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# Image Patterns and the Structure of William Blake's *The Four Zoas*

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To date, structural descriptions of *The Four Zoas* have invariably treated narrative events as the unit of analysis—that is, the textual feature or features whose location in the text itself is examined, in relation to other similar or identical textual features, to identify an architectural plan. On this basis, both Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom divide the poem into three parts, corresponding to the fall, existence in the fallen state, and return to unfallen existence, although they disagree on where the divisions occur.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent studies have generally accepted one or the other of these schemes.<sup>2</sup>

Several critics have noted the reflections of Night I in Night IX, which are usually taken to indicate that Night I represents an inversion of the events of the apocalypse,<sup>3</sup> or that the apocalypse is a completion of the fall.<sup>4</sup> All of these studies regard structure as a function of a linear progression of narrative events, and most rely on Blake's full myth, constructed from details scattered throughout the corpus, to provide associative links missing from the fragmentary narrative as well as a framework for the analysis itself. This implies that the reader must be familiar with Blake's mythic system to fully understand the poem. However, the experience of even novice readers, who comprehend fully the poem's general or thematic statements and are capable of understanding in some depth the meaning of specific episodes, belies this assumption. More importantly, it indicates that details of narrative, while perhaps providing a loose structural base, cannot alone account for the text's internal coherence and cohesion, nor for the poem's powerful effect on readers unfamiliar with the myth.

In view of this, I have attempted to identify and examine a feature or set of features other than the narrative that may contribute significantly to the structure of *The Four Zoas*. In particular, I have looked at Blake's use of images as a vehicle for conveying broad, thematic statements within the poem and hence defining the di-

mensions of meaning that provide the basic framework for the structure of the work. The nature of Blake's images and symbols has been studied extensively, and while initially Blake's use of invented and borrowed names and symbols prompted critics to assert that his images are personal creations inaccessible to the reader without familiarity with Blake's mythic system, several critics—notably, Northrop Frye in *Fearful Symmetry*—have shown that Blake's symbols abound in general and archetypal qualities. The terms in which his myth is expressed—such as fire and ice, youth and age, light and darkness—are among those universal images that possess the greatest constancy and efficiency, and so their connotations are strikingly familiar and clear. Thus, as the reader proceeds through the text of the *Zoas*, a large part of his impression of the fictive world is created by these images, which, because of their overwhelming abundance as well as the accessibility of their connotations, stand in bold relief against the obscurity of the narrative. Without the usual narrative context to supply at least superficial meaning for an image, its effect depends, first, upon its habitual and/or traditional connotations and associations for the reader. So, individual images in the *Zoas* can be seen as isolatable conceptual elements with identifiable connotations for most readers; their substantial role in determining the reader's impression of the work suggests that they may contribute significantly to the structure of ideas underlying the text.

My effort to get at the ways in which imagery contributes to structure and meaning in *The Four Zoas* involved, first, an attempt to identify and locate the important images within the poem—specifically, visual images whose connotations are, for the most part, fixed for the majority of readers. To do this I utilized a multi-purpose computer program for text analysis,<sup>5</sup> which, from a modified version of the machine-readable text of the *Zoas* prepared by Cornell University for the purpose



Abyss	Air	Animals	Armor
Arrow	Ashes	Autumn	Beast
Bed	Bee	Bellows	Bird
Birds of prey	Black	Blood	Body parts
Bonds	Bone	Bow	Boy
Branch	Brass	Bread	Breath
Breeze	Briars	Brook (spring)	Bud
Bulls	Bush (leaf)	Cave	Celestial bodies
Chariot	Chain	Children	City
Clay	Cliff	Cloud	Cold
Cows (goats)	Crystal	Cup	Dark
Day	Death	Den	Desert
Dew	Door	Dove	Dry
Eagle	Ear	Earth (ground)	Earth (element)
Earth (planet)	Elephant	Evening	Eye
Face	Feast	Fire	Fish
Flood	Floor	Flower	Foot
Forest	Forehead	Fountain	Fruit
Furnace	Garden	Garment	Gem
Geometric objs.	Girl	Gloom	Gold
Grass	Grave	Hammer (anvil)	Hair
Hand	Hard	Harvest	Head
Heart	Heat	Horse	House
Ice (snow)	Infant	Insect	Iron
Knife	Lake	Lead	Light
Lily	Limb	Lion	Loin
Loom	Machinery	Maze	Measurement
Metal	Mill	Moon	Morning
Mountain	Music	Neck	Net
Night	Nose	Oak tree	Palace
Pastoral	Plague	Plow	Poison
Prison	Raven	Red	Religion
Reptile (bat)	River	Ruin	Rock
Roof (ceiling)	Root	Rose (flower)	Royalty
Sea	Sea creatures	Seed	Serpent
Shadow	Sheep	Shepherd	Shore
Silver	Skull	Sky	Slavery
Slime	Smoke	Social groups	Soft
Sow	Spear	Spring	Star
Steel	Storm	Structures	Summer
Sun	Sword	Tears	Tent
Tiger	Tongue	Tools	Torture
Tree	Trumpet	Valley	Veil
Vine	Vintage	Void	Wall
War	Waste	Water	Weapon
Web	Weed	Wet	Wheat
Wheel	White	Wild animals	Wilderness
Wind	Window	Wine	Winepress
Winter	Wolf	Womb	Worm

## List of the image categories

of generating the concordance to Blake's writings,<sup>6</sup> generated a dictionary of the words in the text as well as a full concordance. Using the dictionary, I identified by hand 196 "image categories" in the text, each of which consists of either single words or a group of words that are felt to constitute textual variations of a single image.<sup>7</sup> In many cases the categories consist of syntactic variants of a particular image word, such as "lion" and "lions"; in other cases a variety of words are included in a category, as in the category for "fire," which includes "fire," "fires," "fiery," "fired," "fird" (Blake's variant spelling of

"fired"), "blazed," "burn," "burnd," "burning," "burnt," "flamd," "flame," "flames," "flaming," and "inflamm."

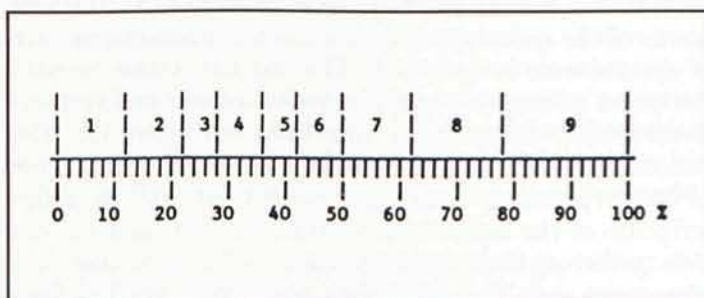
After establishing the image categories, I once again utilized the computer program to generate frequency distributions across the text for each of them. These distributions were then examined to identify patterns within and among them that might provide insight into the structure of the poem. I approached the distributions with two underlying assumptions: first, that meaning in the poem is determined in part by relationships among images in terms of proximity, where distance between two images defines the degree of relatedness between them, and relative predominance, which is determined by relative frequency among images at a particular location in the text; and, second, that patterns in the appearance and reappearance of particular images or clusters of images and ebb and flow in image density and variety yield insight into the structure of the poem. Therefore, I looked at places in the text where occurrences of specific images tend to be concentrated, assuming that a significant increase in the number of times an image appears in a given passage indicates that it plays a primary role in determining the meaning of that passage. I also examined configurations in the distribution of both individual image categories and groups of related categories across the text, to identify an architectural plan. A detailed analysis of image patterns and of the semantic effects of imagery for each individual passage in *The Four Zoas* appears elsewhere;<sup>8</sup> this paper provides a compressed and selective report of these findings.

All of the image categories involved in the analysis represent images that are listed in Juan Eduardo Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols*, which treats only those images and symbols that have persisted in time and bear some "intrinsic relation" to whatever it is they represent.<sup>9</sup> Blake's invented and borrowed names, which serve as complex symbols representing a wide-ranging series of concepts, have not been included because their connotations are not immediately accessible to all readers, and because I feel their meanings are largely defined by relationships established within the text itself. Images such as "drown" and "smile" have also been omitted from the analysis, for while they satisfy the definition of an image by calling up a sensory representation in the reader's mind, these images participate in meaning primarily at the narrative level, and therefore do not contribute as significantly to meaning at the general or thematic level with which the analysis is concerned; in addition, their connotations are less consistent for a cross-section of readers.<sup>10</sup> While some of the decisions I make concerning which images to include and exclude may well be questioned, I feel that the images I have chosen represent most words that could be considered images in the poem. And, finally, I recall Caroline Spurgeon's argument in which she dismisses objections to her definition of im-



agery "because, however much one might discuss it, few would agree as to what constitutes an image, and still fewer as to what constitutes a poetic image."<sup>11</sup>

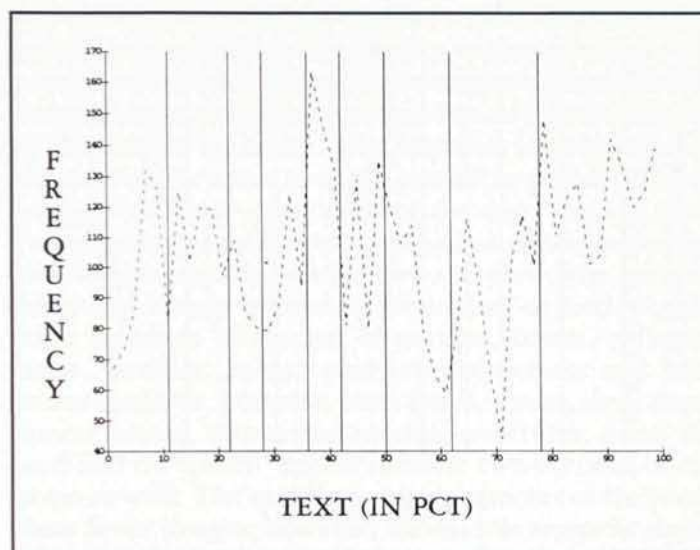
Patterns of image distribution across the text will be discussed here with reference to the nine Nights of the poem, but before doing so it is necessary to clarify the positioning of the Nights along a linear axis representing the text.<sup>12</sup> The Nights vary considerably in length, and many of the distributions reveal patterns related to a position along the axis rather than to the Nights themselves. The positioning of the Nights along an axis representing the entire text is as follows:



Notice that although Night V is numerically the central Night of the nine, the first half of the poem in terms of its total length includes Nights I through VI. In fact, the number of words in Nights I through VI differs by only about fifty from the number in Nights VII, VIII, and IX.

Patterns of image distribution across the text of *The Four Zoas* show several kinds of structuring at work in the poem. First of all, in terms of general mood, tone, and atmosphere conveyed through imagery, the poem divides neatly into two sections of equal length, the first including Nights I through VI and the second including Nights VII, VIII, and IX. The imagery of Night VI is the most relentlessly dismal of the poem, dominated by images of fire, deserts and sand, mountains, rocks, lightning and thunder, slime and mold, serpents, monsters, and the abyss. Night VI represents the lowest point in the story of the fall of man, with which the text of the *Zoas* is concerned; the nights that precede and follow Night VI relate the descent into the depths of fallen existence and the return to the unfallen state, and so it is not surprising that the imagery of both sections becomes more positive as the distance from Night VI increases.

In addition to this rather simple pattern, four other significant configurations were revealed. The first is based on the flux in image density across the text; imagery is concentrated in three areas of the text, which are separated by two text segments containing relatively low numbers of images. Patterns indicate a repetition of many of the same images in the three areas of high image density, and a marked shift in the character of

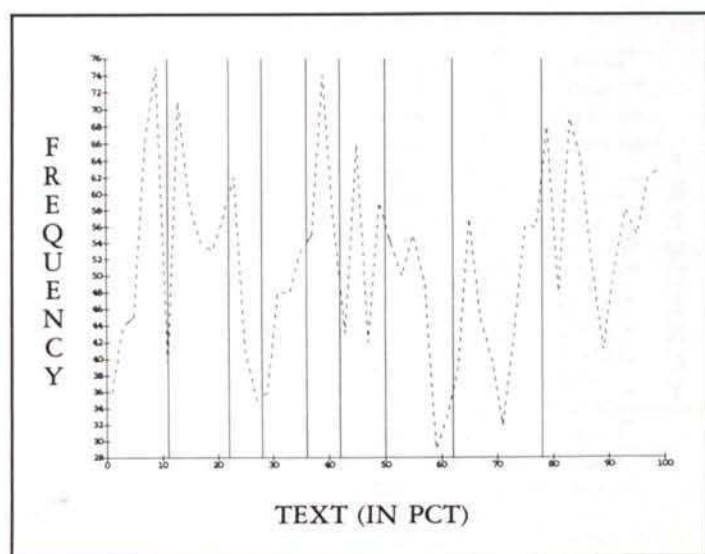


Distribution of image density across the text of *The Four Zoas*.

images between areas of high and low image density. Second, although in several areas of the text images from an earlier Night or Nights are repeated, the symmetric reflection of images from the first two Nights of the poem in the scenes of the apocalypse in Night IX is by far the strongest pattern of repetition—this, we must assume, is at least partly responsible for critical assertions of similarities between the poem's beginning and end. Third, the flux in image density is characterized by a rhythmic alternation that is mimicked in the more rapid alternation of concentrations of images of labor and rest across the text. Finally, the scenes of the apocalypse contain almost every image that appears in the first eight Nights of the poem. This suggests that the apocalypse represents a holistic vision of the events and environment depicted in the earlier sections of the poem.

The most dramatic pattern of image distribution in the text, and the one that dominates the imagistic structure of the poem, involves all of the 196 images considered in the analysis. The distributions show that both the number and variety of images increase significantly in three general areas of the text. Based on this flux in image density, the text of *The Four Zoas* can be roughly divided into five segments. The first segment spans Nights I and II, the second covers Nights III and IV, the third includes Nights V and VI and the first ninety lines of Night VII, the fourth segment spans the remainder of Night VII and most of Night VIII, and the last segment includes the last third of Night VIII and all of Night IX. The first, middle, and last segments contain the highest concentrations of imagery in the poem; in the two intervening segments, both the number and variety of images are considerably lower.<sup>13</sup> These divisions represent *generalized* fluctuations in image va-





Distribution of image variety across the text of *The Four Zoas*.

riety and density, and within each of the segments, variations on these patterns appear. Notably, in each of the areas of high image density, secondary patterns indicating an ebb and flow of image variety and density are evident, especially in the final segment; and in the fourth segment, which contains some of the lowest concentrations of imagery in the entire text, a sudden increase in image levels occurs in Night VIII where Orc's serpent form and Urizen's military hardware are described. However, the level achieved in this segment reaches only that of the lowest levels in areas where images are greatest in number and variety.

The overall pattern of alternation between areas of high and low image density, in itself, affects the reader's perception of the poem. An increase in image levels will increase the dimensions of meaning and emphasis in a passage, which creates the impression of a broadening of scene amid an expansion of perspective. A decrease in imagery creates the opposite impression; the reader senses that the breadth of his view is constricted, and therefore that his perspective on the events and scenes within the narrative is more limited. In addition, a reduction in imagistic connotations places more emphasis on narrative meaning. Thus, the effect of the fluctuations in image density in the text is a sense of steady alternation between expansion and contraction of view, and between emphasis on the broadened scene and on the action within the narrative itself.

This sense is evident within the narrative of the *Zoas*. Each of the segments of the text characterized by high levels of imagery contains a substantial number of scenes in which the reader is provided with an expanded view of existence from the perspective of the stage of the fall or regeneration of man in which the account appears. The song at the feast and Enion's first lament

in Night I provide a vision of the world of experience, and in Night II, although the scene is less expansive than the one in the song at the marriage feast, the reader is given a full view of Urizen's Mundane Shell. Enion's second lament at the end of Night II provides another vision of the world of experience. Nights V and VI include enlarged views in the description of the bound Orc, Urizen's memory of Eternity in his lament at the end of Night V, and the extended view of Urizen's dens, in which the horrifying vision of existence under Urizen's tyranny appears. Early in Night VII, the reader is provided with a view of Orc's caverns. Ahania's lament at the end of Night VIII puts forth yet another vision of existence, and in the early lines of Night IX, the first scenes of the apocalypse provide an encompassing picture of the universe in upheaval. The last thirty-one lines of the poem present a sweeping vision of life in Eternity. Even within the pastoral interlude in Night IX, the panorama is enlarged; the reader is provided with a view of Vala's pastures, hills, and valleys, as well as a description of the house Luvah builds for her, and he sees Vala gathering fruit in her lap and walking to the river where she sees Tharmas. Very few scenes in *The Four Zoas* provide such details of spatial organization among elements of landscape.

The intervening segments of the poem contain far fewer scenes embodying a broadened perspective, and the reader's viewpoint is instead that of one or more of the Zoas, who are intimately involved in the action and events of the poem. In Night III, where image levels drop dramatically, the narrative focuses on an argument between Urizen and Ahania; Ahania's lament broadens the scene somewhat, but her focus is on the individuals involved in the events leading to the fall and provides no expansive vision. The subsequent scene of the destruction of the Mundane Shell is limited in scope and meaning by its proliferation of only images of chaos and fragmentation, which continue to dominate into the early lines of Night IV. In the later lines of Night IV, we see Los binding Urizen; the description of the body he forges for Urizen focuses on an individual entity and is, again, limited in scope and meaning by the relatively few images involved. Night VII focuses first on Urizen, Orc, and Urizen's daughters, and then on the activities of Los, Enitharmon, and the Spectre of Urthona. Los's lament provides a brief broadening of scene, but not the variety of imagery or scope of the scenes in Nights I, V, and IX. The later lines of Night VII depict the embraces of Enitharmon and the Spectre and Los and the Spectre, and the birth of the Shadowy Female—the reader is given a close view of these events, and no larger view is provided. In the first two-thirds of Night VIII, several scenes involving Urizen's war efforts and Los's and Enitharmon's weaving are presented, but the imagery is generally unvaried and provides no substantial



broadening of perspective. Imagery in the scene of the crucifixion, where image levels reach their lowest point in the entire poem, is so sparse that the lack of imagistic meaning heightens the significance of the act itself.

The text segments characterized by low image density are, for the most part, more plot oriented than the sections of the poem containing the densest concentrations of imagery. Therefore, the reader's perception of events is very similar to that of the individuals involved in them. In areas of high image density, plot is interwoven with set pieces providing inclusive visions of existence from the perspective of the current stage of the fall. Thus the reader's experience of the poem is one of alternation between involvement in the action and stepping outside it to obtain a larger view. These variations contribute significantly to the poem's meaning—one of Blake's fundamental tenets concerns the necessity for variation in perspective and the need for alternation between involvement and rest. Here, Blake makes his point, not by exposition, but rather by directly involving the reader in the experience itself.

The links established by image density among the first, middle, and last segments of the poem are strengthened by shared images—that is, images that appear in significant concentrations in these three areas of the text, but appear only rarely, if at all, in the segments of the poem characterized by low image density. This symmetrical, three-part pattern is particularly evident in distributions for images of wine, blood, children or youth, the feast, mountains, valleys, and gold; it also shows up in distributions for images of the garden, ivory, insects, the lion, and stars. The most important of these images—in terms of the extent to which they define meaning and atmosphere in the passages in which they appear—are images of wine, blood, youth, and the feast; and each of these images appears in the first two segments only in specific scenes: in Night I at the scene of the marriage feast (including the song at the feast and Enion's lament), and in Night V in the scenes of Orc's birth and binding or in Urizen's lament. Of these, the most significant is the wine image, whose occurrences are concentrated in the scene at the marriage feast, Urizen's lament, and in Night IX at the feast and in the scene where "Human Wine" is made in Luvah's winepress. Similarly, the blood image is concentrated in the song at the feast, the description of Orc's birth and the Demon's account of the fall that immediately follows, and in the first scenes of the apocalypse in Night IX; and images of children or youth appear significantly in the song at the feast, descriptions of the young Orc in Night V, and in the pastoral interlude in Night IX. The image of the feast appears, of course, in the scenes of feasts in Nights I and IX, and in Urizen's lament in Night V. None of these images appears in substantial numbers in any other part of the poem.

While these images exhibit a three-part distribution in areas of high image density, others exhibit a two-part distributional pattern, appearing in substantial concentrations in either the first and last or middle and last of these three segments. The first and last segments of the text are far more strongly related in terms of shared imagery than any other areas of the text. Each of these two segments contains concentrations of the major agricultural images in the poem—the plow, the harvest, corn, and images related to the sowing of seed. Significant numbers of images of nations, towns, villages, cities, families, ashes, sand, the wilderness and wild animals, the ox, autumn, bees, birds, moon, dew, dove, winter, slaves, thorns and nettles, structures, girls, the sun, and the Earth<sup>14</sup> appear in these two portions of the poem as well. The middle and last segments of the poem share fewer images; however, the middle segment shares with the opening scenes of the apocalypse a sudden and dramatic increase in the number of images of fire, whose explosion into these scenes is so overwhelming that their character is almost wholly defined by it. The effect in both scenes is so pronounced that the allusion is obvious when the reader encounters the opening lines of Night IX. Elsewhere in the last segment, images of music, castle, palace, crow, and crystal appear, whose only other substantial concentrations occur in the middle segment.

The imagery of the first and middle segments of the poem indicates something about the character of the passages themselves, and the reintroduction of some of the most important images from the first segment in the scenes of Nights V and VI, and of images from both of these segments in Night IX, shows Blake at work again manipulating the reader's perception to make a fundamental point—in this case, that perspective defines meaning, and that moving among a variety of perspectives ultimately enables the holistic vision that characterizes Blake's idea of imaginative apprehension. In the earliest segment, the major images are of nature, the social order, and agricultural labor, which is basically an integration of society and nature; the general impression is of man existing in the physical world, the world of ordinary experience, which corresponds to Blake's *Generation*. In the scene at the marriage feast, images of blood, wine, and youth are introduced, introducing further connotations of human suffering and sacrifice, especially the sacrifice of youth and energy to toil in the physical world. In the middle segment, the images of wine, blood, and youth again appear, but here they are coupled with images of fire, primarily, which draws out connotations of the violent and passionate energy of youth. Later, more images of nature, including the mountain and valley images that appear significantly in the first segment of high image density, appear, but again, their coupling with images of fire, rocks, deserts, serpents, monsters, slime and mold, lightnings and



thunder, and the abyss shows nature in a different aspect. The imagistic and narrative allusions in the middle segment of the poem, as well as the increase in numbers and variety of images itself, remind the reader of the earlier scene; but the character of the new images substantially alters the meaning of the whole. Thus the reader is forced to reconsider his earlier perception, and by recognizing a second perspective, moves beyond the viewpoint defined by one or the other of these perspectives and subsumes the two. In the final segment of the poem, where images from both the first and middle segments appear along with other images drawn from everywhere in the first eight Nights of the poem, the effect is similar; while the meaning in the scenes of the apocalypse is defined substantially by the images within it and the relationships among them, the appearance of images from earlier portions of the text invokes alternative connotations, and in comparing them the reader moves to a higher level of abstraction and recognizes not only that alternative meanings exist, but also that meaning is substantially defined by context.

The particular evocation through both shared imagery and narrative allusion of the earliest Nights of the poem in the scenes of the apocalypse creates the further impression of returning to the beginnings of the poem, but again, the differences in context as well as the experience of the intervening segments of the poem clearly demonstrate how perspective shapes what we see. Obviously, the possibilities for allusion to previous appearances of an image or images are far greater in the final segment than they are at any previous point in the poem, and this basic fact is essential to our understanding of the way the poem works. For it implies that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to perceive the apocalyptic vision if he had not progressed through the more limited perspectives of the preceding Nights. This demonstrates a fundamental Blakean principle: that progression is necessary to achieve imaginative vision, and that "Without Contraries is no progression."<sup>15</sup> It further demonstrates that much of the connotative power of Night IX is achieved through narrative and imagistic allusion—by referring to the connotations of an image in earlier contexts, meaning can be layered upon meaning, and the whole enhanced by recognition of the way in which meaning is conveyed. Thus the two expanded views take on added importance in the scheme of the poem, for they provide the raw material for Blake's superlative achievement in the poem's final movement.

Images in the two areas of lower image saturation are not only fewer in number and variety, but also fundamentally different from those in the other three segments of the poem. Furthermore, unlike the three segments characterized by high image saturation, the two share very few images, and, as a result, the character of each differs significantly. Among those images they

do share, the shadow image pervades both segments, as does the eye image,<sup>16</sup> and concentrations of the image of tears appear at the end of Night III and the beginning of Night IV, and in Night VIII.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, the imagery of the two segments differs entirely. The first area of low image saturation contains substantial concentrations of images of clouds, the sea, storms, water, bones, chains, ice and snow, clearly suggesting the chaos and fragmentation that result from the breaking up of the Mundane Shell. In the second of these segments, images of tree, fruit, pastoral landscape, flower, worm, war, implements of torture, veil, and garment dominate. In both segments, the imagery is fundamentally negative in its connotations; the positive implications of pastoral imagery and images of vegetation in the second segment are undermined by extremely heavy concentrations of images of worm and shadow in Night VII, and the overall impression is of nature that is visually appealing but debased and spoiled. Concealment plays a major role in the thematic implications of both segments, but in the first, concealment is conveyed through images of nature (primarily, the cloud image), whereas in the second it is conveyed more predominantly through images related to that which is specifically human (veil, garment). The imagery of both segments shows a connotative shift at roughly a halfway point: in the first, imagery shifts from formless objects (cloud, water, sea) to forbiddingly solid forms (ice, bone, chain, iron); in the second, imagery moves from the natural and organic to the manmade (war, veil, garment, gem).<sup>18</sup> These marked shifts are indicative of the advances in plot that are evident in these two areas of the text.

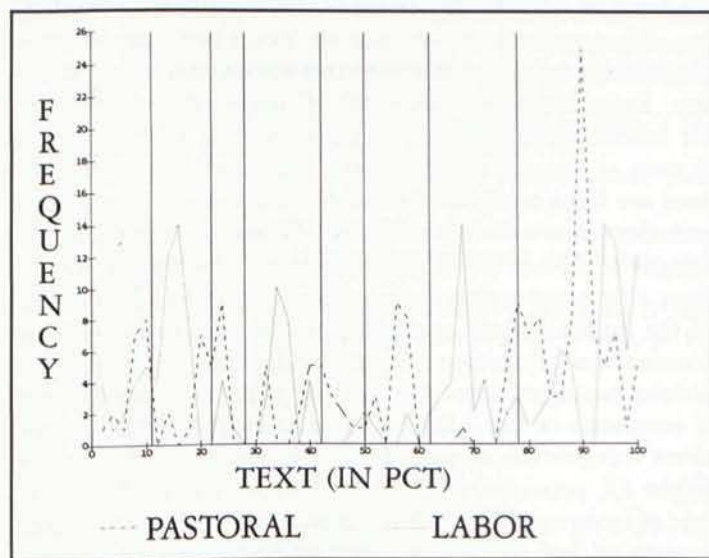
Several images appear in only one significant concentration, and notably, almost all of these appear in one of the two areas of low image saturation.<sup>19</sup> The sea image occurs in only one primary concentration, at the end of Night III and in the first third of Night IV, where it is used to characterize the onslaught of chaos that accompanies the destruction of the Mundane Shell. The tree image appears primarily in Nights VII and VIII, in passages dealing with the Tree of Mystery, and the gem image is concentrated in the description of Orc's serpent form in Night VIII. Again, in areas of high saturation, the variety of images broadens scene and





meaning; by contrast, the dominance of individual images in areas of low saturation limits the possible connotations and, consequently, the viewpoint.

Distributions for groups of images that fall into a broad conceptual category were also generated during the course of the analysis, and certain clearly defined patterns were revealed. In particular, clusters of images that can be collectively regarded as images of the pastoral—birds, flowers, sheep, shepherd, cattle, hills, pastures, and so on—are distributed symmetrically around the middle point of the poem, and, more importantly, their appearance tends to alternate regularly throughout the text with images of labor, including the loom, furnace and hammer, the winepress, the harvest, the vintage, breadmaking, and the plow.<sup>20</sup> This alternation is more rapid than the flux in image density, but the two patterns complement one another. The rapid alternation of images of the pastoral and labor, which are more closely tied to events of the narrative than patterns of image saturation, model the daily alternation of activity and rest in the physical world, while the slower and more dramatic pulsation of image saturation more closely reflects yearly rhythms and the cycle of death and renewal.



Distribution of images of the pastoral and labor across the text of *The Four Zoas*.

The effect of these rhythms on the reader, however subtle it may be, should not be underestimated. Blake's use of rhythm for effect in individual passages has often been noted by critics, and it is not unreasonable to assume that such rhythms may operate on a larger scale within the *Zoas*. Anyone familiar with the poem is aware of its power—power that cannot be accounted for in the narrative alone. Some of this may be attributed to the

almost subconscious appeal of rhythms revealed in image patterns. In Nights V and VI, which constitute the imagistic center of the poem, such rhythms are brought into the narrative when Urizen searches for the source of the pulsation that "shakes [his] caverns with strong shudders" (V, 65:239; E 344). The pulsation is introduced in Night V at the height of image saturation in the description of the bound Orc, continues through Night VI during Urizen's search, and finally explodes in fire imagery at the opening of Night VII. The intensity of the reader's experience of this part of the text may derive in large part from the introduction into the narrative of an element conveyed through image patterns in the earlier Nights of the poem.

In the final one thousand lines of the text, from the crucifixion of Christ in Night VIII onwards, the vision of the apocalypse explodes in a sustained concentration of imagery whose variety is unequalled in any other area of the poem. The final vision of the apocalypse is the imaginative view that sees all elements of existence integrated into an inclusive and harmonious whole. Consequently, the images in this segment of the text are drawn from every one of the previous Nights; in fact, among the 196 images examined in this study, only four—cliff, bellows, maze, and sparks—do not appear at least once in the final segment.<sup>21</sup> Bloom describes Night IX as "Blake's most exuberant and inventive poetry, probably the most energetic and awesome in the language,"<sup>22</sup> and Frye offers a similarly superlative comment—"There is nothing like the colossal explosion of creative power in the ninth Night of *The Four Zoas* anywhere else in English poetry."<sup>23</sup> This exuberance and energy are achieved, in large part, through Blake's imagistic elaboration that literally overwhelms the reader with its visual and connotative richness. Frye adds that "The poet works with physical images, and hence every successful vision of a state of existence beyond the physical must be an immense triumph of technical skill."<sup>24</sup> One of the prime elements of Blake's achievement is his integration of a multitude of diverse images into a composite vision of Eternity—like Blake's well-known drawings of the Last Judgment, the final Night of *The Four Zoas* derives its power as much from the proliferation of images as from their connotations.

The rhythmic alternation of images of labor and the pastoral, and the slower and more dramatic rhythm of the flux in image density throughout the poem, are reflected in the image patterns of Night IX. The pastoral interlude appears at the midpoint of the last Night, and interrupts the furious activity of the apocalypse. The restful scenes of the interlude are characterized by a reduction in the variety of images, although the number of images remains relatively high, and so in Night IX we see a grand enactment of the rhythmic pulsations that occur throughout the first eight Nights. The in-



terlude also invokes the perspective of the areas of low image density earlier in the poem: although the scene is broadened and elements of landscape are well defined, the pastoral interlude presents a close view of Vala, Tharmas, and Enion. The reader's involvement with their activities and perspective is far greater than in the surrounding scenes of apocalyptic fury, and because the variety of images is lower, the connotations are also limited in relation to adjacent passages. Once again, the final lines of the poem both double back to repeat earlier patterns and enlarge upon them, thus providing a substantially enhanced version of both forms of rhythmic pulsation that pervade the earlier Nights of the poem.

Image patterns across the text of *The Four Zoas* reveal that the basic structure of the poem is composed of three parts defined by the flux in image density. The reader is provided with three expansive views of existence from three perspectives, the last of which subsumes the first two. Thus, the structure of the poem is based on multiple views which can be regarded as simultaneous because they present many of the same images in varying contexts. The poem's structure, then, can be described as "layered." The structure is also fundamentally symmetrical, since many of the poem's images are distributed symmetrically around its midpoint. However, the integration of imagery from the first eight Nights into the final vision of the last movement suggests a linear organization, where images are accumulated across the text for their combined presentation in the last lines of the poem.

The structural configuration of *The Four Zoas* revealed by image patterns differs from descriptions based on narrative—such as those of Frye and Bloom—in three respects. First, linearity assumes a secondary role in the overall structure; even if the first eight Nights are regarded as a sequence of viewpoints leading to apocalypse, the notion of linearity is destroyed in the last thousand lines, which in subsuming images from the previous Nights double back and reflect earlier patterns. Second, while the pattern of image density across the text indicates a fundamentally three-part configuration, these three parts coincide only partially with structural divisions outlined by Frye and Bloom. Both critics see a structural division that falls somewhere between the first and second segments characterized by high image density, but Frye puts the division following Night IV, and Bloom puts it after Night III. Frye's second division occurs at the end of Night VIII, with the third area of maximum density, while Bloom's second division at the end of Night VI falls within the second segment of dense imagery. Neither Frye nor Bloom recognizes any subdivision within the sections he outlines, whereas my interpretation sees an alternation between expansion and contraction of view in the first eight Nights of the poem.

Finally, the flux in image density suggests an or-

ganizational scheme that in most instances violates the divisions among the nine Nights. Until now, critics have regarded the individual Nights as inviolable units of the poem's structure. It is impossible to argue that the division into Nights is insignificant, since Blake himself imposed the scheme on the poem, but this does not mean that the poem's organization, at least on some level, is not based on an alternative scheme—perhaps one that is superimposed on the more intricate division into Nights, and which complements the poem's narrative structure. Even within the poem, the divisions between Nights rarely indicate a break in the action or a thematic shift; in fact, in most cases Blake seems to have made an effort to obscure these divisions.<sup>25</sup> Even if the narrative is used as a guide for determining the poem's structural components, we do not find nine clearly delineated segments defined by the nine Nights; and, because of the confusion of narrative chronology in the poem, even Frye and Bloom cannot agree on a scheme for grouping the Nights. Whatever the significance of Blake's divisions, they have not yet yielded a clear structural scheme, except in very general terms. Based on the evidence provided by patterns of image distribution across the text, it seems necessary to consider that in its broader dimensions, the poem's organization may not have its basis in the divisions among the nine Nights.

The reader's experience of *The Four Zoas* is fundamentally one of variation and expansion of perspective. Repetitions and variations of image patterns provide the reader with different perspectives on the condition of man at various points in the fall, and these perspectives are later integrated into the larger vision that both includes and evolves from them. When he sees the same images repeated in varying contexts, the reader recognizes that perspective defines meaning—and this is one of the fundamental tenets of Blake's philosophy. The domination of certain images and types of images in various passages demonstrates the effects on perspective of emphasis of one element over the other; the harmonious integration of images in the scenes at the end of Night IX provides the balanced view that is characteristic of imaginative vision. Alternating patterns of image density and of images of labor and rest almost subconsciously establish a heightened appreciation of rhythmic alternation that is most dramatically apparent in the interposition of the pastoral interlude amid the furious activity of Night IX, and which, again, is a fundamental aspect of Blake's vision of life in Eternity. Thus, meaning and method in the poem overlap, for the underlying theme is certainly that the separation of the four Zoas, and the resulting fragmentation of vision, created the fall, and that the imaginative act of reintegration re-established Edenic bliss. The reader not only finds this meaning in the narrative, but also participates in a similar imaginative act in his apprehension of the poem's images and their dramatic patterning across the text.



<sup>1</sup> Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), p. 278; and Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), headings on pp. 193, 229, and 244.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Brian Wilkie and Mary Lynn Johnson, *Blake's "Four Zoas": The Design of a Dream* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> See Wilkie and Johnson, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Fox, *Poetic Form in Blake's "Milton"* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> The computer programs used in my study include Random Accessible Text System (RATS) and Archive Retrieval and Analysis System (ARRAS), both written by John B. Smith and distributed through Computer Textual Services, Inc., Chapel Hill, North Carolina. See John B. Smith, "RATS: A Middle-Level Text Utility System," *Computers and the Humanities*, 6 (1972), 277-83, for a description of the RATS program.

<sup>6</sup> David V. Erdman, ed., *A Concordance to the Writings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967). The text was edited to conform to the primary text of *The Four Zoas*—including Night VIIa only—in the fourth printing of *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970). In Erdman's 1982 edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, the arrangement of Night VII within the text of *The Four Zoas* is substantially different from that in the earlier edition. However, my work predates the publication of the 1982 edition and is therefore based on Erdman's earlier arrangement. Although it would be interesting to replicate this study using Erdman's later text (as well as Night VIIb), I do not believe that the broad patterns of image distribution with which I am concerned here would differ significantly. In any case, the arrangement of Night VII is conjectural, and no clearly superior version of the text has yet been identified.

<sup>7</sup> For a list of the 196 categories, see chart 1.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy M. Ide, "Patterns of Imagery in William Blake's *The Four Zoas*," diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. xxx.

<sup>10</sup> Complete listings of the contents of the image categories and connotations for each category appear in my dissertation (see note 8, above).

<sup>11</sup> Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965), p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of generating the frequency distributions for images within the text, the *Zoas* was treated as a seamless whole, without regard for Blake's division of the poem into nine Nights. I will argue below that there are several good reasons to ignore these divisions, at least when attempting to get at the poem's structure.

<sup>13</sup> See charts 2 and 3.

<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of image categorization, a distinction was made between occurrences of the word "earth" referring to the ground or soil, and of the Earth as a planet or location, as in "the Earth, the sun, and the stars" or "all men on Earth." References to the Earth as a planet were found to occur primarily in the first and last Nights of the poem.

<sup>15</sup> *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 3 (E 34).

<sup>16</sup> The most significant concentration of the eye image occurs in the pastoral interlude of Night IX.

<sup>17</sup> Lesser concentrations of the tear image appear in the early lines of Night I and in the pastoral interlude in Night IX. Thus its distribution is roughly symmetrical around the poem's midpoint.

<sup>18</sup> While gems are from nature, their meaning derives from the value man has attributed to them. Also, human intervention is usually required to produce gems that are used for ornamentation, as are the gems in the description of Orc's serpent form in Night VIII.

<sup>19</sup> Exceptions to this are images of houses, grass, and sheep, each of which appears in a single significant concentration in the pastoral interlude of Night IX.

<sup>20</sup> See chart 4.

<sup>21</sup> This statistic does not take into account incidental images that were grouped in more inclusive categories for the purposes of the distribution analysis. For example, the snail, which occurs only at one location in the poem in Night II, was grouped with other creatures of the sea.

<sup>22</sup> Bloom, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup> Frye, p. 305.

<sup>24</sup> Frye, p. 306.

<sup>25</sup> Five Nights begin with conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs that link the opening lines with the ending of the previous Night: Night IV begins with "But," Night VI with "So," Nights VII and VIII with "Then," and Night IX with "And." In the opening lines of Night V, the dance of Los begun at the end of Night IV is continued.

