

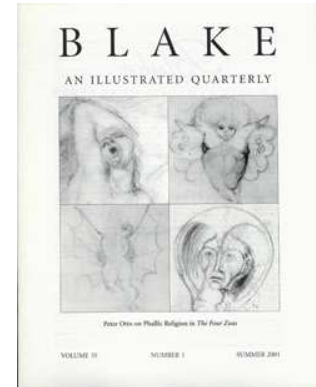
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A R T I C L E

A Pompous High Priest: Urizen's Ancient Phallic Religion in The Four Zoas

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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 [Principle] 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.

Swedenborg¹

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.

Knight²

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

Freud³

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

Lacan⁴

¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *A General Explication of the Ten Precepts of the Decalogue*, Extracted from the "Apocalypsis Explicata" (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1794) 94.

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: Love, Jealousy, and the Sublime in "The Four Zoas"* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

² 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 Priapus, Lately existing at Isernia, 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 Society. And the other from a Person residing at Isernia: To which is Added, A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus, And its Connexion with the mystic Theology of the Ancients* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1786).

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, Penguin Freud Library, vol. 4 (London: Penguin, 1991) 518.

⁴ Jacques Lacan, "The signification of the phallus" in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977) 281-91; 285.

Despite the ubiquity of the word "phallus" and its cognates 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*.⁵ 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."⁶ Twenty-seven years later, the situation is not markedly different.⁷

This neglect is in part due to the manifold difficulties of the poem. As Ault writes, "*The Four Zoas* is the most uncanonical, unmanageable, and recalcitrant text Blake ever wrote. The poem's internal operations exceed the possibility of mastery by virtue of their heterogeneity and complexity."⁸ 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 artistic practice or iconography;⁹ and the still widespread commitment in Blake studies to an idealizing, logocentric (rather

⁵ The work of Marsha Keith Schuchard is a notable exception, particularly her "Why Mrs. Blake Cried: Swedenborg, Blake, and the Sexual Basis of Visionary Art," *Esoterica: The Journal of Esoteric Studies* 2 (2000): 45-93.

⁶ John E. Grant, "Visions in Vala: A Consideration of Some Pictures 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.

⁷ 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* (Manchester: 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* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991).

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.

⁸ Ault, *Narrative Unbound* xviii. Pierce, *Flexible Design* xv, 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."

⁹ 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 Pfau and

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

Robert F. Gleckner (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1998). The most useful overview of Blake's relation to Swedenborg is Morton Paley's "A New Heaven is Begun": William Blake and Swedenborgianism," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 12: 64-90. Paley identifies four distinct phases of Blake's response to Swedenborg. In the first, "From the late 1780s until 1790, Blake's attitude was studious and respectful; even in disagreeing with Swedenborg during these years, Blake expresses himself so as to put the most optimistic construction upon Swedenborg's doctrines." In the second stage (1790), "Blake repudiated Swedenborg vehemently in the marginalia to *Divine Providence*, and he wrote at least part of the satire of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*" (64). The third stage spans the "decade following the beginning of *The Marriage*." During this time, Paley writes, "there is little to indicate Swedenborgian interests in Blake's poetry and art. Then from about the turn of the century and well into the nineteenth century, Blake displays a renewed interest in (though by no means a simple attitude toward) Swedenborg" (78). It is my view that even in the third of Paley's four stages Blake was deeply engaged with, although at the same time strongly critical of, the architecture and thematics of Swedenborg's thought.

¹⁰ For a critique of this aspect of Blake studies see my *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction: Los, Eternity, and the Productions of Time in the Later Poetry of William Blake* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 1-33.

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 *succus* [a nutritive juice] through its nerves and thus from the brain."¹⁴ In *Conjugal 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

¹³ Nelson Hilton, *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983) 92.

¹⁴ Edwin Clarke, "The Doctrine of the Hollow Nerve in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Medicine, Science and Culture: Historical Essays in Honor of Owsei Temkin*, ed. Lloyd G. Stevenson and Robert P. Mutha (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1968) 123-41.

¹⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Delights of Wisdom concerning Conjugal Love, after which follows The Pleasures of Insanity concerning Scortatory Love*, trans. Alfred Acton, 1953 (London: Swedenborg Society, 1970) para. 101.

Swedenborg published *Delitiae Sapientiae de Amore Conjugal; post quae sequuntur Voluptates Insaniae de Amore Scortatorio* in Amsterdam in 1768. A first English translation, possibly the work of H. Servanté, was published in London in 1790. Between January and June 1790, nearly a third of *Delitiae Sapientiae de Amore Conjugal*, translated by the Rev. John Clowes, was published serially in the *New Jerusalem Magazine* as an appendix. Clowes's translation, *The Delights of Wisdom concerning Conjugal Love, after which follows The Pleasures of Insanity concerning Scortatory Love* was printed by R. Hindmarsh in London in 1794.

For details of late eighteenth-century editions of *Conjugal Love* see Acton's "Translator's Preface" (v-vi) and John Chadwick's "Preface" (iii) to his new translation of *Delitiae Sapientiae de Amore Conjugal: The Delights of Wisdom on the subject of Conjugal Love followed by The Gross Pleasures of Folly on the subject of Scortatory Love* (London: Swedenborg Society, 1996).

In this article I quote from the translation by Clowes published in 1794. References to this volume will be inserted parenthetically in the text, citing the relevant paragraph numbers.

¹⁶ Robert Hindmarsh, *Letters to Dr Priestly containing proofs of the sole, supreme, and exclusive Divinity of Jesus Christ, whom the scriptures declare to be The Only God of Heaven and Earth; and of the Divine Mission of Emanuel Swedenborg. Being a Defence of the New Church signified by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse* (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1792) 344-45.

¹⁷ Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (New York: Arno Press, 1973) 234 n.6. Onians, 234, notes that "In the Jewish Kabbalah . . . the liquid in the divine head is the vehicle of life."

¹⁸ Onians, *Origins* 121.

¹⁹ Onians, *Origins* 109-110.

²⁰ It is not known whether Blake read Knight's book. It is, however, likely that he was at least aware of the controversy surrounding it. Giancarlo Carabelli, *In the Image of Priapus* (London: Duckworth, 1996) 72, writes that "It was not until 1794 that [Knight's] book . . . was publicly spoken of in London . . . when the critics discovered its existence, the work was summarily dismissed and furiously attacked as obscene." Blake began work on *The Four Zoas* in 1797. For an account of the public debate over *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* see pages 84-89 of *In the Image of Priapus*. For a brief account of the influence of Knight's work on Blake see Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 145-47.

There are, of course, other sources for Urizen's primitive phallic religion. It was widely known that priapic objects were uncovered at Herculaneum (1713) and Pompei (1748). See, for example, Knight, *A Discourse* 27; Pierre d'Hancarville, *Recherches sur l'origine, l'esprit et les progrès des arts de la Grèce; Sur leur connexion avec les arts et la religion des plus anciens peuples connus; sur les monumens antiques de l'inde, de la perse, du reste de l'asie, de l'europe et de l'egypte*, 2 vols., (Londres: B. Appleyard, 1785); Pierre d'Hancarville, *Antiquites Etrusques, Grecques, et Romaines*, Gravées par F.A. David, Graveur de la Chambre & du Cabinet de Monsieur, Frère du Roi, Membre de l'Académie Royale des beaux Arts de Berlin, &c. &c. Avec leurs Explications; Par D'Hancarville, 4 volumes (Paris L'Auteur, M. David, 1787).

The "pansexual naturalistic philosophy" of Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*, in two parts. Part I. *Containing the economy of vegetation*. Part II. *The loves of the plants. With philosophical notes* (London: J. Johnson, 1789-91) is another important influence on Blake's iconology of the phallus. See Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, 145-60.

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."²¹ 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-Christ, 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 *Conjugal 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 *Disputations Touching the Generation of Animals* (1653), trans. Gweneth 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 shakes 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 Jove the creator. The dove . . . expresses her joy in coitus 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 Herrnhuters, commonly call'd 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 of the first principles of decency and good order in society.²⁶

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.²⁷

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 sempiternal. 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 deploys 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 Danaë 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, cohobation, 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 elimination 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."²⁸

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

²⁶ Knight, *A Discourse* 14.

²⁷ Knight, *A Discourse* 13.

²⁸ Count Zinzendorf, *Sixteen Discourses on the Redemption of Man by the Death of Christ*. Preached at Berlin, by the Right Reverend and most illustrious Count Zinzendorf, Bishop of the Ancient Moravian Church, trans. from the High Dutch (London: James Hutton, 1740) 11.

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 predominantly horizontal: *coire* means to go or come together; *congressus* is a mutual walking or proceeding; a *coniunx* is yoked to a partner."²⁹ The Urizenic phallus resolves this tension between vertical and horizontal movements by dividing one from the other, separating transcendent from mortal faculties, forms congruent with the eternal from the supposed chaos of the flesh. In the drawing on page 132 of *The Four Zoas*, Urizen wears his penis on his buttocks.³⁰ This pliant, flaccid organ represents everything that he wants to put behind him. In contrast, the organ that Urizen worships 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 paradoxical 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 invisible and dim."³¹ 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.³²

²⁹ Clive Hart and Kay Gilliland Stevenson, *Heaven and the Flesh: Imagery of Desire from the Renaissance to the Rococo* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 3.

³⁰ Magno and Erdman write that "The standing giant seems to have a coat with short tails, though just possibly we are meant to see his genitalia from behind" (96). The coat tails/genitalia, however, are hung too high (almost from the waist) to be confused with a penis and scrotum/testes glimpsed from behind.

³¹ Henry Vaughan, "They are all gone into the world of light" and "The Night" in *The Complete Poetry of Henry Vaughan*, ed. French Fogle, Stuart Editions (New York: New York UP, 1965) 270-71, 323-25.

³² Stephen Cornford, ed., *Edward Young, "Night Thoughts"* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) Night IV, lines 20-25.

The Four Zoas offers a critique of these aspirations, and the concomitant desire to shape the material body into one that does not betray the soul/reason's supersensible destiny. Central to this critique is Blake's account of the phallus as the product of a profound re-shaping of the body and re-orientation of its energies. The focalization of sexual desire in the phallus is the product of culture rather than nature: it is a phenomenon that Urizen must labor to achieve.

The Marriage of Love and Wisdom

The [second] night of *The Four Zoas* begins in *medias res*, with Albion "Rising upon his Couch of Death."³³ As the drawing on page 23 makes clear, however, Albion can lift only his head and right shoulder above the couch;³⁴ the rest of his body, already in an advanced stage of decomposition, is breaking into its constituent parts and appears to be flowing away from him. For a person in the throes of death, this is as it should be. Albion's rising head enacts the first stages of the rational soul's ascent from the disintegrating body. According to Swedenborg, after casting off the "dying" body the rational soul enters the spiritual world. As Urizen rises, however, he beholds "his Sons / Turning his Eyes outward to Self, losing the Divine Vision" (23: 1-2). This is a serious difficulty for, as Swedenborg tells us, love of God and one's neighbor is the source of all good, while love of self and nature is the source of all evil, turning us away from God.³⁵

Albion responds to this debacle as a conservative Swedenborgian: he blames Luvah (sexual desire) for his plight and hands his Scepter to Urizen (23: 7, 5). According to Swedenborg, "It is well known, that the Head governs and controuls the Body under it, for in the Head reside the Understanding and the Will, and from the Understanding and the Will, the Body is acted upon, insomuch that the Body is nothing but Obedience."³⁶ By ceding his authority to Urizen, Albion hopes to bring his body into congruence with the rational-spiritual and so prove worthy of heaven. Abjuring the influence of the hell beneath him, Urizen must

³³ All quotations of Blake's poetry and prose are taken from the newly revised edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, comm. by Harold Bloom (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1988), and will be cited parenthetically in the text. References to the text of *The Four Zoas* cite page and line number in that work (e.g. 73: 1-3); references to Blake's prose give the page number in Erdman, preceded by "E."

³⁴ Grant, "Visions in Vala" 153, suggests that this drawing depicts Urizen. More accurately, it depicts Urizen as the head, rising above the other Zoas and the whole man.

³⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise concerning Heaven and Hell, and of the Wonderful Things therein, as Heard and Seen*, trans. William Cookworthy and Thomas Hartley, 2nd ed. (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1784) paras. 342, 484.

³⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Wisdom of Angels, concerning Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*, trans. N. Tucker (London: W. Chalklen, 1788) para. 25.

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 recalcitrant 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 Ahaniah). 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.

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.

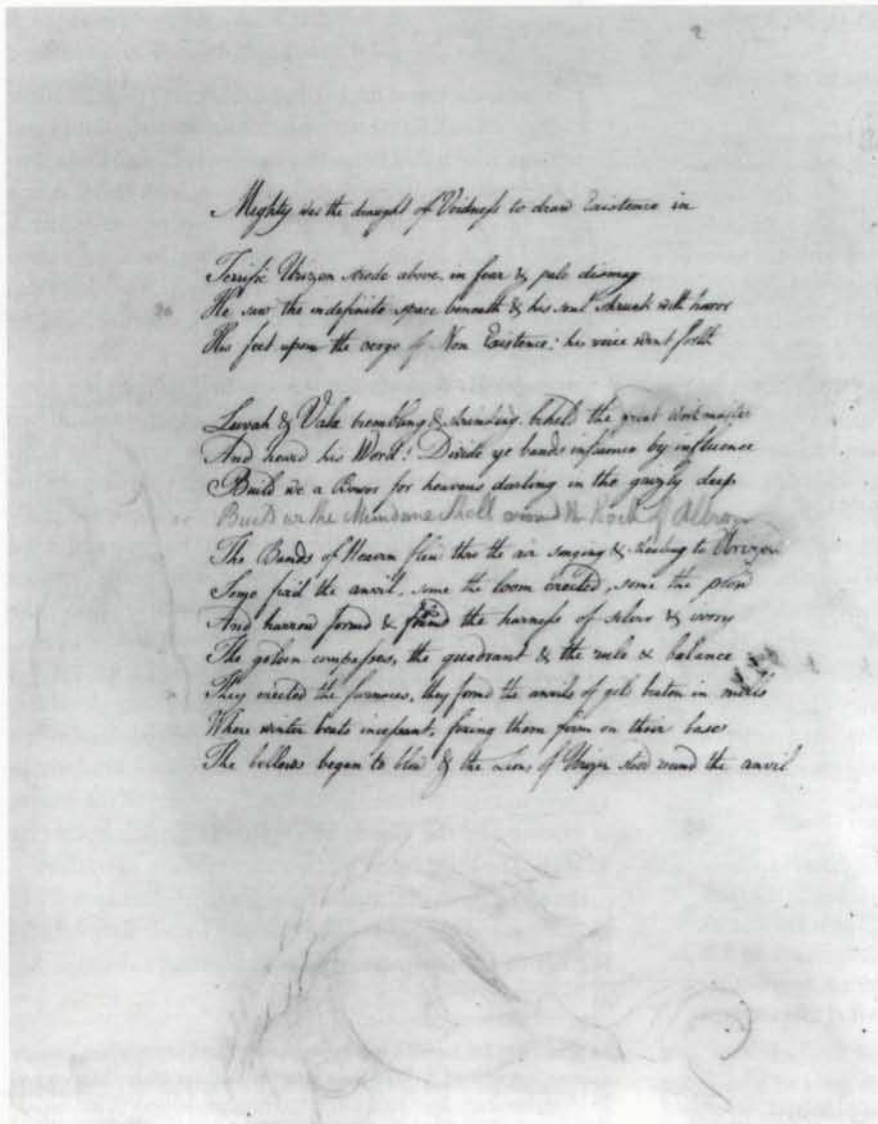
⁴¹ Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1981) 2 vols., 1: 278, writes that "in the left margin there is a phallic form, perhaps a figure." Magno and Erdman reverse the emphasis of Butlin's description: they see "the torso of a female with legs apart 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). Butlin, 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 oxymoron of a female (or hermaphroditic) phallus nicely evokes the violence and absurdity of the marriage of Love and Wisdom (as imagined by Swedenborg).

³⁷ Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* para. 14.

³⁸ Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* para. 14.

³⁹ Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* paras. 4-6. Swedenborg's doctrine of "use" does imply a limited return circulation from below to above. However, this circulation merely returns to the higher realms what they have given to the lower. It defines a hierarchy (in which lower realms are for the use of the higher) and a teleology (in which the lower realm returns to the purported source of its life). The cycle of use always begins with the higher realms. Moreover, the return of lower to higher realms is itself driven by God and not by anything within those realms. See *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* paras. 65-68 and 316.

In his annotations to *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* (1788), Blake focuses on passages which suggest, sometimes in contradistinction to the main thread of Swedenborg's argument, the equality of spirit and body. Love, Blake notes in an annotation to para. 419, "does not receive influx thro the understanding" (E 608). And in an annotation to para. 432, he writes that "Heaven & Hell are born together" (E 609). When Swedenborg writes that "there is a Progression from first Principles to Ultimates, and from Ultimates to first Principles" (para. 316), Blake ignores the hierarchical relation between Principles and Ultimates in Swedenborg's thought and writes instead: "A going forth & returning" (E 607). Read in context this phrase can be taken to imply, contra Swedenborg, the possibility and desirability of both natural and spiritual influx. In Blake's annotations to *Divine Providence* (1790), the attempt either to place the most positive construction on or to reform Swedenborg's thought is displaced by vigorous criticism.



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 embalmd 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 unseald with spades & pick-axes
 Roaring let out the fluid, the molten metal ran in channels
 Cut by the plow of ages held in Urizens strong hand
 In many a valley, for the Bulls of Luvah dragd 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 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 (feminine) body that supports it.⁴³

⁴² Emanuel Swedenborg, *An Hieroglyphic Key to Natural and Spiritual Mysteries by way of Representations and Correspondences*, trans. R. Hindmarsh (London: R. Hindmarsh, 1792) 25.

⁴³ With regard to the "objective" description of the elements of this design and the assumption that its figures form a sequence "that can

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, breasted, 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-

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 loins" (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.

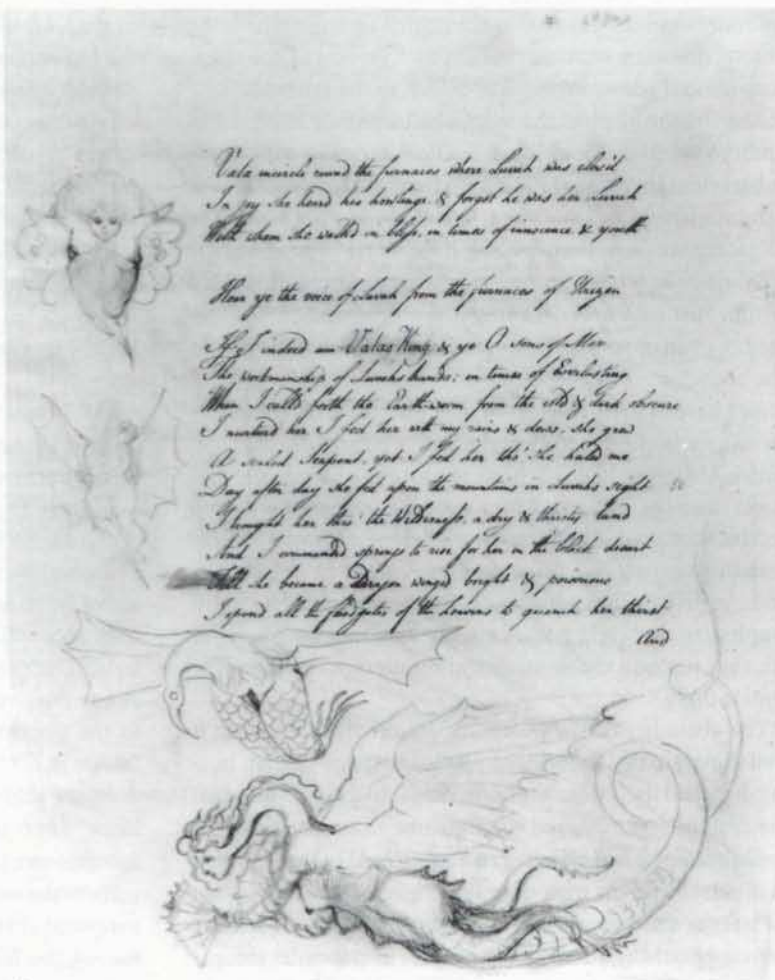
2a (below) *The Four Zoas*, page 26 (detail). Ms. 39764. By permission of The British Library. (Contrast enhanced)



tween male and female, "rational" and physical portions of the self.⁴⁵ 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

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).



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

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.⁴⁶

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.⁴⁷

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 swat it.⁴⁸ 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

⁴⁶ 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.

⁴⁷ Grant, "Visions in Vala" 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 spite of their ostensible readiness to do so" (160). See also Claire McCarthy, "'Terrors of the Uncertain': Mapping the Feminine in William Blake's 'Vala or The Four Zoas,'" thesis (M.A.), U of Melbourne, 1998, 60–62; Brenda S. Webster, *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* 213–14.

⁴⁸ 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 transcendental realm it desires does not exist. If it is to escape death it must return to the body from which it has been severed.

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.⁴⁹

Phallic Institutions

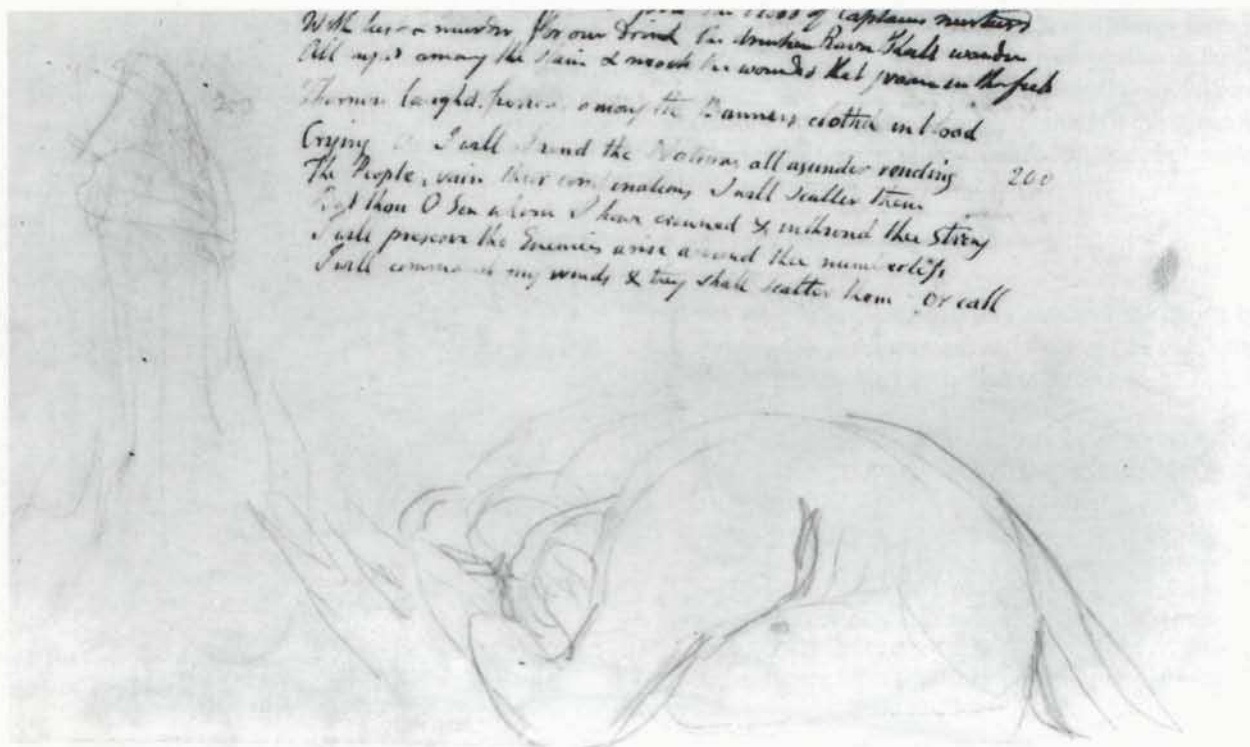
As Urizen tightens his grip on the world, life becomes congruent with phallic forms. A key moment in these developments occurs in Night the Seventh, when Urizen establishes "Trades & Commerce" and constructs a Temple ([95]: 25; 88[96]: 1), the institutional forms of his religion. The phallus establishes 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 entered into the temple might not behold
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)

⁴⁹ Although they note that the design on page 88[96] depicts "The hidden wonders allegoric . . . Of secret lust" (4–5), Erdman and Magno are unwilling to see either the phallus or the worshippers as entirely negative. They write: "The appearance here of an eyed penis should perhaps be taken to signify a contrary view to the pagan penis-worship of pages 39–42, a view of its human form that can see in its balmy drops the promise of a newborn child that will ensure Creative Life. Cannot the bowing figures be the Three Wise men?" (ME 74). There is no evidence in the poem to support either suggestion.



3 *The Four Zoas*, page 88[96] (detail). Ms. 39764. By permission of The British Library. (Contrast enhanced)

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

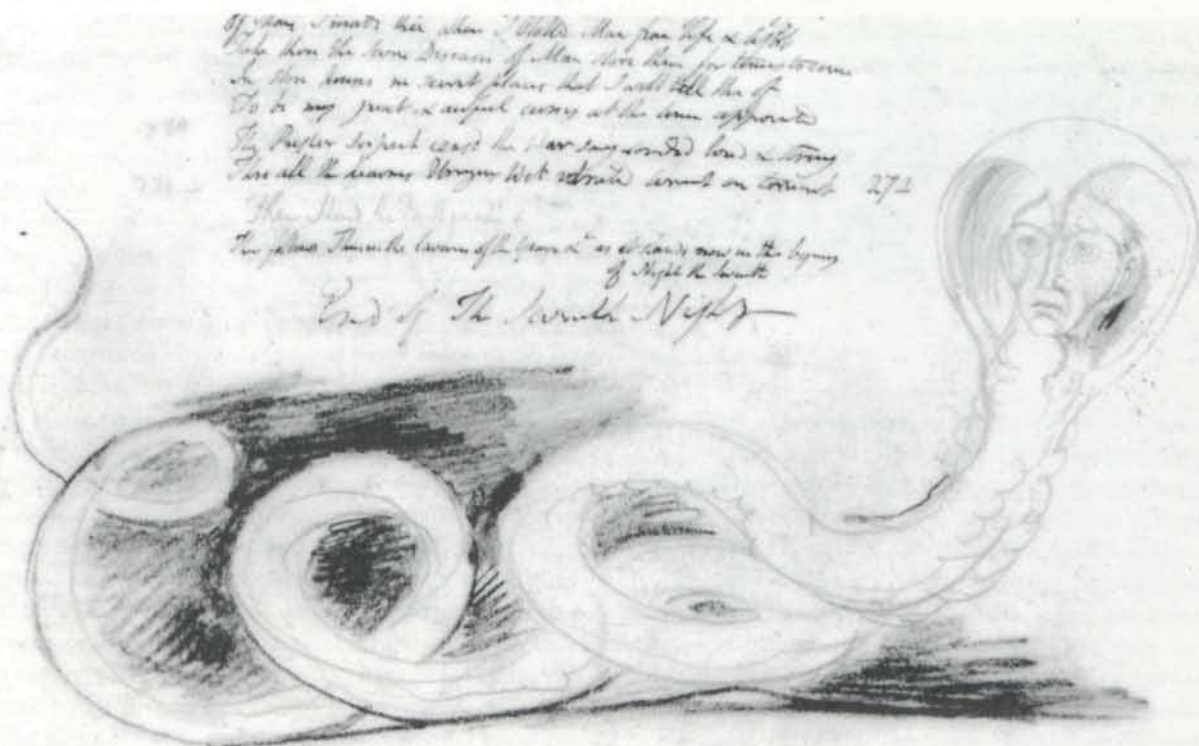
fostered by Urizenic religion can be found in the drawing on page 90[98] of the Prester Serpent, "with human face and cobra hood" (fig. 4). As Magno and Erdman note, if we consider the serpent's head to be Urizen's, "we may take the three coils to be the other Zoas, reduced to headless articulations" (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 redundant⁵⁰

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,"

⁵⁰ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book XI, lines 496-503, in *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London and Harlow: Longmans, Green, 1968) 886-87.



4 *The Four Zoas*, page 90[98] (detail). Ms. 39764. By permission of The British Library. (Contrast enhanced)

with divine authority to "Go forth & guide [God's] battles" (90[98]: 23, 25).⁵¹ 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

⁵¹ In the context of *The Four Zoas*, the association of the Prester Serpent with the cobra and the priesthood is apt. A "Prester" is "A serpent, the bite of which was fabled to cause death by swelling" (OED). Thomas Pennant notes this effect of the Prester's venom before comparing it with the *Torrida dipsas*. He writes: "both serpents inhabit dry, hot, and rocky places; and they live on insects full of saline and acrimonious particles, which cannot fail of exalting the virus of the serpents that make them their food." See Thomas Pennant, *The View of Hindoostan*: vol. 1, *Western Hindoostan* (London: Printed by Henry Hughes, 1798) 199.

The cobra, like the Prester Serpent depicted on page 90[98], is able to elevate the front third of its body, making it a good symbol of Urizen's phallic religion. Pennant writes that when the Cobra de Capella "is agitated by some passion, such as fear, or rage, it then quits its creeping attitude, raises the fore part of the body a third of its whole length, spreads its hood, and moves its head around, darting a fiery glare to every part, often remaining in all other respects immovable . . . it is often represented twisted round the deities, under the name of *Calengam*, in memory of the victory of one of their gods, over an enormous *Naja* [serpent]" (*Western Hindoostan*, 197-8). The Cobra de Capella, he writes, is a "frequent" attendant on "the brain-sick deities of the country" (*The View of Hindoostan*: vol. 2, *Eastern Hindoostan*, 277).

Pennant also describes the Cobra de Morte, a "most fatal reptile" which, he notes, "has on its head the marks of a skull, and two cross

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 Petrarch; Hendecasyllabi*, 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.

⁵² 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.



4a *The Four Zoas*, page 90[98] (detail). Ms. 39764. By permission of The British Library. (Contrast enhanced)

disguises a serpent's head.⁵³ 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

⁵³ This can be difficult to see (particularly in Magno and Erdman's facsimile) because, like a Gestalt diagram, viewers must see as the figure what they had first taken to be the ground (and vice versa). It is also difficult to describe clearly and succinctly. Nevertheless, the following may be of help: on the right-hand side (from his perspective) of the Prester Serpent's head, the line forming his chin/mask meets one of the lines that defines the uppermost part of his trunk. At this point of intersection, the former divides into three. Two of these "branches" go on to define the right-hand side of the mask/face and head. A third "branch," however, joins a continuation of the latter, which passes across the Prester Serpent's right cheek (giving the area around his lower nose and mouth a distinctly "fleshy" appearance) and through the center of his right eye before curving across the center of his forehead and finally coming to rest in his left eye. On the left-hand side of his face, a similar line (from the left-hand side of the serpent's chin to the serpent's left eye) is suggested by shading, still visible in the facsimiles. The figure formed between the curve of the Prester Serpent's chin and the semi-circle drawn between his eyes, defines the serpentine, as opposed to the human, head of the Prester Serpent. From the uppermost point of this serpentine head, emerge the twin forks of his tongue.

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.

Conjugal Love

Like the phallus, conjugal 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].⁵⁴ 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 conjugal form of good and truth (100).⁵⁵

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 conjugal 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 (159).

This conjunction is so far-reaching that, during one of his visits to heaven, a conjugal 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).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 conjugal 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

⁵⁴ Swedenborg treats "good and truth" as equivalent to "love and wisdom."

⁵⁵ See also *Conjugal Love*, para. 101.

⁵⁶ In the 1794 edition of *Conjugal Love* the numbers have been accidentally transposed and this paragraph is numbered as 65.

oration on "the ORIGIN OF CONJUGIAL LOVE, AND RESPECTING IT'S VIRTUE OR POTENCY" (103), explained to representatives of nine European nations:

Ye christians deduce the origin of conjugal love from love itself; but we Africans deduce it from the God of heaven and earth. Is not conjugal love a chaste, pure, and holy love? Are not the angels of heaven principled therein? Is not the universal human race, and thence the universal angelic heaven, the seed of that love? And can such a supereminent principle have existence from any other source than from God himself the creator and preserver (*statore*) of the universe? Ye christians deduce conjugal virtue or potency from various causes rational and natural; but we Africans deduce it from the state of man's conjunction with the God of the universe; this state we call a state of religion, but ye call it a state of the church; for when the love is derived from that state, and is 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).

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 soul, and thereby invigorates, and also blesses with lastingness the intellectual life, which is the very essential masculine life." As Swedenborg observes, conjugal love makes man (*homo*) more a man (*vir*) (433).

The influx of heavenly semen in turn remakes the body. Having raised conjugal love from the body to the heavens, and so opened a conduit from heaven to the body, the body is itself transformed:

conjugal love, from the first beginnings of it's heat, is to be elevated out of the lowest region into a superior region, that it may become chaste, and that thereby from a chaste principle it may be let down through the middle and lowest region into the body; and when this is the case, this lowest region is purified from it's unchaste principles by this descending chaste principle; hence the ultimate of that love becomes also chaste (305).

The spiritual body formed in this manner is, however, unable finally to divide itself from the desires of the flesh. Like the phalli on page 26, conjugal love is able to distinguish but not divide itself from the flesh:

conjugal love altogether chaste or pure hath not place with men (*homines*), nor with angels, there is still somewhat not chaste or not pure, which adjoineth or 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).

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.⁵⁷

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).⁵⁸ In this conjugal relation, the woman is

⁵⁷ Magno and Erdman observe that all of the figures in this design "suggest variants on the theme of planting and the theme of love, 'in various forms,' unrecognized" (ME 42). It is not clear, however, in what sense the love depicted here is "unrecognized."

⁵⁸ At the centre of the mound, clearly distinguished from the stalks of wheat which, like the woman, lie across it, Blake drew what appears

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).⁶²

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 exhausted man; and, arguably, the back of the rising woman encloses 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 supersensuous and insists on a strict division be-

tween 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 supersensuous. 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.⁶³ Ernest Jones observes that "toes [and] feet . . . are in folklore and mythology, as well as in dreams and psychoneurotic symptoms, frequently recurring phallic symbols."⁶⁴ Thus William Hamilton, in "A Letter from Sir Will-

⁶² The right-hand figure is identified by Magno and Erdman as at first glance male, at second glance possibly female, and then finally as male (ME 42). The first and third choices, however, need not entirely rule out the second. This male figure has, following the course of conjugal love, assumed features that were once the province of his female partner. As Swedenborg notes in *Conjugal Love*: "Now whereas the soul and the mind adjoin themselves closely to the flesh of the body, in order that they may operate and produce their effects, it follows that the union of soul and mind with a conjugal partner is made sensible also in the body as one flesh" (178).

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Hilton, *Literal Imagination* 163-65. See also Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Bollingen Series XXXV-11, 2 vols., (Princeton: Princeton UP for the Bollingen Foundation, 1968), vol. 2, 50-51, and Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried" 17.



6 *The Four Zoas*, page 112[108] (detail). Ms. 39764. By permission of The British Library. (Contrast enhanced)

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.

⁶⁵ William Hamilton, "A Letter from Sir William Hamilton, &c. Naples, Dec. 30, 1781," in Knight, *A Discourse* 3-8: 5. See also Schuchard, "Why Mrs Blake Cried" 17-18.

⁶⁶ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Universal Human in The Universal Human and Soul-Body Interaction*, trans. George F. Dole, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1984) 4938.

⁶⁷ The big toe of the left foot, particularly its nail, has still more disturbing associations. See, for example, Schuchard, "Why Mrs. Blake Cried" 73-74.

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 plowd field
saying
I am the nourisher thou the destroyer in my bosom
is milk & wine

(112[108]: 13-16)

The answer to her questions 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]: 32-5)

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 altho 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:⁶⁸ 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

⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973) 129-60: 104.

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-