

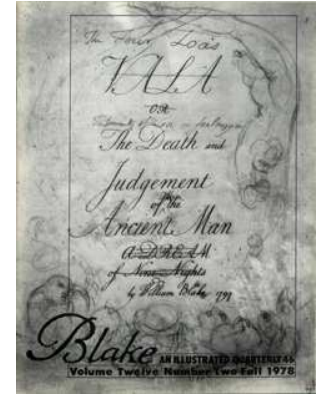
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

A R T I C L E

The Four Zoas: The Text of Pages 5, 6, & 7, Night the First

Andrew Lincoln

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 12, Issue 2, Fall 1978, pp. 91-95



THE FOUR ZOAS: THE TEXT OF PAGES 5, 6, & 7, NIGHT THE FIRST

ANDREW LINCOLN

The first Night of *The Four Zoas* is one of the most heavily revised parts of the poem, and the physical evidence in the manuscript is sometimes highly confusing, especially where Blake changed his mind more than once about a particular revision. Blake's editors have the daunting task of trying to establish the latest revision of the text when the process of revision was probably never finally completed. The conflicting evidence about the ending of Night the First has been interpreted convincingly,¹ but there are some areas of the text which require further consideration.

THE UNION OF THARMAS AND ENION

Erdman says that the fragment page 143 represents Blake's revision of the text of page 7 of *The Four Zoas*,² and in his text (pages 299-300) its readings are given priority over the readings of page 7. The relationship between the two manuscript pages is complicated, and requires consideration in some detail.

The modified copperplate text on pages 5-7³ describes how Tharmas sinks into the sea and his Spectre emerges to woo Enion. A dialogue between Enion and the Spectre leads into the description of their mating in the surviving copperplate lines on the lower half of page 7. Hardly any of the original copperplate text that was erased on pages 3-6 can be deciphered, but Erdman has reconstructed the first six copperplate lines at the top of page 7 thus:

- ? "Weeping, then bending from his Clouds he stoop'd his innocent head"
- ? "And stretching out his holy hand in the vast Deep sublime"
- ? "Turn'd round the circle of Destiny with tears & bitter sighs"
- And said Return O Wanderer when the day of clouds is o'er;

So saying he ... ? fell ... into the
restless sea
Round roll'd the ... globe self balanc'd.

It appears from these lines that in the original copperplate text the union between Tharmas and Enion occurred when the "innocent" Tharmas fell into the sea, and that he, rather than the Spectre, was Enion's partner. It is possible that there was no mention of the Spectre in the copperplate text. Certainly, the term only appears in additions in the copperplate lines surviving on page 7 (in lines 23 and 27). Erdman (p. 743) observes that the first six lines at the top of page 7 "were apparently moved to p 5 for the modified copperplate addition there of lines 9-14 and 25," and they may well have been moved towards the beginning of the Night to make room for the account of the emergence of the Spectre introduced on pages 5-7. It is very strange that Enion's partner in the union, in the copperplate text, should have been the "innocent" Tharmas, as the description of the union on page 7 refers to his "horrible brightness" and his "poisons," which seem to be qualities characteristic of the Spectre. This anomaly suggests that when he transcribed the copperplate text, Blake had already developed a myth involving the union of Enion with a spectre-like Tharmas, but that for some reason he decided to omit the description of this character. Perhaps he had found no way of relating the spectre-like figure to the innocent Tharmas: these conflicting aspects of Tharmas' divided character are related in the modified copperplate revisions by the device of the Spectre. Blake's difficulties in the copperplate text may have arisen from the fact that he had not yet invented this device, and that the spectre-like character was called simply Tharmas--as in the fragment page 141.

Bearing this possibility in mind, I want to turn to the text of the fragment pages 143-44,

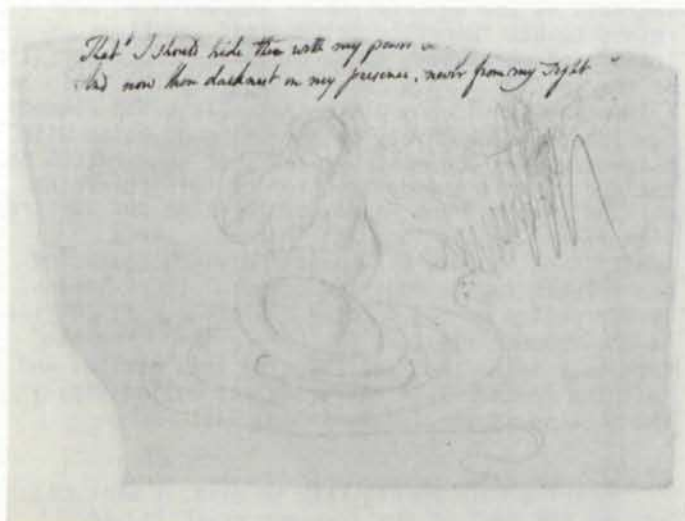
which is transcribed below.⁴ Additions are enclosed in angle brackets <>; pencil additions are preceded by °; deletions and erasures are in italics within square brackets, [thus].

<°Opening his rifted rocks> mingling [*their bodies*] <°together they> join in burning anguish
Mingling his horrible [*brightness*] <°darkness>
with her tender limbs then high she soared <°72>
Shrieking above the ocean: a bright wonder that
nature shudderd at
Half Woman & half [*Serpent*] <°beast> all his
[*lovely changing*] <°darkly waving> colours mix
With her fair crystal clearness in her lips &
cheeks his [*poisons*] <metals> rose
In blushes like the morning & his [*scaly armour*]
<°rocky features> softning
A [*monster*] <°wonder> lovely in the heavens or
wandering on the earth 140
With [*Serpent*] <female> voice <warbling upon
the [*hills*] & hollow vales>
Beauty all blushing with desire <a Self
enjoying wonder>
<For Enion brooded groaning loud the rough seas
vegetate. Golden rocks rise from the [*vorte*]
<vast>>
And thus her voice; <Glory, delight, & sweet
enjoyment born>
<To mild Eternity shut in a threefold shape
delightful>
To wander in <sweet> solitude <enrapturd> at
every wind
<[*Shining across the ocean/ Enion brooded
groaning the golden rocks vegetate The ?b*]>
<[to] Infolding the bright woman [*from the
desolating winds / & thus her voice &*]>

On the verso of this leaf (page 144) are two lines, one cut short where the page is torn:

That I should hide thee with my power &
And now thou darknest in my presence, never
from my sight

Beneath these lines is a drawing of a nude figure entwined by a serpent.



Bentley, commenting on this fragment, argues that "Blake was copying from the copperplate draft (probably already bound at this point) into his notebook." His argument rests chiefly on the fact that the lines on page 144 appear as an addition on page 7, and on the observation that "the first draft of the notebook clearly reproduces corrections in Night I, while none of the changes introduced into the notebook are repeated in Night I."⁵ The two lines on page 144 reappear on page 7 as part of a modified copperplate revision describing the Spectre's relationship with Enion. If, as I suggest, the description of the spectre-like Tharmas existed before the copperplate text of Night I was transcribed, it follows that the lines on page 144 may have existed long before they appeared as additions on page 7. Parts of the basic text of both pages 7 and 143 have been obscured by subsequent revisions, but there are two examples of additions on page 7 which appear in the basic text of page 143. Unfortunately, both of these are problematic. On page 7 "Shrieking" was added in the margin before "Above the ocean" in line 22; it was subsequently deleted, which suggests that Blake changed his mind more than once about including it. In the same line "Nature" is clearly an addition replacing "Beulah";⁶ but "Beulah" was an addition over an erased word, which introduces the possibility that when Blake deleted Beulah he was restoring the original term.⁷ In other words it is not really clear whether page 143 does incorporate corrections made on page 7, or whether Blake derived the account on page 7 from the fragment, making changes which were subsequently revoked; and the fact that none of the changes made in the fragment were repeated in Night I gives no indication of relative date.

The text of page 143 has been subject to three distinct sets of revisions. The earliest are probably the additions made over erasures. That Blake should have bothered to make erasures here casts some doubt on the idea that the fragment comes from a notebook, as it indicates that he had some concern for the appearance of the page--that it was regarded in the first place as a fair copy, and that the revisions were not intended to be retranscribed in a subsequent fair copy. The additions made over erasures were probably appropriate to the original context of the fragment, but they seem inappropriate for the context of Night I. They consistently emphasize that the product of the union is an epitome of the female will: the words "female," "warbling," "sweet," "enrapturd" all contribute to the feeling of sexual bliss. Bentley suggests that the words "Glory delight & sweet enjoyment born" are the beginning of "Enion's song about the beauties of the natural world."⁸ However, the song seems singularly inappropriate to Enion, who in *The Four Zoas* consistently complains about the conditions of experience (in the first two Nights she sings two great laments about the horrors of the natural world). This anomaly is emphasized by a separate

set of revisions in the fragment which introduce a "groaning" Enion to sing the song (lines 10, 14, 15).

In the basic text of the fragment the song is sung by the product of the union of the male and female partners. Raine suggests that the description of the union is derived from Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus,⁹ the youth who is ensnared in a river by the water nymph Salmacis, until both are fused into a single, hermaphroditic body. Thus, the union in the fragment appears to be a union in the literal sense, a "mingling" of two bodies to form a new creature which has a dual nature. Ovid's tale is a story of female triumph, and the tone of ironic rapture in the song on page 143 seems appropriate to the beginning of a song celebrating the triumph of the female will. It is a song which would be more appropriate to Enitharmon than to Enion (see for example Enitharmon's songs in *Europe* and *The Four Zoas* 34:56-90); and Enitharmon would seem to be the likely product of the union of two characters called Tharmas and Enion who are fused into a single, fallen being.

So far, then, I have made two suggestions: (a) that in the copperplate text of pages 3-7 Blake was adapting an earlier myth with only partial success, omitting the description of the spectre-like Tharmas; and (b) that the basic text of page 143 may have been part of a myth describing the creation of Enitharmon. These are both conjectures drawn from meager evidence, but I believe they are supported by other available evidence, and that they help to illuminate the problem of the relative dates of pages 7 and 143.

One set of revisions on page 143 is in pencil. These revisions consistently modify the "bright" or spectre-like qualities of Tharmas in the union. For example, "horrible brightness" becomes "horrible darkness," "lovely changing colours" become "darkly waving colours," and "scaly armour" becomes "rocky features." All of these changes seem designed to suggest that Tharmas degenerates into a desolate marine god as he mates with Enion. If Blake did omit the Spectre from the copperplate text of pages 3 to 7, he may well have considered making changes like these to eradicate the spectral qualities which remained in the description of the union. However, being in pencil they may have been tentative suggestions which Blake decided not to adopt when he transcribed page 7.

The remaining revisions on page 143 were in ink. Blake began these revisions by inserting two lines (written as one) between lines 9 and 11: "For Enion brooded groaning loud the rough seas vegetate. Golden rocks rise from the vorte . . ." (part of the second line was lost when the page was torn). He made a second attempt at this revision at the foot of the page, lines 14 and 15. The initial half-line "Shining across the ocean" would replace the end of line 9. Blake conflated the two lines of his previous insertion into a single line by substituting "golden rocks" in the second line for "rough seas" in the first. The conflated line is followed by "The V . . .," or "The b . . .," the remains of words which were lost when the page was

torn. The next line reads "[to] Infolding the bright woman [from the desolating winds]," the initial "to" being part of an instruction: in other words, Blake was probably indicating that another passage, from "The ?b . . ." to "Infolding the bright woman . . ." should be introduced here. The conflated line appears in the copperplate text of page 8 as "Enion brooded, oer the rocks, the rough rocks <groaning vegetate>," and this line introduces a description of the awakening natural world which begins "The barked oak . . ." and ends with the line "Infolding the bright children from the desolating winds." This may have been the passage cited for inclusion in the text of page 143.

If the basic text of page 143 originally described how Tharmas and Enion lose their individual identities to become Enitharmon, Blake would have made revisions like these when he adapted the text for use in *The Four Zoas*. Tharmas and Enion were to remain separate, and he had to account for the creation of Enitharmon's consort, Los. The added reference to Enion brooding identifies the woman-serpent with Enion herself, suggesting that Enion temporarily assumes this form while mating with Tharmas. The additions still end with "& thus her voice," so at this stage Blake still intended to introduce the lyric song which would be inappropriate to Enion; but the additions introduce "rough seas," a "groaning" Enion and "desolating winds," all in stark contrast to the blissful tone of the rest of the passage. In the copperplate text the revisions begun in the fragment are apparently taken one stage further: the song is omitted; "golden rocks" become "rough rocks," "golden" probably being eliminated because it seemed out of keeping with Enion's desolate condition; and the "bright woman" of 143:15, a phrase inappropriate to the degenerate Enion, becomes "bright children," enabling Blake to suggest that both Los and Enitharmon were created by the union. It seems, then, that in the fragment Blake was beginning to make necessary adjustments to the tone of the passage, and that this process is more complete in the copperplate text. Page 143 may represent an intermediate stage in the composition of the copperplate text, and all of the revisions on the page may have been made before the copperplate text was transcribed. The substitution of page 143 for page 7 in the text of *The Four Zoas* therefore seems unjustified. We must turn to the copperplate text itself to establish a final text.

THE INK CIRCLES ON PAGES 5, 6, & 7

In three places near the beginning of the poem, deleted passages were circled in ink. These are: 5:46-55, Enion's horrified reaction to the Spectre; 6:26, 28-38 (a single block), the Spectre's accusation of Enion and her reply; 7:1-11, the rest of Enion's reply to the Spectre. Blake did not normally draw an ink circle around a passage he wanted to delete, which suggests that these circles have a special significance.

The circled passage at the foot of page 5 was deleted by three slanting ink strokes. However, part of the circle was erased when lines 29 and 30



The Four Zoas, p. 5.

were added, and part of a deleting line was erased when Blake revised the end of line 48 (Bentley does not record this revision, but Erdman shows that "Love is changed to . . . hate" is a subsequent addition). The passage was revised after it had been deleted, and after it had been circled. The circled passage at the foot of page 6 was deleted by two slanting ink strokes, but these strokes were partly erased when Blake made additions in lines 29-31, and part of the circle was erased when Blake added line 38 at the bottom of the passage. Again, this means that the passage was revised after both the ink circle and the deleting lines had been added. On the same page lines 9-25 were deleted by ink strokes and also by a grey wash. The grey wash, however, does not cover the circled passage. At the top of page 7 two long slanting ink strokes deleted the text down to line 18, extending down below the ink circle (which surrounds lines 1 to 11). Within the circle the deleting lines were partly erased when lines 1 to 8 were added. Here, as in the other circled passages, the text was revised after it had been deleted. Revisions to the deleted text only occur within the ink circles, which suggests that the passages were first deleted, and subsequently circled in ink because Blake changed his mind and decided to retain them. The fact that the gray wash on page 6 avoids the circled passage but covers the other deleted lines on the page seems to confirm this.



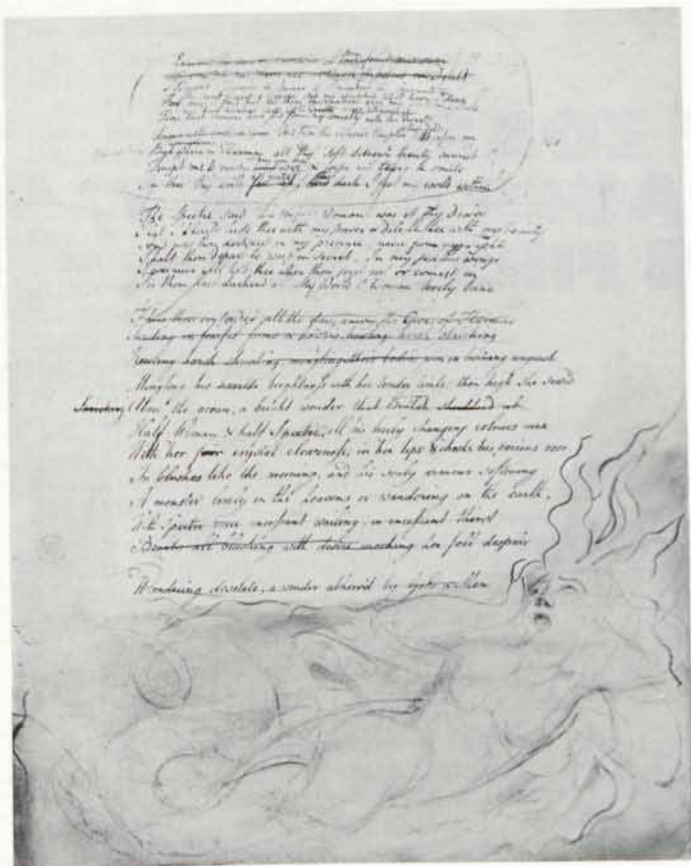
The Four Zoas, p. 6.

It seems possible, then, that the final text on pages 5, 6, and 7 should include some lines which were once deleted, and which are not included in the text edited by Erdman and Stevenson:

PAGE 5. All the lines within the circle (46-55) should probably be retained as none were individually deleted; but not two lines (29 and 30) added above the circle, which were individually deleted by ink strokes; nor the two lines below the circle--the pencilled insert line 56 (which seems to have been partly erased), and line 57 (which was deleted individually by a pencil stroke).

PAGE 6. Line 1 follows on from 5:55. Lines 9-25 were deleted by ink strokes and gray wash, and none of the deletion was superseded by subsequent revisions, so these lines are definitely excluded. The circled passage (lines 26-38) was revised after deletion, but some lines within the passage were deleted individually in pencil. The end of the first line and all of the second line ("Art thou not my slave & shalt thou dare / To smite me with thy tongue beware lest I sting thee also") were deleted and replaced by an addition of one-and-a-half lines (the full line subsequently deleted):

Who art thou Diminutive husk & shell
[Broke from my bonds I scorn my prison I scorn
& yet I love.]



The Four Zoas, p. 7.

Lines 29-36 follow on from these. Part of the circle was erased when line 38 was added, effectively replacing line 37 which was deleted in pencil. The circled passage, thus revised, should probably be retained in the text.

PAGE 7. An ink circle surrounds lines 1-11, and deleting strokes within the circle were superseded when lines 1-8 were added. Lines 1 and 2 were subsequently deleted individually. Line 8 was revised as follows: "[Among wild beasts to roam] And thou the delusive tempter <to these deeds> sit-test before me." (The first part of the line was deleted in pencil, and the words "to these deeds" were written above a gap between "tempter" and "sit-test"). Lines 9, 10, and 11 were deleted individually in pencil, but a pencilled note in the margin by line 11 reads "this line to come in," indicating that the deletion of this line has been revoked. The final text at the top of page 7, therefore, should probably include lines 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 11. The text continues from line 11 with the undeleted lines 21-26, which describe the union of the Spectre of Tharmas and Enion. The transition from line 11 to line 21 is unsatisfactory, and Blake made no other addition on the page to ease this transition. However, as this seems to be the latest, if incomplete, revision of the text of page 7, this may be the textual arrangement we should adopt.

¹ See W. H. Stevenson, "Two problems in *The Four Zoas*," *Blake Newsletter* 3 (Dec. 1967), pp. 14-17.

² *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom, rev. ed. (New York, 1968), p. 742.

³ In all quotations line numbering follows that in *Vala, or The Four Zoas*, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford, 1963), hereafter referred to as Bentley.

⁴ This transcript differs in some readings (and in the marking of passages as insertions) from the 1968 text, since it incorporates corrections made by Erdman after reading this essay in draft and consulting the manuscript again.

⁵ Bentley, p. 160.

⁶ When he composed the description of the union, Blake may have been thinking of Milton's description of the original sin:

Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe.

Paradise Lost, IX, 781-82

⁷ I now make out the erased word to be "Nature"--D.V.E.

⁸ Bentley, p. 160. Bentley apparently thinks that the descriptive passage 8:14-17 was to become part of Enitharmon's song.

⁹ Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton, 1968), I, 282-85.