

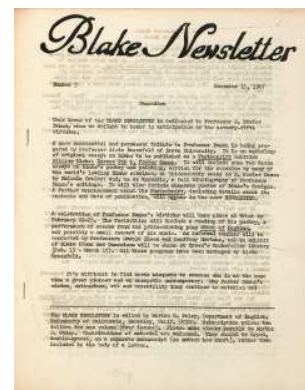
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N O T E

Two Problems in The Four Zoas

W. H. Stevenson

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13-16



- P 748 30: 16 ? halls of 1st rdg erased (I doubt; could be centr f/orm /)
- P 750 40: 11 I / We xxxxxx (Delete the X's -- printer's mistake)
- P 752 56: 11-16 sixth erased line: I doubt most of this conjectured reading: "from" may be "with"; "woe" probably "war".
- P 757 99: 4-9 Note citing Jerusalem 38 twice should cite 34 /38 /.
- P 758 Second line shd read J 34.
- P 768 Three poems written in. . . a copy of Poetical Sketches: said copy is now in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, New Zealand.
- P 770 /To go / on 1 Plate. goupd shd be grouped
- P 772 The wild flowers song: 3 wild / shd read 3 flower
- P 773 Several Questions. . . Line 17, 1st and 2nd rdgs shd be p 107, not p 99
- P 776 Asterisks should be above the bracketed headings, not below them.
- P 790 New mistake: "Her whole Life..." N 101 rev shd read N 100 rev
- P 896 From Cratelos shd read From Cratetos
- P 897 "I love Theotormon" shd read "I loved Theotormon"
- "I saw a chapel..." shd cite t 768

4.

Two Problems in The Four Zoas

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I wish to discuss two problems which puzzled me as I was preparing The Four Zoas for the Longmans edition of Blake's poetry. Both involve the arrangement and organisation of the Nights; neither can be finally determined, since we cannot be sure that Blake himself had made up his mind. He has certainly not made any decisions clear on paper. Unfortunately, an editor must make decisions, and the discussion which follows is largely an account of the reasons which led me to answer these problems as I did. Throughout this work I was involved in a fruitful cooperation with D. V. Erdman, and so I had better stress that these arguments are entirely my own. All references are to the Erdman edition of 1965.

The two problems are, first: Where does the Second Night begin?--and the second, which has attracted more attention: What did Blake mean to do with Night VIIb?

Almost all editions have passed over the first question with ease. The MS presents a series of Night-headings; Night the First on p. 3 is plain, and so is Night the Third (on p. 37) now, although Blake had had other thought as a series of erasures shows. About Night the Fourth there is no doubt at all it follows, then, that the remaining chapter-heading must be the Second, cryptic though it is in its reading Night the . . . (twice written First, and once Third; never Second, according to Erdman, p. 747). But does it follow? Only if it is essential that a Night must start on one of these pages headed Vala in large script. Most editors have considered the marginal insertion

on p. 9 a rejected heading, and have therefore ignored it. Sloss and Wallis accepted it in 1927, but without any adequate justification of their decision. I decided to accept p. 9:34 as the beginning of the Second Night, as a hypothesis, on the grounds that this is in fact the only place where Blake has left the heading Night the Second intact, and that, as the text is so pervaded with problems we do well to try to avoid conjectures involving Blake's supposed or probable intentions where he did not make them explicit. We have to make such conjectures too often in The Four Zoas without manufacturing them.

If there were no other facts, this hypothesis would present no problems; it would simply mean removing the beginning of the Second Night up several pages. It would now be much longer than the First Night, but this would only be a fact to note, not to argue. There are, however, three complications, major and minor. First, the well-known disarrangement of the pages, by which the page that should be 19 is bound in as 21, and vice versa. (To clarify my later remarks about this section, I propose in this article to suffix the standard numbers of these pages with letters indicating the order now generally accepted as correct, thus: 21a, 22b, 19c, 20d.) Second, neither of the "Ends" marked, on pp. 18 and 19c, seems actually to be the end. The "End" at the foot of p. 18 itself supersedes an earlier one, Blake having added several lines after an original "End". After this follows the whole section 21a-20d; and the pencil text of p. 20d looks like a still later addition after the "End" on p. 19c (though we cannot know about its date).

The third complication is the most important. Blake seems very sure that he has an end to the First Night (and, on p. 36, that he has an end to the Second); yet he has apparently no beginning to the Second Night. If we give full weight to the "Ends" on pp. 18 and 19c, we must ignore the total lack of a new beginning on p. 23. Blake himself numbered his pages 1-14 (our 3-14, 17-18), concluding "End of The First Night". Then why was p. 23 never once inscribed as the beginning of "Night the Second"? I do not think we can answer this question, and it would be dangerous to try.

Few acts of an editor are more dangerous than to make further conjectures in support of earlier ones. This, however, I shall do. After all, my acceptance of the marginal "heading" on p. 9 is only a literal acceptance of what actually stands: although this seems on the surface somewhat improbable, it is not more conjectural than the acceptance of p. 23 as beginning "Night the Second". If I accept that 9:34 begins the Second Night, what do I do about the marked ends of the First? In the first place, there can only be one "End"; the other must be out of date. All the evidence suggests that pp. 21a-19c were written later than 18:1-8. Lines 18:9-15 as a whole cannot be dated with any accuracy relative to pp. 21a-19c, but are clearly later than lines 18:1-8. In any case, p. 18 was certainly begun before pp. 21a-19c, and 19c:15 may reasonably be taken to supersede 18:15 as the "End". My suggestion, therefore, is that pp. 21a-19c may be taken as the new end to the First Night, and should be placed after 9:33, the Second Night beginning at 9:34. That is, I take the First Night to be pp. 3:1 to 9:33 and pp. 21a-19c. The Second Night is 9:34 to 18:15 and pp. 23-35. Page 20d looks like an afterthought, to be placed following 19c. The "Ends" on p. 18 are superseded. Pp. 21a-19c form a long, distinct passage; if Blake were looking for an ending to his new First Night, he might well be expected to prepare it like this on separate sheets; in any case the whole Night already needed to be copied out again. I am only unhappy that he did not guide the new passage in on p. 9 as he usually did (e.g. p. 56).

If I had been a free man I would merely have proposed this as a probable idea in Blake's mind. However, I had to present a single, unequivocal text to my readers: and I decided to present them with this rearrangement, not because I like rearrangement for its own sake, but because the new text seemed

to me to make very good sense as narrative, and as narrative construction. If one rearranges the pieces of a jigsaw, one's final justification must be that the picture is better at the end than it was before.

Blake had projected a narrative poem telling how the original state of human perfection had been corrupted. The narrative of Urizen was unsatisfactory; the new narrative would show why and how Urizen began his career as a tyrant, and why he failed. Man's surrender to the tyranny of reason and law had itself a cause - the weakening of the soul by the subtle corruptions of the eternal and unremitting Female Will. In the new poem, Vala embodies this eternal female power, and since she is the protagonist, the poem is named after her. She desires to control the whole of the universal Man; she is not satisfied with her place in the scheme of things. She sets out to seduce him as he walks in the garden (a story several times retold); she stirs up trouble between Luvah and Urizen, and even though, in his resulting sickness, the Man gives authority not to her but to Urizen, who suppresses her immediately, she continues to burn underground, like a heath fire. She bursts out in VII, and achieves domination in VIII - a domination only overcome when the Man himself, in a last burst of energy, reasserts his own authority in IX, and all are redeemed. Part of the legend is the disintegration of the whole human personality into sexual forms (through which female dominion is increased); Enion drives away her counterpart, Tharmas, whose form degenerates and becomes our world of space and time. As Enion sits regarding this world, a new male creature arises from its rocks - "her own Created Phantasm" (del. from p.4: Erdman '65 p.471) and from their sexual union - marked by passions not of love and delight, but of hostility and anguish - she becomes pregnant and gives birth to malicious twins Los and Enitharmon, the Adam and Eve who wander in this new fallen world.

But Blake's concepts, as always, evolved. He came to appreciate the symmetrical pattern of four Zoas, now set out in the opening lines of the poem (3:4ff), and this required some reorganisation of the beginning of the poem. There were to be four "Zoas". In the perfection of Eternity they balanced one another; evil began when the balance failed. Whereas it did not matter in the earlier version that Los and Enitharmon were born of Enion, their appearance as creatures of the fallen creation now creates a problem, since the they are forms of Urthona, who is "brother" to Tharmas-and-Enion. How can they be born of Enion? By writing the additional section, pp. 21a-19c, Blake has cleared up this anomaly. Messengers to the Council of God (a new element, but one that need not detain us) explain afterwards that Urizen and Luvah had fought for dominion, that Urthona was shattered - literally - by the sight, and a part of his spirit fled.

"A portion of his life shrieking upon the wind
she fled"

And Tharmas took her in pitying" (22b:21-22).
From this pitying act arose Enion's jealousy; shortly (lines 22-28) she has "embalmed" both male and female parts of Urthona, his spectre and emanation, in her body, ready to be born in the fallen world as Los and Enitharmon. Thus the pattern of four Zoas is satisfied, and the original story of pp.3-9 is reconciled to it.

But the balance has changed somewhat. In the original plot, the first turning-point was the accession of Urizen to power on p.23; the preceding action was introductory and preparatory. But now the introduction is more complex. The sequence has now three parts - Vala's first corruption of Man; the disintegration of balance among the Zoas; and the emergence of a new

creation in which Los and Enitharmon wander. The first of these three parts becomes merely a vague memory, first recalled by Enitharmon (10:9ff); the second becomes the material for the First Night, and this is found partly on pp.3-9, partly on 21a-19c. The activities of Los and Enitharmon, leading to the introduction of Urizen to their fallen world (p.12) is the material of the Second, starting at 9:34. The turning-point is now the change of scene from Eternity to mortality. Where the action in the fallen world begins, the Second Night now begins. Blake has inserted a new line to open this Night -

"But the two youthful wonders wanderd in the world

of Tharmas" (9:34).

The reader has been away from this scene for some time, during the narrative of pp. 21a-19c, and has to be reminded who the pair are; "they" of the deleted line is no longer clear.

As I said at the outset, this is not a matter on which final certainty can be reached, as the evidence of the MS is that Blake himself was uncertain, rather than that he had decided, and it is not for us to make up his mind for him. Yet an editor who must make a single choice has, I would argue, as good grounds for making this arrangement as for reading the MS straight through as it is now bound, and this choice makes at least as good sense.

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(The second part of Professor Stevenson's article, on the two Nights VII of The Four Zoas, will appear in our next issue.)

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5 Europe iii: 13

In examining copy H of Europe at the Houghton Library, I found that line 18 of the prefatory poem reads "The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy." The third word is usually printed as "where," but there is only one other copy of Europe with this plate extant (K, in the Fitzwilliam Museum), and David Erdman informs me that he has examined his slide of the Fitzwilliam plate iii and found the reading to be "when." The line makes perfect sense as Blake etched it; in fact, "when" ties in more closely with the theme of the prefatory poem.

At the beginning of the poem, Blake hears the Fairy singing about the senses: "Five windows light the cavern'd Man" etc. The fifth sense, touch, could admit man to the joys of Eternity if his hypocritical morality did not restrain him:

Thro' one, himself pass out what time he please, but he will not;
For stolen joys are sweet, & bread eaten in secret pleasant.

After the Fairy is caught by the poet, he promises to write a Blakean illuminated book ("on leaves of flowers") and to

shew you all alive

The world, when every particle of dust breathes forth its joy.

Thus the line as Blake etched it continues the theme of erotic mysticism introduced earlier in the poem, "when" referring to the ecstatic moment at which the life of the universe is perceived.

(continued on page 18)