Peter Otto on Phallic Religion in *The Four Zoas*
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INFORMATION

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Cover: Details of figures on pages 13, 16, and 21.
A Pompous High Priest:
Urizen’s Ancient Phallic Religion
in The Four Zoas

BY PETER OTTO

It is the Semen of Man in which lieth hid the inmost [Prin­
ciple] of his Life, and thence the Inchoament or Begin­ning of a new Life, and from this Circumstance the Semen
is holy: to make this common with the inmost Principles
and Inchoaments of others, as is done in Adulteries, is
prophane.

Swedenborg

The female organs of generation were revered as symbols
of the generative powers of nature or matter, as the male
were of the generative powers of God.

Knight

a good number of these flying dreams are dreams of erec­
tion; for the remarkable phenomenon of erection, around
which the human imagination has constantly played, can­
cannot fail to be expressive, involving as it does an apparent
suspension of the laws of gravity.

Freud

the phallus is . . . the signifier intended to designate as a
whole the effects of the signified.

Lacan

Despite the ubiquity of the word “phallus” and its cog­
nates in feminist, deconstructive and psychoanalytic
(particularly Lacanian) criticism of the last three decades,
Blake critics have shown little interest in the remarkable
array of phalli found in the illustrations to The Four Zoas.3
Arguably, this neglect extends to the illustrations as a whole.
In 1973 Grant noted that “the publication of G. E. Bentley
Jr.’s monumental Clarendon edition of Vala or The Four
Zoas in 1963” had not inaugurated “a tradition of commentary
on the drawings.”4 Twenty-seven years later, the situation
is not markedly different.5

This neglect is in part due to the manifold difficulties of
the poem. As Ault writes, “The Four Zoas is the most unca­
nonical, unmanageable, and recalcitrant text Blake ever
wrote. The poem’s internal operations exceed the possibil­
ity of mastery by virtue of their heterogeneity and complex­
ity.”6 These difficulties are generated in part by two factors:
the assumption that after The Marriage of Heaven and Hell
Swedenborg exerted no significant influence on Blake’s ar­
tistic practice or iconography;7 and the still widespread com­
mitment in Blake studies to an idealizing, logocentric (rather

1 Emanuel Swedenborg, A General Explanation of the Ten Precepts of
the Deaconge, Extracted from the “Apocalypse Explicata” (London:
R. Hindmarsh, 1794) 94.

2 A shorter version of this paper was delivered at the Romanticism
and the New conference of NASSR, held in Halifax, Nova Scotia,
Canada, 12-15 August 1999. The discussions of individual designs in
The Four Zoas are drawn from my Blake’s Critique of Transcendence:
UP, 2000).

3 Richard Payne Knight, A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus, and
its Connection with the mystic Theology of the Ancients, to which is added
an Essay on the Worship of the Generative Powers During the Middle Ages of Western Europe (London: Privately Printed, 1865) 28. This volume
reprints Knight’s An Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priap­
us, Lately existing at Hernia, in the Kingdom of Naples: in Two Letters;
One from Sir William Hamilton, K. B., His Majesty’s Minister at the
Court of Naples, to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart., President of the Royal Soci­
ey. And the other from a Person residing at Isernia: To which is Added,
A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus, And its Connection with the mys­

4 Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans., and ed. James


6 The work of Marsa Keith Schuchard is a notable exception, par­
ticularly her “Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Swedenborg, Blake, and the Sexual
Basis of Visionary Art,” Esoterica: The Journal of Esoteric Studies 2

7 John E. Grant, “Visions in Vala: A Consideration of Some Pic­
tures in the Manuscript,” Blake’s Sublime Allegory: Essays on “The Four
Zoas,” “Milton,” and “Jerusalem,” ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony
Wittreich, Jr. (Madison, Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1973) 141-202:
141. Grant makes a “partial exception” of the drawings on page 26.
8 Critics often consign discussion of the illuminations to a brief
appendix. See, for example, Donald Ault, Narrative Unbound: Re­
Visioning William Blake’s “The Four Zoas” (Barrytown: Station Hill
Press, 1987) 469-72; John Beer, Blake’s Visionary Universe (Mancheste­
er: U of Manchester P; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969) 343-52;
Andrew Lincoln, Spiritual History: A Reading of William Blake’s “Vala”
or “The Four Zoas” (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 291-92; George
Anthony Rosso, Jr., Blake’s Prophetic Workshop: A Study of “The Four
Zoas” (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP; London and Toronto: Associated
University Presses, 1993) 164-79. When they are discussed in the body
of the text, it is usually only in passing: Kathryn Freeman, Blake’s Nostos:
Fragmentation and Nondualism in “The Four Zoas,” SUNY Series in
Western Esoteric Traditions (New York: State U of New York P, 1997);
John B. Pierce, Flexible Design: Revisionary Poetics in Blake’s “Vala” or
“The Four Zoas” (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1998);
V. A. De Luca, Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime

9 Grant’s “Visions in Vala” and Cettina Tramontano Magno and
David V. Erdman’s “Commentary on the Illuminations” in “The Four
Zoas” by William Blake: Photographic Facsimile of the Manuscript with
Commentary on the Illuminations (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP; London and
Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987) pp. 25-102, provide
the most helpful accounts of the designs.

10 Ault, Narrative Unbound xvii. Pierce, Flexible Design xx, writes that “the unfinished state of all but the drawings on the first few pages
leaves the reader lost in a field of conjecture with no firm basis for
argument.”

11 See, for example, Joseph Viscomi, “The Lessons of Swedenborg;
or, The Origin of William Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,”
Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion, ed. Thomas Pfail and

4 Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly

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than prophetic) imagination.¹⁰ The first discounts the most important context for the poem's illuminations; the second leads viewers to downplay or ignore the poem's powerful representations of the tormented, suffering body of humanity.

With regard to the designs, of course, difficulties also arise from the "unfinished" state of many of the drawings and from the work of an unknown hand who erased or disguised important elements of the most "pornographic" designs. Others are the product of Blake's artistic practice, in particular his penchant for creating visual fields composed of multiple (at first sight often incommensurate) interacting elements and "layers." This third source of difficulty is compounded by Magno and Erdman's facsimile of the poem, "The Four Zoas" by William Blake, published in 1987.

Bentley printed his facsimile from conventional photographic prints of the manuscript. This photographic technology was unable to reproduce many of the faint lines, partial erasures and other details visible to the naked eye. When Magno and Erdman prepared their facsimile of the poem, they arranged for infrared photographs to be taken.¹¹ As a result, they were able to reproduce many, although not all, of the details lost to Bentley. They indicated the still significant gap between facsimile and manuscript by making "tracings and sometimes partly conjectural redrawings of lines, to bring out particulars almost lost to the camera" (ME 17).

The most significant shortcomings of Magno and Erdman's facsimile, however, arise from their decision to print, without enlargement, from "the 8 x 10 inch prints . . . obtained for this work" (ME 17). Most of the pages of Blake's manuscript are approximately 12 3/4 x 16 1/2 inches. Where Bentley's facsimile reproduces these pages in full, the reproductions found in Erdman and Magno's facsimile are approximately one third the size of the originals.

Magno and Erdman were advised that printing from the photographs, without enlargement, would "retain their sharpness of detail" (ME 17). Unfortunately, this same strategy makes it more likely that those details will be overlooked or seem insignificant. Moreover, diminishing the size of a visual field tends to resolve its elements into a unity (much like seeing an engraving close-up and then at a distance). Consequently, it becomes more likely that viewers will overlook the elements constitutive of that unity, and the ways in which they might open other "layers" of meaning. For example, on page 90[98] of the manuscript, the head of the Prester Serpent can be seen as a unified whole. Equally, it can be seen as an assemblage of incongruous parts (there is a human head, a serpentine head, and a heart-shaped mask). In Magno and Erdman's facsimile, the much reduced size of the Prester Serpent's head emphasizes the former and makes the latter much harder to see.

For these reasons, it is perhaps worth mentioning that my account of the poem's designs relies on repeated and lengthy study of the manuscript, housed in the British Library, supplemented by the available facsimiles (used in part as mnemonic devices). To assist readers without access to the manuscript, I have used footnotes to describe some of the aspects of the designs not easily visible in the available facsimiles. I have also used footnotes to draw the reader's attention to some of the points at which my account of the designs diverges from the account offered by Magno and Erdman.

In the argument that follows, I focus on one of the varieties of phallus in Blake's oeuvre, namely the Urizenic or hermaphroditic phallus, as seen in the drawings on pages 24, 26, 32, 88[96], 90[98] and 112[108] of The Four Zoas.¹² I argue that the phallus is created by Urizen as a privileged image of the absolute (God the Father/Heaven), the ultimate source and guarantor of the Law used to discipline the wayward bodies of the fallen world. As such, it provides an important perspective on: the mechanisms deployed by Urizen to turn living flesh into a garment appropriate for a rational spirit; the role played by the body in its own disempowerment; and the ways in which the flesh resists the construction of a (rational) spiritual body.

The Head and the Phallus

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was "commonly believed that the brain was connected to the testes by the nerves, which transmitted 'the white or spermatic


¹¹ Prints of many of the infrared photographs obtained by Magno and Erdman can be viewed in the British Library's Manuscript Reading Room. See Prints from MS Negatives, vol. 71.

¹² All citations of the poem's illuminations refer to "The Four Zoas" by William Blake, ed. Magno and Erdman. References to Magno and Erdman's "Commentary on the Illuminations" will be inserted parenthetically in the text, preceded by "ME" (e.g. ME 50).
components” thought to be the source of life.13 Charlton, for example, publicizing and developing the views of Glisson, argued in Natural History of Nutrition, Life and Voluntary Motion (1659) that the testes “received the success [a nutritious juice] through its nerves and thus from the brain.”14 In Conjugial Love, Swedenborg gives these ideas a more spiritual inflexion when he writes of an “influx” from God through the soul to the reason and then to the body.15 Influx opens the body to the rational/spiritual stuff of life. Consequently “the ability and vigour called virile accompanies wisdom,” and men whose bodies are open to influx from reason are blessed with “enduring efficacy” (433). Robert Hindmarsh draws on both medical and religious versions of these ideas when he writes that

The characteristic peculiar to male animals is the formation of seed in themselves, which is first conceived in the understanding, then formed in the will, and afterwards translated to the lower parts of the body, where it is enveloped with a material covering, and thence conveyed into the wombs, and last of all brought forth into open day.16

These views derive ultimately from Greek, Roman and Jewish thought. As Onians notes, “for the Jews originally, as for the Greeks, Romans, etc., the head contained not only the life-soul . . . but also the life-fluid, the seed, and was the source.”17 In the words of one writer: “the seed is a drop of the brain containing in itself warm vapour.” Although “we have fragments of knowledge that in the latter half of the fifth century Hippocrates and Democritus held that the seed was drawn from the whole body,” this view was commonly coupled with the belief that “it gathers to the spinal marrow and that most of it flows from the head.”18 As Onians explains:

It was natural and logical to think that the “life” . . . issuing from a man must come from the “life” . . . in him, from his head therefore, and, helping that location, to see in the seed, which carries the new life and which must have seemed the very stuff of life, a portion of the cerebro-spinal substance in which was the life of the parent.19

A more immediate source of Blake's iconography of the phallus, however, may have been Richard Payne Knight's A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus, And its Connexion with the mystic Theology of the Ancients, published in London in 1786 for the Dilettanti Society.20 The winged phallus depicted on the second plate of Knight's book resembles the...
winged phalli on pages 26 and 42 of *The Four Zoas*. Echoes of the curious, composite figures (part man, beast and genital) found in the former can also be seen in the latter. More important than these visual parallels, however, may have been Knight's account of an ancient phallic religion.

Knight describes the diverse forms of an "ancient polytheism" that, lacking the "artificial decency" of the modern world, represented the creative power of God "by the organ of generation in that state of tension and rigidity which is necessary to the due performance of its functions." Indeed, what more just and natural image could they find, by which to express their idea of the beneficent power of the great Creator, than that organ which endowed them with the power of procreation, and made them partakers, not only of the felicity of the Deity, but of his great characteristic attribute, that of multiplying his own image.22

This iconography identifies men as conduits of divine power and women as the material body (the passive powers) waiting to receive divine influx.23 As Knight notes, "the chaste and pious matrons of antiquity wore round their necks and arms" images in which the organ of generation appears alone, or only accompanied with the wings of incubation in order to show that the devout wearer devoted herself wholly and solely to procreation, the great end for which she was ordained. So expressive a symbol, being constantly in her view, must keep her attention fixed on its natural object, and continually remind her of the gratitude she owed the Creator, for having taken her into his service, made her a partaker of his most valuable blessings, and employed her as the passive instrument in the exertion of his most beneficial power.24

Knight was not, of course, the first person to imagine events that brought together God, the phallus (or the male body) and the female body. In Genesis 6:4, the "mighty men which were of old, men of renown," are described as the product of intercourse between "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men." In Roman mythology, Jupiter takes the form of a swan in order to lie with Leda and a shower of golden rain to lie with Danaë. Representations of the former, such as Marcantonio Raimondi's *Leda and the Swan*, often explicitly coordinate the divine, the phallus, and a docile female body. The swan/phallus becomes a vehicle for the divine seed that shapes human history. In representations of the latter, such as Titian's *Danaë*, the shower of golden rain is treated as a euphemism for divine semen. Danaë lies passive and receptive, while an old woman holds out her apron to catch the heavenly seed.

The practices of certain eighteenth-century sects, such as the Moravian Brethren, also coordinate the divine, the phallus and the female body in a manner broadly analogous to Knight's primitive religion. Zinzendorf announced that Jesus changed Pudendum to Verendum. Consequently, what was chastised by Circumcision, in the time of the Law, is restored again to its first Essence and flourishing State; 'tis made again equal to the most noble and respectable Parts of the Body, yea 'tis, on Account of its Dignity and Distinction become superior to all the rest.

Indeed, Zinzendorf continues, "I consider the Parts for distinguishing both Sexes in Christians, as the most honourable of the whole Body." In sexual intercourse, the husband "represents for a Time the Husband of all Souls [Jesus], and the [wife] the whole Congregation of Souls":

When an Esther by Grace, and Sister, according to her Make, gets Sight of this Member (which is called here the Member of the Covenant, [the phallus]) her Senses are shut up, and she holily perceives that God the Son was a Boy. Ye holy Matrons, who, as Wives, are about your Vice-Christis, you honour that precious Sign by which they resemble Christ, with the utmost veneration.25

Yet another important context for the Urizenic phalli in *The Four Zoas* is Swedenborg's *Conjugial Love*. This volume describes in detail a far-reaching purgation and reorientation of desire that concludes with the achievement of a chaste, sexual union, in which the female body (through the conduit of the male/reason) is opened to influx from the divine. Having turned from the body and the desires of the self, the masculine (reason and the phallus) becomes a ve-

21 Knight, A Discourse 14, 17, 27. For a brief account of phallic worship, see Paul Chambers, *Sex and the Paranormal* (London: Blandford, 1999) 57-72.
22 Knight, A Discourse 17.
23 This is, of course, a fairly common theme. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990) 146, quotes William Harvey's claim in *Disquisitions Touching the Generation of Animals* (1653), trans. Gweneath Whitteridge (Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1981) 165-66, that "The hen's acting 'as one ravished with gentle delight'... is a sign of gratitude toward the male for his godlike act":

She shaketh herself for joy, and, as if she had now received the greatest gift, preens her feathers as if giving thanks for the blessing of issue granted by love the creator. The dove... expresses her joy in ciotus in wondrous wise; she leaps and spreads her tail and with it sweeps the earth below her, and combs her feathers with her beak and settles them, as if the gift of fertility did lead to the greatest glory.
24 Knight, A Discourse 27-8.
25 Quoted in Henry Rimius, *A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Hermelhusters, commonly called Moravians, or, Unitas Fratrum; with a short Account of their Doctrines, drawn from their own Writings* (2nd ed; London: 1753) 48.
hicle for the divine fluid now able to flow from heaven to earth:

There are three (things or principles) whereof every man (*homo*) consists, and which follow in an orderly connection, viz. the soul, the mind, and the body . . . Every thing which flows from the Lord into man, flows into his inmost principle, which is the soul, and descends thence into his middle principle, which is the mind, and through this into his last principle, which is the body: such is the nature of the influx of the marriage of good and truth from the Lord with man; it flows immediately into his soul, and thence proceeds to the principles next succeeding, and through these to the extreme or outermost principles; and thus conjointly all the principles constitute conjugal love.

It is evident from the "idea of this influx," Swedenborg continues, "that two conjugal partners are the form of conjugal love [the marriage of good and truth] in their inmost principles, and thence in the principles derived from the inmost" (101): the relation between man and woman repeats that between God and the masculine mind (soul), and the mind and the body.

Knight complains that

Of all the profane rites which belonged to the ancient polytheism, none were more furiously inveighed against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; which appeared not only contrary to the gravity and sanctity of religion, but subversive against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; which appeared not only contrary to the gravity and sanctity of religion, but subversive against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; which appeared not only contrary to the gravity and sanctity of religion, but subversive against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; which appeared not only contrary to the gravity and sanctity of religion, but subversive. Of all the profane rites which belonged to the ancient polytheism, none were more furiously inveighed against by the zealous propagators of the Christian faith, than the obscene ceremonies performed in the worship of Priapus; which appeared not only contrary to the gravity and sanctity of religion, but subversive of the first principles of decency and good order in society.

This repression has led to the disappearance or marginalization of such "natural" rites and the religion to which they belong, despite Knight's confidence that education, science and religion

may turn and embellish the currents; but can neither stop nor enlarge the springs, which, continuing to flow with a perpetual and equal tide, return to their ancient channels, when the causes that perverted them are withdrawn.

When writing of the phalli in Blake's *oeuvre*, critics often adopt a similar narrative, assuming that the phallus is a sign of the human form divine rather than of the human remade in the image of the semipeternal. Like Knight, they hope to uncover the primitive phallus that, before the imposition of social restraints, could be seen as a "human form" and its "balmy drops [as] the promise of a newborn child that will ensure Creative Life" (ME 74).

As I shall argue, although Blake deplored attempts to disguise the sexual ground of culture and was critical of the cultural institutions that attempt to confine sexuality, the Urizenic phallus is not an ideal form. Although Knight's primitive, priapic religion parades what "civilized" religion hides, it develops the phallus as a symbol of practices designed to create a body that conforms to the divine. This is why the "matrons of antiquity" described by Knight are "chaste and pious." They strive to become vessels of the divine rather than voluptuaries of the flesh or active in their own right. Similarly, the story of Jupiter and Danaé is often taken as an anticipation of the annunciation, a sexual encounter in which mortal man plays no part and the female body again plays the role of passive receptacle for divine seed.

Even the sexuality praised by Zinzendorf and Swedenborg has been purged of the desires of the flesh. Swedenborg writes that

spiritual purification may be compared with the purification of natural spirits, as effected by the chemists, and called defaecation, rectification, castigation, cohabation, acution, decantation, and sublimation; and wisdom purified may be compared with alcohol, which is a spirit highly rectified . . . Now whereas spiritual wisdom in itself is of such a nature, that it grows more and more warm with the love of growing wise, and by virtue of this love increases to eternity, and inasmuch as this is effected in proportion as it is perfected by a kind of defaecation, castigation . . . and this by elimation and abstraction of the intellect from the fallacies of the senses, and of the will from the allurements of the body, it is evident that conjugal love, whose parent is wisdom, is in like manner rendered successively more and more pure, and thereby chaste (145).

Zinzendorf is still more extreme: "Our very Nature and the whole Mass of Man is infected with the Poison of the Sinful Matter, the best remedy against which is its Fermentation in the Grave, that thus our Saviour may produce something better."26

In Urizen's religion the phallus is worshipped because its rise above the body, "involving as it does an apparent suspension of the laws of gravity," anticipates the resurrection. In contrast to the flesh—which is soft, multifaceted, polymorphous in its pleasures—the phallus is unbending, singular, unequivocal. For Urizen it provides, therefore, an apt symbol of the static, law-abiding order of his heaven and synecdoche of the disciplined body he labors to construct


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in this world. The phallus, in other words, is for Urizen the
most important (material) image of the mind's immaterial
essence.

Hart and Stevenson observe that "When a man or a woman
is imagined as aroused but not yet sexually united with a
partner, terms carrying strong ascensional connotations are
usual: the man is erect, the woman's heart may 'flame up
and burn with love' . . . Both may look forward to a time
when they will achieve a state of heavenly bliss." Yet "When
the two are sexually joined, it is common for the upward-
tending language and imagery to give way to something pre-
dominantly horizontal: coire means to go or come together;
congressus is a mutual walking or proceeding; a coniunctus
is yoked to a partner." The Urizenic phallus resolves this ten-
sion between vertical and horizontal movements by divid-
ing one from the other, separating transcendent from mor-
tal faculties, forms congruent with the eternal from the sup-
posed chaos of the flesh. In the drawing on page 132 of The
Four Zoas, Urizen wears his penis on his buttocks. This
plant, flaccid organ represents everything that he wants to
put behind him. In contrast, the organ that Urizen wor-
ships is divided from the body that supports it. In the pages
of The Four Zoas it is most commonly seen rising above the
earth or standing alone. The Urizenic phallus is the para-
doxical symbol and product of Urizen's disavowal of the
flesh: it embodies the desire to be disembodied.

The desire to cast off the flesh and become one with God
is a common theme in the literature of religion. Vaughan
asks the "Father of eternal life" to

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
My perspective (still) as they pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
Where I shall need no glass.

He longs for "that night! where I in him / Might live invis-
ible and dim." Young writes that we are angels whose true
nature lies apart from the material world:

Angels are Men in lighter Habit clad,
High o'er celestial Mountains wing'd in Flight;
And Men are Angels, loaded for an Hour,
Who wade this miry Vale, and climb with Pain,
And slippery Step, the Bottom of the Steep.

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Where I shall need no glass.

He longs for "that night! where I in him / Might live invis-
ible and dim." Young writes that we are angels whose true
nature lies apart from the material world:

Angels are Men in lighter Habit clad,
High o'er celestial Mountains wing'd in Flight;
And Men are Angels, loaded for an Hour,
Who wade this miry Vale, and climb with Pain,
And slippery Step, the Bottom of the Steep.

The desire to cast off the flesh and become one with God
is a common theme in the literature of religion. Vaughan
asks the "Father of eternal life" to

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set to work to reshape the world in the image of the divine; he must create a spiritual-natural, a body passively receptive of divine (rational) influx.

According to Swedenborg, the divine is composed of both Love and Wisdom, Essence and Existence. The latter, like the former, are

distinctly one . . . for Love is Essence, and Wisdom is Existence, inasmuch as Love doth not exist but in Wisdom, nor Wisdom but from Love; wherefore, when Love is in Wisdom then it existeth. 37

As this suggests, the Divine Soul (Love, Essence) cannot be imagined outside of the Divine Body (Wisdom, Existence).

Indeed,

That a Soul can exist without a Body, and exercise Thought and Wisdom, is an Error proceeding from Fallacies; for every Soul of Man is in a spiritual Body, after it hath put off it's (sic) material Coverings which it carried about with it in the World. 38

In attempting to create a spiritual body (a spiritual-natural) distinct from the physical body and entirely subject to reason, Urizen encounters a number of difficulties.

Swedenborg allows no influx from the natural to the spiritual worlds; influx descends from God to the angels, to reason and then to the natural world, with each level ultimately taking its form from God. Men and angels are recipients of life rather than themselves being life. 39 In this static, hierarchical universe, order is dependent upon a curious mixture of insight and blindness. We must allow ourselves to be shaped by God and the good (heaven), while remaining unmoved by the desires of the self and the body (hell). In the absence of this influx, faced with a resurgence of the "selfish" energies of the body, Urizen must actively shape recalitrant flesh into forms consonant with the divine.

The most striking of Urizen’s difficulties, however, arise from the fact that, in the universe of The Four Zoas, Love and Wisdom are separate powers (Luvah and Urizen) with separate emanations (Vala and Ahania). The reduction of love to Esse that is “in” and realized as “wisdom” therefore involves a fundamental reorganization of the psyche. First, Love (Luvah) must be divided from his emanation (Vala) and his energy rerouted to serve Urizenic ends. Second, Vala must be forced to take the shape of Urizen rather than Luvah. This will involve the emergence of her rational, spiritual form from her fleshly self which will then be cast off. Third, wisdom must be driven by love, but in a manner that does not disturb the equipoise of reason. The form constructed to meet these criteria can be seen on page 24 (fig. 1).

Immediately below and to the left of lines five and six—“Luvah & Vala trembling & shrinking, beheld the great Work master [Urizen]/ And heard his Word!” (24: 5-6)—floats a figure that is ambiguously a large phallus and an armless and headless woman, whose feet have both been severed above the ankle. 40 The top of the phallus is suggested by the woman’s breasts and its trunk by her torso. Magno and Erdman speculate that “At the place of her vulva there was something (much erased) resembling a keyhole—perhaps symbolizing the guilt that forbids sexual intercourse.” 41 This chaste, mutilated, phallic form is Vala as a spiritual-natural body, shaped in accordance with Urizenic wisdom. At the bottom of the page, the natural Vala, divided from her spiritual form, constrained by the “ropes and nets” (ME 38) of Urizen, sinks into the abyss. Vala assumes her spiritual body as her natural, sexual body undergoes confinement and exile.

39 Swedenborg, Divine Love and Divine Wisdom paras. 4-6.
40 In the manuscript, this figure is not quite as faint as it appears in either of the facsimiles. Viewing the manuscript, there can be little doubt that the breasts and shoulders of this figure were drawn to resemble the head (and the torso the upper portion of the trunk) of a large circumcised phallus.
41 Martin Butler, The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1981) 2 vols., 1: 278, writes that “in the left margin there is a phallic form, perhaps a figure.” Magno and Erdman reverse the emphasis of Butler’s description: they see “the torso of a female with legs apart but with neither head nor feet.” The figure does have “a phallic appearance”; but because “knees, even the right kneecap, can be made out; also the double bulge of breasts,” they imply that this is likely to be fortuitous (ME 38). Butler, Magno and Erdman assume that this curious figure must be either a phallus or the torso of a woman. A deconstructive or romantic postmodern reader might argue that it is impossible to decide and that, consequently, this drawing creates a stumbling block for the rational understanding. In this case, however, the ommoror of a female (or hermaphroditic) phallus nicely evokes the violence and absurdity of the marriage of Love and Wisdom (as imagined by Swedenborg).
To close one’s body in a rigid form is inevitably to confine the active powers that once animated it. To construct the Urizenic phallus is, in other words, also to build Urizen’s “Furnaces of affliction” (25: 40), which he will use to smelt Luvah into malleable form. Urizen sees “Vala incircle round the furnaces where Luvah was clos’d” (26: 1; my italics). Vala is both the inside and outside surface of the Urizenic world that confines Luvah. Like the bodies of the pious, from the outside she is dominated by Reason/God; from inside, however, she maintains a relation with repressed desire (Luvah). On the one hand, Luvah’s energy now drives (is consumed by) Vala/Urizen’s body; on the other hand, the same body compresses Luvah, thereby generating the heat that will reduce him to “molten metal” (28: 8). Both aspects are suggested by the narrator’s equivocal observation, “Vala fed in cruel delight, the furnaces with fire” (25: 41). Vala is a “body embalmed in moral laws” (J 80: 27).

In brief, Urizen’s furnaces represent the congruence of three elements: Urizen’s moral laws, Vala’s body and Luvah’s sexual energy. The first turns the second into rigid, masculine form and the third into a liquid that can be diverted to Urizenic ends. As this suggests, and the mutilated female on page 24 demonstrates, this convergence is realized as a phallus in which the Swedenborgian conjunction of love and wisdom is achieved. Vala and Luvah now take the form of patriarchal authority. Blake critics are often quick to associate the phallus with revolutionary desire, forgetting that in Jerusalem it is described as “a pompous High Priest entering by a Secret Place” (J 69: 44). In The Four Zoas the Urizenic phallus “believes” it has a supersensible destiny in which the body to which it is attached does not share.

Although shaped by Urizen, Vala’s life (the life of the now chaste body) still depends on Luvah. As he loses form, Vala’s “fires” fade until she falls “a heap of Ashes / Beneath the furnaces... in living death” (28: 5-6).
Then were the furnaces unscaed with spades & pick-axes
Roaring let out the fluid, the molten metal ran in channels
Cut by the plow of ages held in Urizen's strong hand
In many a valley, for the Bulls of Luvah dragged the Plow
(28: 7-10)

Love (Luvah and Vala) is now congruent with the form imposed by Urizen (wisdom): Vala has been reduced to ashes on the surface of Urizen's world, while Luvah is the sexual fluid contained and shaped by Urizen's phallus. This rigid, unbending instrument turns sexual congress into ploughing, a violent (masturbatory) opening of a female "channel." Urizen holds "the plow of ages" in his "strong hand" and, dragged by "the Bulls of Luvah," cuts "channels" in which the molten Luvah, ejaculated when the furnaces are opened, will congeal. Luvah and Vala have been harnessed to the production of an inert, material world/body.

Although Urizen's phallic furnaces are efficient engines for the sublimation of Luvah, the bodies they produce are not as docile as Urizen would like. Once the emanations adopt a determinate, objective form, they cannot be so easily bent to the ends of the active powers. In Swedenborg's terms, passive power (the power to receive impressions, characteristic of emanations) becomes inert:

Inert power is not a dead power, but it exists whenever a body is deprived of the power of re-acting in the same proportion as it is acted upon, or when it has lost its (sic) elastic virtue; thus the power impressed on it is absorbed [or swallowed up in it], since it does not return the same degree of re-action, as it at first received of action. 42

This poses no difficulties for the rational power described by Swedenborg, which he imagines as standing midway between heaven and hell, God and the selfish desires of the body. Indeed, Swedenborg suggests that the spiritual-natural forms a barrier that divides us from the hell of the body. In The Four Zoas, however, Urizen is housed within the body, without access to divine influx. Consequently, at the moment when the body as a whole assumes rigid, phallic form, Urizen finds that he has been engulfed by the female body he had hoped to escape. The designs on page 26 (fig. 2) explore these difficulties as a struggle between, on the one hand, rising and penetrating powers (phallus) and, on the other hand, opening and enclosing powers (vagina). This struggle is driven by the phallus's attempt to rise above the (female) body that supports it.

Phallic Sexuality

Towards the top of the left-hand margin of page 26, Blake drew a small figure with frizzy hair, butterfly wings and small legs, which trail beneath a swollen belly and large pendulous breasts implying that she is heavy with child. A line drawn down the centre of the belly allows one to construe the same figure as a large vulva. This flying, breastsed, vulva-womb is an apt representation of the sensuous world (Vala) described by Luvah as "the cold & dark obscure" and by Urizen as "the Abyss" (23:15). 44

Immediately beneath the vulva-womb woman is a large bat-winged phallus, beneath which hangs a scrotum and two large testicles (fig. 2a). A woman has wrapped her arms around the trunk of this creature. Her legs trail beneath the scrotum; her head has been pushed to one side by the phallus. In the text, Vala feeds the fires of the furnace and is fed by them. The figure clinging to the winged penis plays an analogous role: her arms encircle the phallus, providing the friction that causes Luvah to boil and the phallus to rise. This creates the impression that the woman (like Vala) is being fed by Luvah, lifted with the phallus. Her elevation, however, is short-lived. The narrator reports that when Luvah is "quite melted," the "fires of Vala" fade. Similarly, in Luvah's account of these events, the appearance of the dragon is followed by the Flood, which submerges the body (26: 12-14). The third figure echoes both of these narratives.

Here, the upward thrust of the flying phallus appears to have loosened the hold of the clinging female figure, causing her to fall downwards and establishing a division be-

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43 With regard to the "objective" description of the elements of this design and the assumption that its figures form a sequence "that can be read from the top of the page to the bottom," my account broadly follows that offered in "The Four Zoas" by William Blake. Magno and Erdman, however, describe the interaction of the design's elements only in the most general terms (the "four stages of metamorphoses ... combine love and hate, humanity and monstrosity," etc.) and they assume that the design's visual narrative constitutes "a prophecy of true progression" rather than, as I argue, the cycle of phallic sexuality. In order to establish this positive progression, they ignore the complex interaction between male and female powers, and the involvement of Urizen (and the desire for transcendence) in these metamorphoses.
44 For Magno and Erdman, the page's "prophecy of true progression" begins here. They identify this figure as "the Earth-worm" "call'd forth" by Luvah "from the cold & dark obscure" (26:7). As there is nothing that associates this figure with an Earth-worm, they contend (however improbably) that the figure "depicts a 'worm' [an Earth-worm!] in butterfly form." Although Luvah does not portray the Earth-worm as an overtly positive figure, Magno and Erdman conclude that the butterfly-worm is "an emblem of hope and humor: a droll creature with girlish, winking face" (39). It seems more straightforward, however, to associate this first figure with "the cold & dark obscure," the feminine world seen from the point of view of Luvah who, imprisoned within the furnaces of Urizen, is able to recall the steps that led to his confinement only by "Reasoning from the Joins" (28:2). As Brenda S. Webster writes, the figure's "whole body suggests a voracious sexual organ" [Blake's Prophetic Psychology (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983) 213]. This is the sexual, fleshly "abyss"/womb above which the phallus wants to rise.
tween male and female, "rational" and physical portions of the self. The upper half of the figure is once again a flying phallus, attached to a hairy scrotum. Unlike its precursor, it is capped by a bird's head with a single eye, and its bat-wings have two rather than four segments. The bird-phallus is able to elevate itself above the female body, but cannot entirely separate itself. It brings with it a pair of "scaled thighs which grow together to form a mermaid's body that trails off into four absurd filaments" (ME 39). Immediately beneath the scrotum, at the top of the mermaid body, is a darkly drawn vulva, echoed by the giant vulva formed by its "scaled thighs." This female body is a creature of the watery, material realm precipitated by the elevation of Urizen and the sublimation of Luvah. It is the unwanted "shadow" of the bird-phallus.

Unable to divide himself from his female body, the bird-phallus must reform it, turning the natural into a spiritual-natural that corresponds to the dictates of (Urizenic) reason. In the third figure, this process has already begun: the phallic bird's neck is turned and his beak bent towards the vulva, as if he were about to enter his own body. The result of this intercourse can be seen in the remarkable drawing of a female dragon at the bottom of the page, which turns the previous figure inside out.

The human face of the female dragon is stylized and elegant, with one strand of hair falling casually in front of her face. This dragon is so domesticated that her arms and legs have atrophied. The latter trail uselessly behind her; the hands or paws of the former have been replaced by "elegant" fans. Two, perhaps three, breasts hang from her body. Two large wings hold her aloft, ensuring she remains an unobtainable object of desire.

The most surprising feature of this dragon is her masculine interior, implied by her segmented wings (previously attached to male rather than female bodies) and her long, serpentine neck (which echoes the neck of the bird-phallus). The neck appears to be an extension of the long, serpentine tail that has thrust her legs apart and trails behind her. Like the two figures immediately above her (and Enion on page 7), this dragon is a hermaphrodite; unlike her precursors, however, the winged dragon's female body is now

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45 Magno and Erdman ignore the implied struggle and binary opposition between male and female portions of this creature. They see only "male and female organs fused into a unity" (39).
no more than the exterior to the phallic interior. She is the chaste, domestic woman; yet another version of the spiritual-natural whose form corresponds to the rational. The dragon realizes the ideal phallic female depicted in embryo on page 24: his/her docile exterior is completely subservient to his/her rational (masculine) interior. Yet the achievement of this state also brings its demise, taking the sequence we have been tracing back to its beginning. By subduing the female power, the male power closes himself within "the cold and dark obscure" of the body it has created. Urizen must once more resume his efforts to rise above the body.66

As I have argued, the text of The Four Zoas describes determinate bodies as the product of a bizarre sexuality in which Urizen's phallus is both the source of seed (the furnaces) and the instrument for opening female channels to receive that seed (the plough). These phases of Urizenic sexuality correspond, respectively, to the rising bat-phallus and the delving bird-phallus. At the same time, the designs emphasize that rigid bodies are not achieved once and for all; they rest on a vigorous, unending attempt to subdue the female body.67

The absurdity of the phallic desire for transcendence is well illustrated by the winged phallus on page 42 that, having detached itself from the body, rises into the air. Although the phallus has managed to rise some distance above the earth/body, it is still attached to a string held in the left hand of a naked woman who raises her right hand as if to sweat it.68 From this perspective, the winged phallus is no more than a plaything of the very powers it hopes to escape, doomed to a cycle in which each rise is followed by a fall. This cycle does not, of course, qualify its status as a symbol of the transcendent. The periodic rise of the phallus is, for the believer, a compelling sign of a power in excess of the flesh: it offers an image of the resurrection that will one day lift us above the temporal world. On page 88[96], three believers prostrate themselves before a huge phallus resting on two large testicles (fig. 3). The phallus is worshipped because, like the flying penis, it rises above both women and the body. It is an emblem of a religion that treats death as the path to life.69

Phallic Institutions

As Urizen tightens his grip on the world, life becomes congruent with phallic forms. A key moment in these developments occurs in Night the Seventh, when Urizen establishes "Trades & Commerce" and constructs a Temple ([95]; 25; 88[96]: 1), the institutional forms of his religion. The phallus establishes a rigid order which turns the body into a furnace, melting Luvah (sexual energy) into a liquid substance which can then be directed to Urizenic ends. Similarly, "Trades & Commerce" establish a nascent global order at one remove from local cultures. Humanity is sacrificed to the demands of this inhuman, "non-material" order: "slaves in myriads in ship loads burden the...deep"; "children are sold to trades / Of dire necessity" and forced to labor "day & night till all / Their life extinct they [take] the spectre form in dark despair" ([95]: 29, 26-8).

From the outside, the Temple speaks of eternal rather than temporal things. Like the phallus worshipped on page 88[96], the Temple solidifies the physical organ which is its archetype, enlarges it and severs it from the body, teaching believers that eternal life depends on the death of the body. At the centre of the phallus on page 88[96] can be seen the small space that contains the tormented and molten Luvah; the small congregation who worship this phallus emulate this form, rolling themselves into a ball to hide their own genitals. Similarly, "in [its] inner part" Urizen creates a "Secret place"

That whosoever enter into the temple might not be hold The hidden wonders allegoric of the Generations Of secret lust when hid in chambers dark the nightly harlot Plays in Disguise in whisperd hymn & mumbling prayer (88[96]: 1. 2, 3-6)

66 Magno and Erdman conclude their discussion of the fourth figure by suggesting that it is only from Luvah's perspective (from within "the furnaces of affliction") that the hermaphroditic dragon appears monstrous. They write that "the movement of the hair and wings, the hands fanned like all-reaching pinnae, the swollen breasts and the belly and legs assimilated to the phallic serpent tail: all express the passion of the female—to capture the male organ?—to transform it into a baby to feed" (ME 39). It is my view that the opposition between withdrawal from and engulfment by the female body (the phallic attempt to rise above and the subsequent fall into the female body) are complementary parts of the Urizenic sexual economy represented on page 26.

67 Grant, "Visions in Valea" 153-60, offers a valuable description of, and a useful critique of earlier commentary on, this design. However, he misleadingly describes the composite creatures on page 26 as "female figures... driven by desire but... unable to satisfy each other in spirit of their ostensible readiness to do so" (160). See also Claire McCarthy, "Terrors of the Uncertain": Mapping the Feminine in William Blake's Valea or The Four Zoas," thesis (M.A.), U of Melbourne, 1998, 60-62; Brenda S. Webster, Blake's Prophetic Psychology 213-14.

68 As the string does not quite reach the winged phallus, it is possible to argue that the latter is on the verge of escape. At best, however, its chances of escape are slim. This one-eyed bird-phallus is presumably "blind" and therefore cannot see that the transcendent realm it desires does not exist. If it is to escape death it must return to the body from which it has been severed.

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The walls of the temple, therefore, allow Urizen to hide the fact that his frozen heart and phallus are the correspondent forms not only of an unmoving heaven but of his perverted sexuality as well. During the day he wages a public war against the body. During the night he is the prime actor in “secret religion” (88[96]: 18). Rather than being “open, seeking / The vigorous joys of morning light” (VDA 6: 5-6), the phallus, temple, and believer shelter a “secret lust” that plays beneath “hymn” and “prayer.”

Urizen’s Commerce, Trades and Temple sketch, on the surface of the world, an ideal, (apparently) non-material order that, contrary to appearances, rests on a profound sublimation and rerouting of desire and imagination. Even the sun (emblem of Los and Orc) is dragged into his temple “to give light to the Abyss / To light the War by day to hide his secret beams by night” (88[96]: 15-16).

Phallic Selves

Blake depicts the open-ended, active life of Eternity (as opposed to the sempiternality of Urizen’s closed heaven) as forged in relations of brotherhood and equality between the Zoas or faculties of Albion. The transformation of these relations in the macrocosm, wrought by Urizen’s phallic religion, is repeated in the microcosm. The phallic dynamic constitutive of trades, commerce and religion can also be identified in the body and psyche of the individual. Perhaps the most striking of Blake’s many analyses of the psyche fostered by Urizenic religion can be found in the drawing on page 90[98] of the Prester Serpent, “with human face and cobra hood” (fig. 4). As Magno and Erdman note, if we consider the serpent’s head to be Urizen’s, “we may take the three coils to be the other Zoas, reduced to headless articulations” (ME 75).

In Paradise Lost, Milton writes that prior to the Fall the serpent did not move

with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that towered
Fold above fold a surging maze, his head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes;
With burnished neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass
Floated redundant

Arguably, the Prester Serpent is the product of an attempt to force the material body into a form correspondent with this unfallen, elevated creature. As such, it embodies the Urizenic struggle to divide spirit from body, reason from the flesh. Like the periodically tumescent phallus, the head of the Prester Serpent finds itself attached to a material body that he can periodically rise above but not leave behind. Nevertheless, the Prester Serpent claims to be the “Priest of God,”

with divine authority to "Go forth & guide [God's] battles" (90[98]: 23, 25). He represents another, parodic version of the rational body desired by Urizen.

Without arms or legs, the bulk of his body serves only to support his head, positioned at the center of his cowl. At first sight, the cowl is a body that mirrors the serpent's human head. Both are round in outline, and the heart-shaped space at the front of the cowl, through which the serpent looks, repeats the shape of his face. The Prester Serpent, it seems, is a temporal form correspondent with the eternal: he represents divine love (the heart) perfectly in accord with divine wisdom (the head). Yet this is an appearance designed to disguise a less palatable reality. The serpent's heart-shaped face is in fact a mask, quite distinct from what one assumes is a human head behind it. Moreover, the mask bones, perhaps imaginary." His description is repeated by Francis Wrangham in a footnote to his "The Restoration of Learning in the East." See Francis Wrangham, The Holy Land: A Poem on the Restoration of Learning in the East; Joseph made known to his Brethren; A Few Sonnets Attempted from Petrarca; Hendecasyllabes, intro, by Donald H. Reiman (New York and London: Garland, 1978) 14, 24n.

In the art of ancient Egypt, the cobra is depicted "as a rearing serpent, the divine-royal uraeus cobra... Whether she is on the king's forehead, a part of his titulary, or represented as decorative ornament, the uraeus, 'the risen one,' is consistently associated with Horus, the king." See Sally B. Johnson, The Cobra Goddess of Ancient Egypt: Predynastic, Early Dynastic, and Old Kingdom Periods (London and New York: Kegan Paul, 1990) 11.

32 Erdman and Magno make no mention of the complex, "layered" structure of the Prester Serpent's face. In their facsimile, the dramatic reduction in size of this design tends to resolve the face into a seamless whole. Bentley's facsimile offers a more accurate reproduction of this aspect of the manuscript.
disguises a serpent's head. From the tip of the serpent's head (just above the human eyes), his forked tongue extends to outline the upper portion of the "heart" (fig. 4a).

As I have argued, the Urizenic phallus is the product of an equilibrium between Love (Vala), Wisdom (Reason) and sexual energy (Luvah), first glimpsed in the hermaphroditic phallus on page 24. The same elements—Love (the heart), Wisdom (the "human" head) and sexual energy (the serpent)—form the composite body of the Prester Serpent. From Urizen's point of view, influx is a celestial fluid, received by influx from heaven through the brain (wisdom), and issuing forth to create a spiritual body (love). This drawing, however, suggests that influx has a bodily rather than heavenly origin: it is the sublimated sexual energy formed by turning the human body into a serpent/phallus. Influx is a "poison," manufactured in the (disciplined) body, that enters the brain through the serpent's mouth. It is this dynamic that the Prester Serpent's human mask, like Urizen's Temple, is designed to hide.

Conjugial Love

Like the phallus, conjugial love emulates the divine by bringing love (the woman) and wisdom (the man) into a unitary form. Indeed, according to Swedenborg,

THE MALE AND FEMALE WERE CREATED TO BE THE ESSENTIAL FORM OF THE MARRIAGE OF GOOD AND TRUTH [love and wisdom].

The reason is, because the male was created to be the understanding of truth, thus truth in form, and the female was created to be the will of good, thus good in form, and there is implanted in each, from their inmost principles, an inclination to conjunction into one . . . thus two make one form, which emulates the conjugial form of good and truth.

The "male is born that he may be made understanding, and the female" is born so that she may be made will loving the understanding of the male; from which consideration it follows, that conjugial conjunction is that of the will of the wife with the understanding of the man, and the reciprocal conjunction of the understanding of the man with the will of the wife.

This conjunction is so far-reaching that, during one of his visits to heaven, a conjugial husband felt it necessary to inform Swedenborg that contrary to appearances he was "not alone, my wife is with me, and we are two, yet still not two but one flesh" (56). Curiously, seen as a whole, this flesh is masculine rather than feminine or androgynous. When a man and woman are united in a love truly conjugal, they become "an united man, and as it were one flesh" (178).

Swedenborg describes this congruence of male and female minds and bodies as the product of a rejection of sexual desire and an embrace of divine influx. Although conjugial love "commences by the love of the sex," it does not, Swedenborg asseverates, "originate in it." Instead, "it originates in proportion to advancement in wisdom, and to the dawning of the light thereof in man, inasmuch as wisdom and that love are inseparable companions" (98). Its source therefore lies in God. As an African, in his prize-winning

56 Swedenborg treats "good and truth" as equivalent to "love and wisdom."

55 See also Conjugial Love, para. 101.

In the 1794 edition of Conjugial Love the numbers have been accidentally transposed and this paragraph is numbered as 65.
Conjugal love is “chaste” only in the sense that it is sustained by influx from God rather than the body. Indeed, the “delights” of conjugal love purportedly “exceed the delights of all other loves . . . for it expands the inmost principles of the mind, and at the same time the inmost principles of the body” (68). Sexual love lacks constancy and eventually loses its potency. In contrast, because the source of the seed that feeds it is infinite, conjugal love knows “the delight of perpetual spring,” a permanent erection. The “wisdom of this love opens a vein from it’s fountain in the body” (ME 42). Sexual love is not stable and permanent, it must needs operate it’s own virtue, which is like unto it, and thus also is stable and permanent . . . this potency is described by the angels in the heavens as the delight of perpetual spring (113).

As we have seen in our analyses of the phallus, Trades, Commerce, Religion and the Prester Serpent, Blake understands Swedenborg’s heavenly influx as the product of a re-orientation rather than obliteration of sexual desire. Influx from heaven is sublimated sexual desire, deployed to discipline the body that is its source. With this “slight” revision of Swedenborg’s ideas, one could argue that conjugal love introduces phallic organization into relations between the genders. Like the phallus, its form emulates an unchanging, transcendent God, bringing wisdom and love, men and women, into an unchanging form (everlasting potency) in which the body (woman) is subservient to the mind (man) and God. It is therefore not surprising to find in The Four Zoas that relations between the sexes take phallic form. This is most evident in the remarkable drawings on page 32 (fig. 5).

Phallic Embraces

The curious figure on the right-hand side of page 32, described by Magno and Erdman as “certainly a penis, though it also suggests a standing couple embracing” (ME 43), is an exemplary instance of conjugal, phallic relations. Husband and wife together form a hermaphroditic phallus (similar to the ones depicted on pages 24 and 30) that has grown so rigid it seems part of the vegetable world. This couple’s emulation of the unchanging, undivided order of heaven turns difference into unity, and flexible, human bodies into inert objects. The other couples on this page are similarly “two, yet still not two but one flesh”: each forms the outline of a hermaphroditic phallus.

The outline of the couple immediately to the left of the phallic toadstool parallels its form. It is as if the couple, previously locked in phallic embrace, have each taken a step backwards to look at each other. Further to the left, a woman lies face down, draped over the top of a mound of “ripe, lodged wheat, as if to take the ripe grain as seeds into her body” (ME 42). In this conjugal relation, the woman is

Conjugal love altogether chaste or pure hath not place with men (hominis), nor with angels, there is still something not chaste or not pure, which adjoineth and subjoineth itself thereto . . . with the angels the chaste principle is above, and the principle not chaste is beneath, and there is as it were a door with an hinge interposed by the Lord, which is opened by determination, and is providently prevented from standing open, lest one principle should pass into the other, and they should mix together (146).
the passive recipient of male seed. Her hands and feet are undeveloped, her legs bound together with a rope, and a heavy object, perhaps a loadstone, has been strapped to her buttocks, pressing her firmly against the mound. Love again takes the form of phallic "wisdom."

Immediately above this mutilated woman, an exhausted man lies on the ground, his face turned towards the reader. His equally languid partner lies across his body, her back resting on top of his shoulders. The man's arms cradle his head, as does the woman's left arm, creating a form suggestive of a large testicle. Its partner is suggested by the woman's head, while her outstretched body becomes the flaccid penis to which the testicles are attached.

These three tableaux—the couple in erect conversation, the woman bound to phallic seed, and the deflated lovers—are arranged in a triangle mapping the movement from erection to conception and then to deflation. These are the steps of conjugal rather than physical love: relations between men and women are contained by the rigid forms prescribed by Urizen, and in each stage of this cycle, women passively take the form of male desire. Swedenborg's claim that couples bound together by conjugal love, through conjuction, "BECOME ONE MAN (homo) MORE AND MORE" (177) is literally true of the couples depicted here.

Above and to the left of the exhausted lovers, Blake drew a fifth couple. Despite erasure, one can see the outline of a naked woman standing on the tips of her toes. Her back is arched, head thrown backwards and chest thrust upwards, as if she were a crescent moon. Beneath her, a man "kneels, with his face in her long hair" (ME 42) and his right arm bent towards his genitals. Precisely what he is doing is no longer evident, but one might speculate that this drawing originally depicted "chaste" ejaculation, the product of mas-
turbation rather than contact between the sexes. Reduced to a passive body that merely registers the actions of the active power, she takes the form of his emanation: she arches her back and is lifted upwards, becoming a heavenly body able only to reflect her husband’s light. Like the Urizenic ploughing and release of fluids discussed earlier, conjugal love is, in the words of the last two lines of page 32, a process of sowing and planting, digging of channels and the pouring “abroad” of water, in which seed and receptacle are both formed by the rational power.

On page 26, the winged dragon marks the subjugation of the female body to Urizenic desire and the consequent enclosure of Urizen within a rigid female form. A similar dynamic is evident on page 32, where the embracing couple on the right, although forming a Urizenic phallus, seem in danger of becoming a toadstool (ME 43). It is likely that the couple to the left of the phallus are investigating the first signs of a similar reversal. The man (like Luvah on the preceding page) crosses his legs and holds his hands behind his back. Not content with these signs of chastity, he has hung his penis behind him, beneath his buttocks, out of sight of his partner. What the man hides, however, his partner gains. He stares with quiet consternation at the penis that she grasps in her right hand (it is possible that she holds a second penis in her left hand).

By creating a chaste material body sufficiently rigid to serve as an exterior image of his rational interior, this man inadvertently ensures that he is henceforth confined and so shaped by that body: the active power is feminized (like Luvah on page 31), and the passive power gains a penis, emblem of her shaping (rather than receptive) power. The other couples betray signs of the same reversal: the mutilated woman presses down on and forms the outline of the mound of seed; the languid woman’s arm circumscribes the head of the kneeling man. Seen from this point in the oscillation between male and female powers, Urizen’s world is contained by a shapeless bulb. This turns his world inside out. The material world contains the rational world, rather than forming the dust on its periphery.

Desublimation

Throughout The Four Zoas, Urizen focuses his attention on the supersensual and insists on a strict division between thought and body, thus relegating Ahania (his emanation) to the margins of his world. As this suggests, Urizen also takes the form of the phallus: this rigid, solitary figure imposes laws of chastity and obedience on his body (his emanation) in the hope that he will one day be released from the flesh and ascend to heaven. Like the winged phallus, however, Urizen finds that he is unable ultimately to divide himself from the body that supports him. Attempts to do so must ultimately result either in death or a collapse back into the body. The former is the end described in the penultimate pages of the third Night, when Urizen attempts to divide himself from Ahania. He falls down down rushing ruining thundering shuddering
Into the Caverns of the Grave & places of Human Seed
Where the impressions of Despair & Hope enroot for ever
A world of Darkness.

(44: 2-5)

The latter is Urizen’s fate when, towards the end of Night the Eighth, he makes a last, desperate attempt to reach the supersensual. This ignoble fall into the flesh can be seen in the design on page 112[108] (fig. 6).

This design depicts Ahania reclining on a “regal bed” or legless sofa. As Magno and Erdman note, the sofa resembles a huge flaccid penis attached to two large testicles. In previous Nights, Urizen has attempted to make life itself (the body, the individual, conjugal love, social relations) take phallic form. It is important to note, however, that as a human faculty he remains within the phallic forms he constructs. In the moment of desublimation, when the body’s energies are exhausted, Urizen is of course still contained by the body. However, at this point in the cycle of Urizenic sexuality, he is “No longer . . . Erect” (108[116]: 41). The body is now flaccid and labile. We can therefore say that, rather than dominating the body, Urizen has become Ahania’s sofa. It is his now softened flesh that receives the imprint of her outstretched body.

One more feature of this design deserves comment: curiously, this flaccid penis/sofa has a toenail, suggesting that it is also a big toe. Ernest Jones observes that “toes [and] feet . . . are in folklore and mythology, as well as in dreams and psychoneurotic symptoms, frequently recurring phallic symbols.” Thus William Hamilton, in “A Letter from Sir Will-

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64 What one takes as a significant feature of a design is in part conditioned by what one believes the design to be about. Although the toe nail is clearly outlined, it is likely to have been ignored by Magno and Erdman because they had no interpretative context in which this collocation of sofa, phallus and toe (and reason/head) could make sense.

iam Hamilton, &c. Naples, Dec. 30, 1781," claims that participants at the "Feast of the modern PRIAPUS, St. COSMO" described the Saint's phallus as "the Great Toe."65 Equally relevant in this context is the Swedenborgian belief that each part of the temporal body corresponds with a portion of the Universal Human:

heavenly things in the Universal Human constitute the head, spiritual things the body, and natural things the feet. . . . the heavenly things, which are highest, are bounded by the spiritual things, which are intermediate; and the spiritual things are bounded by the natural things, which are lowest.66

This moral geography is no doubt one of the reasons why in the design on page 37 Ahania looks so intently at the big toe of Urizen's left foot. She is astonished to find, beneath Urizen's heavenly garments, a natural foot, and a toe that could also be part of a cloven hoof.67

Previously Urizen has labored to ensure a relation of correspondence between head and phallus, in which the latter acts as the material image and representative of the former.

On page 112[108], however, this relation has been reversed. The head and phallus have sunk to the lowest part of the body. Urizen has been engulfed by the body and sexual energy that he had previously repressed.

A Phallic Labyrinth

Sitting on Ahania's buttocks, an aged Cupid, without arrows and wings, is busy unstringing his bow. Ironically, it is Ahania rather than Urizen who retains sufficient strength to raise the upper portion of her body from her couch of death. She lifts her right shoulder from the sofa, turning her chest toward the reader, and folds her right arm around her head. This slight divergence of their otherwise parallel bodies is sufficient for Ahania to take stock of the Death that engulfs them both. She opens her mouth to cry out in anguish, and holds her left hand in the same position as Urizen on page 110[106]. No doubt Ahania also suffers pangs of conscience owing to Urizen's unexpected collapse into the body. She asks in astonishment,

Will you seek pleasure from the festering wound or marry for a Wife
The ancient Leprosy that the King & Priest may still feast on your decay
And the grave mock & laugh at the plowed field
saying
I am the nourisher thou the destroyer in my bosom
is milk & wine

(112[108]: 13-16)
The answer to her question is “yes.” The Urizenic belief that life can be found only in death has inspired humanity to “erect a lasting habitation in the mouldering Church yard” (112[108]: 11). As Ahania laments,

> alas that Man should come to this
> His strong bones beat with snows & hid within the
caves of night
>Marrowless bloodless falling into dust driven by the
winds
>O how the horrors of Eternal Death take hold on Man

(112[108]: 32-3)

Ahania deplores the hold death has on humanity; yet against such a formidable foe, what can she do? In her account, humanity is the victim of horrors no human efforts could remove. The lesson to be drawn from her lamentation is that we can do not more than prepare ourselves for the advent of the Savior, who will take us from this world to heaven. The “phallic” congruence of passivity, fear, and death that this implies is nicely evoked by Enion, who replies to Ahania “from the Caverns of the Grave” (113[109]: 13):

> A voice came in the night a midnight cry upon the
mountains
>Awake the bridegroom cometh I awoke to sleep no
more
>But an Eternal Consummation is dark Enion
>The watry Grave. O thou Corn field O thou Vegetater
happy
>More happy is the dark consumer hope drowns all my
 torment
>For I am now surrounded by a shadowy vortex draw ing
>The Spectre quite away from Enion that I die a death
Of bitter hope aloth I consume in these raging waters

(113[109]: 20-7)

Ahania’s despair and Enion’s hope are responses to the devastating effect on the body of Urizen’s phallic religion. Their responses, however, remain within the orbit of that religion.

As I have argued, the phallus rises as Urizen, confronted by death, confines the body within a form that, he hopes, will be judged worthy of salvation. His efforts, of course, exacerbate Albion’s suffering and sense of powerlessness. This in turn intensifies humanity’s desire for the advent of a Savior and so brings the cycle back to its beginning. As this suggests, the phallus stands at the centre of a labyrinth that includes its own exits within itself: the desire for transcendence is both the product of and the precondition for the labyrinth of the fallen world.

With regard to this type of labyrinth, humanity is both lock and key. The possibility of exodus can be achieved only by recognizing heaven and hell as the contingent products of human actions. In The Four Zoas, Blake writes as a prophet, patiently mapping the contours of Albion’s prison, in the hope that the relations that constitute Urizen’s primitive phallic religion can be recognized and then changed. As Blake writes in his Notebook:

> If it is True What the Prophets write
>That the heathen Gods are all stocks & stones
>Shall we for the sake of being Polite
>Feed them with the juice of our marrow bones?

(E 501)

**MINUTE PARTICULARS**

**Blake for Children**

**By Michael Ferber**

I was recently invited to edit a selection of Blake poems for children, as one of a series of books in a large format with plenty of room for new illustrations. My first reaction, of course, was that Blake had already done that, and had illustrated his poems pretty well by himself, thank you very much, though in a rather small format. After looking over several books already published in the series, however (Dickinson, Frost, Poe, Stevenson), I was won over to the project—provided I could include a few of Blake’s own illustrations as enticements for children to find the readily available editions of the Songs. Well, my editor pointed out, the series format is rigid; she would try to convince the board to allow one Blake original at the end, but was not at all sure she would succeed even at that. The only opening was in the choice for a small black-and-white picture (perhaps a photograph) of the author at the end of the introduction; that could be by Blake. And I could say in the introduction that Blake was a professional illustrator and almost always included his designs with his poems, and I could list some books in the bibliography.

I hesitated, loyal Blake purist that I am. But then I gave in. After all, I reasoned, for over a century Blake’s designs were difficult and expensive to obtain while his poetry, set in ordinary type and its spelling normalized, gained many readers and admirers. Moreover I have long felt that some of his designs weren’t very good, especially in the Songs. I could do a better tyger myself. (I know, there is a subtle case to be made that Blake drew the tyger to seem unfrightening as an ironic comment on the speaker’s awestruck state of mind—but still!) Neil Waldman has painted a properly awesome tyger in his edition of the poem (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993), and Paul Howard has a good one in Classic Poetry: An Illustrated Collection, edited by Michael Rosen (Cam-
bridge, MA: Candlewick, 1998). Why shouldn't a new illustrator have a go? Would Blake himself have objected to someone else exercising his or her imagination over his texts? I didn't think so.

I won't deny that the fee was an incentive, too. For not terribly much work, and with the promised help of my eight-year-old daughter, who has long had Blake's "Tyger" plate hanging in her bedroom and can sing "Jerusalem" with great flair, I would earn as much as I made on my last Blake book, which took me over a year to write.

So I plunged in. I needed about twenty-five poems to fit the format. After I made about a dozen obvious choices from the Songs, and "Jerusalem," and a couple of excerpts from the long works, it began to come home to me how few poems Blake actually wrote that are suitable for children aside from the Songs themselves, and some of those seemed either too namby-pamby or too difficult. I considered "The Mental Traveller": I don't understand it, but children might really like it. Would they like Thel? Probably not, but I might be mistaken. I wondered if anyone had ever actually tested Blake's poems (and designs) on children and published the results. I thought nonetheless that I could meet the quota with a list not entirely predictable but still well representative of Blake's shorter works.

My daughter helped, not by locating poems, since she didn't know Blake well and had other claims on her reading time such as Harry Potter, but by going over the ones I typed up and circling words she did not know, or that "other kids might not know," to guide me in the annotations. She rated some of them, following Coleridge's example; she wrote "exilent" over "The School Boy" (her school year had just ended). Her circlings were interesting and would have been useful had the project gone through.

But trouble lay ahead, and I should have seen it coming. I had paused over "London." For a number of years the whole poem lay chiseled into the Silver Jubilee Walkway on the South Bank of the Thames where every child might read it. Its rhythm and sound effects are attractive. But it's certainly grim, and especially in the last stanza rather dense. It would need a lot of notes. I ran it by my editor. Oh, no, out of the question: it has the word "harlot" in it. The headnote would have had to explain how even "The Tyger" raises heretical religious notions, so I then rather preachily went on about how radical Blake was, how even "The Tyger" raises heretical religious notions, but its sentiments are tolerant and humane. It must stay. "The Divine Image" is religious, to be sure—it appears in some hymnals today (along with "Jerusalem"). I can change the headnote if you like, but it must stay. "The Divine Image" is religious, to be sure—it appears in some hymnals today (along with "Jerusalem," which is no less religious) but its sentiments are tolerant and humane. It must stay, too.

And to my editor's suggestion that we simply drop the last stanza of "London," I replied that printing the first three stanzas of "London" would be like performing the first three movements of Beethoven's Ninth.

The Little Vagabond: Ale-house. We must keep away from alcohol, beer, ale, even wine—any reference to drinking, especially any glorification of it. Actually, we try to avoid it altogether.

The Little Black Boy: Current day sensitivity is such that great a poem anyway, though my daughter liked it and didn't think it funny. The headnote would have had to explain how everyone drank beer or ale then because no one drank water. And what about the wine at communion? Never mind. But my notions of suitability certainly conflicted with my editor's. I wrote back that "Little Black Boy" must remain—it is one of the four or five greatest poems in the lot; and it is not racist. I think you've misunderstood it: both black skin and white skin are clouds; beneath them we are all alike. Of course the black boy is confused, and still sees white as superior in some way; of course he lived in London in 1789. I can change the headnote if you like, but it must stay. "The Divine Image" is religious, to be sure—it appears in some hymnals today (along with "Jerusalem," which is no less religious)—but its sentiments are tolerant and humane. It must stay, too.

More Christians with picket signs. We were back to the Victorian editors of Blake, who omitted lines with "whore" in them or dropped "The Little Vagabond" altogether.

After a day or two letting off steam I decided I had to draw the line. I could kiss the vagabond good-bye. It's not all that great a poem anyway, though my daughter liked it and thought it funny. The headnote would have had to explain how everyone drank beer or ale then because no one drank water. And what about the wine at communion? Never mind. But my notions of suitability certainly conflicted with my editor's. I wrote back that...
My editor then emailed her board, and passed on to me the most important reply, the one from her boss.

I am not an expert on Blake nor on the morals of America. However, I am fairly expert on what we are likely to get into trouble for publishing, and harlots and religion and race are certainly right at the top of the category. We will not use poems that include these themes or we are likely to get into a difficult situation. I appreciate his explanation of black and white, but I cannot be there to explain that to a reviewer, nor more likely, to a store owner or buyer or consumer. I would much rather take back the money and cancel this project.

I agreed with the last sentence.

Blake would not have been surprised to hear that certain "experts" govern the publishing industry, experts not in what they publish but in what might get them into a "difficult situation." The experts do the work of the self-appointed censors they fear and base their own morals on the bottom line. The Beast & the Whore rule without controls, and they are cowards to boot.

I got to write a self-righteous letter to one of the bosses as I returned my check:

The restrictions on content—no poem can refer to race, religion, sex, or alcohol—have strangled this project and I can no longer be a part of it. It would be an insult to Blake to continue with it, the Blake who despised the timidity and conformism of the book-publishing business of his own day and suffered from it. I recommend you drop Blake altogether from your projected list: he's too much for you.

The boss got to write an even more self-righteous reply:

The William Blake project will be better served by having an editor who understands the children's market, and who can appreciate the need for sensitive and responsible treatment of racial issues.

He must not have been the boss who appreciated my explanation of black and white, but he is probably right that I don't understand the children's market. I think I more or less understand children, however, and I understand the damage the market can inflict on them. A quick trip to the children's section of my local Barnes and Noble, moreover, has shown me that other publishers share my ignorance: there I found "The Little Black Boy" in Iona and Peter Opie's Oxford Book of Children's Verse (1973, paperback 1994), and both "The Little Black Boy" and "The Divine Image" in Elizabeth H. Sword, ed., A Child's Anthology of Poetry (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1995).

I have since wondered if Blake would have agreed with my refusal to cooperate. Perhaps he would have wanted me to suppress my indignation and let the project go forward.

"The Tyger" would have remained, and might have generated some forehead-widening conversations: "Daddy, if God made lambs, why did he make tigers? Or could there be two Gods?" I might have slipped in a few more subtly subversive poems. If some kids liked my selection, they could easily have found paperbacks of the Songs at stores or libraries and read the poems I had to leave out. "Mommy, what's a harlot, and why would she blast a baby's tear?" Perhaps Blake had something like this in mind when he produced his Songs in the first place, in the form and manner of contemporary children's books but with something very unorthodox lurking within. I think Shelley did something like this when he gave his radical critique of God, monarchy, commerce, and meat-eating the absurdly misleading title Queen Mab.

Well, if I missed an opportunity someone else can take it on, someone more sensitive, or less sensitive, than I. If such a volume appears, however, and if it leaves out all the scary poems, wouldn't it be fun to form a Blakean Anti-Defamation League and picket the bookstores?

Verbal Echoes of Cumberland's Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, and the System that Guided the Ancients (1796) in Jerusalem

BY TILAR JENON MAZZEO

Blake's references to sculpture develop one of the most persistent metaphors in Jerusalem, and the relationship between the poem and sculptural forms has received considerable attention in recent years. Studies by Vincent De Luca, W.J.T. Mitchell, Morton Paley, Molly Rothenberg, Jason Whittaker, and Joseph Viscomi have each suggested that Blake's investment in sculpture is reflected in the structural and thematic principles of the poem.1 However, Blake's verbal echoes of George Cumberland's Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, and the System that Guided the Ancients in Composing Their Groupes and Figures (1796) in Jerusalem typically focus on three predominant images—the bright sculptures of Los' halls in Golgonooza, the "unbrow" Druidical temples at Stonehenge and Avebury, and Blake's visual emphasis on the iconic arrangement of words. The most developed discussion of Blake's sculptural aesthetic is offered by De Luca's reading of the hieroglyph (literally "sacred statue") and the biblical sublime, in the Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime (1991). Other approaches to this topic are offered in: Viscomi's Blake and the Idea of the Book (1993); Mitchell's Blake's Composite Art (1978); Paley's "Wonderful Originals: Blake and Ancient Sculpture" in Blake in His Time, Eds. Essick and Pearce (1978); Rothenberg's Rethinking Blake's Textuality (1993), and Whittaker's William Blake and the Myths of Britain (1999).

1 Discussions of sculptural forms within Jerusalem typically focus on three predominant images—the bright sculptures of Los' halls in Golgonooza, the "unbrow" Druidical temples at Stonehenge and Avebury, and Blake's visual emphasis on the iconic arrangement of words. The most developed discussion of Blake's sculptural aesthetic is offered by De Luca's reading of the hieroglyph (literally "sacred statue") and the biblical sublime, in the Words of Eternity: Blake and the Poetics of the Sublime (1991). Other approaches to this topic are offered in: Viscomi's Blake and the Idea of the Book (1993); Mitchell's Blake's Composite Art (1978); Paley's "Wonderful Originals: Blake and Ancient Sculpture" in Blake in His Time, Eds. Essick and Pearce (1978); Rothenberg's Rethinking Blake's Textuality (1993), and Whittaker's William Blake and the Myths of Britain (1999).
have not been noted as a source for his interest in the medium, although the parallels between these two texts offer suggestive conceptual implications.

Blake's familiarity with the Thoughts on Outline and his enthusiasm for the author's imagery are evident from his letters to George Cumberland, who employed Blake as an engraver on the project from 1794 to 1796. During this period, Blake completed six plates for Cumberland's book, and his letters emphasize his confidence in Cumberland's artistic sensibilities. Blake writes in 1796, for example, that he sends his plates to Cumberland "to be transmuted, thou real Alchymist" (Erdman, 700). Again in 1799, upon receipt of the finished volume, he professes to "study [Cumberland's] outlines as usual just as if they were antiques" (Erdman, 704). This particular interest in Cumberland's outlines was to develop further when Blake came to write Jerusalem, and his engagement with the Thoughts on Outline stemmed, I propose, from Cumberland's unusual definition of sculpture as an essentially linear form.

In the Thoughts on Outline, Cumberland develops a complex and quite original definition of sculpture, which identifies the bounding line as the defining and potentially transformative feature of this medium. As a linear form, sculpture is characterized by outline, surface, and circumference and is reducible to two dimensions without any change in its essential quality. In fact, Cumberland writes that:

The Sculptor's art, by which is not meant merely finishing his compositions in marble, but forming, with correctness, figures in any material, is a truly rational and liberal employment.....The statue is all outline; a creation, the bounds of whose surface require inconceivable knowledge, taste, and study, to circumscribe. (Cumberland, 8-9)

Here, Cumberland suggests that sculpture is independent of its traditional media and is a form characterized instead by its outline, boundary, and surface. The relationship among these elements is more clearly delineated later in his treatise, when Cumberland explains how these model outlines are produced—as projections cast from a limited number of antique originals. In his estimation "there are statues in the world which, if turned around on a pivot before a lamp, would produce, on a wall, some hundreds of fine outlines" (33). Thus, the bounding line of a sculptural form contains a multiplicity of outlines within it, and this is its rarest quality. Not only can sculpture transform itself, however, Cumberland also claims that its production is an act of artistic and intellectual alchemy. He writes:

form stamps a value on the measte materials [and] when this nation shall have nursed a race of men, capable of creating finer forms than others, out of clay, stone, wood, and metals, we shall possess a better thing than the ideal stone of the philosopher. For that pretends only to the skill of compounding gold from mixed metals, but these men will transmute, by aid of the mind, and hand, the basest materials into solid bullion. (12)

Sculptural activity becomes both a national project and an act of alchemical restoration. And, while Blake echoes Cumberland's concept of sculpture throughout Jerusalem, it is this last passage—which proposes the delineation of form as the imaginative renovation of base existence—that particularly interested the poet.

Blake's subsequent interest in Cumberland's aesthetic principles and in this passage from the Thoughts on Outline in particular is suggested by several of his own critical statements. In the Descriptive Catalogue, for example, Blake indicates his abiding interest in both outline and sculpture, claiming that his own works have been shaped by an investment in the "bounding line" of form and in the richness of "Antique Statues" (Erdman, 550; 536). However, Blake's letters also indicate his particular interest in this alchemical passage in Cumberland's treatise. This metaphor of transmutation appears only once in Cumberland's text, and it is surely the source of Blake's invocation of Cumberland as "thou real Alchymist!" in the letter of 23 December 1796. More importantly, Blake also seems to have had this passage in mind when composing the final plates of Jerusalem, and the poem's apocalypse incorporates verbal echoes of Cumberland's treatise on outline and sculpture.

In the dramatic final lines of Jerusalem, Blake alludes specifically to the alchemical passage from Thoughts on Outline, narrating an apocalypse that evokes Cumberland's imaginative transmutation of "clay, stone, wood, and metals" (12). In the final visionary conversation, Blake describes "All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone" (99:1), repeating precisely Cumberland's sculptural elements. And, while this instance marks the only precise reference to the Thoughts on Outline, other passages in the final plates of the poem suggest that Blake may have had Cumberland's treatise in mind, most notably the celebration of "the Outline the Circumference & Form" of the human lineaments in Beulah (98:22). In light of these refer-

2 All references are to George Cumberland's Thoughts on Outline, Sculpture, and the System that Guided the Ancient Artists in Composing their Figures and Groups: Accompanied with Free Remarks on the Practice of the Moderns, and Liberal Hints Cordially Intended for their Advantage: to which are Annexed Twenty-four Designs of Classical Subjects Invented on the Principles Recommended in the Essay by George Cumberland (London, 1796). References to Blake's works refer to David V. Erdman's The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake (New York, 1988).

ences, it seems clear that Blake was thinking of Cumberland's Jerusalem.

The significance of Blake's verbal echoes and allusions, unfortunately, lies beyond the scope of a short note such as this; however, several conceptual similarities between Cumberland's essay and Blake's poem suggest themselves immediately, and they perhaps merit further consideration. After all, the thematic parallels with the Thoughts on Outline extend beyond the final plates of Jerusalem. Not only does Cumberland's description of statuary as a linear form extend beyond the final plates of Jerusalem, but there is also a sense in which the base narrative of the poem—Los's journey with "red globe of fire in hand" around the "stonified" body of Albion—can be read as an enactment of Cumberland's process of casting outlines. Above all, there is this central similarity: Blake proposes, like Cumberland, a series of "stupendous originals," each described by and, in a sense, composed of the scattered images, outlines, and projections of its own form. While Cumberland's aesthetic project is to collect these outlines in a single didactic text, Blake's objective, though surely more complex and subtle, may ultimately be much the same.

R E V I E W


Reviewed by SHEILA A. SPECTOR

Generically, the published proceedings of a conference are greater than the sum of the individual papers presented during the course of the two- or three-day period in which scholars meet to exchange their views on a particular topic. Blake in the Nineties is the product of a conference organized by Steve Clark and David Worrall at St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, in July 1994, to consider the deliberately ambiguous topic of "Blake in the Nineties." Referring, obviously, to the 1790s, the historical period when, politically, Great Britain formally entered into war with France, and, professionally, Blake confronted the limitations of his business prospects, the conference title also points to the 1990s, the critical period when the British-American academic community began to resist the control ideological criticism had exercised over the direction taken by Blake scholarship during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Implicitly rejecting the restrictions associated with what had degenerated into a fundamentally dualistic mode of thought, the participants—both individually and collectively—exposed the oversimplifications inherent in a deconstructive criticism that had degenerated, according to Clark and Worrall, "into a fastidious bibliographical ultra-empiricism. . . .[that] somewhat unexpectedly, resulted in interpretative curtailment rather than textual licence" (1). Collectively, the eleven essays comprising Blake in the Nineties help counter the negations dominating twentieth-century criticism by exposing the theoretical oversimplifications upon which they had been predicated, and then by providing historical justification for the new pluralism.

Fittingly, the paradigm for this new mode of inquiry can be inferred from the triad of essays found in the middle, beginning, and end of the anthology: Angela Esterhammer's "Calling into Existence: The Book of Urizen"; Robert N. Essick's "Blake and the Production of Meaning"; and Keri Davies's "Mrs. Bliss: a Blake Collector of 1794." As the sixth of eleven papers, Esterhammer's is a first-rate example of speech-act criticism, intended to analyze the degeneration of language from God's initial use of performatives in the creative process to their distortion by the tyrant who attempts to impose a restrictive political and social order. Using The Book of Urizen as her text, Esterhammer explores this dualistic manifestation of performatives: "That this
contextualization of utterance accounts for its ability to call a new world-order into existence, but also ties its creative power inextricably to division, restriction, and imposition, is the dilemma Blake dramatizes in The Book of Urizen” (115).

In the essay, Esterhammer explores the influence of biblical criticism, especially the theoretical lectures of Robert Lowth and the popular interpretations of Thomas Paine, as well as the literary transformations of John Milton, to establish a pattern in which the performatives of God the Creator are seen as being usurped by the legislating, i.e., Urizenic, god, whether in the voice of the “Jahwist” of Genesis 2-3, or the Father of Paradise Lost. In both cases, what begins as the pure act of “calling out, or proclaiming, the names of his creations when they appear before him as phenomenal manifestations of his utterance” seems inevitably to degenerate into the “negative connotations of imposition and even violence” (118). In other words, “In Blake’s poem, the legislating word has completely usurped the world-creating word” (120); and ultimately, “On some level, then, virtually all the voices in The Book of Urizen have the power to call things into existence in the manner of the Elohim—but this is because their utterances also carry the politicized authority of Yahweh” (123).

Esterhammer draws three inferences from her analysis of The Book of Urizen: In Blake’s narratives, (1) various characters’ utterances could have a potentially significant impact upon the narrative voice; (2) Blake’s awareness of performatives influenced his own use of language; and (3) that use entails “a mythological slant on what might be called the 1790s version, or perversion of the creative language of the Elohim” (127). While these conclusions are all warranted by the analysis, the theoretical assumptions governing her argument prevent Esterhammer from considering elements beyond the range of her conceptual framework. To cite just the most obvious, the naming of Urizen is at best an ambiguous performative:

1. Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
   In Eternity! Unknown, unprolic!
   Self-clos’d, all-repelling: what Demon
   Hath form’d this abominable void
   This soul-shudd’ring vacuum?—Some said
   “It is Urizen,” But unknown, abstracted
   Brooding secret, the dark power hid.

   (pl. 3:1-7, E 70)

Esterhammer infers that because Urizen, in contrast to the fallen angels of Paradise Lost, retains his original name, “the ‘eternal’ quality of Urizen’s name may be a measure of the successful performative effect of the utterance,” “It is Urizen” (123). Yet, within its own context, Blake undermines the force of that performative: describing the character as a self-generating demon; using the weak verb “said” to describe the act of naming; and limiting that act to only a portion of the eternals— “Some,” not all, much less the One.

More important than this specific act of naming, though, is the broader context of the name itself. Urizen is not a conventional sign whose signification is easily discernible, and consequently, indicative of the phenomenon being signified. Rather, as a neologism whose possible sources and etymologies remain ambiguous, the real force of its utterance lies not with the narrator of a particular literary or artistic context, but with the artist William Blake who called the mytheme into existence in the first place. We should not forget that the biblical act of naming constituted the identification of an essential identity. Also, the name Urizen had already been given a performative utterance in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, where Oothoon proclaimed: “O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven” (pl. 5:3, E 48). Are these two speech-acts to be considered separate events, neither influencing the other? Or are they to be combined into some sort of ur-performative within the larger speech-act constituted by the Blake oeuvre? Is Urizen to be identified as the demon who formed the void, the creator of men, or both? Or possibly, are the two equivalent to each other?

This is not to quibble about the identity of Urizen, but to suggest that a binary analysis oversimplifies the complexities of Blake’s language. In her last sentence, Esterhammer articulates her own recognition that Blake’s language does not conform to either the “Elohist” or the “Jahwist” use of performatives; rather, she notes that “Between the two lies the language of Blake, calling political and poetic consciousness into simultaneous existence” (129). The problem, as she implies, is that Blake’s illuminated books do not provide the kind of delimited, protected space amenable to pure speech-act analysis. Rather, the bibliographical complexities of The Book of Urizen suggest that the text itself was likely affected by external factors that not only influenced the manifestation of the speech act under consideration, but also intruded on the creative process any number of times between the conception and execution of the various versions.

Even though not directly related either to speech-act theory or to The Book of Urizen, the other two essays of this triad complete the implicit subversion of binary criticism, Essick providing the theoretical analysis and Davies the historical justification for a more pluralistic approach to Blake. In “Blake and the Production of Meaning,” Essick confronts the question of dualities head on, juxtaposing two then-recent studies—Morris Eaves’s Counter-Arts Conspiracy and Joseph Viscomi’s Blake and the Idea of the Book—to explore the ways different cultural and institutional contexts create different perspectives on Blake which in turn produce not just different interpretations, but different conceptions of the grounds and constituents of meaning—or at least what constitutes meaning’s next-of-kin, significance. (7)
Avoiding the manner of the sons of Albion, Essick does not privilege either Eaves or Viscomi but, rather, contextualizes each to suggest that Eaves and Viscomi, as primarily a literary scholar and an artist respectively, conceptualize differently the problem of Blake’s illuminated books. Even more significantly, though, Essick, through his own experience as a collector, demonstrates not only that the verbal/visual components of the art are not mutually exclusive of each other, but that there are other, as yet unexplored aspects of the problem, perspectives that have been obscured by the dualism dominating critical thought. For example, the exigencies of the marketplace add another—though not necessarily the only—new dimension to the production of art, for as Essick notes, “Blake’s linearist conceptualization of what constitutes ‘true’ art is inconsistent with his increasingly tonal methods of execution” (21).

As a collector, Essick cites John Barrell’s characterization of the influence of the marketplace on aesthetic values in terms of gender:

Perhaps the main issue at stake was how to explain the apparent mismatch between the theories of painting most influential on 18th-century connoisseurs and critics, committed to the promotion of a public art of manly virtue and idealised forms, and the predominantly private, informal, even (as the century got older) feminised works which actually got produced. (23)

Providing historical support for the Essick/Barrell thesis, Keri Davies documents that feminized influence through his study of early collector Rebekah Bliss (1749–1819), reconstructing the existence of an overlooked component of Blake’s early audience “rather different from the male radical intelligentsia with which he is customarily associated” (212).

A “bibliophile of national importance” (213) who, Davies infers, dealt directly with Blake himself, Bliss had been left an orphan at nineteen and, with no relatives closer than an uncle and cousins, had consequently gained not only control over the family fortune, but the freedom to avoid a forced marriage. Remaining single for her entire life, she did live—possibly in a homosexual relationship—with another woman, Ann Whitaker; and around 1800, they invited a third woman, Harriet Barnes, to live as their companion. In her will, Bliss arranged for her library to remain in Whitaker’s possession until her death, so the collection stayed intact until 1826.

Regarding the Blake collection in particular, Davies cites Bliss’s ownership of a proof copy of *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* as evidence that she dealt directly with Blake himself, speculating that since the two traveled in the same dissenting circles, they could have met socially, if not commercially through Joseph Johnson. But regardless of whether or not they knew each other personally, her presence indicates the existence “of a rather different kind of dissenting community from that customarily associated with Blake.” And, Davies concludes, “Taken together, these new pieces of evidence should compel a revision of the traditional assumption that Blake lacked any significant contemporary audience” (226).

Complementing Essick’s and Davies’s analyses of economic factors, the next two pairs reconsider the political and religious institutions of the 1790s. The second entry in the anthology, Joseph Viscomi’s textual analysis, “In the Caves of Heaven and Hell: Swedenborg and Printmaking in Blake’s *Marriage,*” gains historical depth when read in conjunction with the ninth, Marsha Keith Schuchard’s historical discussion of “Blake and the Grand Masters (1791–4): Architects of Repression or Revolution?” As his third of three articles dealing with *The Marriage*’s evolution, Viscomi’s contribution builds on his earlier studies, which argued that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* had undergone distinct printmaking sessions, and that plates 21–24 comprise a discrete unit. Now, in this essay, Viscomi claims that by dissecting the printing process, he has been able to trace the evolution of Blake’s attitude towards Swedenborg. Focusing on cave imagery—the open cave symbolizing the enlightened mind, and the closed cave the closed mind—Viscomi demonstrates how “Reading *Marriage*’s textual units in the order in which they were executed reveals thematic and visual connections not readily apparent in the book’s finished order” (57), specifically, Blake’s progressive dissociation from Swedenborg.

Viscomi’s textual interpretation is supported by Schuchard’s historical analysis of the complex relationship between Freemasonry and the radical movement in England, France and Scandinavia. In “Blake and the Grand Masters (1791–4),” Schuchard explores the political ramifications of the two competing branches of Freemasonry: the “Ancients,” from the earlier Stuart traditions of Scottish, Irish, French and Swedish Masonry, which included an interest in Cabalist and Hermetic studies; and the “Moderns,” the later schism, derived from the Swedish-Jacobite plots of 1715–17, and dedicated to Newtonian science and Hanoverian loyalty. It was through this later form that Swedenborgianism was introduced into the circles of Blake and his friends. But as the “Moderns” became more involved with international intrigue—by members like the British Prince of Wales, the French Duke of Orleans and the Swedish Duke of Soudermania—artists like Blake grew disillusioned with the purity of Swedenborg’s visions. Yet, fearing political repercussions, Blake disguised his true intent with a number of camouflage devices, like the use of intricate systems of occult symbolism, as documented by Schuchard, and the reorganization of plates, as delineated by Viscomi.

Expanding the perspective beyond economic and political considerations, the next pair focuses on the theological implications of Blake’s art. In the third essay of the anthology, “Spectral Impostion and Visionary Impostion: Printing and Repetition in Blake,” Edward Larrissy connects
Blake's theory of printing with the idea of redemption. Associating the word imposition, along with its underlying concepts of repetition and plurality, with both Blake's printing process and the concept of prophecy, Larrissy infers that "For Blake, printing as repetition is explicitly linked to questions about influence, originality and the redemption of time" (68). Blake's various kinds of repetitions being linked specifically with "the traditions of a fraternal and communitarian Protestantism" (76). For Michael Ferber, in "Blake and the Two Swords," Blake's Protestantism in the later books is most apparent in his war imagery, through "the distinction between spiritual and corporeal war, and . . . the tendency of his age to suppress the one and glorify the other" (156). In this context, the "ultimate spiritual weapon, I think, and the most difficult to wield effectively, is to hold up to our imaginations the vision of a transformed world . . . One feature of his utopia is the return or restoration of all things, the apocatastasis of the Book of Acts (3:21)" (168).

These new perspectives on Blake's cultural context gain philosophical support through Stephen C. Behrendt's phenomenological analysis of the composite art, and Steve Clark's recontextualization of Locke. In "'Something in My Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts," Behrendt argues that Blake's illuminated poems comprise a "third text," a meta-text (81), that requires its audience to become "both participant and co-creator" (85): "Blake's campaign against worldly materialism . . . was intended not to reconcile us to the natural world, or it to us, but rather to draw us away from it and towards the imaginative and spiritual world of Eternity . . . Blake directed his art towards engendering in his audience the sort of accession to vision that had been Elisha's part" (93). So, too, with Locke. In "'Labouring at the Resolute Anvil': Blake's Response to Locke," Clark argues that "If we read the Essay in the context of its implicit theological imperatives, rather than as a prefiguration of a secular and materialist culture, it becomes possible to see his work not as antithetical to Blake's, but as within a common tradition of radical Protestantism" (134). The assumption that Blake and Locke represented antithetical views derived from Frye's assertion that Locke's influence on Blake was "clearly a negative one" (14). However, as Clark notes, "condemnation need not necessarily entail denigration: it can instead serve as an implicit tribute to intellectual stature" (133). Rather, as Clark demonstrates, Blake transformed, and in the process assimilated, the Lockean vocabulary to the point that, as Clark concludes, "Blake's mythology is most compelling where it incorporates its apparent adversary most directly" (149).

Finally, the last essays return to the problem of language, Nelson Hilton's "What has Songs to do with Hymns?" focusing on the sacred language of hymns, and David Worrall's "Blake and the 1790s Plebeian Radical Culture" on the secular language of radical literature. Although Hilton readily differentiates "To Tirzah" from those lyrics that are associated with conventional hymns, he argues that the final Song functions like a hybrid in which the secularized language is used to reflect back on the religious genre. Thus, "To Tirzah" functions like a meta-hymn, "a hymn on hymn-singing to point up the innocent and experienced Psalms of Blake's 'Bible of Hell' and found most frequently, like many a doxology, towards the conclusion of the Songs" (101). As such, he concludes, "To Tirzah" serves "as at once the terminus ad quem of the collection and the jumping off point for the longer poems" (110).

Blake's incorporation of secular language into what was usually considered a sacred form can be attributed at least in part, according to Worrall, to "the existence of a plebeian radical culture whose rhetorics are assimilated in Blake's works" (194). In his survey of the radical literature of the time, Worrall finds echoes in Blake of sources as varied as the anonymous A. Z., author of a list of grievances against Home Secretary Henry Dundas, the anti-Swedenborgian W. Brian, linen-draper Thomas Bentley, and Richard "Citizen" Lee, not to mention the numerous anonymous authors of songs, broadsides, pamphlets, and protest letters. Although in many cases it is impossible to demonstrate a direct link between Blake and specific examples of the radical literature, both still share a common rhetorical base, including the vocabulary and idioms "of an emergent, assertive, innovative and long-lasting artisan public sphere" (208-9).

Individually, each of the eleven essays establishes a new perspective on a traditional topic, ranging from bibliography to literary criticism through cultural analyses. More important, though, as a collection, the anthology projects an expanded mode of critical thought. Having liberated themselves from the mind-forged manacles of twentieth-century dualism, the textual scholars represented by the first part of the collection have returned not to the book, but to Blake's many books, in order to reconsider the complexity of the creative process as Blake attempted to mediate between his artistic imperatives and the demands of everyday life. In the second half, the new historians provide cultural justification for the textual studies, each essay introducing new perspectives on topics that had erroneously been considered fully explored. By foregrounding materials that had heretofore been marginalized by the "sons of Albion" in their attempt to reduce the world to a moralistic duality, Blake in the Nineties creates its own system, pointing out new directions to be taken by Blake scholars in the twenty-first century.

Works Cited


CORRIGENDA

William Blake The Creation of the Songs
From Manuscript to Illuminated Printing

Corrigenda and a Note on the Publication of
Gilbert Imlay’s A Topographical Description
of the Western Territory of North America

BY MICHAEL PHILLIPS

In preparing my book on the creation of Blake’s Songs (London: British Library Publishing, 2000; Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001) for the press every effort was made to provide an accurate text. However, several errors of transcription were not identified before the sheets were printed. I list these below so that the text may be relied upon.

p. 7: First column, “Song 3d by an old shepherd,” line one:
    For: When silver decks Sylvio’s cloaths
    Read: When silver snow decks Sylvia’s cloaths

p. 12: Second column, “Nurses Song,” penultimate sentence:
    For: In the first line he altered ‘tongues’ to ‘voices’ and in the third stanza, last line, ‘meadows’ to ‘hills.’
    Read: In the first line he altered ‘tongues’ to ‘voices’ and in the third stanza, last line, ‘meadows are’ to ‘hills are all.’

p. 13: First column, “Nurses Song,” third stanza, line three:
    For: And the hills are coverd with sheep
    Read: And the hills are all coverd with sheep

p. 59: Second column, “NURSES Song,” first stanza, line two:
    For: And whisperings are in the dale:
    Read: And whisprings are in the dale:

p. 65: Second column, “London,” fourth stanza, line four:
    For: And hangs with plagues the marriage hearse
    Read: And smites with plagues the marriage hearse

p. 68: First column, “The Tyger,” first sentence:
    For: Fully reinstating the ambivalence and terror of the first drafts, Blake relief etched and printed this final version of ‘The Tyger,’ deleting ‘And’ in the penultimate stanza, line three, and in the last stanza, line three, replacing ‘&’ with ‘or.’
    Read: Fully reinstating the ambivalence and terror of the first drafts, Blake relief etched and printed this final version of ‘The Tyger,’ deleting ‘And’ in the penultimate stanza, line three, and in the last stanza, line three, replacing ‘&’ with ‘or.’

p. 69: Second column, “The Human Abstract,” second sentence:
    For: Salvaging only the last two lines of the third stanza, and the first two lines of the fourth stanza from ‘I heard an Angel singing’ on N. 114, Blake formed the first stanza on N. 107, establishing from the outset an explicit contrary relationship to ‘The Divine Image’ of Songs of Innocence.
    Read: Salvaging only the last two lines of the third stanza, the first two lines of the fourth stanza, and in the latter replacing ‘pity’ with ‘Mercy’ from ‘I heard an Angel singing’ on N. 114, Blake formed the first stanza on N. 107, establishing from the outset an explicit contrary relationship to ‘The Divine Image’ of Songs of Innocence.

p. 74: Second column, “A little BOY Lost,” second quotation, first line:
    For: Then led him by the little coat
    Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 75: First column, “A little BOY Lost,” third stanza, line three:
    For: Then led him by the little coat
    Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 75: Second column, “A little BOY Lost,” third stanza, line three:
    For: Then led him by the little coat
    Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 84: Second column, “The Fly,” first sentence following second quotation:
    For: Blake crossed through ‘summer play’ and following it wrote ‘thoughtless hand.’
    Read: Blake crossed through ‘guilty hand’ and following it wrote ‘thoughtless hand.’

p. 85: Second column, “THE FLY,” second quotation, fourth stanza, line three:
    For: But the want
    Read: And the want

p. 85: Second column, “THE FLY,” following second quotation, first sentence:
    For: With the addition of punctuation and three minor changes, in the first stanza, line two, ‘summer’ to ‘summers,’ line four ‘Hath’ to ‘Has,’ and, in the fourth stanza, line three, ‘But’ to ‘And,’ the text as composed on the page was relief etched and printed as ‘THE FLY’ in the first issue of Songs of Experience.
Where she is Communications Director. Back at home, our new managing editor is Sarah Jones, a native of New Zealand. The last issue that Patty Neill supervised was spring 2001, and personal skills were captured by United Way in Bloomington, with her over those years will understand why we lamented when the journal moved to the University of Rochester, Patricia Neill has been its only managing editor. Since 1986, Blake's Managing Editors, 1986-
Blake has always been lucky in its managing editors. Since 1986, when the journal moved to the University of Rochester, Patricia Neill has been its only managing editor. You who have dealt with her over those years will understand why we lamented her decision to abandon Rochester for the hills and valleys of southern Indiana last year. Patty's exceptional editorial and personal skills were captured by United Way in Bloomington, where she is Communications Director. Back at home, our new managing editor is Sarah Jones, a native of New Zealand. The last issue that Patty Neill supervised was spring 2001, and Sarah Jones's first issue is in your hands. Patty took us through the transition from old-style camera-ready copy to electronic layout; we're counting on Sarah to take us the next step, where electronic layout meets the Web. Many thanks and a very fond farewell to Patty, and a hearty welcome to Sarah.

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