language’s ability to produce, as Aristotle believed, a benign redoubling of
Being, have discernible antecedents in the romantic period. “It has been a major
preoccupation of recent criticism,” writes Burwick,

to expose the rhetoric and the semiotics of entrapment which inform the
arbitrary pretense of the natural sign. While attention to textuality and
intersexuality may well reveal an inherent deception which has masked it-
self as “representation” of human nature, it is also true that the self-reflexive
aesthetics of romanticism often anticipated such critical exposure, calling
attention to the deception and thematizing the entrapment. Skepticism and
incredulity coexist, or at least alternate with, illusionism and that “willing
suspension of disbelief which constitutes poetic faith.” (Mimesis 11-12)

Burwick substantiates this claim by presenting, in the first three chapters, three
foundational concepts “in the understanding and application of mimesis during
the romantic period”: l’art pour l’art [art for art’s sake]; identity and difference,
with the latter term exalted as the essential attribute of artistic success;
and artistic representation as a natural result of the mind’s ability to reflect on
its own workings. On the bases of these conceptual explorations Burwick builds
three additional chapters, each of which provides concrete applications of the
foundations of romantic mimesis. Thus chapter 4 demonstrates how the ob-
ject of mimesis can be the mimetic process itself” through a detailed examination
of important romantic examples of ekphrasis, the representation of “an
artifact of the visual arts” in the verbal arts (13). In chapter 5, Burwick turns to
Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s frequent use of the motif of mirroring to dem-
strate how “reflections often prompt us to ponder both the internal and
external aspects of visual experience” (14). The final chapter focuses on the
phenomenon of the “twice-told tale,” in which “literary self-reflexivity” is
pushed “to its most expansive dimensions,” allowing for “a structural bifur-
cation that exposes the mimetic pretenses” of the very act of storytelling (14-
15).

Burwick ranges far and wide, drawing his examples from sources as dis-
parate as the ancient Greeks, Neoplatonic and Christian Scholastics, well- and
lesser-known English romantics, and the contemporary poet John Ashbery,
producing numerous striking insights and correcitives to conventionally held
beliefs about romantic attitudes concerning the cognitive and artistic elements
of representation. One of the most important comes in Chapter 5, the title of
which, “Reflections in the Mirror,” challenges M. H. Abrams’ influential inter-
pretation of the transition from the Enlightenment to the romantic era through
the metaphor of “The Mirror and the Lamp.” In place of Abrams’ narrative of
an evolution from Aristotelian mimesis to something approximating Platonic
expressionism, Burwick substitutes a more nuanced and convincing demon-
stration that “the two principal concepts of mimesis — Plato’s imitation of
ideal form, Aristotle’s imitation of the processes of thought — persist in the
romantic period” (Mimesis 158). Repeated evocations of mirrors and reflec-
tions in the poetry of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley do not, Burwick
writes, affirm “the philosophical argument that knowledge is a repetition in
the mind of images received through the senses” (Mimesis 144). Instead, such
revisions “involve a mimesis of mimesis, a self-reflexive opportunity to
explore, or to challenge, the presumptions of representation” (Mimesis 159).

Burwick’s ability to draw conclusions as far-reaching as these arises from the
depth and breadth of learning he brings to the task of examining romanticism’s
foundational concepts. His command of the myriad literary, philosophical,
theological, and scientific trends and discourses that combined to produce romanticism give his insights a weightiness sadly lacking in much
theory-driven contemporary romantic criticism. Burwick does not eschew
theory; he surmounts it. Indeed, the opposition he traces in both Thomas De
Quincey: Literature and Power and Mimesis and its Romantic Reflections be-
 tween rhetorical and transcendental literary modes bears upon Burwick’s own
work. Burwick’s flawless logic and careful, comprehensive scholarship enables him
to rise above the empty rhetorical flourishes and paint-by-the-numbers pre-
dictability of much contemporary criticism to a transcendent understanding
of the subjects on which he writes.

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Kathleen Lundeen. Knight of the Living Dead: William Blake and the Problem of
Ontology. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP and London: Associated Univer-

Reading William Blake is a dizzying task of discerning the relationship
between the physical text, the words, and images. Blake works between sense
and nonsense, the material and the epistemological, in ways that bring sense
and sensual into question. To make sense is to work with the sensual sense
in a non-sense sense, the non-sensate meaning of the visual and verbal.
He works in folds, between ways of being and meaning, between history and
myth, religion and heresy, image and text, body and spirit, sense and non-
sense. Kathleen Lundeen situates herself within several elementary folds of
Blake’s work — the spiritual and earthly, the image and the verbal text, as
well as meaning and being — in order to show the transparency between
material and spiritual worlds in Blake’s universe. She discerns some helpful
rules for making sense of the way Blake turns language and images toward a revelation of the divine, all the while explaining her theory of reading by picking through a wide range of Blake's texts and visual images. For those unfamiliar with Blake, a word of caution: the book provides no introduction or summary of his work nor are quotations from scholars put in context of their contribution to Blake studies. One must already have a working knowledge of Blake and Blake criticism to feel at home in this book. That said, even beginning readers of Blake may enjoy the many clever readings throughout.

In chapter one, Lundeen discerns three modes of interaction between poetry and illustration. First, the verbal text functions as a component of the visual design. The words on the page either describe the scene illustrated or, as is often the case with Blake, the word and image do not coincide. The authority of the signs to yield meaning comes under question, as for example in "The Tyger" where furious words and meek image are held in contrast to one another. By such disjunction, as each medium attempts to read the other, the ability of both word and image validly to represent are called into question. Neither fold of word-image art gains the authority by which to appropriate the other. Second, in the chiasmus where image and word meet, the two mediums can infect one another, as in the "incarnation of the text" in which a block of text is placed over an image of a human body. Finally, in contrast to Lessing's postulate that images are spatial while poetry is temporal, Lundeen shows instances of Blake's reversing the space and time realms. In each fold between image and text, Lundeen finds a spirit of animation, creating "winged words" that point beyond what she terms fallen language or fallen representation and opens the way to a visionary and eternal language: "According to Blake, the resemblance between his artistic transgression of aesthetic borders and his crossing of ontological boundaries is not coincidental" (55).

In chapter two, Lundeen introduces her approach to how language operates in Blake. According to Lundeen, Blake collapses the linguistic distinction between general and particular signs. If we were to use only proper names, language would lose its epistemological value, and yet, to use general signs abstracts from the concrete particulars, causing a loss of specificity. Such is the curse of the Fall. The problem, then, becomes how to represent if "When words create they cruelly bind" (65). Aply, this chapter focuses on The Book of Urizen and Milton to illustrate the problem. The more Urizen seeks to form a "solid without fluctuation" the greater the interchangeable nature of images in the poem becomes. A generative globe both metaphorically and literally becomes a womb, and then these life-giving images as easily become a death-like net and tent of binding. With such slippage of language, the poem problematizes Blake's own act of creation and the reader's ability to create meaning. "Fallen" language fails to mediate between things and their meanings, their sense and non-sense. For Lundeen, Blake's goal is to have readers realize that, "while matter and spirit appear to be separate states of being, they are actually different modes of perception" (84). The chapter concludes by developing a perception of language from a "redeemed state" that gives, as Blake's Milton discovers, "a language of action [which] is literal, unencumbered by arbitrary figures" (92).

It is the attempt to recover an Eternal state and "natural" or "innocent" language that serves as Lundeen's way out of the labyrinthine folds of Blake's work. Not all critics agree that Blake's Eternity or his Eternal perspective should be privileged. Instead, many postmodern readers consider Blake as destabilizing any field that acts as a "solid without fluctuation." There are many Blakes, with scholars picking and choosing which elements of his work to use in support of their claims. Lundeen's Blake is first and foremost a prophet who can see into Eternity and whose twists and turns find their end in collapsing our common understanding of this world and pointing us to another world.

Lundeen's final two chapters extend the discussion of language. Blake opens for his readers the originary, spiritual yet material language of Eternity in comparison with which our fallen words and world are merely figurative and derivative. From "The Lamb" and "The Fly" to his early prophecies, we see Blake's poetry stretch language to literalize figures and figure the literal. Likewise, in his illuminations, figure and ground unsettle one another. Indeed, as Lundeen aptly explains, figure and ground collapse as terms for distinguishing how images and language function for Blake. The prophecies become a dizzying array of shifting fields — autobiographical, historical, mythological, and biblical — with no singular ground upon which to determine meaning. To escape and explain such indeterminacy, Lundeen hangs meaning upon Heidegger's understanding of poetry as that which reveals the truth of being. Heidegger and Blake change the rules for grammatically acceptable means of representing being. For Heidegger, the "world worlds" and for Blake "pipers pipe" and singers sing songs. Lundeen claims that "Tautology, which closes the gap between subject and object, appears to restore the natural unity between the poet, his muse, and language itself" (127). She asserts that Blake and Heidegger use tautology not as one among other logical forms but as an intensification of revealing unlike any figurative means of representing. Lest such revelation seem to divide spiritual concerns from the bodily nature of being-in-the-world, Blake's self-conscious materiality in his printing method and his sculpting of images and words on a page keep the language of innocence and revelation vitally physical.

In chapter four Lundeen brings the previous chapters to bear upon the central direction of the book, that Blake's verbal and visual text develops a transparency between the spiritual and material world. Again we find the inter-
play between figurative and literal as Blake makes “visual alliteration” and superimposes one image over another to produce a “twofold vision.” Lundeen’s contribution to Blake scholarship is to explain how the poet/prophet works at the borders between the world we commonly see and a larger spiritual world; the two can be perceived to be intimately inter-related, if we will only develop the eyes with which to see it.

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In Disorderly Sisters: Sibling Relations and Sororal Resistance in Nineteenth-Century British Literature, Leila May explores the subject of sisters as represented by eight novelists of the nineteenth century. She selects works by Dickens, Eliot, Jewsbury, Martineau, Collins, Mary Shelley, and Emily Brontë, claiming that these authors “intentionally or unintentionally participate in an ambivalent representation of family dynamics.” In each of the novels, May demonstrates that there is at least one sororal figure who is “a demurger of the strangely imbalanced world that is depicted” (14). The author offers many enlightening insights, but needs to establish a better context for eighteenth-century novels and to reflect more on brother/sister and brother/brother relations in the time period.

In the first chapter, entitled “Family Business,” May clearly and succinctly sets out her purpose, approach, and theoretical considerations. Her primary aim is to show “the connection between idealizing the purity of the sibling bond and such unostensibly unrelated cultural and social phenomena as the debate about public versus private realms, the lengthy political battle over the Deceased Wife’s Sister Bill, and the social attitude toward the morality of colonialism and the business ethics of industrial capitalism” (14). Her method is “to trace [literary] anxiety developmentally through four subgenres of fiction: realist, sentimental, sensational, and fantastic” (26). By using this approach, she claims to show that “the movement between commitment to condemnation of the ideal of immaculate sorority eventually reaches a frenzied pitch” (27). While her primary debt is to Levi-Strauss, she also reflects on the Antigone myth as analyzed in the nineteenth century by Hegel and Eliot and subsequently in the twentieth century by Irigaray. May argues persuasively against Irigaray’s critique of the motive for feminism in Eliot’s reading by pointing out that Eliot’s feminism is rooted in a “profound dissatisfaction with the construction of her own impossible desire” (41). Nonetheless, she posits that Eliot could agree with Irigaray that Antigone’s “is a rebellion of feminine desire,” and that other nineteenth-century authors manifest “a cultural dread [of this rebellion], a wish to arrest it in its nearly nascent form — sisterhood — and a fascination with the destructive possibility that it might not remain contained” (42).

Chapter 2, “Relative Creatures,” charts the “the assertions and contradictions of the dialectic of sororal ideology” (44) by exploring the influence of the changing socioeconomic world on brother-sister relations in Dickens’s Dombey and Son and Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss. In Dombey and Son, May argues that Florence, “the soft, hidden underbelly of patriarchal industrialism” (64), offers a sisterly love that does not fit into the callous world of acquisitive materialism. Furthermore, “Dickens’s development of the protean force that is sororal desire shows that it must lead to a corrosive vengeance before redemption can be secured” (42). Like Dickens, Eliot exalts the immaculate quality of the sibling tie, but she also condemns the hypocrisy of the nineteenth-century enshrinement of sororal love. May astutely points out that “Eliot depicts a sister who reveals (and subverts) the machinations of the Victorian family whose protection justifies the oppression and entrapment of its female membership” (84). For May, Maggie becomes a “disturbing new Antigone,” who “rejects the choices proffered by the social world and presents her own disjunctive ‘either/or’” (45).

Chapter 3, “My Sister/My Self: Sentimental Sisters,” analyzes sororal ties in two works of sentimental fiction. Harriet Martineau’s Dearbrook and Geraldine Jewsbury’s The Half Sisters. May remarks that the seeming embrace of the ideology of sororal love in these works is “decidedly dialectical, asserting that without the purity of sisterly love neither personal nor social stability is possible, while simultaneously positing the opposite thesis” (42). May’s argument in this chapter (and elsewhere) would be even more cogent if she included additional commentary on the treatment of sibling relations in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century fiction to provide a clearer context for the handling in Victorian literature. The literary legacy of the eighteenth century is laden with the cult of sibling ties in works by authors ranging from Frances Burney to Jane Austen and from Charlotte Smith to Matthew Lewis. Granted, May’s work deals with sister relations of the nineteenth century, but it needs to pay more attention to earlier antecedents, and how they laid the groundwork for later works.