enlarged through time. We begin with the root of the image. The classical Muses appear earliest in the Homeric epics; from there, they evolve into a major archetype in the complex tree of the Western metanarrative of creativity.

The goddess to whom Homer sings the opening lines of The Iliad is not named, but she is one of nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. Homer uses the word μοῦσα ("mousa"), which the Liddell-Scott Greek-English Lexicon shows in this context:
'ολυμπιάδος μουσα, Διος αιγιοξοι θυγατρες" (Olympiados mousa, Dios aigioxoi thygateres) In the second book of the Iliad, line 491, we find this Greek phrase translated by Richmond Lattimore as "the Muses of Olympia, daughters of Zeus of the aegis." Homer has little more to say on the subject. He seems never to name any of the nine, much less to identify which of them as the subject of his invocation. He says no more, I believe, because with regards to his audience it was unnecessary for him to do so.

Homer is not a mysterious writer. He usually covers us with details, copious details, immense and overwhelming details. Yet he seems to feel no need for this sort of detail with regards to the Goddess of song. This is because the Greek metanarrative within which he wrote provided ample information for the Greek listener. The common listener would not have been interested in the discourse on poetics, but the bardic student would have known the code. It would have been embedded within the more exciting narratives of the epic as metaphors of poesis, part of the greater story not only of Muses-as-goddesses, but of aspects of consciousness we think of as memory and spirit and the immortality.

We have difficulty reading the discourse on inspiration with anything approaching the purity of the Homeric metanarrative because we are operating within our own very complex metanarrative. We read Homer through eyes that have likewise read Virgil and Dante, Milton, Blake, and Coleridge, to say nothing of Moreford, Lenardon, Hamilton, Otto, and Preston. We see through a glass, darkly. Yet within our complex of understanding, incomplete though it might be, we find not only the hindrances built up by
theory and canonization, but clues with actual and useful potential to lead us to fuller meanings. So as to clear the glass (if that be possible) and so as to get at a fuller understanding of the metanarrative of Homer, let us explore the diegesis of the Greek world as revealed in the greater body of what we call Greek mythology.

One of the problems with this will immediately seem obvious: all of what we think of as Greek mythology came into text as we know it long after Homer wrote his epics. It may seem dangerous, this reliance upon evidence gathered after the fact. But in discussing a world in which so many stories were shared in an oral tradition, it is equally invalid to argue provenance too strictly. That Homer's story of Odysseus and Teiresius predates by centuries the story of Sophocles' Oedipus and Teiresius is a case in point. Homer had no need to tell of Oedipus; his story involved Teiresius only. It does not prove that Homer did not know of Oedipus, only that he had no need of him in his story. The same can be said of the story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, about which Homer says nothing, or about the revenge of Clytemnestra upon Agamemnon, which Homer barely mentions. The later stories of Aeschylus and Euripides tell us the details, but the characters are already alive to some arguable extent in the Homeric metanarrative. A common metanarrative seems to have served both Sophocles and Homer across the centuries. So let us investigate that grand story for what it may reveal of similarities, without relying overmuch on strict historicity.

The unnamed Muse was likely to have been Calliope. Homer does not say so, and although Hesiod names her as the greatest of the Muses, he makes no connection between
her and Homer, or with epic poetry. Rhoda A. Hendricks tells us that the association of
Calliope and epic was not made textually (that we have record of, at any rate) until Roman
times (40). Calliope is an interesting choice, for she is, by some accounts, the mother of
Orpheus (Hendricks 314). Orpheus plays no part in the Homeric epic, but in connection
with our study of the Muse and its association with inspiration and music, one can hardly
dismiss the golden-voiced journeyer to the Underworld from the context of our
discussion. Both Odysseus and Orpheus journeyed to the realm of Hades and returned,
and these stories are in the background of the Blakean vision of the Abyss in the *Marriage
of Heaven and Hell*.

Orphism and its attendant purification rituals seem to have developed more or less
concurrently with the time of Homer, if the authority of Mark Morford and Robert
Lenardon may be trusted:

The chronological tradition for Orpheus' career is ... muddled. Those who
date him in connection with Homer deserve the most credibility. Thus
[Orpheus] was the inventor of writing and his works preceded the Homeric
epics, or Homer was the first poet and Orpheus followed shortly thereafter.

(276)

There is a long tradition which claims that Orpheus was not divine, but human. He was "a
hero who lived, suffered, and died; his tomb was sacred, and he had a cult. He was in this
view a prophet, a priest, or if you like, a saint, whose god was Apollo or Dionysus or
both" (277).
The character of Orpheus gives us something of an understanding of the spiritual
diegesis of the Greek story-teller, of the characters of human and divine aspect who
peopled the Greek literary world, and of the divine character of inspiration. By the fifth
century BCE, Orpheus was thought of as a human religious teacher, "whose doctrine was
communicated in sacred writings attributed to him and believed to be much earlier in
time." Plato tells us of his priests, who preached a message of salvation. Orphism—or the
tantalizing scraps we have of it—provides us with clues to indicate the Greek belief in the
soul, and although redemption seems not to be an aspect of Hades as Odysseus
experiences it, there is clearly a belief in both stories that the soul survives death, and that
it can, in extraordinary circumstances, commune with the divine while alive, and with the
living when dead.

Thus we see that very early on there was a belief that the human soul has the
potential of communicating with the divine and with dead souls. The imagery used to
illustrate the soul is fascinating. Regarding the death of Patroklos, Homer tells us in Book
Sixteen of the *Iliad* that "the end of death closed in upon him, and the soul fluttering free
of his limbs went down into Death's house mourning her destiny, leaving youth and
manhood behind her" (855-857). One of the things that leaps out from this passage is the
fact that the soul is feminine, even when the warrior is male. This seems to illuminate the
feminine aspect of the Muse to whom Homer sings. Homer had no need to explain to his
audience the answers to the questions the modern reader might raise. Could it be that the
Greeks arbitrarily assigned female attributes to the word for Muse, that it means no more
than the feminine hand (la mano) of the Spanish language? In that case, shouldn't Lattimore have used the ungendered "it" in his translation? No, I suspect he used the word "her" deliberately, not only because Homer put it thus in his text, but because it is appropriate in discussing the divine aspect of human existence. It would seem that the Greeks thought of the complete human as being equal parts male and female; in the Greek metanarrative, inspiration is something of a union between two aspects of the poet, and these two parts are gendered.

Morford and Lenardon tell us, for example, that inasmuch as Zeus mated with Mnemosyne (Memory), who gave birth to the Muses, then "allegorically Memory with divine help produces inspiration" (61). In keeping with the gendered framing suggested by the feminine soul of Patroklos, the merging of the masculine divine with feminine memory is, in the Greek metanarrative, a necessary action of the poetic imagination.

Let us turn our attention next to the song of the bard Demodokos to Odysseus. In Book VIII of the Odyssey, Odysseus is in the land of the Phaiakians. He has been treated most generously by his host, the king Alkinoós, who has given a feast, who has offered him the hand of Nausicaa, and who has organized something like the Olympic games in his honor. "Always the feast is dear to us," Alkinoós tells him, "and the lyre and dances" (Odyssey VIII.248). The king calls forth those who among all the Phaiakians are the best dancers and summons Demodokos, the bard. "The stewards of the course stood up, nine in all of them" (258) "and the herald came bringing with him the clear lyre for Demodokos, who moved into the middle" (261). He sings to Odysseus of the love of Ares
and Aphrodite, and Odysseus "enjoyed it in his heart as he listened, as did the others" (368).

The nine stewards seem to parallel the nine daughters of Memory, sore-thumbing the number nine within the Greek metanarrative. Other coded words in this allegorical reference to the Muses would be the lyre, the dance, and the remembered song. The fact that the stewards are male might not seem to fit, but if gender balance (or switching) is important to the Greek concept of soul, and thus the imagination, then it might be necessary that the nine be male in this telling. Certainly the subject of the story told involves a merging of male and female, in this case the comic coupling of Ares and Aphrodite. It is easy to laugh with the gods at the trap sprung upon the illicit lovers. But I suggest that there is more to it than base second-level entertainment for the court of Alkinoós. There is an embedded narrative that is not altogether obvious to the modern reader, but which would have had meaning for the Greek poet without the need for explication.

The structural placement of this story in the sequence of the epic is important, for if the song and dance is analogous in a discourse on the Muses, then we have seen an invocation, and should expect it to be followed by inspired artistry. And indeed in the sequence that follows we see first a wonderful dance, then the courteous exchange of gifts, and then the sharing of high poetry, with Odysseus transformed into the Bard. Consider the scene in which Odysseus carves meat from the loin of the pig for the singer Demodokos, presenting it with these words: "For with all peoples upon the earth singers
are entitled / to be cherished and to their share of respect, since the Muse has taught them / her own way, and since she loves all the company of singers" (VIII.479-481). After the feast, Odysseus once again addresses Demodokos, saying: "Demodokos, above all mortals beside I prize you. / Surely the Muse, Zeus' daughter, or else Apollo has taught you" (487-8). He calls for another part of the story and demands that Demodokos "sing us the wooden horse" (492). The bard complies. And something happens here I'd not have noticed had I not become aware of the part of the feminine soul in the Greek metanarrative:

So the famous singer sang his tale, but Odysseus

melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching

his cheeks. As a woman weeps, lying over the body

of her dear husband . . . . (521-4)

Reading the story literally, we hear the story of the battle and remember the losses and terrors endured by Odysseus, and his weeping seems no more than what we would expect of any battle-weary soldier. But if we are sensitized to the feminine aspect of the soul and to the necessity that both aspects engage in the imaginative act of poesis, we see this as a necessary prologue to what follows, which is nothing less than an epic poesis in the words of Odysseus, the poet under the influence of the Muses. Alkinoös calls upon Odysseus to tell his story. Inasmuch as the allegorical Muses have been invoked with proper reverence and ritual, the propitiations have been satisfied. Odysseus has shed the mask of the man-of-war to become as a woman. Now the sacred telling can begin.
I will not recount much of Odysseus' story, and I will not discuss it at all; it is set out plainly enough in the text. My subject is the inspiration of the poet, not the text inspired in this particular case. But one thing must be noted at this juncture. When Odysseus praises Demodokos, he seems not to know whom to credit for the inspiration. Perhaps, he suggests, the Muse, Zeus' daughter has inspired the great singer. Or perhaps it was Apollo.

The metanarrative, we see, is more complex than if the only possibility in the metaphor of inspiration was the gift of a Muse. Homer, and for that matter, Odysseus, both speak of a singular Muse, even though it is clear that Homer knows that there are in fact nine of these daughters of Mnemosyne and Zeus. But this idea is now further complicated by Odysseus' mention of Apollo. We know of the association of the Muses with inspiration. But Apollo?

We should not, of course, be surprised. Apollo is, after all, the god of poetry, or more properly, of μουσική (mousike). Morford and Lenardon point out that the Muses resemble Apollo, "with whom they are often associated" (61). One of the more significant associations of Apollo and the Muses is the story that tells us Apollo fathered Orpheus with the Muse Calliope (275). Although this story contradicts other stories naming other parents for Orpheus, there is no small importance in this association, for in the arts of μουσική, Orpheus is a major player, as are Calliope and Apollo. One of the most consistent images of Apollo is the lyre, and that icon is likewise associated with Orpheus.
As I will show in a later chapter, it is also connected most thoroughly with the Welsh Bard.

More important to our exploration of the nature of the Welsh Awenyddion is the connection between Apollo and prophecy. Unfortunately, what we encounter is mostly mysterious. Morford and Lenardon tells us that "the exact oracular procedures followed cannot be determined precisely" because the source materials assume "an exact knowledge of Delphic practices" (151). This seems to reinforce the point I made earlier, that Homer participated in rather than invented a well-known metanarrative and assumed his readers knew it as well. It is as though in our time we set out to tell a Southern American of Jimmy Carter, mentioning that he is a "foot-washing Baptist" without feeling the need to explain the term or the greater context of the biblical story or its use in Southern American culture. Its usage would communicate well within its native culture; and if the meaning were missed, at least the parameters of misunderstanding could be understood. But it would be almost wholly lost in the Islamic world. Our problem with the hidden Greek metanarrative is worse than that, because an Islamic scholar would have access to information that could elucidate the vague American/Christian reference. We have little or no such information relevant to the lost Greek metanarrative. No one seems to have produced the appropriate reference materials, and we are left now trying to figure out the Delphic mysteries, along with other problems related to the Muses, based on too restricted a field of information.
Be that as it may, Odysseus mentions Apollo in context with the Muses, and we must imagine that he held them to be more or less equally engaged in the inspirational arts. But that sets up another question: are these the only Greek deities or forces or human agents engaged in the inspirational metanarrative? The answer is, as we might expect, no.

Aeschylus's telling of the myth of Prometheus presents him speaking with these words:

O divine air and sky and swift-winged breezes, springs of rivers and countless laughter of sea waves, earth, mother of everything, and all-seeing circle of the sun, I call on you. (Moreford and Lenardon 50)

His call is not specifically to the Muses, but to some spirit superior even to Zeus, who has chained him to the rock for the crime of his gifts to humankind. What Prometheus says about these gifts is enlightening:

And indeed I discovered for [humans] numbers, a lofty kind of wisdom, and letters and their combination, an art that fosters memory [Μνημοσύνη] of all things, the mother of the Muses' arts. (51)

And later he says

I set forth the many ways of the prophetic art. I was the first to determine which dreams would of necessity turn out to be true and I established for them the difficult interpretation of sounds and omens of the road and distinguished the precise meaning of the flight of birds... I burned the limbs enwrapped in fat and the long shank and set mortals on the path to
this difficult art of sacrifice, and made clear the fiery signs, obscure before.

Such were these gifts of mine . . . . In a brief utterance learn the whole story: all arts come to mortals from Prometheus. (51-52)

We see in this that the Greek metanarrative offers yet another characterization of inspiration in the Titan Prometheus. In short, he is the source of letters and their combinations, and thus memory, and thus is the source of the mother of the Muses' arts. Again we see the juxtaposition of the masculine and feminine, here in the father begetting the mother of the Muses' arts.

Aeschylus gives utterance to a bold image in his portrayal of Prometheus. Not only do the Muses seem to enjoy a rich imagery in being called "divine air and sky and swift-winged breezes, springs of rivers and countless laughter of sea waves, earth, mother of everything, and all-seeing circle of the sun," but a voice is given to the creative mind who rendered the Muses accessible to the human mind. We would have babbled on in vain had not Prometheus given us the gift of "letters and their combination."

Prometheus claims authorship of the human imagination through the art of letters, of inspiration. The source of the Muse is, at least in part, in the mastery of the Promethean gift of language, and through it, the mastery of both the logos and the mythos. And with this paradigm laid before the audience—a commonplace for those who share the metanarrative—we come to understand that there is no other difference between Homer and Odysseus, other than the one tells the story and the other sings. Both participate in the teller's art. The historicity of Odysseus is the same as that of Homer, or of
Prometheus, or of the Muse for that matter. All of these are characterizations within the Greek epic metanarrative of an aspect of the eternal art of creation.

As to the experience of the Muse that gave rise to the recognition of a need for language to talk about it, that is another matter altogether. Zeus and Mnemosyne did not have nine daughters who sang to various poets over the period of several centuries in a literal way. This is an allegorical image used in Greek literature to speak of that apparently ever-present aspect of human consciousness that in the twelfth-century Wales of Geraldis Cambrensis would be called the *Awen*. There are many similarities between the Greek and the Welsh stories, not the least of which is the Appolonian character of enlightened inspiration and music suggested by the figure of Taliesin of the Shining Forehead playing his harp and singing in the court of Arthur. Nor is this merely coincidental, for the Welsh traditionally saw themselves in terms of the descendants of Trojans through Brutus, who landed on the shores of Britain in 1170 BCE according to Geoffrey of Monmouth (Davies 1).

At this point, I'd like to point out a curious coincidence, which seems to have equal relevance to the Greek and the Welsh metanarratives. I have no way of proving the connection, but I am inspired to believe it even if I cannot verify it because it leads in such an interesting direction. We know the connection between the Muses and music and poetry. We can readily see the implied etymological connection between *Muse* and *music*. The curious coincidence occurs in the potential etymological connection of μοῦστος, which is *mustum*, or new wine, and μυθος, which we translate variously as "myth,"
“narrative,” and/or "word or speech." They have what appears to be not only a common root-sound, or morphology, but, at a rather sophisticated and abstract level, a common root-metaphor having something to do with an exalted state [and here I want to employ an oriental trick of multiple meanings all active at once] of mind-expression-creativity-perception-telling-madness.

Arguing first for the metaphoric connection between the mythos and the muses, consider the words of Prometheus. It is not a far reach to pull myth into the context of memory and inspiration. In fact, a strong argument could be made for myth as being exactly what Prometheus had in mind when he spoke of "letters and their combination, an art that fosters memory of all things, the mother of the Muses' arts." The word is a combination of letters, but a word means nothing outside the context of mythos. Meaning occurs in contextualization, which is to say that the story is as essential to meaning as is the individual word. So it is in our exploration of the word Muse; it cannot be legitimately reduced to a simple phrase. It takes the context of Homer's usage in conjunction with that of Hesiod and Aeschylus and Euripides to render a sense of its usage within the Greek metanarrative, and it takes the additional context of Taliesin and Geraldis Cambrensis and Evan Evans and William Blake to elucidate the distinct differences suggested within the Welsh metanarrative. The sources may render parallel narratives of the Muse, but they are by no means always the same Muse.

As argues for the connection with wine, its divine aspect is associated with Dionysus, whose contrary energy we should anticipate as soon as we recognize an
Apollonian aspect of the Muse. Wine has long been associated with the creative process. The effects range from wonderous psychic lubrication to total dysfunction, and its use is known as much for its dangerous spiritual captivation as it is for its use in creative generation. Dionysus is a dangerous god, and wine is a dangerous Muse. Yet who would deny the presence of wine and other intoxicants in the generation of poetry in all ages?

Let's explore this aspect.

During the period stretching from some vague time around the tenth century BCE through about the fourth century BCE, the cult of Dionysus was coming into existence. Walter F. Otto in *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* tells us that the divine essence of Dionysus is madness. But it is no ordinary madness:

The madness which is called Dionysus is no sickness, no debility in life, but a companion of life at its healthiest. It is the tumult which erupts from its innermost recesses when they mature and force their way to the surface. It is the madness inherent in the womb of the mother. This attends all moments of creation, constantly changes ordered existence into chaos, and ushers in primal salvation and primal pain—and in both, the primal wildness of being. (Otto 143)

Otto's eloquent assessment juxtaposes madness and creation. This is not what we see in Homer's invocation of the Muses, or in that of Prometheus. This is another aspect altogether, a dark and chaotic and perhaps more direct force.
"The deep emotion with which this madness announces itself finds its expression in music and dance," Otto continues. If we know anything at all about Dionysus, we know of the Mænads, the wild dancing women. Perhaps we see here a clue as to the absence of Dionysus from the Homeric epic. Odysseus is calculating and measured. He is closest to the goddess Athena, whose aspect is wisdom and feminine strength in war, and who is noted as being the technical inventor of the flute, but not as its master, or even its player. She would not be compatible with wild dancing women. She might be able to calm the Furies with her cool logic, but she would never succeed against the women of Bacchus. Thus I conclude that while Homer knew of Dionysus, he desired not to make overmuch of him.

Otto writes at length about wine and Dionysus, and much of what he says seems to make sense with regards to the use of intoxicants by poets and prophets not only in the Age of Classical Greece, but in the Age of the Awenyddion as well. "In the art of prophecy," Otto says, "madness is represented as secret knowledge" (144). He quotes Aristotle as writing that "the prophets belonging to a Thracian oracle of Dionysus prophesied after they had imbibed a good deal of wine, while the Apollonian seers in Claros gained their inspiration by drinking holy water" (144-145). I am reminded here of Gerald's quotation from the Book of Esdras: "The Lord said unto me, open thy mouth, and I opened my mouth, and behold a cup full of water, whose colour was like fire; and when I had drank it, my heart brought forth understanding, and wisdom entered into my breast" (Cambrensis 179-80). He is speaking of the Awenyddion, but one can readily see
the applicability of the link with holy liquid and wisdom and understanding. The Muse and likewise the Awen are brought forth out of “water whose color is like fire.”

Otto asks if “the age in which the cults and myths came into existence [looked] at things in the same way we do?” (145). He suggests that things which for us have little use or meaning might have had much different meaning for the ancients. If they “assigned to wine the miraculous power to lead man to the divine,” then it is not likely they also worshipped the spirit of the divine within the wine? Its special place in the worship of Dionysus has to do with its ”intrinsic power to enchant, to inspire, to raise up the spirit. And this is the power whose effect brings even us in contact with the ancient belief that a god reveals himself in wine.”

For the present inquiry into the nature of the Greek Muse, this is an important connection. We tend, out of a culturally-bred fear of stigma, to downplay the part of alcohol in inspiration, but many of us can relate to the late-night use of wine as a creative lubricant. We might be shy of attributing divine aspect to the substance, but no one can deny its effect. The part of wine in the ritual feasts of the Greeks (and Phalakians) cannot be overlooked. Likewise, writers in the eighteenth century made use of wine and other substances for their power to enchant, inspire, and raise up the spirit.

I will have more to say about the place of the divine substance in the metanarrative of the Muse in subsequent chapters, where I will discuss not only the part of wine, but of porter and laudanum on the poetic consciousness of various poets in the Age of Blake. For now I will conclude this discussion of the Greek metanarrative by stating the obvious:
there is no such thing as a Welsh metanarrative separate from the Greek. Things are not so clearly delineated. A culture which traces its ancestry to Troy must incorporate both the Greek metanarrative and the Virgilian metanarrative. I have focused on the Homeric story in discussing the Muse because it is abundantly clear that Virgil's *Aeneid* comes out of that tradition and because the idea of the Muse is treated by Virgil as a commonplace. I will henceforth talk of the Homeric/Virgilian Muse as the classical Muse, and will posit that it is inextricably imbedded in the Welsh notion of the Awen.

Yet it is also clear that the Welsh idea of inspiration is not purely a classical notion. It has its own flavor, its own classes of characteristics. In particular, the idea of Annwn must be undertaken, and to that subject we will now turn our attention.
ANNWN AND THE DREAM-VISION MOTIF

Annwn [also spelled Annwfn] is a Welsh word for the Celtic Otherworld (Stephens 13). Read through the filter of Christianity, this concept is often translated as Hell, but in fact it is distinctly different in that it is not a place of evil, or even a land of the dead. Christian otherworlds include Heaven and Hell; the Greeks have Hades and the Elyssian Fields. These are realms of the after-life. Annwn is distinct, for it is the otherworld of the imaginative experience. It may be found in literature as widely diverse as the oldest Arthurian legends and the most modern "Celtic" fantasy. It is as clearly demonstrated in the lands of the beanstalk giant as it is in the final journey of Frodo, Bilbo and Gandalf from the Grey Havens into the Western Sea.

The period of interest for this discussion runs from about the tenth century through about the fourteenth. During this time, many tales came into text concerning Annwn. In these tales, Annwn is represented in two distinct forms, “either as an island or islands somewhere in the western ocean (see YNYS AFALLON) or else it was situated under the earth in a sidh or fairy mound” (Stephens 13). An early Welsh example of such a story is the Preiddiau Annwn (lit. “The Spoils of Annwn”), a poem from The Book of Taliesin thought to date from the early tenth century which tells of Arthur’s expeditions to Annwn in order to capture the cauldron of the chief of Annwn.
thought to date from the early tenth century which tells of Arthur’s expeditions to Annwn in order to capture the cauldron of the chief of Annwn.

Several things are significant about this tale. First of all is the reference to Ynys Afallon, or the Isle of Avalon. This is “the magic island in the western ocean to which Arthur was carried after being mortally wounded” (Stephens 671). It is a land of “perpetual youth, fertility, feasting and every kind of sensuous pleasure, including magical birds which sing enchanting songs, and Morgen is the chief of nine sisters who rule there.” Second is the occurrence of the nine sisters, whom I cannot help but associate with the Muses. Third is the cauldron, whose rim is decorated with pearls, and which is heated “by the breath of nine maidens and will not boil the food of a coward” (Stephens 488).

In the Preiddiau Annwfn, Arthur goes on an expedition to capture the cauldron. Annwn is depicted as “a four-cornered glass fortress” with a “silent sentinel, a wonderful fountain, a doleful prisoner and ever-youthful inhabitants much occupied with feasting.” The cauldron is the prize they seek, but the journey is disastrous; each stanza ends with the phrase “save seven, none returned.”

The cauldron is a major motif, which we see over and over again in the early Welsh materials. I believe the cauldron to be analogous with the grail, and the nine sisters to be analogous with the Muses. Thus these stories of Annwn are more like the story of Odysseus’s journey to the land of the Phaiakians than the episode embedded within that tale in which he journeys to Hades. The motif of the journey to the magic land of joyful
feasting wherein the number nine is featured prominently is an allegorical way for the poet to speak of poetics.

Meic Stephens tells us that in the *Hanes Taliesin* (the History of Taliesin) we encounter "a folk-tale with a highly mythological content [which] has at its theme the origin of poetic inspiration" (Stephens 571). We'll turn now to Sir Ifor Williams' explication from his work entitled *The Poems of Taliesin*:

The *Hanes* or 'The Story' of Taliesin 'in the oldest fragment now extant, says that Cyrridwen, wife of Tegid, had a son called Afagddu, and he was the ugliest man in the world. His mother was grieved at this and thought that the only way he could secure a welcome amongst noblemen would be if he excelled in knowledge. Following the instructions of Vergil's books—evidently the poet had developed into the mediaeval magician—she put on the fire the cauldron of Inspiration and Knowledge, which had to be kept on the boil for a year and a day without a break. Gwion Bach was ordered to keep on stirring it for the whole period, Cyrridwen in the meantime collecting herbs and plants of various kinds to put in it, according to the recipe. At the end of the year it happened that three drops of the hot liquid splashed over on to Gwion's finger, which he naturally stuck in his mouth. These three precious drops happened to be the essence of all the magical ingredients in the cauldron. Though intended for Afagddu, they were now in Gwion's mouth, and when he swallowed
them he became the greatest sage on earth, knowing everything, past, present, and future. He saw at once that Cyrridwen was his mortal enemy, and fled for his life. She pursued him. He changed into a hare, and ran like a hare. Cyrridwen turned herself into a greyhound and chased him to a river. He jumped in and turned into a fish, she became an otter. He became a bird, she followed as a hawk; and when she was on the point of overtaking him he saw a heap of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn, alighted on it, and changed into one of the grains. She then turned into a black hen, scattered the grain with her feet until she found him, and swallowed him. Nine months later she was delivered of him, and because of his beauty she could not bear to kill him herself. So, she put the babe in a skin bag and threw him into the sea. This bag was found in a weir by a certain young prince named Elphin, who picked him up, and with great gentleness carried him home. Because of his lovely forehead (tal), he called him Tal-iesin, “beautiful brow,” and was astounded when the beautiful browed infant began to talk with the wisdom of a patriarch, not only in prose, but in flowing rhyme as well. Poems streamed out of his mouth. Gwyddno, Elphin’s father, when he came in, asked about the catch at the weir. “I got something better than a fish,” his son replied. “What was that?” “A poet.” “Alas,” said the father, “what is a thing like that worth?” — using another Welsh word tal meaning worth, value. The child
immediately answered back, "He is worth more than you ever got out of
the weir," punning on Tal-iesin, as if it meant "fine value". "Canst thou
speak, though so small?" asked the other. "I can say more," said Taliesin,
"than thou canst ask." (Williams n.p.)

An examination of the archetypal structure of this story reveals a number of interesting
things. Let us begin with the types of human characters. Cyrridwen is characterized not
only as a wife and mother, but as a magician and shape-shifter with knowledge of
herblore. Her son, Aflagddu, is "the ugliest man in the world," a motif we shall see
repeated in the Welsh Triads, in Gray's "Death of Hoël," and in Blake's "Antient Briton's"
in the early nineteenth century. Gwion Bach is her servant.

Under Frye's category of "form" we find the cauldron. Yet it is not sufficient to
think of this as a cauldron, for its brew is not a thing to be thought of as a formed thing.
Better we think of it as a formless thing of power and magic, for what it yields is all
knowledge, past, present, and future.

When we combine the character of Gwion Bach and the magic brew of the
cauldron, we find something very nearly divine, with resonances of Moses (the bag thrown
in the sea) and Jesus (better than a fish) and Virgil, all wrapped up into the quintessential
Welsh Bard, Taliesin. The cauldron, like the grail of other stories of poetic inspiration, is
emblematic of a sixth-level sightedness, and Taliesin is the embodiment of the Welsh
prophet. The three drops of Cyrridwen's brew, like the holy water or wine in the Homeric
metanarrative, have the power to invoke divine sight.
So if Arthur's journey to Annwn has as the object of its quest the cauldron of the nine sisters, then allegorically this can be seen as a search for poetic inspiration, and we see by this the privileging of poetic wisdom in the Welsh metanarrative. Yet the quest is not the only way by which wisdom (poetic or otherwise) may be obtained. It may also be gotten by way of the inspired dream, more along the lines of what Gerald attributes to the Awenyddion. Annwn is not only an island in the western sea; it may also be an Underworld. But it may also be a terrain of the imagination, with a coded imagery inclusive of many significant objects or numbers or ideas.

I have been focusing on something I call the Welsh metanarrative, but I have tried to make clear that this so-called Welsh metanarrative is comprised of things incorporated through a number of other cultural narratives. The period under consideration includes a number of works involving discussions of the imaginative terrain that are not Welsh per se, but which should nevertheless be included in the discussion because of the clear evidence of syncretism.

Gerald of Wales, for example, as shown in the earlier discussion, makes use not only of the Bardic metanarrative in discussing the nature of the Awenyddion, but he uses also the apocryphal metanarrative of the fourteenth chapter of II Esdras. I have cited that portion of the book to which Gerald referred, but it will help to do so again, for by expanding the context of that metanarrative, we will see more of the iconography revealed which was so important among the poets of the Britons in the tenth through the fourteenth
century, and not only to those who wrote in Welsh, but those who wrote in Anglo-Saxon and Middle-English as well.

The portion cited by Gerald reads as follows: "The Lord said unto me, open thy mouth, and I opened my mouth, and behold a cup full of water, whose colour was like fire; and when I had drank it, my heart brought forth understanding, and wisdom entered into my breast" (Cambrensis 179-80). A search for this leads to the fourteenth chapter of II Esdras, which begins as follows: "On the third day, while I was sitting under an oak, suddenly a voice came out of a bush opposite me and said, 'Ezra, Ezra!' And I answered, 'Here I am, Lord,' and I rose to my feet" (II Esdras 14.1-2 qtd. Cambrensis).

The place where Ezra encountered the voice out of the bush, i.e., "under an oak," is quite important. I will save the discussion of the significance of the oak in the druidic metanarrative for a later chapter, but in the time of Gerald, it would have had significance as a magic site not only because of the story told in II Esdras 14, but because of many other associations of the appearance of the Lord to humans in or around sacred trees. I will not catalogue all of those occurrences, but will mention only a few out of the Christian metanarrative: the trees of the Garden of Eden, the Burning Bush, the Holy Rood-Tree, and the Trees of Life in the final book of Revelation. No one familiar with the Bible and its attendant literature (oral and written) could fail to respond with heightened attention to the oak.

The Lord continued in his conversation with Ezra as follows:
"I revealed myself in a bush and spoke to Moses when my people were in bondage in Egypt; and I sent him and led my people out of Egypt; and I led him to Mount Sinai, where I kept him with me many days. I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of the times. Then I commanded him, saying, 'These words you shall publish openly, these you shall keep secret.' And now I say to you: Lay up in your heart the signs that I have shown you, the dreams that you have seen, and the interpretations that you have heard; for you shall be taken up from among humankind, and henceforth you shall live with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended.'

(II Esdras 14.3-9)

In Gerald's paradigm of the Awenyddion, we read the later verse about the cup, but it seems important to me that we look carefully at the vision under the oak, for this would have been immensely appealing to any who desired to be "taken up from among humankind." The significant elements of this visionary narrative are the oak, the bush, the voice of the Lord, the dream, and the seer's interpretation.

Ezra responds thusly:

"I will go as you have commanded me, and I will reprove the people who are now living; but who will warn those who will be born hereafter? For the world lies in darkness, and its inhabitants are without light. For your law has been burned, and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by you. If then I have found favor with you, send the holy spirit into me, and I will write everything
that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things that were written in your law, so that people may be able to find the path, and that those who want to live in the last days may do so.” (20-22)

The task of the seer is revealed here. The world lies in darkness; the law has been burned up. No one will know the right path without the seer to direct them. The method of enlightenment must come through the holy spirit, so that the seer may write everything that has happened in the world from the beginning.

The Lord tells Ezra, “I will light in your heart the lamp of understanding, which shall not be put out until what you are about to write is finished. And when you have finished, some things you shall make public, and some you shall deliver in secret to the wise” (25-26). It is most interesting, the injunction here that only some of the writing shall be made public. Implicit here is the fact that there is a secret brotherhood of the wise, and this cannot but be part of the justification for the complex of beliefs that some held to justify their assertion that they belonged to a bardic brotherhood, or by others who asserted that such a brotherhood existed.

It is here that we come to the image invoked by Gerald of the cup in his explication on the Awenyddion. I will cite here somewhat more than Gerald cited, for there are other things in the text which will help to shed light not only on the Welsh idea of the Awenydd, but on the place of certain other images in the prophetic metanarrative in the Age of Blake:
And on the next day a voice called me, saying, "Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink." So I opened my mouth, and a full cup was offered me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory, and my mouth was opened and was no longer closed. ... So during the forty days, ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, "Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first, and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge. And I did so. (38-41; 44-48)

We see here the resonant cup/cauldron/grail with its inspirational fluid. And as discussed earlier, it is nothing less than pure inspiration in its effect, for the fire-like water incites the understanding, wisdom, and memory into generating forty days of non-stop writing. We who write in this age could well wish for some of that miraculous water, but there is an attendant air of secrecy here, for only twenty-four of the books were to be made public. The notation indicates that the twenty-four books are those of the canonical Old Testament, but that the seventy books given to the wise are apocalyptic books. Reference is made to II Esdras 12, verses 37 and 38, which says, "Therefore write all these things that you have seen in a book, put it in a hidden place; and you shall teach them to the wise
among your people, whose hearts you know are able to comprehend and keep these secrets.”

This idea of secret knowledge will certainly inspire the writers of the eighteenth century in its turn, for all of this seems like nothing so much as a prescription for the visionary poet. For the Welsh poets Evan Evans, Iolo Morganwg, Goronwy Owen and William Owen Pughe, the holy spirit would be called the Awen, and it is this that Gerald recognizes in the passage in which he describes the Awenyddion. But there is another image out of this apocryphal writing that resonates throughout early British poetry, and that is the image of the final lines of II Esdras 14: “For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.

One of the earliest dream-visions in the British metanarrative is that of The Dream of the Rood. It is a beautiful piece which, simply put, demonstrates the movement of the pagan elder tree into the Christian camp. It may be accurately thought of as an Anglo-Saxon piece because of its language, but its metanarrative is anything but pure, for it derives not only out of the Anglo and Saxon traditions, but out of the Celtic and Nordic as well.

The key here is not only the presence of the sacred tree of the Bible and the apocryphal books, but of the sacred tree of the Northern myths as well. Concurrently, there is the presence of the spring, the fountain, and the river, all of which are associated with knowledge, and thus with some aspect of inspiration. In the next chapter, I will discuss at some length the associations of the tree and the spring in the early British
metanarrative, for it is fundamental to understanding the nature of the iconography of the awenyddion in the Age of Blake.
The word *haergtraf* from *Beowulf* has been causing difficulty among scholars of Anglo-Saxon for some time now. When Grendel's attacks on Hrothgar's hall killed many mighty warriors, the king's counselors went into secret sessions, debated remedies, and considered what they might do (*Beowulf* 175-180). And sometimes they made vows at the *haergtraf*, and did honor to idols, petitioning them with words. *Haergtraf* is glossed as meaning "heathen-temple," but Klaeber includes a question-mark, and the true etymology has occasioned some debate. Throughout the poem are many references to the *Drihten*, to the *Metod*, or the *Wealdend*, all of which seem to refer to the Christian God, so it is easy to conclude that the *haergtraf* is simply a heathen temple. But for our purposes we need to dig deeper, for the nature of the *haergtraf* will enlighten us a bit as to the nature of the so-called heathens, and in the end will enlighten us as to the place of the tree and the fountain in the spiritual literature of the Welsh Awenyddion.

Karl Wentersdorf says that "critics still find difficulty regarding the nature and significance of the pagan features" in *Beowulf* (Wentersdorf 91). Possibly the poet was a Christian cleric who intended to create for his audience a grim picture of life as he imagined it to have been in pre-Christian times. Or perhaps he drew upon the social idioms of his own day, portraying the ancient Germanic legends in a way his audience
idioms of his own day, portraying the ancient Germanic legends in a way his audience
would have found familiar. Frederick Klaeber wrote in despair of the ambiguous and
"peculiar spiritual atmosphere of the poem" (Robinson 81). He refers to Hrothgar as a
good Christian, but says it is at least equally possible that the Danes failed to live up to the
poet's modernized representation of them (Klaeber 135). Similarly, J. R. R. Tolkien
insisted that while the poem is set in pagan Scandinavia, Hrothgar is "a kind of Christian
monotheist moving among pagan compatriots." Fred Robinson wants to argue that the
poet and his audience were well aware that the Scandinavians were heathen, and that the
"vaguely pious heroes of Beowulf . . . would not have been mistaken for Christians by an
Anglo-Saxon audience" (82). I will argue that what Wentersdorf terms "distinctive
Christian and pagan elements" were anything but distinctive to the poet's audience, but
rather were so blended into an evolving imaginative and vital mythos as to render
impossible any hope of clear separation between the pagan and Christian elements. I will
illustrate this homogeneity by interpreting the word haergtraf as a "place of worship"
(from the Anglo-Saxon word herg) "among the trees" (from an unknown root) and then
demonstrate a persistent image of the sacred tree in pagan and Christian mythos from at
least the seventh century through the fourteenth. I will begin with the Anglo-Saxon poem,
The Dream of the Rood, and then we'll look at some other works which taken together
constitute the literature of what we may call the "cult of the cross."

The Dream of the Rood begins thus:

Lo, I will tell you of the best dream,
a vision that came to me at midnight

after the speech-bearer turned to his rest.

I thought I saw such a marvellous tree,

aloft in the air, its brightest beams enveloped in light. (1-5)

The poet describes a tree which glows, adorned with gold and gems. He speaks of holy spirits from all over the face of creation gazing upon the angel of the Lord, clearly casting this wondrous tree in a Christian context. It is the Wealdendes treow, the Lord’s Tree, the Holy Rood, the Victory-beam, wet and drenched and gleaming.

But more marvelously, this tree speaks. It tells how it was taken by "feondas," hewn from its trunk, seized and set upon a mound of stones as a gallows. It tells how the Lord, a young hero in the best Anglo-Saxon tradition, hastened forward, strong and brave, eager to mount the high gallows. The tree stood fast, not daring to bend or burst or to fall as the earth trembled. It tells how it was drenched with blood, wet and covered with steam, driven through with nails. When the King had sent forth his ghost, all creation wept, and the tree was sore afflicted with sorrow. And then, an awesome fate: men cut the Rood to the earth and buried it and the other crosses in a deep pit, where they remained until dug up by friends. Then the Rood was adorned with gold and gems, placed as a beacon, and commanded to reveal to men "that it is the glorious tree on which the almighty God suffered for mankind’s many sins and for Adam’s ancient deed" (97-100).

Upon first encountering this poem, I was struck not only by the broad connection of the Rood with the extended imagery of the tree throughout the Bible, but by the more
specific similarity between the "wuldræs trecōw" and the "world tree" of Icelandic mythology. I am speaking of the great ash Yggdrasil. Like the rood-tree, Yggdrasil glistens, wet and trembling (Pigott 217-218). Also like the rood-tree, the world ash is a gallows. The primary myth about Yggdrasil involves Odin, the chief Nordic god, who comes to drink from the spring of all knowledge flowing from its roots, the Spring of Urth. He pays the price of an eye for this drink, and gains great wisdom. Then, to gain the secret of the runes, he hangs in the branches of the tree. In the *Elder Edda* one can read "Odin's Rune Song:"

I know that I hung, on a wind-rocked tree, nine whole nights, with a spear wounded, and to Odin offered, myself to myself; on that tree, of which no one knows from what root it springs. (Thorpe 44)

The similarity between the three-day crucifixion story of Jesus and the hanging of Odin for nine days is remarkable, and it is precisely this similarity that led me to wonder if perhaps the Nordic legend (which is otherwise quite different) might have been a source of inspiration for the rood poet. After all, *The Dream of the Rood* bears almost no resemblance to the biblical version of the crucifixion; clearly other cultural metanarratives are at work within the poem.

Some light may be shed on this question by examining a curious stone sculpture known as the Ruthwell cross, which bears a portion of the text of the poem. This object, over five meters tall, stands at the Church of Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. It is
engraved with branches and leaves, and depicts an eagle and a dragon in its foliage, both of which are associated with the Yggdrasil (Swanton 14-16). From the Eddic *Voluspa* we get a picture of the great Ash, dew-dropper, whose branches spread over the whole world. High in the tree sits an eagle who knows many things; entwined in its roots is the dragon Nið-hoggur, the hostile gnawer who constantly strives to bring down the Ash (Pigott 218). The cross also contains many panels depicting scenes from Christian lore, with inscriptions of passages in Latin and Anglo-Saxon, some in Latin characters, and some in runic characters. The presence of runic characters connects back to Odin, for it was he who gave the runes to humankind. Consider these lines from "Odin's Rune Song."

Bread no one gave me, nor a horn of drink, downward I peered, to runes applied myself, wailing learned them, then fell down thence.

Then I began to bear fruit, and to know many things, to grow and well thrive: word by word I sought out words, fact by fact I sought out facts. (44-45)

Very powerful, very potent were these words, these facts; and of all the things that he learned, one of the most significant is the twelfth:

If on a tree I see a corpse swinging from a halter, I can so grave and in runes depict, that the man shall walk, and with me converse.

Odin obtained from the runes no less than the power to raise the dead.
The date of the Ruthwell Cross is subject to debate, but because of the runic characters, as well as the artistic nature of the sculpture, it is thought by some to have been carved in the seventh or eighth century (Dickins and Ross 7). The text of the Vercelli manuscript, our source for *The Dream of the Rood*, has been placed in the latter half of the tenth century, some two-hundred years or more later. The *Eddas* are themselves said to have been written down from an earlier oral tradition in the mid-eleventh century. By date alone it might be concluded that the rood-poem was the earlier of the literary forms, and thus more likely to have influenced the Eddic poems. But we must remember that the textual dates tell us nothing about the persistence of the poems in the oral tradition. We are aware of many oral stories transmitted through the generations for centuries before ever coming into text. No conclusion is possible as to which came first, or as to whether one song was heard by the poet of the other. In fact, strong arguments have been advanced on both sides, the one arguing that the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition strongly influenced the invading Vikings, and the other insisting that the Icelanders came to maturity quite free of the taint of European Christianity. It is possible, and perhaps even likely that the two traditions grew side by side, the Angle bards, or *scops* singing songs out of both traditions.

In all likelihood, these two traditions grew side by side with a third tradition generating out of the Celtic metanarrative. Christianity did not suddenly appear in the Anglo-Saxon world in the eighth century. There is evidence of an Irish Christian church, quite independent of the church in Rome, as early as the fourth century, and perhaps even
earlier (Wilson 12-14). These Irish monasteries, serving the Celtic people, were autonomous from the Church in Rome. They sent forth "desert fathers" who set up new monasteries until the Irish church was quite well established, even moving into parts of Scotland and Wales. The tradition of the *perigrinus*, or the solitary monk, was widespread by the eighth century, so that the stone cross at Ruthwell represents not the work of the newly converted, but the work of an artisan following a long tradition. True, in many places the old idols, be they stone or ancient trees, had been supplanted with newer sanctuaries. But we see in the Ruthwell Cross both the sacred stone and the sacred tree of the Celts surviving and emerging in the evolving Christian metanarrative of Britain. The stone cross stood until the year 1642, when it was taken down in accordance with an 'Act concerning Idolatrous monuments in Ruthwell' passed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Parts of the cross were broken, and it remained scattered, parts in the floor of the church and other parts buried in the churchyard for over a hundred years (Swanton 9-10).

Significantly, the people of the British Isles, up until the fifth century, were predominantly Celts, worshipping gods under the spiritual leadership of what we may conveniently wish to think of as the Druids. We know nothing of the Druids that doesn't come to us through Christian writers, and a great deal of that is of highly questionable origin or intent, but what we do know indicates that they worshipped and practiced their rites in sacred groves, quite often at the foot of an elder tree. We know also that often the conversion of a people was largely peaceful, and that often the Druids themselves would
forswear the old religion and eagerly accept the new. Consider Bede's account of "The Conversion of King Edwin" (Mitchell 216-219). The king heard the new lore, and thought it sounded good, but he wanted to converse with his "witum," his wise men. Their chief, a high-priest named Cefi, essentially said, "Well, the old gods haven't done me a lot of good—why not?" And then he himself took up arms against the "bed of idols." He threw a spear, which stuck fast in the fane, or herig; then he tore down the idol and all the sanctuary and burned them. Clearly Bede was not writing of stone idols. If Bede does not specifically describe an ancient tree, or a "place of worship among the trees," he at least lets us know that the sanctuary and the idol itself were wood, and not stone.

The story of Saint Boniface also sheds light on the nature of the hærgtraf. This English monk traveled in Germany in the mid-eighth century, and is said to have cut down the sacred Donar Oak, the thunder oak of Thor (Wilson 11). The legend tells us that he struck the great tree once, and that a breeze blew from heaven, and the tree fell in four parts in the form of a cross. Saint Boniface then had his followers take the wood and build a Christian sanctuary on the spot. While Pope Gregory did not advocate this method, which got Boniface and many of his followers slaughtered, he suggested a pattern generally followed by the English missionaries of converting heathen images to Christian usage.

Gregory's policy worked well, for the most part, but it also led to problems. Even before Pope Gregory, Theodore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, had warned against the wickedness of paying heed to incantations, divinations, auguries, auspices, and dreams,
setting out a separate set of punishments for the clerics (Wentersdorf 102). These specific prohibitions clearly suggest that heathen practices by the clerics were widespread enough to be a problem. By the time of the writing of the Vercelli manuscript, several centuries later, priests were still delivering sermons warning against heathen practices. Bede wrote of a King Raedwald who was a baptized Christian, but who had in his chapel an altar to the Christian God alongside one for the "demons." Wulfstan wrote the "Canons of Edgar," forbidding sorcery and the worship of springs, elder trees, and idols of stone (104). Ælfric, writing in one of his many homilies, warned "It is not permitted to any Christian man to seek cures at any stone, or any tree (except the holy rood-cross), or any sanctuary, unless it be the holy house of God" (106).

Over and over again we see the same images: a spring, a stone, and an ancient tree. These were significant in a major way to the early people of the British Isles, and as Christianity evolved there, it had little option but to use these same images, often in similar ways. The Dream of the Rood was only one part of a much larger metanarrative, one which was deeply rooted in the past, incorporating elements from Celtic and Germanic lore into the Christian and Classical lore brought there by the Christian priests.

One of the Celtic incarnations of the talking tree occurs in an obscure Welsh piece known as the Cad Goddau, or "The Battle of the Trees," from the fourteenth-century manuscript, the Book of Taliesin (Sources 101-3). The voice is that of an "eternal" character, or a Bard: "I was many shapes before I was released," he says, listing an enchanted sword, raindrops in the air, a star's beam. "I was a word in letters, I was a book
in origin... I was a path, I was an eagle. I was a string in a harp enchanted nine years... I am not one who does not sing; I have sung since I was small. I sang in the army of trees' branches before the ruler of Britain." He says, "The three greatest upheavals that have happened in the world: and one comes to pass in the story of the flood, and Christ's crucifying, and then Doomsday." He goes on to catalogue the nature of the enchanted trees in the Lord's army, naming the alder, the willow and rowan, the ash and the hazel. "Swift and mighty oak: before him trembled heaven and earth; fierce enemy of warriors, his name in wax tablets... tree gave terror in combat."

The story is too complex to cover fully in this context, but let me mention these lines before I finish. The eternal speaker of the poem says, "Druids, wise one, prophesy to Arthur: there is what is before, they perceive what has been. And one occurs in the story of the flood, and Christ's crucifying and then Doomsday" (103). The poet seems to be a Christian reminding the wise one that Druids "perceive what has been." He clearly knows the key biblical events, and he says the druids know this too. And finally he says this: "The lord produced me when he was quite inflamed; the magician of magicians created me before the world—when I had existence, there was expanse to the world. Fair bard!" The poet seems to be stating, in his own Celtic voice, the words of John, the beloved disciple, who said "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The solitary wandering priest, filled with the excitement of his newfound Christian lore and the vast tradition of his Celtic lore, could not help but blend the two together.
We also see here the word “nine.” Let me repeat the sentence: “I was a string in a harp enchanted nine years.” While this is not an occurrence of the nine sisters, it is the use of the number nine in connection with the harp, which is an emblem of the poetic art, and which is said to be enchanted. Taliesin is one who sings, and it seems to me that there is a certain discourse embedded in this ancient poem that, like the episode of Odysseus among the Phaiakians, has to do with a poet’s code of poesis. “The lord produced me when he was quite inflamed,” he sings, invoking in my mind not only the imagery of the inspirational cup of II Esdras 14, but the Dionysian idea of inspiration generating out of the new wine, or mustos.

To return to the idea of the tree as spiritual emblem in early Bardic literature, recall that the Bard has said, “I sang in the army of trees’ branches before the ruler of Britain.” He goes on to catalogue the nature of the enchanted trees in the Lord’s army, naming the alder, the willow and rowan, the ash and the hazel. “Swift and mighty oak: before him trembled heaven and earth; fierce enemy of warriors, his name in wax tablets . . . tree gave terror in combat.” It is most interesting to see the oak in such a privileged position as the tree before which “trembled heaven and earth.” There is a strong association here of strength and terror.

We also see an intriguing clue to the scarcity of ancient materials with which to substantiate our search into the poetics of the early Celts in the phrase “wax tablets.” The phrase indicates that the name was written in wax, and there could hardly be a less permanent medium. How much more would there be if, like the Assyrians, the ancient
Celtic epic had been committed to runic language in tablets of clay? Well, it cannot be helped. Perhaps, though, we may see a lesson or two in this. First, the tablets must have been slabs of bark smeared with wax. There is a certain consistency to this, for the runes were, after all, the gift of the Yggdrasil. And second, there would not have been a great concern for the permanence of written records, for the permanent record was that passed through oral tradition from one generation of the wise to the next. Tablets would have been useful for instruction of the young, but the proof of education was in the commission of the lore to memory.

One of the significant forms of oral memory can be seen in the Triad presented as part of this poem: "The three greatest upheavals that have happened in the world: and one comes to pass in the story of the flood, and Christ's crucifying, and then Doomsday." The Cad Goddau is itself an example of the Triadic form, for it is one of the Three Futile Battles of the Isle of Britain (Stephens 207). The Trioedd Ynes Prydain, or the "triads of the Isle of Britain," served as mnemonic devices for keeping track of all sorts of native lore. As such, the Triads are a formal collection of short groupings of three elements. These are sometimes historical in nature, but also concern heroes of legends, or matters of gnomic or proverbial interest. Gray's "Death of Hoël," and Blake's "Antient Briton's" both derive from an ancient Triad brought into currency when Evan Evans translated the Old Welsh Y Gododdin of the sixth century into Latin in the mid-eighteenth century.

Leaving the discussion of the Cad Goddau to look at other significant spiritual trees of the ancient world, we turn our attention now to the Old English Finding of the
*True Cross*, which tells of the journey of Saint Helena to Jerusalem, of how she found the holy cross, buried and kept hidden by evil Jews for two hundred years after the crucifixion. *The Dream of the Rood* only briefly alludes to this story, mentioning the friends who dug it up and made it a glorious beacon. There is also *The History of the Holy Rood-Tree*, which traces the rood-tree from the Garden of Eden through the crucifixion. Seth, the son of Adam, returns to the Garden. He looks in and sees a marvelous tree, gay and green, which [like the Yggdrasil] reaches right up to heaven, and whose roots fall "Into the utterest end of hell" (Morris 69). He takes three kernels from that tree and when he buries his father, he plants them in his mouth. They sprout forth as three trees, a cypress, a cedar, and a pine. These become the magic rods of Moses. David inherits them, and then his son Solomon, who plants them in Jerusalem, where the rood-tree grows until the Jews cut from it the holy cross.

The *hærgtraf*, simply put, was a heathen sanctuary. In the greater context of the syncretic metanarrative of Mediaeval Britain, it seems that it was a place in an enchanted grove, a place by a clear spring flowing from the roots of an ancient and lordly tree, dripping with dew in the first beams of morning light. The Christian priests would sit there among the stones where in the old days the druids had offered sacrifices, but where now the *reordberend*, or news-bearer spoke of the new Christian God, who whispered from the trembling branches of the wondrous tree as the poets shaped new songs from their ancient word-bord.
CHAPTER VII

THE WYRD WORD HORD OF THE PRELINGUISTIC AGE

Trees are always significant in poetry, whether as elements of the setting or as abstract symbols, and by analyzing the metaphoric composition of the poet's tree words, one can develop a contextual metanarrative out of which to find clues to enhance the rest of the poem. In the early British metanarratives featuring the Holy Rood, it is at once the Cross of Christianity, and the Elder Tree of a much older native tradition. The syncretism of the image involves the Christian context as well as the Germanic and Celtic contexts, and one will not understand all that is happening with a poem unless one knows more than one of the foundation myths behind the image.

The problem is not terribly difficult when the words are literal. It is simple to translate the word *treow* as tree and to understand the meaning at its literal level. It is even fairly simple to make the allegorical and analogical leaps demanded by the image of the *Rood*, because the literal translation to the Cross is so easily made, and the codes of inference are so well known.

But there is another class of words which have intrigued poets and scholars for a long time, and these I call the “drisful words.” They are linked together by their morphological structure, but they are also linked together through a contextualization generating out of a systematic archetypology. This is, it seems to me, the basis of
etymology. Many have argued that even with the techniques of our own times, etymology cannot be counted on for anything approaching certainty; yet it is an intriguing field of study, and it is fascinating to observe its bumbling history in the early Age of Blake.

I will begin this part of the discussion with my own observations as an amateur translator, working first with the Middle-English of *Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight*, and later and more systematically with the Anglo-Saxon of *Beowulf*. As I mentioned in the introduction, I could not find the Middle-English word *Dryȝyn* in the Oxford English Dictionary. The closest connection seemed to be revealed in the Greek Lexicon, where I found the word ἄργυσαν, meaning “druids.” I was quickly dissuaded from believing that there was anything demonstrable or provable in the idea, but I could not erase from my mind the coincidence of all the words I found having some form of the *dry-* sound embedded in them and having something metaphorically to do with some aspect of the tree. The Greek word for “tree” was ἀργυς, and there were many other like-sounding words that seemed to me to have derived not only from some similar root sound, but from some ancient sense of tree-ness.

I began to build lists of words, and I quickly discovered the theory of the proto-language we call Indo-European. And the more I looked, the more I realized that there were indeed whole groups of words which not only had the similarity of sound, but which could go together to form coherent sensibilities. For example, I made an extensive study of the Glossary to Kläber’s *Beowulf*, looking for words beginning with the morpheme “dr.” This is a partial list:
The words seemed to me to fall into lists according to type: dragon; *dream*-as in “joy;” drink imagery; endurance imagery; blood imagery—perhaps associated with the liquid imagery of drinking; driving and striking imagery; *drihten* as Lord; *dryht* as
associated with valor, bravery, splendor, peace. Thus thirty-one words coalesced into eight categories.

I began to look for ways to put these categories within the contexts of trees and druids. The druidic category was fairly straightforward, including those senses which had to do with the lord-as-ruler as well as Lord-as-God. With a little imagination, the dragon fit in with the category of the tree, especially when I considered the Greek word and its association with the serpent.

The tree category forced allegorical thinking, but there were tree-aspects to consider, and as soon as I realized that wood was hard and durable, I began to see how those words having to do with endurance imagery fit. When I understood the lord as a warrior, then the striking and driving images fit as tree-like aspects extending to valor and bravery, even peace. Drinking images threw me for a while, but I began to think of the water dripping from the leaves, and of the spring at the roots of the World Tree. When I thought of the drug as the product of the tree or bush, and then imagined the vine as a potential variation on the theme of the tree, I found I could include wine, which made a good connection to drinking as well as *dream* in both its Anglo-Saxon sense of “joy” and its modern sense as a state of consciousness. I found that with a little imagination, everything fit nicely.

I tried other variations, and found that different languages favored different configurations, but that the letter “r” in connection with either a “d” or a “t” and any vowel was likely to fit somewhere in my tree paradigm, which I had come to call “the
context of drisful words,” after the Greek word δρίς, associated with δυναμός and having to do with “power.” One of the most fruitful contexts turned out to be the sequence of “-r-d,” which yielded the following partial list from Klaeber’s *Beowulf* Glossary:

“r-d” words from *Beowulf*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bord</td>
<td>board, shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eard</td>
<td>land, estate, region, dwelling, home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heard</td>
<td>hard, strong, brave, hardy, severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hlaford</td>
<td>lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hord</td>
<td>hoard, treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hyrde</td>
<td>herd, guardian, keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utan-weard</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weard</td>
<td>guardian, watchman, keeper, lord, possessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word-hord</td>
<td>word-hoard, store of words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To associate *bord* with the tree was elementary. *Eard* was not much more difficult, for what was land if not a region of trees. It was beginning to look as though all of these words, if I thought about it hard enough, could be made to fit into some system of coding or other that had to do with one aspect or another of the tree.

My favorite connection was in the contextualization of the Lord with the Word. It seemed to me to be especially revealing that words like *ordain* and *wyrd* and *dream* all came together within the context of the Sacred Tree. I noticed with glee the name of Yggdrasil, from whose roots poured forth the Spring of Urd, and from whose rood-like branches was Odin hung to learn the secret of the runes. Wisdom and poetry all came to be tied together in one giant coded narrative involving the morphemes invented by an
ancient race beyond our memory, for whom the lightening from the sky had set off an association of the oak with the power of heavens.

I remember how I would build a fire in that ring of stones, how I’d stand in the smoke and cool mist, staring into the embers and obsessing on the subject of words. I truly imagined that I was indeed like Odin, for I began to see runes in the shadows of branches, and trees in the morphology of a hundred words. The more I looked at it, the more convinced I became that a great deal of poetry had an embedded system of archetypal treeness, and the more I believed that if I worked long enough, I would discover a code hidden in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in *The Dream of the Rood*, in *Beowulf*, and indeed, throughout the system of human language.

With this confession behind me now, I turn to one of the most intriguing aspects of the Welsh metanarrative, and that is the attempt by a number of scholars in the early part of the eighteenth century to recover the lost original language.
CHAPTER VIII

DE LINGUA BARDIS

As I have indicated, what I call the Welsh metanarrative is anything but purely Welsh. It is a body of narratives deriving from the Middle East, from Greece, from Troy, from Rome, from Ireland and Scotland and Denmark and Germany. To be sure, there is a core which the natives like to believe is their very own, and to be sure, there is some evidence that parts of it did indeed originate within the boundaries we recognize today as having to do with Modern Wales. Whatever we make it out to be now, in the last part of the seventeenth century it was all but lost. Manuscripts sat unread on bookshelves not only because no one had any interest in such provincial literature, but because no one had the skill required to read the archaic language. The language of the Old North, a Brittonic dialect called Cumbric, was sufficiently close to Welsh for Y Gododdin and a handful of other ancient poems to have been transmitted into the early manuscripts of the tenth through the fourteenth centuries, but was sufficiently different as to be unreadable by a people who had by and large been forced to speak English since the before the time of the Tudors.

Yet even in the worst of times, there was an interest in preserving Welsh, and it is in this context that we turn our attention to the Welsh-born Oxford scholar, Edward Lhuyd, who in May of 1697 left Oxford and made a tour of four years duration through
Lhuyd, who in May of 1697 left Oxford and made a tour of four years duration through Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany (Campbell and Thomson xiii). Lhuyd was a natural scientist with a keen interest in botany and geology, but from 1693, when he was invited to “write additional notes on the antiquities of the counties of Wales for Edmund Gibson’s new edition of William Camden’s Britannia,” he found himself more and more interested in philology and antiquities (Stephens 349).

This was an era before the interest in the “druidic monuments” would capture the popular imagination. Stuart Piggott tells us that “on the whole the general attitude of scholars and the educated public they addressed on Celts and Druids was, by the early eighteenth century, objective and unromantic” (Piggott 131). The Druids were commonly accepted as having been the priests of the ancient Britons on the authority of Tacitus, Caesar, and a very few other historical sources, but they were not yet idealized, so that when John Aubrey hypothesized that the stone monuments at Avebury and Stonehenge were somehow connected with the Druids, Edward Lhuyd concurred in rather even tones, writing “I conjecture they were Places of Sacrifice and other religious Rites in the Times of Paganism, seeing the Druids were our antient heathen Priests” (Piggott 135).

Lhuyd’s interest was not in popularizing the Druids, but in gathering a foundation of broad knowledge for a complete history of the Celtic regions. Throughout his four-year journey, he “made detailed notes, copied manuscripts and corresponded with a host of learned acquaintances” (Stephens 349). After returning to Oxford in 1701, he spent the rest of his life working with the huge volume of materials he had gathered. Unfortunately
he was only able to publish part of his work, for he died with the bulk of it incomplete, and
the larger part of his collections were later lost to fires. But in 1707 he was able to publish
the first volume of his *Archaeologia Britannica*, which included not only grammars and
dictionaries of several Celtic languages, but scientific discussions on the nature and
conditions of their phonological variations. His work was the bedrock of the modern
study of Celtic languages. As Meic Stephens writes, “The scientific method of dealing
with the material and the descriptive, rather than theoretical, attitude towards the data,
make this book a keystone in the history of comparative philology, of which Lhuyd was a
pioneer, if not the father” (349).

It is unfortunate for the science of Celtic studies that Lhuyd had no worthy
successor. He died suddenly in 1709, the victim, it is thought, of over-work, and David
Parry, his assistant, was too hopeless a drunkard to be of any use (Campbell xiv). The
work began in such good manner by this scientist was dispersed, and the character of
Welsh philology has not, to this day, fully recovered.

What took place in the stead of a scientific study of the Celtic languages and their
historical circumstances was something of rather more interest to creative writers than to
scientists, for interest was rising in the Druidic monuments, and not in what we might
recognize as the scientific way, but rather in an imaginative way. Literally speaking, the
idea of the connection of Stonehenge with the Druids can be traced back to the twelfth
century when Geoffrey of Monmouth recorded the legends of Merlin’s transporting of the
great stones from Ireland (Piggott 136). Though this was only one of several theories
current in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was the most exciting to consider, and people, then as now, had less interest in that which is accurate than they had in that which is fun and exciting to contemplate. The other two theories as to the origin of the stone monuments involved the Romans (championed by Inigo Jones in 1655) and the Danes, a theory promoted by Walter Charleton in his *Chorea Gigantum* of 1663 (Piggott 140). The theory of the Druidic origin of Stonehenge had no better claim than either of the other two theories, except that it placed the genius of its builders in a native race rather than in a foreign race.

Though primary responsibility for the success in the mid-eighteenth century of the Druidic origin theory must lie with William Stukeley, who published two books on the subject, he was not alone, nor was he the first to propose that the Druids dated back to the time of Noah. Other writers bear at least part of the credit, and insofar as the eventual impact of Druidism in the Age of Blake, one in particular deserves our close scrutiny. The Reverend Henry Rowlands, in 1723, published his book entitled *Mona Antiqua Restaurata*, in which he not only wrote an “Archaeological Discourse on the Antiquities” of his native Angelsey (*Mona* in Welsh), but in which he also wrote of the descent of the Druids from Noah (Piggott 143).

Rowlands was a correspondent of Edward Lhuyd, but he did not share Lhuyd’s scientific methodology. Whereas Lhuyd was a descriptive linguist, Rowlands was an imaginative linguist, as we can surmise from the title page of his book, wherein he includes the subtitle: “an Appendix containing a Comparative Table of Primitive Words and the
Derivatives of them in several of the Tongues of Europe, with Remarks upon them” (Piggott 141). He was among the first to popularize a linguistic connection which would be of great importance to the idea of the Druid in the Age of Blake, for in his book he wrote, “There are very many antient British words which have no resemblance at all, no coherence in Sound and Signification with the words of any other Language in the World except the Hebrew” (Rowlands 36).

To his credit, Rowlands noticed something about the inter-relation of languages many decades before Sir William Jones would turn the study into a science. With that in mind, it is quite interesting to read what he writes on the origin of the word Druid:

On this account, I take it, the Indians called their great Promoters of Civility and Humanity, Brachmans, probably from a primitive word, they might carry with them, Barach, to praise and celebrate: And no doubt the Æthiopians and Scythians gave to theirs also suitable Appelatives at that time, tho’ now forgotten: And thus it was that we the Celtæ came to name our first Masters of Knowledge, Druids, from the Celtish word Derw, as ‘tis generally thought; and that because these Men seem’d passionately affected to that Tree...” (55).

That tree was, of course, the oak, and here we see the beginnings of etymology taking form. It was not scientific enough to withstand the rigors of time, but it sparked the imagination of those who read it, for they were inclined to want to find in themselves and their race the origins of something wonderful.
In the year 1723, Rowlands' book was published, and in that same year William Stukeley, while at Avebury, began to write his own book under the original title *The History of the Temple of the Ancient Celts* (Piggott 146). Stuart Piggott tells us that “the use of the word ‘Celt’ as an alternative to ‘Briton’ was now coming into general use among the British antiquaries.” This was largely due to David Jones’ 1706 translation of a French book written by Paul-Yves Pezron, popularized under the title *The Antiquities of Nations, More Particularly of the Celtæ or Gauls, Taken to be Originally the same People as our Ancient Britains*. In this book, the theory was advanced that the Celts had descended through Gomer, and thus Japhet and Noah. Stukeley, writing with this in the background, pursued his interests until in 1740 he published a book entitled *Stonehenge, a Temple restor'd to the British Druids*, followed in 1743 by *Abury, a Temple of the British Druids, with Some Others, Described* (Piggott 148). Stukeley intended these two books as part of a seven-volume work on Patriarchal Christianity, which had as its purpose (in his own words) “to combat the deists from an unexpected quarter, and to preserve so noble a monument of our ancestors’ piety, I may add, orthodoxy” (148-9).

Stukeley had entered Holy Orders in 1729, and so found himself engaged in a defense of Christianity in which his idea of Druidism must conform with his Christian beliefs. The enemy was Natural Religion, “la religion de Adam, de Seth, de Noe . . . aussi ancienne que le monde,” as Voltaire wrote in 1752. Stukeley had no problem accepting that the Druidic religion was the oldest in the world, but he could not accept that it was the mechanistic religion of the Deists. He thought that Christianity itself went back to the
beginning of time, and not in the way promoted by John Toland, who wrote *Christianity not Mysterious* and who "belittled or repudiated the miraculous elements in the Faith, and undermined the necessity of Revelation" (Piggott 151). He followed, rather, the ideas of Matthew Tindal, who wrote in 1730 a book entitled *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature*. Stukeley's Druid came to England soon after Noah's flood with the Phoenicians, and were "of Abraham's religion entirey."

What had this to do with history? The better word is mythistory, for though there was attention paid to the evidences of the Druid in historic literature, there was more than a little of the Druid-as-wished-for in all that floated around in the years immediately preceding the birth of William Blake. And what has the mythistorical Druid to do with the literature of the Welsh Bard? The story becomes quite confused, for though there was that which could be identified on the basis of ancient manuscripts as being authentically Welsh in origin, it was thoroughly mixed in with the literatures of not only other cultures, but of other ages. Lhuyd had begun the work of sorting these manuscripts out, but there was no methodology in place whereby scholars knew how to proceed, and much was done to pollute the streams of historical evidence.
In 1757, the year announced by Emmanuel Swedenborg as the year of the Second Coming, two important events occurred: Thomas Gray published his poem, "The Bard," and William Blake was born. In that year Dr. Johnson was engaged with the on-going work of his Dictionary, continuing his systematic inquiry as to the relationships between the English, Welsh, and Irish languages. James Macpherson labored with the collection of his Fragments, and Bishop Percy with his Reliques. William Collins lingered in the last insane years of his life, his great ode on the superstitions of the Highlands written, but as yet unfound. Edward Williams, who would later come to be known as the Bard Iolo Morganwg, was ten; Richard Llwyd, who would be remembered as the Bard of Snowdon, was five, as was Thomas Chatterton, the Rowley poet. The manuscript of Sir Gaweyn and the Grene Knyght sat unread on a shelf beneath a bust of Nero.

It is relatively easy to follow the mainstream influences of the early years of William Blake, and one may easily see that he lived in a world in which the work of Gray, Johnson, and Macpherson had great impact. But the Welsh scholars likewise had impact on the discourse, though that thread is not as easily followed. The next chapter discusses the poet Thomas Gray and his influence on Blake. In the course of doing so, we will take a closer look at the community known as the London Welsh and several of their bright
a closer look at the community known as the London Welsh and several of their bright stars. Though little attention is given the mid-century Welsh philologists, they are quite important to understanding the Welsh metanarrative behind the mature works of William Blake.

THOMAS GRAY

Writers in the Age of Blake wrote in reaction to what I conveniently call the Old Mythos. The Old Mythos is a very complex combination of Christian and Classic transcendent metanarratives, the result not only of the source texts of the Bible and the Greco-Roman myths, but of all that had generated out of the discussion of those texts over two millenia and more. It was never simple, but by the mid-eighteenth century the literature on transcendency included ideas from Dante and Milton and Shakespeare and Swedenborg and Locke and Bacon and a host of others. Though it was anything but coherent, it did fall into systems of coding, with Christianity as the master narrative, and with the Greco-Roman diegesis as a legitimate source for psychic characterizations.

Howard Weinbrot argues that the eighteenth century was characterized by a general "revulsion with the literary and moral values of the Greek epic, and with roughly comparable Germanic values and their modern political ramifications and negative associations" (Weinbrot 22). In writing about the period of James Macpherson's introduction of Ossian, circa 1761 and '63, Weinbrot points out that the Celtic poetry
experienced its success in large part because "their ancient veneer allowed them to embody modern Anglo-Scottish anthropology, politics, and literary trends" (11). These modern trends stood in contrast with older tendencies to venerate the Classics, a tendency which had been, by degrees, dying out even in an age that defined literacy in terms of the imitation of classical forms and images. As early as 1664, René Rapin wrote that "Achilles is a compendium of 'Imperfections and Vices.'" In 1714 Houdar de la Motte says that "the whole of the *Iliad* is but a piece embroider'd with Pride, Anger and Revenge." Nor were the Greeks the only targets of this revisionist tendency:

No one could forget that the Goths ruined Rome's ruins and enough cultures, libraries, and lives to gladden the fiercest Achilles. For Thomas Brown in 1695 the Goths "destroy'd Learning root and branch"; for Nathan Bailey in 1730 they "brought into Subjection and Barbarism a great Part of the Christian World"; for Alexander Pope in 1743 Goths are an emblem of a dead civilization. Later in the century Thomas Percy laments that the northern nations rose "upon the ruins of literature and the fine arts." (7-8)

More than merely literary in nature, there was a political disdain for the Hanoverians "and the German roots their supporters nourished" (8). This fed the "Jacobite rhetoric during the Scottish rebellion of 1745; nor was anti-German anger limited to Jacobites. During the Seven Years War the British army was overextended and Germans were invited to defend Britain on her own soil" (9). The rising tide of hostility "was adaptable for literary purposes," political as well as cultural, and as Weinbrot points out, the British were more
than happy to find in Macpherson's Celtic epics a favorable contrast to the bloody Greeks and Goths. This aspect of disdain in the eighteenth century was "well mapped by Nathan Drake in 1798 [when he lamented] the Gothic afterlife in which drinking, killing, and maiming are eternal amusements, and praises the Celtic afterlife in which Fingal's warriors 'listened in rapture to the praise of their bards, who sung of friendship" (10).

This change in the British attitude toward the literature of the classical south and the Germanic North was a gradual change, as Weinbrot shows, and although Macpherson's fictional epics are among the most spectacular examples of the New Mythos in the Age of Blake, they were by no means the first. Gray's poem The Bard was published in 1757 and reflected not only Gray's long-running interest in Celtic lore, but his knowledge of an already extant body of more or less scholarly work on the subject. Gray had access to many books in his personal library and that at Cambridge, including John David Rhys' 1592 Welsh grammar (Cambrobrytannicae Cymraecaeve Linguae Institutiones), William Stukeley's archaeological studies of the stone monuments at Stonehenge and Avebury, and Thomas Carte's History of England, from which he took the two lines giving him the authority for the legend of the "Massacre of the Bards" (Snyder 34-36). Gray's particular sources are vague to us, due to his refusal to include notes. When the public failed to understand the Welsh allusions, he wrote gleefully to his friend and editor, William Mason, "I would not have put another note to save the souls of all the owls in London. It is extremely well as it is—nobody understands me, and I am perfectly satisfied" (Snyder 38n).
Every bit as important as the books were his friends and correspondents. The popular blind Welsh harpist John Parry taught him something of the musicality of the Welsh meter known as *cynghanedd*, a poetic form Gray attempted to follow in this line from *The Bard*: "Weave the warp and weave the woof" (39n). Parry is remembered for his three volumes of Welsh airs, and it was he who induced Gray to finish and publish *The Bard*, begun in 1754 and then abandoned (38).

Following the publication of *The Bard*, Gray came to correspond with Bishop Thomas Percy, who during the period in question was compiling the materials for his work entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Through a friendship with a Professor Lort, who taught Greek at Cambridge and whose mother was Welsh, Gray came to know of Lewis Morris, the "greatest living authority on Welsh literature" (Snyder 40). These men fueled Gray's interest, providing material that would build up in Gray's consciousness over the next few years.

But of all the people who participated in Gray's search for the Celtic during these years, none was finally so important as Ieuan Fardd—Ieuan the tall Bard—known outside of his native Wales as Evan Evans. Gray received confirmation of the legend of the massacre of the bards from Evans and was inspired to write his poem *The Death of Hoël* by Evans's Latin translation of the Old Welsh *Y Gododdin*, and for that reason we ought to look a little closer at Evans's contribution to Gray's scholarship.
In 1746, upon Ieuan's appointment to a position of "service at a 'Gentleman's house,'" his mentor Lewis Morris undertook to write instructions for the young scholar's behavior. Buried within warnings not to exceed his station is a paragraph of particular interest:

You may be as forward as you please in repeating or shewing any production of your own, in the Welsh, if you hit upon a new tune or a new subject, and in case Clergymen or Scholars are present, any Quotation out of the Classics likewise; Especially if you can translate it into Welsh which is the Language admired there; and this will shew your Tact and judgement and it is the Awen and not you that Speaks. (Lewis xiii)

We see a pride of place being given to Welsh, and an emphasis on intellectual and poetic discussion of the Classics with clergymen and scholars. But most especially we see that Morris encourages Evans to be forward when "it is the Awen" that speaks.

The Awen, as I have earlier indicated, is a poetic power associated with Taliesin, a Welsh bard of the sixth century to whom Aneirin alludes in *Y Gododdin*, and to whom Gray himself had alluded in line 121 of *The Bard*. Taliesin is known as a shape-shifter, who can "traverse time and space and possesses a universal knowledge of the past, present, and future" (Bloomfield and Dunn 80). "More particularly, he has carried with him the kind of knowledge that is requisite for all human poets and has become their
ultimate exemplar." This mythic sense of the poet as supernaturally attuned is evident throughout the historical poetry of the Welsh, and it is this knowledge to which Morris refers in his instructions to Evans, who hardly needed to be reminded of so fundamental a precept as that voiced in the word *awen*.

"Etymologically, *awen* means 'breath', 'breathing-in', and thus 'inspiration'" (Bloomfield and Dunn 80). This resonates with the biblical idea of *pneuma*, which likewise literally means "breath," but which is understood within the Christian metanarrative as "spirit." This connection may seem purely coincidental to the linguist educated in scientific methods following after Sir William Jones' announcement of his theory of Indo-European common sources, but it should not be so dismissed in the time of Macpherson and Rowland Jones.

Evans spent his time searching out ancient Welsh manuscripts, making it his personal mission not only to compile a directory of personal and academic libraries where the manuscripts were housed, but to copy and translate them as well. Between 1757 and 1761 he transcribed and translated many of the most important ancient manuscripts, including *Y Gododdin* and *The Book of Taliesin* (Stephens 187). He was certainly a better scholar than James Macpherson. When he encountered obscure passages in his texts, he left gaps (Lewis xxiii). "He was too loyal to the originals to invent when he did not understand, much less to elaborate and improvise. No skeptic could cast doubt on the honesty of [his translations]."
By 1759, Evans had completed the first draft of the *De Bardis Dissertatio*, containing Latin translations of selected Old Welsh poems. *The Triumph of Owen*, *The Death of Hoël*, and *Caradoc* are all results of Gray's explorations into Evans's work with the Welsh antiquities, and represent some of the earliest entries of the ancient Welsh into the infant mythos of the Age of Blake.

By this time, however, Evans had lost the respect of Lewis Morris, for he began to evidence the weakness that would hamper his credibility throughout the rest of his life. "He grows drunk," Morris wrote to his brother, "and a mere poet in all respects" (Lewis xiv). Respect for his morality and poetry aside, however, Morris never lost his belief in Evans as a scholar. Though his personal discipline occasioned disgust among those who knew him, his scholarship continued to grow. He had matriculated at Oxford in 1750, and entered Merton College as a servitor. He was in residence until 1754, when he left without taking a degree. While there he obtained permission to read the *Red Book of Hergest*, which was the richest collection in one manuscript of medieval Welsh literature, containing in the manner of a well-constructed anthology, "all the principal prose texts" (Stephens 506). In 1757 he returned and spent three months transcribing the *Red Book of Hergest* (Lewis xviii-xix). By 1759, he had also transcribed *Y Gododdin* and much of the poetry associated with Taliesin (xx). "With notable single-mindedness he had laid the foundations of his study of early Welsh poetry. The transcripts which he had now made filled five large volumes when they were bound at Dublin in 1759" (xx-xxi).
These years were the prime of his career. In addition to transcribing the manuscripts, he began to translate them into Latin. He thought the task "as hard as for an Englishman to translate the oldest Saxon or Runic poetry without either dictionary or glossary to help him." By 1759, "he had completed the first draft of the 'De Bardis Dissertatio,' containing Latin translations of selected poems."

Not long after this, in 1761 through correspondence with Thomas Percy, we become aware of Thomas Gray. In a letter dated 21 July, 1761, Percy wrote to Evans, saying:

I am told you are acquainted with M' Gray the Poet: pray has he any foundation for what he has assered in his Ode on the British Bard, viz. "That there is a Tradition among the Inhabitants of Wales, that out Edward I's destroyed all the British Bards that fell into his hands"?—The existence of that tradition has been questioned. (Lewis 5)

Evans's reply indicates that he was already in communication with Gray:

I have sent you an antient British ode with a translation as literal as that wherewith the Greek poets are commonly rendered into Latin, which was the way I was advised to translate them by a friend who wanted to send some by way of specimen to M' Gray. (Lewis 6)

The friend was Daines Barrington, a Judge on the North Wales circuit (Lewis 6n). It was at his request that Evans entered into the very difficult task of translation:
I have a great veneration for their works, yet for want of a through knowledge [sic] of their language, wherein there are many obsolete words, not to be found in any dictionary or vocabulary, I cannot translate some of the best pieces of the Bards of the sixth century without great pains or study. (Lewis 7)

The letter goes on to decry the loss of the work of the Bards, whose order has been extinct since the time of the first Queen Elizabeth. In one century more "their valuable works will be in the utmost danger of being entirely lost" (9):

I have made it my business for some years past to transcribe some of our old MSS. that regard history in order in time (if God give me life and health) to contradict our disingenuous adversaries, who as they know nothing to the purpose of the matter, peremptorily condemn our histories as fabulous and fictitious. (9)

We see in this letter that Evans is quite aware of his work as a historian, linguist, and mythographer. With this authority he replies: "It is very true that Edward the first destroyed the Welsh Bards" (11).

Modern historians no longer believe the tale to be true. Meic Stephens tells us that this traditional tale "is believed to have had its origins in Welsh fables about the burning of Welsh books in London which were confused with the claim that the poets, too, had been proscribed" (Stephens 388). "This may have been an exaggeration of the fact that kings of
medieval England had been known to license Welsh poets because they caused discord by their vaticinations."

A good deal of the Welsh tradition of the eighteenth century had its roots in Geoffrey's twelfth-century adaptations of the old myths of Arthur and the Trojans. As Prys Morgan writes, he "adapted the old myths and invented a Welsh tradition; he emphasized the Trojan origins of the British, Britain taking its name from Brutus, and Wales (Cymru) from Camber" (Morgan 46, rpt in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition*). One of the primary aims of Welsh patriots was to find and publish the Welsh original thought to be behind Geoffrey's history, for there was still a belief in the prophetic or messianic dimension of the Old Welsh poetry. Evans noted this in his discussion of the Welsh bardic tradition, especially in his "Dissertatio de Bardis." After the loss of independence in the late thirteenth century "the literature of brud or prophecy took on great importance" (Morgan 46).

Evans was a very careful and cautious scholar, but he was not sufficiently detached so as to avoid the confusion of Druids and bards. As we have seen, there was a persistent belief that the Druids of Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and Tacitus's *Agricola* were succeeded by the Welsh bards. The connection with Anglesey was conclusive enough for some; the authority and prophetic nature of their poetry gave additional weight to the arguments. Evans grew to maturity and learned his native history in the context of Lhuyd, Toland, and Rowlands. His mentor, Lewis Morris, when he founded the London Welsh expatriate organization known as the Cymroodorions, designed their banner with an Ancient Druid
supporting the arms. Evans believed that the Old Welsh poetry was difficult to understand because it was written in the “Druids’ Cabala,” and that the great Welsh scholars of the sixteenth-century Renaissance Gruffydd Robert and Sion Dafydd Rhys were the Druids’ successors (Morgan 63). He could hardly be expected, in spite of his fastidiousness and his interest in demonstrating the authenticity of the Welsh bardic tradition, to have avoided the connections accepted within the master narrative of the day.

In the course of Evans’s lifetime, the Welsh bard underwent a transformation. Thomas Gray, according to Prys Morgan, did not himself believe the story of the massacre of the bards literally, but soon after the publication of “The Bard” in 1757 the Welsh themselves began to believe the story:

The Morris circle earlier on had seen the Welsh bard primarily as an entertainer. To them poetry was an amusing social pastime, and this had led to a rupture with Goronwy Owen, who saw poetry as the sublime or epic literature. Evan Evans belonged to the generation which saw the bard as a heroic creature, often driven into great hostility to his environment. He deeply admired the earlier Welsh poets who had been real warriors. Iolo Morganwg carried this idolizing of the figure of the bard to its greatest heights. . . . (Morgan 82-83)

By the 1770s and 1780s Gray’s bard had become a stock subject for many painters, including Paul Sandby, Philip de Loutherbourg, John Fuseli, and John Martin (Morgan 83). Among the earliest drawings exhibited by William Blake was his painting “The Bard, from Gray,” shown at the Royal Academy in 1785 (Bentley 30). It would be difficult to
overstate the importance of Gray’s contribution to the Age of Blake, for he not only brought the Bard into the consciousness of the London literati, but made it an icon in the minds of Welshmen in their own land.

ROLAND JONES

One of the leading authorities on philological matters during this period was a Welshman named Rowland Jones. Born in 1722 at Llanbedrog in Caernarfonshire (which is the region of Mount Snowdon in Northwestern Wales), he was admitted to the Inner Temple in London in 1751 (Stephens 322). He returned to Wales before Blake’s birth, but during the time of Blake’s youth he published five books through the London presses. In 1764, when Blake was seven, the first of these books appeared, called *The Origin of Language and Nations*. In 1768, when Blake was eleven, Jones published *An Heiroglyfic Grammar*. Jones’s *Philosophy of Words* was released the following year; *The Circles of Gomer* came out in 1771, and in 1773, when Blake was sixteen, Jones published his final book, called *The Io-Triads*. So it was that as Gray’s bard was gaining iconic status in the Welsh master narrative, a parallel narrative was being generated giving substance to theories of Welsh as the proto-language. We have no evidence of Blake’s having read any of these books, but we know that he was apprenticed to the antiquarian James Basire, and it must be that he was present at discussions between Basire and his antiquarian friends of the nature of language and of the ancient origins of the Britons.
It is difficult to find anything written on the subject of Rowland Jones or his books that does not ridicule his efforts. Indeed, he makes an easy target. In the 1970 Scolar Press edition of Jones's *Circles of Gomer*, the editor writes:

The work here reproduced, though its aim was laudable enough proved disastrous in execution. Jones laboured indefatigably, and with uncommon obtuseness, at his dedicated task of proving that English was a medium for enshrining all knowledge and perception, and in the *Circles of Gomer* sought to prove his theories in place-names. The work bristles, it is true, with much idiotic conjecture, but there is also a fair and, to date, neglected proportion of inspired guesswork. The additional section on English as a universal language is of interest in reviving a theme which had remained dormant since the activities of Wilkins, Lodwyck and the "universalists" of the Royal Society.

The laudable aim of Rowland Jones was, in his own words, "to shew that alphabetic writing language and knowledge derive their origin by revelation and tradition from the fountain of all perfect knowledge" (Preface to *The Io Triads, or the Tenth Muse*). Jones believed language to have derived from older languages, and more specifically, that English had "superior pretentions ... to originality and universality" (42):

This copiousness, simplicity, and purity of the English language, is in a great measure owing to its being permitted naturally to partake of the various ancient dialects of our British ancestors, as well as the continental and learned languages, without suffering it to fall into any one particular
mode of artificial grammar, or to be forced out of its natural state of connection, by any addition of artificial signs of grammar. But preserving its arrangements and sounds according to their natural significations, and the most ancient and uncorrupt standard, and keeping its connatural place with the growth of science, it has in a manner accidentally recovered its universal primitive and philosophical state, and is thereby become the best living language for an universal one. (42)

Jones’s argument is an interesting one in the light of modern theories of language. We cannot accept his claim that it “accidentally recovered its universal primitive and philosophical state,” but it is quite true that it partook of many dialects and languages in its evolution. The roots of a valid theory of linguistics are here, and that makes it worth our while to look a little closer into what Jones thought.

For example, at the conclusion of his final book, The Io-Triads, he presents a table of the “western, primitive, or older Japhetan languages and dialects” (49). His use of the term “Japhetan” goes back to his embellishment of the theory that Japheth, one of the three sons of Noah, was the progenitor of the Celtic nation. As we have seen, Jones was not the first to promote this theory; he was merely following the established use of the Biblical metanarrative as grounding for the growing Druidic metanarrative. His table of languages runs thus: the most ancient was the Antediluvian or primitive language (49). That developed into the Gomeric, Cymbric, Phrygian or Celtic, which then yielded Erse (or British), Welsh, Irish, Cornish, and Greek, among others. The next generation
includes Belgic, Teutonic, Frisian, Danish and Swedish; and the final generation yields French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Flemish, Dutch, and so forth. Of these, English is, by all the virtues heretofore stated, the best suited as an universal language:

On the contrary the German, though expressive, wants copiousness; the Italian, by polishing has lost its original expression; and the French, though originally both copious and expressive hath been so far forced out its natural state, that its signs and sounds have lost their original correspondence; many of their sounds, being through nose, instead of the organs of speech, are more like the noise of beasts than organical, articulate, and rational sounds; and their artificial grammar, has wholly destroyed their natural arrangement and connection by their variations, and the addition of arbitrary signs of construction. (42)

So Jones arrives at his [correct] conclusion that English is the perfect language. The modern linguist can find fault with virtually every line of his argument, but in the time of Blake's youth it was not only the subject of debate, there were people who were quite ready to argue on Jones's side. By Blake's own reference to Adam and Noah as Druids it seems evident that he had internalized the Japhetic/Druidic metanarrative:

Adam was a Druid, and Noah; also Abraham was called to succeed the Druidical age, which began to turn allegorical and mental signification into corporeal command, whereby human sacrifice would have depopulated the earth. All these things are written in Eden. The artist is an inhabitant of that happy country; and if everything goes on as it has begun, the world of vegetation and generation may
expect to be opened again to Heaven, through Eden, as it was in the beginning.

(Blake *Descriptive Catalogue* qtd. in Erdman 533)
CHAPTER X

TRIADS OF WILLIAM BLAKE

It is hardly possible to overestimate the influence of the Welsh Bard on the British imagination in the Age of Blake, for it gave focus to a national desire for a native mythos. For Blake, it gave structure to his own poetic imaginings. Not only is the ancient bard materially present in many of Blake's works, but his poetics reflect the poetics of the ancient bardic materials, what the Welsh call the *barddas*. Dr. Johnson would no doubt have been scathingly sceptical had he lived long enough to have read Blake's proclamation of the voice of the bard, but Blake was not encumbered by Johnson's dedication to empiricism. Nor was he overly concerned with scholasticism, as Gray had been in his search for bardic lore. Blake was a visionary, a man who himself communed with spirits, and his mythos generated out of inspired imagination, largely unique and of his own making. He did not however create a wholly new or unique mythic paradigm; rather it fell into place as a restructuring of the Christian and the Classical paradigms through the filter of his own perception.

Whether or not it was created with a conscious application of Welsh bardic principles we cannot say for certain. We know a good deal about the circumstances under which Blake's work was composed, but we cannot find in the canon of Blake scholarship any reference to his genetic roots beyond his parents' generation and very little about his
early life. W. B. Yeats and Edwin John Ellis, in their 1893 *Works of William Blake*, proclaim father James Blake to have been “of Irish extraction,” known in his youth as James O’Neil (Ellis and Yeats, *Memoir* 3). G. E. Bentley, Jr., in his Introduction to the Ellis and Yeats, says of this assertion that it is “embarrassing,” that it “will not bear scrutiny:”

Of course, we do not know that his grandfather James Blake had not changed his name from John (or Cornelius) O’Neil (or O’Neal) and come from Ireland, but there is no surviving evidence or likelihood that this is the case. Blake’s Irish background seems to be pure Irish wishful thinking. (Ellis and Yeats, Introduction 8-9)

Because of the privileged position of the character of the Bard in Blake’s mythos, and because of his demonstrated knowledge of bardic lore, I suspect that at least some of Blake’s forebears were Celtic, and that they were members of a large Anglicized Welsh community in London, whose origins dated back well beyond the mid-eighteenth century. Records of the Honourable Society of Cymrodorion suggest that Welsh bards carried their harps through the streets, and Blake knew of their music and very likely met some of their scholars during the time of his apprenticeship. It seems likely that he sang with them on their saints’ days in the years of his maturity, and although he was not trained specifically as a bard, it can be shown that he knew and held as his central conviction an internalized understanding of the Awen.
As discussed in the earlier chapters, the Awen (or Awenydd) is what the Welsh call something they translate variously as "the Muse," "genius," or "the Holy Spirit." An Awenyddion is a bard who practices poetics under the influence of the Awenydd, and according to Geraldis Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), is someone who seems to have drunk the Holy Spirit in a Cup of Fire and seen the future through madness (Cambrensis 179-80).

Though Blake never uses the Welsh word, and only rarely any other Welsh word or placename, it is clear that he spent his life obsessed with genius, and that Wales is one of the four corners of his Jerusalem. The opening plate of Jerusalem The Emanation of The Giant Albion, read under the influence of the Welsh metanarrative, begins with a future-looking bard opening the door, holding in his hand a circular radiance as he steps across the threshold. A set of empty manacles hangs on the frame. On Plate 2, the title page, we see revealed a sleeping winged and naked woman, above whom fly no fewer than a dozen angelic creatures. Plate 3 depicts Blake's address "To the Public," which states explictely:

Reader! of Books! of heaven,
And of that God from whom
Who I mysterious Sinais awful cave,
To Man the wond'rous art of writing gave,
Again he speaks in thunder and in fire!
Of the Measure in which the following poem is written We who dwell on Earth can do nothing of ourselves, every thing is conducted by Spirits, no less than Digestion or Sleep.

Poetry, Fetter'd. Fetters the Human Race. Nations are Destroy'd or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish! The Primeval State of Man, was Wisdom, Art, and Science.

Blake may not say the word Awen, but if the archetypal structure given us by Geraldis Cambresis is applied, then Blake certainly follows the pattern. Indeed, it is made clear here that Blake follows no set pattern of poetic structure, and while that may be seen as denying the Welsh metanarrative as an exclusive archetypal system, it certainly does not exclude it from the palette.

This influence of the Awen can be demonstrated in many other pieces, as well as in the extra-linguistic evidence of certain paintings and music, both those we have and those we have lost. In fact, it can be a very rewarding challenge for modern writers, painters and musicians to attempt to recover the lost work. That will be the subject for a later discussion, though; for now we will concern ourselves with the works we have, and the metanarrative structure they reveal.

The first work I wish to contextualize under the Welsh system is Blake's account of the now-lost painting entitled "The Antient Britons," which was a fresco watercolor
some fourteen feet high and ten feet wide. It was the focal piece of Blake's exhibition at his brother's house in 1809, and we know it from his *Descriptive Catalogue* (Bentley *Records* 217-8). In the prose account of this painting, Blake illustrates the Welsh core of his poetic cosmos, drawing connections between the three survivors of the sixth-century Battle of Camlan and "Poetry as it exists now on earth" (*Descriptive Catalogue* 535). This work contains important keys toward understanding the multiple aspects of Blake's spiritual bodies in his other transcendental works, for it not only presents a Welsh Triad, but it explicates the anagogic level of the fourth member as well.

This we will consider in the context of Blake's earlier paintings of the poems of Thomas Gray (circa 1800), for the iconography revealed in Blake's interpretation of Gray's Welsh prophecy serves to illustrate much of what we might hope to see if we were to find the lost painting. On the verso of his title page to *Watercolour Designs of the Poems of Thomas Gray* Blake wrote:

> Around the Springs of Gray my wild root weaves.

> Traveller repose & Dream among my leaves.

This very bardic (to say nothing of Yggdrasilic) statement places Gray's portrait of the Bard at the center of Blake's poetics. Not only is Blake proclaiming Gray as a source of poetic inspiration; he is doing so in terms of the most native of magical images, that of the dreamer among the leaves by a sacred spring. I will not here recount the stories of Odin and the Yggdrasil, the haergtraf of Hrothgar, or *The Dream of the Rood*, for I have written about these earlier in "The Haergtraf and the Rood."
The obvious influences on Blake are evidenced in the paintings of *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*. Not so apparent is the influence of Gray's missing poem, *The Death of Hoël*, which is a translation Gray made around 1760 from Evan Evans' work in the ancient Welsh, but which did not appear in the 1790 Mason edition Blake illustrated. Blake would have known this poem from Mason's 1775 edition of Gray's poems, and it is unfortunate that Blake did not paint this poem, for *The Death of Hoël* is structurally Welsh in a way strikingly similar to Blake's "Antient Britons" in that both are Welsh Triads in form, following the mnemonic narrative structure traditionally used by the Welsh Bards for recalling their oral history.

Arthur Johnston argues that Blake's painting of "The Ancient Britons" is the first example of a Welsh Triad translated into English, but he has not recognized Gray's poem as a Triad (Johnston 305). It is, though it is not from the body of works compiled by Edward Williams in 1801 for Edward Jones' *Myvyrian Archaiology*. *The Death of Hoël* comes from Aneirin's *Y Gododdin*, a sixth-century poetic lament for the fall of the Old North kingdom of Gododdin, near Edinburgh. Its story of the three survivors of the last stand of a kingdom, especially insofar as these three survivors are the Brave, the Strong, and the Meanest of them all, is too near Blake's telling of the Strong, the Handsome, and the Ugliest of them all to be coincidental. The triadic structure of Blake's "Ancient Britons" demonstrates an authentic connection with the ancient Welsh transcendental iconography, if not directly from Welsh bardic lore (the Barddas), then at least as revived by Thomas Gray in his translation of Taliesin's contemporary, Aneirin.
I have mentioned Blake’s use of a spiritual fourth member of the Triad. This is indicative of what I call his theology of the Awen, in which genius and poetics are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Whatever else one concludes, Blake’s spirituality cannot be properly understood merely through the traditional Christian filter. It is much more complicated than that. Before one can grasp the subtle difference between Blake’s spiritual vision and those he reacted against, one must include in Blake’s transcendental level of archetypology the Welsh idea of the Genius as Holy Spirit, and the Word as the emanation of the Poet of Albion, the Awenyddion.

This forms the basis for something I think of as Blakean Gnosticism, which is not that sort practiced by those branded as heretics by the early Christian church, but which is every bit as heretical to the orthodoxies of the Age of Blake. Unraveling what this means requires more than a simple paragraph or two; it requires a closer look at a number of Blake’s statements. Before we get to the discussion of these texts, though, let us begin with Blake’s experience of The Antient Britons.

THE ANTIENT BRITONS

William Blake’s London was filled with people of many nationalities, and among them as a major presence were the Welsh. Within easy carriage distance of Blake’s neighborhood stood St. Paul’s Cathedral, the regional hub of a community of Welshmen who celebrated St. David’s Day with harps and songs and porter and ale. During Blake’s
early age, hundreds of them belonged to an association called The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, or "the Antient Britons" (Jenkins and Ramage Chapter 1).

The Cymmrodorion's met on Saint David's day to recount with nostalgia tales of "childhood in far-off Llŷn or Cardiganshire" (Jenkins and Ramage 2). Though they had been a strong part of London society beyond all memory, many of them, they clung to some ideal of the good-old-days back home, and their meetings celebrated their Welshness. They would gather and sing, give a rousing toast to the crown, and then a more arousing toast would go round for the old Shire.

They were not outcasts; they formed no underground (though they had among their members certain "radicals" and "democrats"). They were respected members at many levels of London society, from the fields and stables to the highest offices of government. R. T. Jenkins and Helen M. Ramage tell us in their History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion that "The first Treasurer of the Cymmrodorion Society was a hosier from Montgomeryshire" (5). One of their presidents was Lord Mayor of London. Their documented membership, numbering nearly two hundred in the year 1762, represents Welsh men within a short distance of St. Paul's who cared enough about the preservation of things Welsh to join a society with stated scholarly goals (259).

There were more than 345 Welsh printers in London between 1500 and 1800. More Welsh books were printed in London than in any other town, and these printers certainly did not confine their printings to Welsh materials. We see that in the world of young William Blake the Welsh were deeply entrenched, and we must conclude that their stories
were in broad circulation, especially in the locus best suited for its dissemination: the print shop.

William Blake was apprenticed in 1772 at the age of fourteen, by which time he had already reported visions of angels (Bentley 7). He spent the next seven years working for James Basire, "a member of a family of engravers and, at that time, the most distinguished topographical and antiquarian engraver in London" (9). Blake went to no other school, but rather was exposed to books from the inside out by a man who revered things ancient and taught him to visualize them. He met many writers, including Oliver Goldsmith (13). His education was necessarily eclectic, and was more-than-a-little framed by an antiquarian's perspective.

Certainly the most interesting incident of his apprenticeship involves Blake assisting Basire in the tombs in Westminster Abbey in the preparation for the engravings being made for Gough and the Society of Antiquaries. Blake became locked up in Westminster Abbey one day in 1774:

The aisles and galleries of the old building (or sanctuary) suddenly filled with a great procession of monks and priests, choristers and censer-bearers, and his entranced ear heard the chant of plain-song and chorale, while the vaulted roof trembled to the sound of organ music. (Bentley.13)

Nearly fifty years later he would still be telling this story to his young painting students.

Of more particular interest to us is the fact that one of the required sketches was of the corpse of King Edward (Miner 640). For a young man already visited with an
imaginative spirit, this must have been a formative moment. The tomb was opened, and
the ruthless king's winding sheets, described by Gray in *The Bard*, were brushed away
before Blake's eyes, perhaps by his own hand. He saw—with satisfaction I would
suppose—the mummy of the cursed killer of the Welsh Bards. We may be certain that the
image of the tyrant king was emblazoned in his imagination.

Let us shift our focus forward several decades to his exhibition of 1809, and to Blake's central painting depicting the last survivors of the Battle of Camlan. This painting,
or rather the explication Blake wrote regarding the painting called "The Antient Britons,"
seems to hold the key to understanding Blake's idea of multiple spiritual aspects and
poetry as he perceives it. The actual text associated with the painting reads as follows:

In the last Battle of King Arthur only Three Britons escaped, these were
the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, and the Ugliest Man; these
three marched through the field unsubdued, as Gods, and the Sun of
Britain set, but shall arise again with tenfold splendor when Arthur shall
awake from sleep, and resume his dominion over earth and ocean. (Blake 533)

This is a not-so-accurate translation of something—remarkably—available only in Welsh
when Blake wrote it. The *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, containing the Welsh Triads
of Edward Williams, was printed in 1801 under his bardic name, Iolo Morganwg. This
was not translated into English until around 1823 (Smith 7). Arthur Johnston has argued
that it was unlikely Blake knew Welsh, and so his source must have been oral, most likely
one of the scholars of his day with whom he had crossed paths (Johnston 307). Edward
Williams is perhaps the most likely candidate; his book *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral* was
distributed by Joseph Johnson. Or perhaps if it was not Williams, it might have been
William Owen Pughe. Williams and Pughe were both active among the London Welsh. It
is even possible that a very young William Blake could have met Evan Evans during the
period of Blake’s apprenticeship, for his association with Basire had placed him among
many antiquarians of note, and exposed him to many ideas relative to historical as well as
transcendental thought.

Whoever the source—and we'll never know for certain—the use of the Triad
indicates not only a knowledge of a rather obscure Welsh work, but implies the possible
influence of its unique system of poetics as well. Blake was no trained scholar, but he was
an enthusiastic reader, and more, an astute listener. While he may not have achieved
mastery of what Gray called the *pseudorhythmus* (see Gray’s essay by that title), or what
the Welsh call *Cynghanedd*, or “harmony” (Stephens 114), he certainly felt the same sense
of *awen* that led to *The Bard* and *The Death of Hoël*.

The Three Survivors illustrated in Blake’s painting of ”The Antient Britons,” he
writes, were originally one man. How man became divided is ”a subject of great sublimity
and pathos,” Blake tells us in the 42nd plate of *The Descriptive Catalogue* (533). ”The
Artist has written it under inspiration, and will, if God please, publish it; it is voluminous,
and contains the ancient history of Britain, and the world of Satan and of Adam.” Blake is
writing on the subject of genius and inspiration, and he is doing so in a Welsh context:
He has painted this Picture, which supposes that in the reign of that British Prince, who lived in the fifth century, there were remains of those naked Heroes, in the Welch Mountains; they are there now, Gray saw them in the person of his bard on Snowdon; there they dwell in naked simplicity; happy is he who can see and converse with them above the shadows of generation and death. (Blake *Catalogue* Plate 42).

The time of Taliesin was the sixth century, and he dwelt nearer Edinburgh (or, to be more proper, the kingdom of the Gododdin) rather than to Snowdon, but these historicist bits of trivia are almost beside the point. We know these things because of the effort of scholars after the time of Gray who followed up on his hints and clues and filled in the blanks on a great deal that was unknown in Blake's time. We know these things because the linguists have presented reasonable models for understanding which of the bardic remnants were truly ancient, and which were concocted out of the eighteenth-century zeal for the ancient.

Blake lived in the midst of the pre-linguistics period, and the relevance of "authenticity" was not one he would concede. The bards live in naked simplicity on Snowdon, he tells us in his discussion of "The Ancient Britons," and happy is he who can see them and converse with them above the shadows of generation and death. Blake makes free use of the Welsh mythos, but as we shall see, he bends its narrative framing to fit his own inspiration.

For example, the narrative structure of a Welsh Triad prescribes three parallel elements. Blake takes the three and posits another, going beyond those which are
apparent and adding that which he has witnessed: The fourth, says Blake, "was like the Son of God" (Blake Plate 42). Of the number "four" we know that Blake held it in highest esteem. It is central to The Four Zoas, Blake's "magnificent attempt to incorporate all [his] myths into a single narrative," as S. Foster Damon tells us. The root story to which Damon refers here is that found in this Triad, and it is that construct of the mythos upon which Blake builds his four-fold vision of Christianity. He has raised his consciousness of the Triad so as to see the psychic or spiritual aspect.

Blake's Triad presents the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, and the Ugliest man. Beauty is associated with Blake's idea of "intellectual beauty" (535). Ugliness is associated with imbecility and disease; Strength is associated with "Wisdom, a sublime energizer." Strength accumulates power "to the principal seat."

The strong Man acts from conscious superiority, and marches on in fearless dependance on the divine decrees, raging with the inspirations of a prophetic mind. The Beautiful Man acts from duty, and anxious solicitude for the fates of those for whom he combats. The Ugly Man acts from love of carnage, and delight in the savage barbarities of war, rushing with sportive precipitation into the very teeth of the affrighted enemy. (535)

Originally these three aspects were all one man, who was fourfold. It is the fourth aspect that intrigues, that informs and guides one through the later incarnations of Blake's meta-narrative. It is like the Son of God; for Blake, it is the inspirational spirit. In the language native to the bard of the fifth-century prince and his naked heroes, it is the Awen.
The Triad which Blake’s Triad most nearly resembles is Iolo’s Triad 83, which I here reproduce:

The three men who escaped from the battle of Camlan: Morvran son of Tegid who, being so ugly, every one thought he was the devil from hell and fled before him; Sandde Angel-aspect, who having so fine a shape, so beautiful, and so lovely, that no one raised an arm against him, thinking that he was an angel from heaven; and Glewlwyd with the Mighty Grasp, for so large was his size and mighty his strength, that no one could stand before him, and every one fled at his approach. These are the three men who escaped from the battle of Camlan. (Morganwg 54)

Blake seems not to have followed this model very literally, if he followed its text at all. He uses none of Iolo’s names, nor does he follow Iolo’s elaboration. But the character of Iolo’s Morvran resonates with Blake’s Ugliest Man (whom he leaves unnamed), so it seems plausible that Blake knew the story orally, but either did not remember the names, or chose to not to use the Welsh names so as to render the story more appropriate to his own system.

Malcolm Smith tells us that Morvran is "Cognate with Affagdu, the hideous child of Ceridwen" (Morganwg 103). In the Hanes Taliesin,(the History of Taliesin) we encounter "a folk-tale with a highly mythological content [which] has at its theme the origin of poetic inspiration" (Stephens 571). As I have already discussed this story at length in my chapter “Annwn and the Dream-vision Motif,” I’ll simply refer to Sir Ifor
Williams' explication of *The Poems of Taliesin*, in which it is quite clear that the Ugliest Man is none other than the greatest of Welsh Bards, Taliesin.

At the heart of the "Ugliest Man" motif is the Bard and wisdom and poetics. That Blake knew of Taliesin we can be sure at the very least from the line in Gray's *The Bard*. It seems likely that he knew of the Old Welsh Taliesinic lore, given the consistency of his telling with the Gwion Bach story and its motif of ugliness and poetic wisdom. Blake implies as much on Page 40 of the *Descriptive Catalogue*: "The British Antiquities are now in the Artist's hands; all his visionary contemplations, relating to his own country and its ancient glory, when it was as it again shall be, the source of learning and inspiration (Blake 533). Blake refers to "the warlike naked Britons," naming Arthur and Merlin and speaking of Arthur's "conquest of the whole world; of his death, or sleep, and promise to return again." He is clearly invoking the Arthurian metanarrative. We may regret that he is not clearer in citing his sources when he says, "Mr. B. has in his hands poems of the highest antiquity," but it seems likely that he is speaking of a body of works which includes not only Geoffrey's *Morte D'Arthur*, but also some combination of oral and textual bardic lore for the hands of the Welsh scholars of his own age.

Let us now turn our focus to Blake's paintings of Thomas Gray's poem, *The Bard*. It may seem that I am abandoning too quickly Blake's discussion of poetics as found in his explication of "The Ancient Britons," but I will return to this theme in the concluding chapter, which requires first a close look at the illustrative text of William Blake.
The following pages display photographs of The Bard taken from the Trianon Press facsimile edition of William Blake's Watercolour Designs of the Poems of Thomas Gray. Blake took a copy of William Mason's 1775 edition of The Poems of Mr. Gray, carefully cut the text from each page, mounted each of these pages in the center of a sheet of watercolor paper, and then painted a series illustrating each page. The paintings depicting the Welsh Bards constitute a pictorial narrative demonstrating a bardic sense of poetics, revealing Blake to have been a bard in the tradition of the Welsh awenyddion (for a fuller discussion of the Awen and the Awenyddion, see earlier chapter entitled "Geraldis Cambrensis and the Mediaeval Welsh Metanarrative").

A number of bardic motifs are apparent in these paintings, but the one I wish to place in the foreground is the triadic motif. It may be argued that three is a significant number in all meta-narratives, and I will not dispute this. But with Blake's portrayal of the Welsh Bard, it is more than generically archtypal. Not all of the painting display triads, but those that do show a critical structuralization on the part of Blake that was dominated by recurrent sets of three.
The first set of three that I will note may strike the reader as insignificant, but as Blake argued for careful attention to all details (for not the tiniest is insignificant), I direct attention to the harp shown in Figure 1, upon which the floating angelic character plays: it has three strings. Musically speaking, nothing of interest can be produced with only three strings. At best, one could produce a single chord. No complex melody can ensue, nor can any song be accompanied, for the scale requires seven distinct tones (at the least), and
the generation of the three basic chords of even the simplest songs requires all seven tones. One might argue that Blake did not know enough of music to be held accountable for this, but though he had not the art of writing music, he clearly demonstrated a life-long affinity for music. I conclude that he constructed this particular harp with only three strings for a very deliberate purpose.

It is a Greek harp—a lyre, as if Blake means to point out at the outset that there is a strict limit to the musicality of the Greek paradigm. I use the word *musicality* in an expanded poetic sense that includes its inspirational meaning besides its usual tonal meaning; it is almost as though Blake puns upon the word *music* as being Muse-artistry, and thus poetry. Not only do I read the limitations of the Greek paradigm in this painting, but I read also a sense of the limitations of the Christian paradigm, for the character playing the harp looks as much like an angel as it does a Muse. Within this first painting, then, I propose that Blake means to present us with a pictorial discourse that at once utilizes the expected invocation of the Muse, while at the same time presenting a counter-narrative expressing the limitations of the old Classical-Christian messenger.
By contrast, the harp held by the Welsh Bard in Figure 2 is a Welsh harp with nine strings. Nine strings enable the musician to play all the chords of a complex song, with the ability to play a complex melody as well. Nine also is the result of three sets of three, a coincidence that I read as highly significant in its juxtaposition with the classical harp. It is as if Blake sore-thumbs the Triad by thricing it, as if he wishes us to understand the Welsh
paradigm as being three times as potent in its musical potential as the classical or Christian metanarratives.

I also think it significant that the angel in this painting is an integral part of the harp itself, and is given voice through the playing of the harp. The angel plays a limited harp in the prior painting, but in this painting it is the voice of the Welsh harp, and more than that, of the Welsh Bard. Implicit in this construction is the poetic principal of awen, I believe, for the inspiration of the Bard gives voice to the message, as opposed to the angel giving voice to the message as heard through the tightly constrained voice of the three-stringed harp. The source the inspiration is important to Blake; in the iconography of the poem, the harp is to be equated with the Awen.
The painting in Figure 3 shows three dead Bards and a broken harp, over which hovers a fierce eagle. The text of this painting tells us that the ode "is founded on a tradition current in Wales, that Edward the First, when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards that fell into his hands to be put to death." The eagle clearly is meant to represent symbolically the conquest and decree of Edward the First. The broken harp represents the subjugation of the Welsh to Edwardian rule on a historical
level, but on the level of Blake’s discourse on poetics, it represents, to use the words of Geoffrey Keynes, the "frustration of poetic inspiration" (Keynes 57). In the awenyddic metanarrative, then, the broken harp is the suppression of the Welsh Awen by the Saxon king.

The three Bards, reading from left to right, are faceless, ancient, and fair. This is the first occurrence of an important motif echoed in paintings 6 and 11 (Figures 7 and 12, respectively). Blake seems to be presenting a Triad illustrating the three Bards slain by King Edward. I have reported some of what Blake had to say regarding the three survivors of the Battle of Camlan. Specifically, let us recall that the three survivors existed in three corporal manifestations as well as a fourth spiritual manifestation: "The fourth was like the Son of God" (Blake Descriptive Catalogue Plate 42). The paintings of Gray’s poems, completed around 1800, seem to set up the same argument used in his later painting of "The Antient Britons," displayed in the exhibit of 1809. The association I suggest regarding the harp as awen in the earlier paintings resonates with his declaration of the fourth aspect as "the Son of God."

This is not merely an idea waiting to be developed as he paints the poetry of Thomas Gray in 1800. A decade earlier, in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake wrote "The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses" (Blake, MHH Plate 11). His logic moves from the pure inspiration of the Ancient Poets to the formation of Priesthood by "Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales." The true nature of the divine power of poeisis is made explicit in the final line of this plate: "Thus
men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast." Blake, in the persona of the ancient Poet, animates the harp with an angelic voice, and there can be no voice without the genius of the harper's hands and imagination. Thus song and poetry are each voices of the "Son of God," for all deity resides in the human breast.

So the broken harp in Figure 3 represents far more than a shattered instrument. It is the voice of God-within stilled, or worse, profaned.

Keynes makes the observation that Blake had written in the Introduction to *Songs of Experience* about the poet-prophet:

Hear the voice of the Bard!

Who Present, Past, & Future sees

Whose ears have heard,

The Holy Word,

That walk'd among the ancient trees.

"It was the function of the poet-prophet to know the future and to tell the truth about the past and present; also to divine the unconscious emotions of other men and to be the intermediary between the material world and the visionary world of the imagination" (56).

This adds even more to the psychic text of the second painting, for it implies possibilities for the faceless, ancient, and fair bards. Perhaps they represent the unseen future, the past and the present; perhaps they represent the unconscious, the material, and the visionary aspects.
Whatever else we might conclude, the painting says a great deal more than simply that the Bards of Wales were put to death by King Edward the First.

Fig. 10-4

The Bard

The painting in Figure 4 shows the ancient Poet grasping giant strings dripping with gore. These are at once the strings of the harp and the manifestation of the Bard's curse, the "warp and woof" of "The winding-sheet of Edward's race" (Gray line 50). Now
we have the actual text of Gray's poem to give meaning to the painting, and the painting certainly serves to illustrate well the literal meaning of the poem. We see the sable-robed Bard with haggard eyes, hair streaming like a meteor as "with a master's hand and prophet's fire" he strikes the deep sorrows of his lyre. But the painting is more than literal; at the allegorical and the anagogical levels, Blake illustrates a multitude of psychic actions, implying a multitude of literal (or historical) as well as spiritual and psychological consequences yet to come.

Fig.10-5

Edward on his Horse

For example, the next painting (Figure 5) shows Edward, his queen Eleanor, Gloucester and Mortimer, all cowering in terror under the imprecations and vaticinations from the Bard high on the cliff above.
The painting shown in Figure 6 displays the giant-oak, the desert cave, and the torrent, each personified. It is as if Blake has drawn us into an Otherworld where Edward's nightly fears are reified. Though the word Annwn never appears anywhere in any of Blake's poetry, this is the Welsh Otherworld, the world of the unfettered imagination, where trees have ancient druidic faces, where a dark cave sighs, and where the torrent of Conway's foaming flood speaks in an awful voice. This is not Hell, but it is
not far from it. It is a place of fear, generated out of the voice of the Bard, a place of torment woven of poetic strands for the tyrant king.

It seems appropriate here to remember that Blake has himself seen the winding sheets of this tyrant king in the tombs of Westminster, and that he has witnessed visions of angels among the trees.
The painting in Figure 7 illustrates the "Dear lost companions of my tuneful art" (line 39), who do not sleep; on the cliffs they sit, "Avengers of their native land" (line 46). These are Cadwallo, Urien, and Modred, again a Triad, and they hold in their hands the gory warp and woof of the winding sheets.
How much Blake knew about the historical characters these names seem to portray is unclear, though he clearly was exposed to Welsh antiquarians and their stories: Cadwallo seems to refer to Cadwallon ap Cadfan, a seventh century king whose name came to be associated with the defense of Welsh freedom in later centuries (Stephens 65). Urien Rheged was a king of the Old North, a kingdom stretching as far north as Loch Lomond, named by Nennius as one of the four kings who opposed the infiltration of the Angles into the Brythonic territories (Stephens 610). Modred is a mystery, it seems, not only to Roger Lonsdale, who makes no notes as to Cadwallo, Urien, or Modred, but to Meic Stephens as well, who can usually be relied upon to close gaps between our ignorance of the Welsh histories and the allusions in Gray's obscure poems.

Yet here is an interesting point, and it goes not only to show how Gray might have missed the Welsh spelling (no crime for anyone who has ever tried to work with that very difficult language), but how Blake's imperfect knowledge of the Welsh metanarrative might have led him to misinterpret the character of Modred. The closest Stephens comes to any name approximating Modred is Modron, "the mother of Mabon in the tale of Culhwch and Olwen and, according to one of the Triads, of Owain ab Urien. Her name is derived from that of Matrona, the Mother Goddess of Celtic mythology" (401):

The Peniarth Manuscripts contain a folk-tale relating how Urien Rheged meets a washer-woman at a ford called Rhyd y Gyfarthfa. Although she is not named, it is clear that this woman is Modron for she declares herself to
be the daughter of the King of Annwn [Annwn] and later bears Urien a
son, Owain [ap Urien]. . . . (Stephens 401)

The connection between Urien and Modron may be coincidental; we cannot know for
certain, for Gray delighted in the obscurity of his Welsh references, and refused to
enlighten his readers. I suspect that Gray meant Modron, but that Blake missed the
allusion, for he painted the Triad with three male figures. He understood the connection
to Annwn, it seems, but missed the gender of the Celtic Mother Goddess.

Or perhaps Modred was a son of Modron. He is one of the avengers, after all, and
not clearly characterized as an awenic muse. However the reader decides, two things are
clear: Figure 7 shows another Triad, and its sense is Otherworldly.
The painting in Figure 8 portrays the scourge of heaven with three stars; three figures flee in terror and sorrow. I'll not belabor my point here.
The imagery of the lines portrayed in Figure 9 seems primary to be Classical, as does the imagery portrayed in Figure 10.
Fig. 10-10

Fell Thirst

And Famine Foul
The painting in Figure 11, however, turns again to a Welsh theme, for its text invokes the name of Arthur. In a rare note by Gray, (which Blake certainly would have read) Gray wrote: "Both Merlin and Taliessin had prophe- sied, that the Welsh should regain their sovereignty over this island; which seemed to be accomplished in the House of Tudor" (Lonsdale 196). Perhaps these are the characters portrayed looking down upon Edward and his dead queen in this painting.
Figure 12 portrays the "Faerie Queene" in divine aspect, floating above the clouds with leaves in her hair, as though emanating out of the harp of Taliessin, or else from the thought of Merlin beside him:
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;

They breathe a soul to animate thy clay. (121-122)

The prophecy is realized; it will be realized for the Bard who sings as it has been realized for the reader who now witnesses the story. It is a prophecy in three emanations, represented again by the three Bards, one faceless, one ancient, and the other fair. I note again the harp. As with the first harp in the hands of the floating spirit, it is in the form of a lyre—a Classical form. But this time, rather than three strings, it has four.

And the fourth was like the Son of God.
Figure 13 portrays Edmund Spenser as Taliessin reincarnate:

'The verse adorn again

'Fierce war and faithful love,

'And truth severe, by fairy fiction dressed.
As we might have predicted with the three-stringed harp transforming into a nine stringed-harp, we see here three sets of three emanating from the imagination of the Poet. In the foreground go the characters Grief, Pain, and Horror; their shadows seem to stand (or fall) on the cloud beside the Poet, in whose hand stands a fourth shadow—awen, perhaps, or imagination. Behind and above are three figures of light—or rather four, for the cherub in the clouds seems to be echoed by a vague twin. Where there are three, there must be four in Blake’s coding. Past, present, and future are not all there are in the realms of time or imagination:

'T'Fond impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud,

'R'Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day? (135-136)

The Bard addresses the tyrant king with these lines, but in the context of Blake's narrative, it is as though the spirit of the Poet asks if the clouds generated out of the imagination might truly block the sun? Fond, impious man! Behind the apparent three always stands a fourth, whether perceived or not.

As Blake concludes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Every thing that lives is holy" (Plate 27). It may not be seen, but as he also says, "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" (Plate 7). Nor, I would suggest, will one see in Blake the same thing through the Classical Christian filters as one will see through Welsh filters. In terms of awen, Blake's paintings and Gray's poems are equally inspired.
'Enough for me; with joy I see

'The different doom our fates assign.

'Be thine despair and sceptered care;

'To triumph, and to die, are mine.'

(139-142)
The Bard plunges headlong into the flood, into endless night, says Gray. Blake paints him as serene, his face composed, his garb no longer sable, but white. But most telling—if counting threes imaginatively has anything to tell us—the harp now has only six strings. Could it be that in leaping from this life, the Bard has cast off the constraints of the physical and lower levels of consciousness? Could it be that in his headlong plunge he is abandoning the works of this life, but taking the essentials of music into the next incarnation?

As historicists, we are trained not to be satisfied with speculation. We are encouraged to find the demonstrable, and to elucidate it, illuminate it, and explicate it thoroughly in positivistic terms, so that no one can assail the argument. Yet Blake, of all people, resists this. He demands a mythistorical view.

That is the key to the fourth "Memorable Fancy" of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. It is the knowledge the Young Man offers the Angel after the exchange of visions. The Angel shows the Young Man a terrible abyss filled with frightful visions; the Young Man finds himself by a peaceful river listening to the sounds of a harp. The Angel accuses him of imposition, but the Young Man responds: "It is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics" (Erdman 41).
CHAPTER XI

PEACOCK'S *HEADLONG HALL*: A SAXON READING OF
WELSH CODAL CONTEXT

What I have indicated in the previous chapter as being Blake's understanding of a
psychic aspect of Thomas Gray's Bard was not part of the general British writers'
metanarrative, however advanced Blake himself might have been. Blake did not write in a
vacuum, but his works remained largely in a vacuum until long after his age was over.
The Flaxman paintings of the works of Gray remained hidden in their personal possession
and that of their heirs, and few of Blake's illuminated poems were seen beyond his own
household in his own lifetime.

The Welsh metanarrative was quite public on the other hand. *The Bard* was
known far and wide, having been quoted and printed and painted throughout the land. It
was quickly joined by Macpherson's Ossianic epic, and together these were responsible
for a great resurgence in interest in the Antient Britons of the native country.

Among those who were writing on the subject during the last years of Blake's life
was Thomas Love Peacock. His take on the Welsh in *Headlong Hall* is anything but
psychic, for he is interested in satirizing the very literal people he found so amusing. But
he knew them better than most, and within the humor of the piece runs a counter-narrative
that indicates a shrewd understanding of the Celtic debates.
When Marilyn Butler points out that scholars have missed the socratic nature of the dialogue in *Headlong Hall* and dissuades us from thinking too literally about Peacock's portrayal of the three philosophers in terms of Peacock-for-Escot, Shelley-for-Foster, and Hogg (or perhaps Newton)-for-Jenkison, she comes close to the mark (*Peacock Displayed* 40). The rhetorical form of this discourse does not demand a one-to-one correspondence between the characters and known persons of whom we have written evidence:

The dialogue requires not characters, but spokesmen. Foster and Escot represent between them a gallery of eighteenth-century intellectuals. Their debate is the grand debate of the Enlightenment on the nature of contemporary society, and whether or not it is conducive to the happiness of the individual. The speeches... [paraphrase] the arguments of a series of philosophers who are on one or other side of the central issue. (40-41)

Her argument is good, as far as it goes; but it is incomplete. She presents convincing data regarding not only Peacock's intellectual relationships with Shelley and his circle, but with the larger context of Malthus and Godwin and Rousseau and the French Revolution and long-standing debates about gardening and nature. But she fails to identify a distinctly Welsh structure popular in Peacock's day: The Welsh Triad. Who are the three philosophers she says the editors have puzzled over? They are the three philosophers of Headlong Hall. But if you are not Welsh, you probably won't get the joke.
When Peacock reveals in the opening paragraphs the destination of his travellers as
"Headlong Hall, the seat of the ancient and honourable family of the Headlongs, of the
Vale of Llanberris, in Caernarvonshire," he is not merely choosing some exotic Welsh
setting to appeal to the fancy of London readers, though they did indeed fancy travelogues
descriptive of the wild and romantic Welsh mountains. He is telling of a place he has
actually been while invoking the metanarrative of "The Antient Briton" and framing a
satire in which he will present various character types giving voice to a complex discussion
involving the myth of Welsh mythology. Nor are the names he catalogues chosen
arbitrarily: "Rices, and Prices, and Morgans, and Owens, and Williamses, and Evanses,
and Parrys, and Joneses" are names we know from among the scholars and poets
associated with the complex and confused recovery and re-invention of the Welsh mythos
in the last part of the eighteenth century. And the stories of Huw Llwyd's pulpit, the
fiddler lost in the caves, of Hoel and Cadwallader are part of that legacy of "auncient
meelodies." The learned reader schooled in the Western canon may be helped by
familiarity with the debates among the intellectuals of England and the Continent in the
early nineteenth century, and may benefit greatly from a knowledge of Greek and Latin
languages and mythologies. But one will be largely blind to a major discourse in the novel
if nothing is known of the history of the Welsh revival, of the songs and melodies played
to the Welsh harp, or of the stories introduced from the giant's recovered (or was it
stolen?) treasure.
In order to ground our exploration into the coding of this discourse, we need to know that when Peacock wrote this novel in 1815, he had spent fifteen months at a place called Maentwrog Lodge, near Tan-y-bwlch (Joukovsky 22), and was not only filled with local lore picked up while in Wales, but actively in the midst of a discussion that had been growing in intensity ever since Thomas Gray published *The Bard* in 1757. This discussion involved the romantic image of the Welsh bard of ancient times juxtaposed against the skepticism of the enlightened empiricist. Peacock was born in 1785, and his youth was spent in London, where Welshmen like Iolo Morganwg and Goronwy Owen were busy re-inventing and practicing the rituals of the Ancient Druids, with no small following from among the large community of London Welsh and others sympathetic to the idea of native Celtic wisdom. Meanwhile, scholars after the style of Samuel Johnson were loudly decrying these practices as fraudulent, and the poetry of the imagined bardic revival, explicitly that of Macpherson's Ossian and Morganwg's Triads, as fakery. To no small extent this was an issue of elitism, with educated Londoners ridiculing the country bumpkins. But it was more than mere big-city elitism, for the bumpkins were often Welsh, Irish or Scottish, and nationalism, or perhaps even racism played no small part in the tenor of this antagonism. As Howard Gaskill has pointed out recently in an Internet discussion group, "at that time something approaching cultural genocide was being inflicted on [Macpherson's] people and he was aware that a great deal of its heritage had already been destroyed." Furthermore, England was in these decades ruled by George III of the House of Hanover; the rhetoric of revolution flowed in a strong anti-Germanic current through
Celtic literature, and the opposition fought it through the medium of criticism, both intellectually and through the use of ridicule.

Peacock plays with this tension through the ongoing arguments of Escot, Foster, and Jenkison as though they were the characters of a Welsh Triad: the three philosophers of Headlong Hall. It may seem that the coincidence of this grouping of three under-reaches some standard of demonstrability, but it should not be dismissed without consideration. The *Trioedd Ynys Prydain*, or "the triads of the Isle of Britain," is a "collection or index of legendary characters, arranged in groups of three" (Stephens 598). In medieval Wales, oral instruction was the chief means of conserving and transmitting tradition, and triads served as an essential mnemonic element in bardic lore. A number of thirteenth and fourteenth-century manuscripts survive, but for Peacock the source would have most likely been the informal oral transmission of the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, a work published in London in 1801, based in part on ancient manuscripts and in part on the "findings" of Iolo Morganwg (599). Though the Morganwg Triads are now thoroughly discredited, they were not in Peacock's time, and were held by romantic Celticists to be authentic remnants of a large body of bardic lore, with roots going back many centuries.

Peacock is not known to have actually read the *Myvyrian Archaiology*: it was after all published in Welsh, and though we know Peacock sooner or later attempted to learn Welsh, there is no indication that he could ever read it with the proficiency that the *Archaiology* would have required. But we must not dismiss the Welsh Triad on those
grounds, for it was clearly part of the Welsh culture, which was not only ubiquitous throughout London, but was thoroughly bilingual. The efforts of the Welsh in preserving their language had been singularly effective, and it is estimated that during the first quarter of the nineteenth century "some eighty per cent of the [Welsh] population was Welsh-speaking" (Stephens 630). But since from the time of the Tudors the Acts of Union had "proscribed its use for official purposes." English was the dominant language, embraced effectively by all its educated people. Anything widely known in Welsh would inevitably have been expressed in English, especially something as fundamental as the form of the Triad. Thus Peacock's Socratic dialogue (as Butler would have) should more properly be thought of as a trialogue, with Escot, Foster and Jenkison as the characters in Peacock's extended parady of a Welsh Triad.

In addition to the three philosophers, Peacock presents us with other characters designed as spokesmen for various aspects of the Celtic debate. Foremost among these is Squire Headlong, who represents the (more-or-less) educated Welsh native, a man strikingly different from his countrymen in that he actually suffers books to be brought into his home. The name "Headlong," we learn in Peacock's tongue-in-cheek opening paragraphs, is as genuine as any of the great Welsh names, derivating from greater antiquity even than Cadwallader himself (Baron 1f). Scholars have noted that Peacock likely modeled the Squire after a man he came to know while in Wales, one Thomas Johnes, Lord Lieutenant of Cardiganshire, whose mansion Peacock visited in 1811. "Johnes was noted for his impulsive character as well as his extravagant support for the
the arts and an enthusiasm for wild scenery" (Baron and Slater 338). This may well have played a significant part in Peacock's invention of the character, but this historicist approach provides little of what we need in order to understand Peacock's meaning within the terms of the Welsh discussion. We may learn more from this clue in the text:

...the founder of the family was preserved in the deluge on the summit of Snowdon, and took the name of Rhaiader, which signifies a waterfall, in consequence of his having accompanied the water in its descent or diminution, till he found himself comfortably seated on the rocks of Llanberris. (1-2).

Welsh folk-history records that the survivors of the great flood of the land of Gwaelod landed on Snowdon. More than an amusing caricature of a local squire, this is Peacock's effort to ground his novel in the discourse of the oral traditions of the Welsh. Regarding the myth of the Flood of Gwaelod, Baron and Slater write that Peacock "possibly found this information in The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids (1809) by Edward Davies ..." (338). It is indeed possible, but it is perhaps more probable that Peacock came by the story through an oral telling, for we must remember that he spent better than a year in North Wales in 1810 and 1811. Nicholas A. Joukovsky, to whom Michael Baron has referred as giving "the fullest account of Peacock's early life," tells us that "...Peacock left for North Wales around the beginning of 1810..." (Joukovsky 22). He visited the Vale of Llanberis, then Tremadoc, and by late January of 1811, "he had settled temporarily at Maentwrog Lodge, near Tan-y-bwlch, where he was to remain for almost fifteen months."
There can be little doubt that during Peacock's stay in Wales he heard many a tale from his host and the guests at the Lodge. It is relevant to inquire what knowledge Peacock gathered from books, but in the absence of proof, we might need to imagine what traditions he learned over glasses of cwrw. Deeply woven into the texture of his novel is a more-than-casual familiarity with the Welsh metanarrative, and as that system of stories was largely oral, we must be prepared to acknowledge that Peacock's familiarity with this body of tales is broader than can ever be demonstrated in the empirical sense of historicity. Squire Headlong serves in this satire as more than a ridiculous rendering of a country intellectual. The fact that the squire possesses books and that this is highlighted as rare among the Welsh tells us that this is a culture largely dependent on oral narrative for its literary transmission. So, I would posit, was Peacock dependent on oral narrative, and so therefore must we look to the broad Celtic orality of the times for the context of the Welsh discourse.

We can begin with Gray's image of the Bard, which Peacock seems to invoke directly in the use of the name Headlong. *The Bard* tells of the confrontation on "Snowdon's shaggy side" between the last Welsh Bard and Edward I, the English king who ordered the deaths of all the bards after his successful conquest of Wales. The Bard stands "On a rock, whose haughty brow/Frowns o'er Conway's foaming flood" (16-17). Having delivered a curse and a prophecy, he plunges "headlong" down the face of the cliff into the waters below in the poem's final lines.
The image of this headlong plunge was the emblem of Welsh resistance to the English crown, particularly during the 1790's, and though we may no longer recognize this emblem, it was certainly current in the years of Peacock's youth. The story of Gray's poem comes from a tale "now recognized as foreign to the Welsh tradition" (Stephens 28), but from its publication in 1757 through the decades following it sparked the imagination of many, in England and in Wales, inciting specifically the realm of literature that we call the "Celtic Revival" and more generally that literary realm we call Romanticism.

The impetus for this nationalistic pride was not due solely to Gray's Bard; his poem was followed in 1760 by James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* and then in 1762 by *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books*. Peacock's deteriorationist philosopher Mr. Escot quotes Macpherson when he says, "Poets and philosophers of all ages and nations have lamented this too visible process of physical and moral deterioration. 'The sons of little men,' says Ossian" (57). This line comes from 'Barrathon: A Poem' by Ossian, who Baron and Slater describe as "a semi-legendary Gaelic poet of the third century AD" (359). James Macpherson claimed, in addition to making use of oral materials, to have found manuscripts containing fragments of Ossian's work and published what he asserted to be straight translations. He would never provide the manuscripts, however, and Dr. Johnson led the legitimate philological school of criticism in denouncing these productions as "impudent forgeries." Outside the debate of authenticity, however, they became immensely popular and influential, especially in Europe. Baron and Slater
these productions as "impudent forgeries." Outside the debate of authenticity, however, they became immensely popular and influential, especially in Europe. Baron and Slater hold Macpherson to be one of the founding fathers of the Romantic Movement. They are not alone in that opinion, and there can be no doubt that Peacock was broadly exposed to Ossian, both as myth and as material for debate.

Though Ossian was nominally Scottish, it was known to the Welsh that the ancestral territories of the Antient Britons included what was known as The Old North, including the kingdom of Gododdin, situated in the area of present-day Edinburgh (Stephens 437). The poetry of Ossian came to be associated in their minds with the ancient myths not only of Scotland, but with those of Wales and Ireland as well. Among those of the Welsh who most enthusiastically took up this complex image of the Celtic Bard (recalling the catalogue of names on Peacock's page one) were Evan Evans, Edward Williams (more popularly known as Iolo Morganwg), Edward Jones, Owen Jones, and Goronwy Owen, all of whom would come to be associated, either directly or indirectly, with the Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain (literally the throne or assembly of bards in the Isle of Britain), a poetic and musical competition of "bards" popularized in London during Peacock's youth (Stephens 230). These men lived among the London Welsh in what they thought of as their great city, where groups like The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion and the Gwyneddigion gathered to drink and argue and play the harp. More than just enthusiastic musical and social gatherings, these gatherings became the focal points for the nationalistic efforts to preserve the ancient Welsh language and its
traditions, a point of pride (and contention) in an era when Britain was ruled by Hanoverian kings.

Marilyn Butler writes of Peacock's interest in this culture in an essay entitled "Druids, Bards and Twice-Born Bacchus: Peacock's Engagement with Primitive Mythology:"

It would be fair to say that pagan myths and the controversy surrounding them were among the most consistent topics of Peacock's writing career before 1829. From 1806 to 1812, his three early volumes of poetry treat the philosophy and religion of remote pagan cultures. *The Genius of the Thames* (1810) has a long sequence about a Roman soldier killing a Druid priest, who dies in the manner of Gray's Bard, uttering a long prophecy about post-Roman times. Scattered among the three volumes, or unpublished at the time, are other poems and dramas using Norse and Celtic settings, or written in the manner of Macpherson. (57)

Butler shows that Peacock was demonstrably well-read not only in the standard Christian and Greek mythological groups, but in the Oriental and Celtic as well. She points out that he "was thus quite as well-qualified a mythologist as J. F. Newton and the circle at Bracknell which he entered after meeting Shelley in 1812; though he ridiculed the enthusiasms of this circle in his *Memoirs of Shelley*, his writing proves that he continued to share their interest in myth" (57).
The implication of this last statement is that *Headlong Hall* was written for the "circle at Bracknell," a group of intellectuals interested in mythology which included J. F. Newton and Percy Shelley. It certainly must be allowed that Peacock had this audience of acquaintances in mind in structuring the discourse, but we must not think that they alone would have been privy to the discussion. Butler reminds us that a poet in this era whose topics were primarily mythological signalled something politically tendentious:

To use myth in poetry in the eighteenth century was a symptom of secularism, or at least of detachment from the state religion. Myth plays a significant part in the fresh wave of polemic that precedes and accompanies the French Revolution. Most of the significant mythologizers in the 1780's and 1790's were revolutionary sympathizers, or at least, like the great Asiatic scholar, Sir William Jones, liberals...." (58)

Peacock places himself within the discourse of secular intellectuals, liberals, and revolutionary sympathizers. The problem of "pagan myths and the controversy surrounding them" had begun in the middle years of the eighteenth century in a far less politically-charged atmosphere. Thomas Gray had not written with a religious or political agenda, but for the love of scholarship in an interesting area, and Evan Evans had likewise written as a Welsh scholar intent on recovering the authentic literature of his nation. But when Macpherson's Ossian gained such currency as a Jacobinical icon, and especially as the debate over its authenticity became metonymic for the politics of Celticism, the whole field came to be a charged arena.
So as to see the context of this discourse and thus place Peacock's other characters in their proper place within it, let us identify three distinct critical camps, looking first at the characteristic literature of the antiquarians. Peacock's knowledge in the antiquarian arena, apart from what he must have picked up by oral transmission, probably came from books known to have been in circulation during the period. We know he owned some of these books because they were included in his library at the time of his death. When he got them we cannot know, but it will aid us to know something of them in constructing the background of his knowledge of the Welsh mythos. Among these books are Welsh dictionaries and grammars, and an edition of poems called *The Heroic Elegies of Llywarch Hen*, written by William Owen Pughe and published in 1792. "This book was a landmark in the Welsh literary revival, the first classic document of its 1790's phase, which established the bards in the cause of radicalism" (Butler, *Druids* 65). Llywarch Hen, (in English Llywarch the Old) "is a hero of Romantic nationalism, like Gray's Bard and Macpherson's Ossian." When Peacock wrote to his publisher Thomas Hookham in April of 1811 that "he was travelling in Wales accompanied by Luarch and Tacitus," he was, Butler proposes, probably referring to Owen Pughe's book, spelling Llywarch as an Englishman would pronounce it [Butler (66) cites Herbert Wright's essay "The Associations of T. L. Peacock with Wales" (31) as proposing--probably with good authority--that Luarch was an Englishman's rendering of the Welsh word "Llywarch." The quotation may or may not to be accurate, for the letter as shown in the Halliford Edition of *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock* shows this line as reading "I have a clean
shirt with me, and Luath, and Tacitus" (Halliford Peacock VIII/191).] We have no direct evidence of Peacock's opinion on the matter, but the claim of the book was that the Llywarch poems came in direct line of succession from the Glamorgan bards. Though we no longer consider Owen Pughe's work as authentically connected to the tenth-century Canu Llywarch Hen, it represented in Peacock's time what was then believed to be an authentic connection to the bardic literature of ancient Wales (cf. Stephens 72 and 454).

Also among these books, representing what we may call the clerical camp, was the Reverend Edward Davies' 1809 publication, Mythology and Rites of the British Druids (Butler 66). It deals at great length with "the legend of the great Welsh flood on the plain of Gwaelod, on the shores of Cardigan Bay." It seems likely, if not probable, that Peacock learned from this source, at least in part, of the flood he references in his opening to Headlong Hall.

The Reverend Edward Davies was what Butler calls "the most copious adversary of the Jacobinical Welsh Bards" (66). "Davies's Druids were in short very like Unitarians, except that they were unusually Tory in their politics." This places Davies at opposition with Owen Pughe and Morganwg specifically, and with the culture of popular Welsh studies at large, inasmuch as they were represented by democratic societies like the Cymmrodorion and Gwynneddigion, and inasmuch as they represented "the invasion of 'polite letters' by men advancing radical claims about oral cultures" (Butler 63). Interestingly, Morganwg, writing under his real name as Edward Williams, was a noted early promoter of Unitarianism, having been one of the main founders of the Unitarian
Society in south Wales (Stephens 643). But he also called himself "The Bard of Liberty" and was anything but a Tory. Davies, in his view of the history of the Druids, was in direct opposition to the democratic Morganwg, suggesting that they belonged to the privileged families of their day. To put this in terms of our narratological discussion, Davies promoted the conservative counternarrative to Morganwg's revolutionary narrative. On the one hand we have the Anglican Tory view; on the other hand we have the Unitarian Jacobinical view.

Both of these aspects of the debate were tempered by Peacock's reading of the aforementioned quarterly journal, the Edinburgh Review. Francis Jeffrey, representing the critical camp, wrote with equal vehemence against the radical antiquarians and the Anglican clerics. The Review was the venue of much of the public debate about Celticism during the period of Headlong Hall's gestation, and must be considered as an integral part of Peacock's background (if not inspiration), for we know that when he went to Wales, he wrote to Thomas Hookham for a list of reading materials, saying "The Edinburgh Review will perfectly satisfy me in the article of criticism. The others are growing very stupid" (Works VIII 186).

These three camps all made use of and offered to make meaning of the discourse founded in the field of Welsh studies. The religious, critical, and revolutionary uses of the Welsh metanarrative became three separate and distinct counternarratives, each intent on establishing itself as the master narrative in a charged discussion. However, no one of
these interpretations is sufficient in and of itself; understanding Peacock’s orientation requires knowledge of all three, and then some.

To return to the discussion of the novel, the three philosophers of Headlong Hall may be understood as three philosophical approaches to the problems imposed by the arguments of the antiquarians, the clerics, and the critics. Though Peacock is highly satirical in his description, there is something serious and telling in the “etymologies” offered regarding their names. Mr. Escot, the deteriorationist, holds the pessimistic view, believing the ancient wild man to have lived in the perfection of nature before deteriorating to the fallen state evidenced by the industrial society of his day. The history of his name, given in a combination of Greek and Latin, is “quasi es skoton, in tenebras, scilicet, intuens; one who is always looking into the dark side of the question” (3f). In terms of the story, Escot is not only he who is always looking into the dark side of the question, but is he who is always in the dark. In fact, he is always looking into the dark for his pronouncements, which are invariably predicated on the veneration of the imagined ancient based on an ideal formulation of the primitive man in a natural (read: more noble) life.

Mr. Foster, the perfectibilian, is the optimist, and his name, pronounced fosthr, is from “faos and threw, lucem servo, conservo, observo, custodio,—one who watches over and guards the light.” Where Escot is dark, Foster is bright. Baron describes him as a "pasteboard figure" and says:
It is easy to feel that the perfectibilian point of view is less forceful in the novel than the deteriorationist. This is evident when, for example, the philosophers visit the manufactory at Tremadoc. Foster sees a productive Owenite commune; Escot, an inferno where ghastly featured children struggle to keep pace with 'the dizzy and complicated motions of diabolical mechanism'." (Baron xvi)

As regards the debate between the ancient and the modern, Foster believes "that men are virtuous in proportion as they are enlightened; ... as every generation increases in knowledge, it also increases in virtue" (Peacock 17). Escot argues that the progress of knowledge is not general, but confined to a chosen few in every generation, leaving the mass of mankind as "beasts of burden, mere clods, and tools of their superiors." It seems that Escot is quietly revolutionary, his sympathies with the mass of mankind, as opposed to the bright but superficial Foster, who is sympathetic (if that is the word) with owner of the manufactory at Tremadoc.

Mr. Jenkison is the "status-quo-ite." He is the one who can always produce arguments on both sides of a question "with so much nicety and exactness, as to keep the said question eternally pending." He rounds out the three philosophers of Headlong Hall nicely, for with him we have Peacock's perfect assurance that nothing will ever be resolved. This I read as his comment not only on philosophy in general, but as a witty barb aimed at his friends Shelley, Hogg, Newton, Godwin and the rest of the Blacknell group, and as a venomous barb aimed at "very stupid" critics in the journals of the day.
In terms of the Welsh metanarrative, Escot is in love with the romantic image of the Welsh bard of ancient times juxtaposed against the skepticism of Foster, the enlightened empiricist. Jenkison, the ambivalent, represents something a little more complex. He is not merely irresolute. In spite of Peacock's etymology (which we need not take as factual in any event), the name "Jenkison" looks to be a Saxonized version of Jenkins rendered as "son-of-Jenkins." Jenkins is a common Welsh name; there were several more or less prominent antiquarians and poets by that name in Peacock's day, though none with a close enough similarity to warrant our speculation as to a historical source for the character. What we have, though, is a marriage of a Welsh name to a Saxon suffix. In a novel which drives headlong toward a marriage between the Welsh squire and the Saxon daughter of Mr. Chromatic, this resonates thematically, revealing an additional meaning to that offered in the ambiguous double-talk of Peacock's satirical footnotes.

Following the three philosophers of Headlong Hall, the next group of characters to consider is represented by Mr. Gall and Mr. Treacle, "who followed the trade of reviewers" (13). They seem to be viable candidates, along with MacLaurel and Nightshade as their "senior lieutenants," as Peacock's spokesmen after the model of Francis Jeffery's *Edinburgh Review*, which was begun in 1802. Peacock characterizes these people as writers of bad criticism and bad poetry, and as such we may prefer to read them as the "stupid" critics and poets who are the subjects of the *Review*. However we wish to interpret them, they invoke the world of polite letters: "Jeffrey liked to ridicule those
orthodox clerics who followed Bryant into Arkite, Cuthite, or Sabian superstition, the wilder shores of current Christian syncretism" (Butler 67). Jeffrey supported the aristocratic Whiggish opposition, and felt a strong distaste for the movement to popularize culture. "His encouragement of this attitude made the Edinburgh Review somewhat philistine in relation to all antiquarianism in its early years, since the field of 'popular antiquities' was dominated by avowed democrats."

Representing a distinctly Johnsonian voice among these people of polite letters is Mr. Panscope, "the chemical, botanical, geological, astronomical, mathematical, metaphysical, meteorological, anatomical, physiological, galvanistical, musical, pictorial, bibliographical, critical philosopher, who had run through the whole circle of the sciences, and understood them all equally well" (13). It is he who is derided most thoroughly by Peacock, who in the voice of Escot says to him: "I presume, sir, you are one of those who value an authority more than a reason" (29). The ensuing argument, in which Panscope loses his temper and Escot claims the victory, is as much as to say that authority has no sway in the antiquarian argument, especially where the antiquarian's reason is an article of blind faith.

As to the other characters and their placement within the milieu of the Welsh issue, the Reverend Doctor Gaster seems to represent Peacock's satirization of the group of clerical writers in the Anglican church. He is not, however, presented with anything like the intellectual powers of the Reverend Jacob Bryant or his followers. He is presented as
a gluttonous buffoon, quick to call on others to respect his cloth, but virtually void of spirituality.

The Sexton is really more interesting, and more material to the clerical aspect of the Welsh argument. He can't be seen strictly in terms of the Bryant school, though he exhibits a knowledge of folk-history similar to some of the productions of that group. He is better thought of in contrast to the Anglicans, in terms of the jacobinical stonemason Iolo Morganwg, the Unitarian resurrector of the Druidical rites of whom I have already spoken briefly. The Sexton's command of legend is quite reminiscent of the dubious stories passed on by Iolo as authentic bardic lore.

More to the point, the Sexton connects directly to a historical character, one of whom we know without doubt that Peacock knew intimately. When he made his first trip to Wales in 1810, he made the acquaintance of a man he writes of as "Dr. Griffith," whom he prevailed upon to accompany him at midnight to "the black cataract," a favorite haunt of Peacock's some two-and-a-half miles from Maentwrog Lodge (Works VII 181). In the company of a Mr. Lloyd, they sallied forth under a full-orbed moon, as Peacock wrote, "to the no small astonishment of mine host, who protested he never expected to see us again." What they saw was truly magnificent. To many it would have seemed "an abode of damp and horror"—a Grendel-mere, so to speak. But for Peacock it was a place of great beauty, probably reminiscent of Gray's poetic setting for The Bard, with water foaming into a deep basin, "the sides of which are all but perpendicular, and covered with hanging oak and hazel" (182). "Dr. Gryffydh [sic] trusting to a rotten branch, had a fall of
fifteen feet perpendicular, and but for an intervening hazel, would infallibly have been hurled to the bottom."

The Sexton says of himself that his father was "Owen Ap-Llwyd Ap-Gryffyd Ap-Shenkin Ap-Williams Ap-Thomas Ap-Morgan Ap-Parry Ap-Evan Ap-Rhys" (Peacock HH 53). This is to say that the Sexton is the son of Owen, son of Lloyd, son of Griffith (or Gryffydd or Gryffydh). This is as close as Peacock ever gets to making a direct connection to his historical model, for Dr. Griffith (however Peacock spelled it) was the parson, John Gryffydh, whom Nicholas Joukovsky tells us was "One of the first acquaintances that Peacock made at Maentwrog" (Joukovsky 22). Peacock's initial description was not flattering: "a little dumpy, drunken, mountain-goat." But this was an important man in Peacock's life, for through John Gryffydh, Peacock came to know more directly about the Welsh, giving him a new perspective and a way around the intellectual and largely inaccurate narratives of the London crowds. In a letter to his friend Forster (13 June 1811) Peacock wrote:

There are no philosophers in Wales. The natives have a great deal of religion, without a single grain of morality. Their total disregard of truth is horrible, their general stupidity prodigious, and their drunkenness most disgusting. (23)

This single revelation is more useful than all Peacock's deep study of the London intellectuals, clerics, and antiquarians, for it demonstrates the mind-set that could generate
the satirical tone of *Headlong Hall*. If for no other reason than this, John Gryffydh would be an important man.

But he is important for more than that. In April of 1811, Peacock left Maentwrog "after bidding farewell to Jane Gryffydh—'the most innocent, the most amiable, the most beautiful girl in existence'" (Joukovsky 23). It would be nine years before this relationship would come to fruition, but in 1820 Peacock returned to Wales and married Jane Gryffydh, the daughter of the little dumpy, drunken, mountain-goat (Madden 47). The marriage came years after the writing of *Headlong Hall*, but it indicates a sympathy resident in Peacock's heart during the interim. The Welsh may not have been philosophers; they may have been in his opinion religious without morality, disregarding of the truth, and generally stupid drunks, but they were a fun people, given to music and dance and frivolity. In spite of it all, there was something about them Peacock loved, and to the satirical tenor of the novel we must add this dimension.

More than anything, the Welsh seemed to love a good story, and Peacock seems to have needed to blend this in with all the philosophy. It is far too complex to insist that his sympathies were with the antiquarians rather than with the clerics, or that the _Edinburgh Review_ had shaped his opinions into a disdain for both camps. He could not help but have the London intellectual's disdain for what appeared to be hypocrisy and outright untruths. Yet something in him seems to want to embrace the freedom of this creative aspect of Welsh story-telling.
But it was not an easy thing for him to embrace. For all that he was interested in
myth and outside the clerical pale and known for having composed poetry and drama prior
to the writing of *Headlong Hall*, he was not all that creative in doing so. He was, as were
most writers of the time, imitators of great models. He did not, as Blake did, create his
own grand mythic cosmos, though he worked with the same raw mythological materials.
His early works, as Butler has shown, were often mythic, but well grounded in
scholarship, not strikingly original, and hardly spiritual.

Peacock's efforts to learn Welsh demonstrates his interest in pursuing the Welsh
mythos as a scholar; he was part of the first generation of scholars to tackle that vast body
of stories and come out convinced of its unreliable nature. Yet he persisted. In Wales he
learned not only to regard the natives with intellectual disdain, but to laugh and dance and
listen to their happy stories. And though they didn't fit into his idea of good scholarship,
there was something irresistably compelling about them. So he wrote satire, ridiculing
these people with an astute observer's eye, but telling their stories at the same time with
sympathy, and ridiculing their critics as he went along. His is not the superficial Wales of
Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, a setting where the natives sound so much like every other
place the fugitive has been. His is not the Wales of Dr. Johnson's experience—a place of
big castles but otherwise not much different from the rest of England. Peacock's Wales
smacks of authenticity—right down to the fantastic spinnings of incredible yarns.

To understand Peacock's novel, we must certainly understand the complexity of
the Celtic debate in his time—and in these pages, we have barely begun. But we must also
understand that Wales offered something new to the literature of England. It offered an attitude so foreign to the rules of good scholarship as to be treated with disdain not only then, but to a large extent even through the present time. Historicity, to the creative Welsh story-teller, is only useful insofar as it frames and informs a good story. And if the story requires it, history be damned.

Philologists have great difficulty with this attitude, for it haunts the "mountains of forgeries" that are the legacy of the work of Iolo Morganwg. It is a problem which assails the literature not only of Britain, but wherever folk histories intersect with the work of intellectuals, for the oral tradition demands no accountability. The measure of success is in the telling, not in the verifiability of the sources, or the establishment of historical groundings. As Litsa D. Hadgopoulos recently said, writing about the same problem as it relates to Greek literature of the Greek Romantic Period, "sometimes, the oral tradition, the oral literature is more important than any manuscript."

The stories embedded in Peacock's narrative reveal multiple counter-narratives, all of which are confusing to the reader unused to the body of Welsh literature. Great fun can be had in searching out the answers to the subtle riddles offered in the names and allusions. The story of the skull of Cadwallader is worthy of our notice before abandoning (for the time being) the pursuit of this thread. The Sexton led Escot to the bone-house, from which he removed "a skull of very extraordinary magnitude, which he swore by St. David was the skull of Cadwallader."

"How do you know this to be his skull?" said Mr. Escot.
"He was the piggest man that ever lived, and he was buried here; and this is the piggest skull I ever found: you see now—"

"Nothing could be more logical...." (55)

The problem with the logic is multifaceted. I will not trouble with all of the clerical and critical ramifications of the story, for they would simply be condemnatory and lead us nowhere very useful. Instead, consider the myth: Cadwallader died in Rome and was buried there. It is said that when his bones are returned to Wales, the Welsh shall regain the sovereignty taken by the English crown. Those bones are clearly now returned. The spirit of Welsh imagination now rules the creative generation of popular literature, with mere criticism relegated to poor scholars of English, writing minor papers for critical journals.

Nothing could be more logical.
CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, I explored the discourse on the Welsh debates of the early nineteenth century as embedded by Thomas Peacock in the narrative of *Headlong Hall*. In the chapter before that, I explored William Blake’s use of the Awen and other aspects of the Welsh metanarrative in his paintings of Thomas Gray’s poem, “The Bard.” And before that, I spent many pages exploring the idea of poetic inspiration as captured not only in the Welsh idea of the Awen, but in the biblical and homeric sources out of which the idea grew. It may appear that my subject has been the use of the Welsh materials in Romantic literature, but that is only the superficial clothing. The subject was all along the idea of the Word as God, and the attendant idea that language itself is the house of the divine. I have found the structure of the *Barddas* useful, indeed, fascinating and revealing, and I believe that an expanded knowledge of the body of Welsh literature serves as a rich context from which to explore not only Blake and Peacock, but many others who have participated in the discourse of British literature. But what has been of more intense interest to me is the use of the tree as the primary metaphor in the ages-long discourse on the world of the divine.

Rowland Jones strikes the historicist as a nut-case. Where I have seen the tree as the key metaphor, he saw the spring. In the five books he published through the London presses, he explored origins and philosophies of language and grammar. His intent was flawed; he was an eisogetic interpreter, which is to say he practiced cisogesis instead of
exogesis in seeking to glorify the Welsh and placing them in the prime spot as originators of all the world’s languages. Not only did he privilege the Welsh, but he did so using a Christian overlay, so that Welsh became in his cosmography the original language from which Hebrew derived. We find much to ridicule in his theories today. The editor of the 1970 Scolar Edition of *Circles of Gomer* writes that Jones “laboured indefatigably, and with uncommon obtuseness, at his dedicated task of proving that English was a medium for enshrining all knowledge and perception, and in the *Circles of Gomer* sought to prove his theories in place-names” (Preface). The results of Jones’s work is useless in modern linguistics; historicists can find nothing more than a weirdly interesting background in his existence. But I have sought to develop a sense of mythistoricism, and in doing so I refrain from tossing out discredited work solely on the basis of its failure under scientific criteria. As the editor points out, “the work bristles, it is true, with much idiotic conjecture, but there is also a fair and, to date, neglected proportion of inspired guesswork.” The “inspired guesswork” suggests to me the working of the Awen, something Jones would have respected, and the results of his work point to something that linguists beginning with Sir William Jones would come to believe, that at the root of all branches of European languages was a proto-language. We think now, based on evidence provided by Sir William Jones and others, that the proto-language was something we call Indo-European, and we believe, based on nearly two centuries of subsequent work, that Welsh and Hebrew may both derive from this older language. Rowland Jones may look silly for seeing water images everywhere and for suggesting the Welsh was the proto-
language, but what he noticed in the similarities of words was of monumental importance, and it is a shame that he is not at least remembered for the sparkle of his insight.

I first admired Rowland Jones because he made me feel better about my own silliness in seeing the tree as the primary metaphor out of which grew the whole language of poetics. But if I have learned anything from Jones et al, it is that my insight is perhaps not so silly after all. Recent studies in the evolution of cognition and the part of metaphor in language are beginning to supply a language with which to discuss such things. I do not know well this language of the cognitive scientists, but I will venture into the on-going project using my own mythistorical construct, for I have found it useful not only for seeing aspects of the tree in seven levels of word-consciousness in modern language and literature, but for the broader interpretive study of literature in every age that I have examined.

It is now more than a dozen years since I pulled the runes out of the glowing coals of the oak fire, writing of Sir Gawain and his icy journey through the mountains of Wales. The expanded understanding which came out of the Kundalini paradigm helped me to categorize the dozens of tree-rooted words I found there. Many have to do with literal aspects of the tree: board, hard and durable, for example. But many others stem forth (and notice: I could as easily say “spring forth” here) from fundamental myths which feature the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life, the Burning Bush, and the Leaves for the Healing of the Nations. The master context, going back as far as language (for we see even in the Gilgamesh the sacred trees in the forest of Humbaba)
connects trees with the divine, trees with knowledge, trees with healing. Even in the opening line of the Gospel of John we find the tree, though it seems hidden: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Tradition (for some) has it that the Word (Logos in Greek and Verbo in Latin) refers to Jesus, but in my mythistorical reading of the verse I see the leaves of the book of the Hebrews—the language out of which the Word could be made flesh through the reading and telling of stories of Jesus. It does not matter to me whether or not my reading holds historically; I am more interested in the mythic use of the concept, and that has to do with something transcendent, which mere historicism cannot hope to elucidate.

I have only begun to look at the formal studies of linguistics and cognitive science. My approach has heretofore been that of a reader of stories, of a seeker after meaning. I find, though, that I have sought to render a construction upon meaning, to find something universal whereby I can read many works and find a common transcendent reality. My approach seems not to yield anything recognizable to the formal studies of linguistics and cognitive science, yet I am convinced that the things revealed here have relevance. I am convinced that there is a structure of archetypal morphemes which can be identified in a great number of words. I am convinced that an awareness of multi-leveled consciousness-as-revealed-in-extended-metaphor can provide a powerful tool for discerning hidden levels of meaning in difficult texts. I am convinced that an examination of the nature of the extended vehicle holds promise for our continued exploration into the tenor of the mind,
which though it may only be expressed through a vehicle of words, surely describes
something very real.

Exciting new realms have been opened up through recent theoretical efforts, so
that we know much more about the operation of language than has perhaps ever been
known before. George Lakoff recently delivered a lecture to the University of North
Texas Conference on Languaging, which he called “The Poetics of Mind: How the
Metaphors for Mind Shape Philosophical Discourse.” In this talk he discussed at length
the way we speak of the abstract idea of the mind in terms of body-based metaphors. The
mind is a body and thinking is physical; ideas are entities with physical existence; thought
is physical action involving these independent entities. In the extended metaphor of
thought-as-moving, one travels a path, wandering, reaching, searching out dead-end
avenues, avoiding writer’s-block and jumping to conclusions, seeking to arrive at an
understanding. In the metaphor of thought-as-perception, one sees the light, or can’t see
the light unless another draws a picture. One can be shown things and can smell
something fishy in them. In the metaphor of thought-as-object manipulation, messages are
sent and retrieved; they can be grasped, or they can evade one’s grasp. We can cram ideas
into the storehouse of knowledge; we can play with ideas, twist them and shape them.
Ideas can come at you out of the blue, be over your head; you can be thrown a curve.
Ideas can be mapped out and put under the scrutiny of a microscope.

Lakoff continued with thought-as-eating: the term “brain-candy” came to my mind.
He spoke of spoon-feeding, force-feeding, and digesting tasty or bland or disgusting ideas,
some of which are substantial food for thought, and others of which are bullshit. And he
spoke of thought-as-language, a rich metanarrative in which the language of grammar
communicates things spelled out, cryptic, mis-read, and articulated.

Likewise, we have the language of thought-as-math, where two-plus-two is a
simple formula, but rocket-science is Greek to me. And on and on he went, speaking next
of thought-as-machine, leaving me spinning my wheels as he ground out example after
example of productive structures of metaphor whereby we use the English language to
speak of this thing called thought.

The *a priori* assumption here seems to be that truth exists within the language
system; everything can be expressed. We know that this is not precisely true, but we also
know that everything we think of we have to think of within the structure of language, for
it is the vehicle of thought. Someone mentioned Deconstructionism to Lakoff, and he
pointed out its fallacy, the belief that if something can be shown to be metaphorical, then it
cannot be true. To this he answered “Ridiculous!” It could be quite true that he was
“wasting our time,” even though an economic metaphor was employed in speaking of time
as something to be spent or wasted.

I looked up from my notebook after an hour or so of Lakoff’s lecture, not
unimpressed with his grasp of the extended metaphor, but puzzled by the omission of
something that seemed quite essential to me, but which he seemed to be avoiding. If the
brain is a machine--a computer into which we feed data and grind out text, and if language
is the operating system and critical stances the processing applications—what, in this
analogy, turns on the switch? What, in this analogy, drives the keyboard?

Lakoff and his group out at Berkeley seem interested in this problem, though I
heard nothing to help me understand what he may think about how to express it. But he
mentioned two pieces of related data which I find to be to the point. A person told to
watch a screen for a flashing word and then push a button upon making sense of the word
will take about half a second to respond. The time it takes for an impulse to cross the
synaptic threshold is about one-one-hundredth of that, or .005 second. That means that
the brain can make at most one hundred calculations between seeing the word, processing
it to make meaning, and then signal the finger to push the button. Considering the vast
storage of words and meanings we hold in our brains, the evidence is clear that the
process is not computer-like linear sequencing. Something drives the brain in such a way
as to circumvent comprehensively systematic searches of data banks. That whatever-it-is
that drives the brain is not a machine modeled on logic. I am not convinced that I can
express what it is, but I'm sure of this much: we are not driven by something that can be
accurately expressed by metaphors employing physical analogy.

Yet that is what language does. How else can we talk about anything abstract
save by analogy with those things of our sensual experience? It's what we have to do,
having no other words to employ but those generated out of a system which names
phenomena in terms of experience. And just as we have classes of metaphor for thought,
so we have classes of metaphor for inspiration.
The word *inspiration* demonstrates one of the prime metaphors: spirit and respiration both come from a common root word having to do with breath, as we can verify in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Further evidence of this can be seen in the Greek word πνεύμα, translated throughout the English New Testament as “spirit,” though a literal rendition would be “breath.” Thus, air is divine, and a whole world of metaphor comes together in the extended image of the sky-as-heaven, with sun and light and birds and angels and stars and comets and flight taking part as aspects of divine metanarrative. The vehicle of the word is breath in a very literal sense.

Two sensual realms of experience yield two distinct yet related diegeses for the action of the spirit. Spirit-as-light is perceived in terms of sight, and in transcendent terms, sight becomes the dream, or more properly, the dream-vision. Spirit-as-air gives way to the perception through touch of the transcendental in terms of breeze and wind and flight, while in terms of the perception of sound, the transcendent makes itself known through words. The Angel is a complicated character, being bright, having wings, and bringing spoken messages in visions and dreams.

The Muse, or more properly, the Muses, are the generations of Divine intercourse with Memory. This seems quite different, yet a review of the myth shows it to be quite consistent with spirit-as-air. Zeus is a sky god, a god of thunder and light. The intercourse which generates inspiration is between this “brute blood of the air” (to appropriate a favorite line from Yeats’s poem “Leda and the Swan”) and the human Mnemosyne, or Memory. Poetic generation, for the ancient Greeks as well as for
Coleridge and others of the later ages, takes place as the interface of the human body of knowledge and experience and the divine action of an inspiring god. Moreover, it seems to be an intercourse of male and female aspects within the psyche, as I have discussed in Chapter Four.

Odin found wisdom in the Spring of Urd at the foot of the Yggdrasill. In this story, inspiration is metaphorized in terms of the Spring and the Tree, with Wisdom coming from the water of great price, and the elements of words themselves a result of light casting runes in the shadows of the tree’s branches. Heaven and Earth again, and great pain and suffering for the poet hung in between.

The cup of the prophet Ezra likewise contains an inspirational substance: “The Lord said unto me, open thy mouth, and I opened my mouth, and behold a cup full of water, whose colour was like fire; and when I had drank it, my heart brought forth understanding, and wisdom entered into my breast” (II Esdras qtd. in Cambrensis 179-80).

The metaphor resonates with Apollonian and/or Dionysian similarities, for those stories likewise feature the cup as something preliminary to prophetic action. In the Age of Blake the substance might as easily have been porter, or cwrw, or laudanum, but the partaking of the inspirational cup or cauldron or grail remains integral to the idea of inspiration.

My efforts have been to explore as fully as I can, considering that the project must end sometime, the nature of the Awen in the Age of Blake. I have utilized something I call Kundalini Archetypology in a mythistorical way so as to arrive at this understanding.

I conclude that musality in the Age of Blake was generally perceived in complex terms
which were a combination of Christian and Classical models. For Blake and some few others, though, the additional texture of the Bardic metanarrative was utilized, and this manifested itself in the literature not only in Bardic characterizations, but in a creative attitude which gave rise to a new style of myth-making. We who labor in this age to understand the nature of poetics would do well to remember that poetry is more than the generation of words in physical manifestations that flow in structural ways across a page. There are additional dimensions influencing the generations, and not all of them may be quantified and understood in terms of scientific inquiry. The challenge remains for us to develop the language of metaphors whereby we can speak of musality. The exploration into the Welsh Awen reveals that the Welsh codality is nothing more than a culturally distinct version of something universally experienced in poetics. We can understand the physical vehicles of the Cup, the Voice, the Sight, and the Music. What remains is to develop adequate vehicles for scientists who wish to discuss the divine origins of the impulse that generates the metaphors.

This is something the Poet can leave to faith.
APPENDIX A: DRISFUL WORDS FROM KLAEBER’S BEOWULF GLOSSARY

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tredan</td>
<td>tread, walk upon, traverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treddian</td>
<td>step, go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trem(m)</td>
<td>step, space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treow</td>
<td>truth, good faith, fidelity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treowan</td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treow-loga</td>
<td>one false to plighted faith, traitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treoda</td>
<td>track, footprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trum</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truwian</td>
<td>trust, have faith in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go-truwian</td>
<td>trust, confirm, conclude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tryddian</td>
<td>see treddian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trywe</td>
<td>true, faithful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-OR--

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>draca</td>
<td>dragon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>joy, bliss, rejoicing, mirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream-healdendo</td>
<td>joyful, blessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreamless</td>
<td>joyless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drefan</td>
<td>stir up, make turbid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreogan</td>
<td>set, bear oneself, perform, be engaged in, experience, pass through, enjoy, endure, suffer, (DREE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreoc</td>
<td>dripping blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreoc-fish</td>
<td>marked with blood, stained with gore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreorig</td>
<td>bloody, gory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go-dreocsa</td>
<td>fail, decline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreopen</td>
<td>strike, hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drepe</td>
<td>blow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drifan</td>
<td>drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryht</td>
<td>see dryht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryhten</td>
<td>see dryhten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drystan</td>
<td>drink, flushed with drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryso-stent</td>
<td>see drynk-stent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drysing</td>
<td>see drosing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drosobo5</td>
<td>way of life, course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drosen</td>
<td>see drosan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>druasian</td>
<td>stagnate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryst-bearn</td>
<td>noble child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drythian</td>
<td>lord, prince, Lord, God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-guma</td>
<td>retainer, warrior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-hec</td>
<td>noble, lusty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-mi6um</td>
<td>noble treasure, splendid jewel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-scype</td>
<td>valor, bravery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-seile</td>
<td>splendid hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dryth-sib</td>
<td>peace, alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drynk-stent</td>
<td>drinking vessel, cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drysmian</td>
<td>become gloomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MISCELLANY OF WORDS WITH -ARD, -ERD, -IRD, -ORD, -URD, -YRD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-hyrden</td>
<td>harden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bat-weard</td>
<td>boat ward, boat guard, boat keeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beah-bord</td>
<td>ring board, treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bord</td>
<td>board, shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bord-haehbend</td>
<td>board-having, shield-bearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bord-hreocga</td>
<td>shield-covering, shield, phalænx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bord-mæt</td>
<td>shield</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

191
word-board
word-right

-end-

-adreogan
 dracon
 dream
 dream-baldende
 dream-less
 dreia
 droga

drex
 drex-fah
 dreorig
 ge-drogaun
 droqua
 drepe
 driht
 drihten
 drihten
 discan
 discan-fet
 dreorig
 drohoð
 dropqa
 drosan
 dryht-bearn
 dryhten
 dryht-suna
 dryht-uic
 dryht-enan
 dryhte-scype
 dryhte-sele
 dryhte-sib
 dryhte-siet
 dryhtian
 go-drag
 go-dryht, -dryht
 gyrre-giest
 gyrre-taoð
 gyrre-lic
 gyrre-sib
 out-driedan
 on-dryne
 so-driedan

-wyrd
 a-wyrdian
 fyrd-geatalla
 fyrd-born
 fyrd-bragi
 fyrd-bræt
 fyrd-taoð
 ge-wyrd
 grund-byrde
 wyrdian

-yrd-

fate, destiny
injure, destroy, bring fate upon
war comrade
war-dress, cost of mail
war garment, corslet
active in war, warrior
war-song (lay)
fate
guardian of the deep
injure, destroy
APPENDIX B: THE GWION BACH STORY

from Sir Ifor Williams' The Poems of Taliesin

The Hanes or 'The Story' of Taliesin 'in the oldest fragment now extant, says that Cyrridwen, wife of Tegid, had a son called Afagddu, and he was the ugliest man in the world. His mother was grieved at this and thought that the only way he could secure a welcome amongst noblemen would be if he excelled in knowledge. Following the instructions of Vergil's books—evidently the poet had developed into the mediaeval magician—she put on the fire the cauldron of Inspiration and Knowledge, which had to be kept on the boil for a year and a day without a break. Gwion Bach was ordered to keep on stirring it for the whole period, Cyrridwen in the meantime collecting herbs and plants of various kinds to put in it, according to the recipe. At the end of the year it happened that three drops of the hot liquid splashed over on to Gwion's finger, which he naturally stuck in his mouth. These three precious drops happened to be the essence of all the magical ingredients in the cauldron. Though intended for Afagddu, they were now in Gwion's mouth, and when he swallowed them he became the greatest sage on earth, knowing everything, past, present, and future. He was at once that Cyrridwen was his mortal enemy, and fled for his life. She pursued him. He changed into a hare, and ran like a hare. Cyrridwen turned herself into a greyhound and chased him to a river. He jumped in and turned into a fish, she
became an otter. He became a bird, she followed as a hawk; and when she was on the point of overtaking him he saw a heap of winnowed wheat on the floor of a barn, alighted on it, and changed into one of the grains. She then turned into a black hen, scattered the grain with her feet until she found him, and swallowed him. Nine months later she was delivered of him, and because of his beauty she could not bear to kill him herself. So, she put the babe in a skin bag and threw him into the sea. This bag was found in a weir by a certain young prince named Elphin, who picked him up, and with great gentleness carried him home. Because of his lovely forehead (tal), he called him *Tal-iesin*, "beautiful brow," and was astounded when the beautiful browed infant began to talk with the wisdom of a patriarch, not only in prose, but in flowing rhyme as well. Poems streamed out of his mouth. Gwyddno, Elphin’s father, when he came in, asked about the catch at the weir. “I got something better than a fish,” his son replied. “What was that?” “A poet.” “Alas,” said the father, “what is a thing like that worth?” -- using another Welsh word *tal* meaning worth, value. The child immediately answered back, "He is worth more than you ever got out of the weir," purring on *Tal-iesin*, as if it meant "fine value". "Canst thou speak, though so small?" asked the other. "I can say more," said Taliesin, "than thou canst ask." (Williams n.p.)
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