

# Gargano: Songs of Experience

By Christine Castro Gache

FOR THE HERALD

Blake's lamb and his tiger are distanced from each other as lovers that might be separated only a transparency apart. That one sleeps whitely on the mead, and the other roars flame red throughout forests that brim with the phosphorescence of a watchful bird's eye, they are bonded flesh, and as such, eat and defecate in perfect unison. It is the little shepherd that, sauntering as weightlessly as the fleece of his herd is light, will announce to the grouse, but too late, that his lamb had snarled with implacable ivory.

The poet's metaphors on the passing of time, and on how this invisible course that incessantly flows inevitably modifies both how man perceives the world around him and how he is thus viewed by others, are organically divided, just like the moments in our own lives that do not unfold simultaneously, into poems that are separated into two parts. That in itself is Blake's tour de force, as "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience", written in 1789 and 1794 respectively, are contemporary in their concept, as they adopt with their sculpture-like presence, the shape of concrete poetry that allies form and content: the poems not only speak of time, they are time in progress.

Fascinated, for the mind that constructs below the visible soil is always concocting ferocious and glittering images, when one sees Gargano's paintings displayed at Sylvia Vesco's gallery, one is hit in the solar plexus by the feeling that his works possess a certain Blake-like gust. However, contrary to the poems, that center on the progressive transformation of the psyche, Gargano's oils tell the story of the loss of innocence on a larger scale, that philosophically imply the eradication of any certainty. Indeed, they are a breathtaking synthesis of man as a creature devoid of absolute knowledge, in the midst of what

could be devastating solitude if all that relies on a greater and loving spirit in fact would realize it to be a hoax. As soon as the eye has adjusted to the initial blow that so much vibrant colour and decisive line impart, symbolically comparable to that which seems easy to comprehend, it clearly detects, as if it were a certain shape that brusquely evolves out of a dampness stain on a wall, the metaphor of ambiguity hidden within the plot. Akin to Blake's vision of inevitable alterations, the bucolic serenity of the landscape of "Sitio" is soon metamorphosized, if one stares at the pigment long enough, into a perplexing, if not distressing sight. The pond into which a cascade tumbles is voraciously red, whilst the bird in blue hovering with outstretched wings is reminiscent of raw, prehistoric monsters. And one is left just as frail, for Gargano's works invite but then reveal their snare, after viewing "Padre Mío". Inspired on a poem by Goethe, in which the son implores his father to allow him to respond to the call of the king of the alder trees, a brown, throbbing, albeit abstract figure, is seen riding the winds in mad fervour. One also knows the outcome of the encounter, and it is just this chant of underlying and seductive horror that configures some of the passageways of Gargano's internal maze.

*(Gargano's works will be on show at Silvia Vesco's gallery, San Martín 522, until November 17, 2001)*



La noche es siempre - Germán Gargano