BLAKE

N O T E

Reason and Urizen: The Pronunciation of Blakean Names

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instance, the trophy which Blake engraved was not used, and Griffiths chose the seal of the Order of the Garter instead of the Shield of the Order of St. George to mark the column's fork. As Miss Sandra Blutman writes, "Poor Emlyn's order was doomed to failure. It was never copied or adapted to modern requirements and Beaumont Lodge, an otherwise rather ordinary Georgian house, stands empty today—the only surviving example of this curious idea." 18

Beaumont Lodge was, interestingly enough, beside the home of Blake's friend of later years, George Cumberland, who bought his estate in Windsor Great Park in 1792. 19 Did Blake ever see the British Order executed in stone? Perhaps, for he might have visited Cumberland at Bishopsgate, as Cumberland visited Lambeth. Cumberland, at least, probably did know Beaumont Lodge, for he had a dispute with Griffiths about a destitute family which had squatted, with Cumberland's permission, on some waste land between the two houses. 20 The altercation found its way into print in Cumberland's A Letter to Henry Griffiths, esq., of Beaumont Lodge (1797), to which came the due response, Mr. Griffiths' Remarks, upon the Letter Signed George Cumberland (1797).

As a final note we might remark that the third edition of Emlyn's treatise (1797) was printed by one "J. Smeeton, St. Martin's Lane, Charing Cross." This is the same house, reestablished after a fire, as "G. Smeeton, Printer, 17, St. Martin's Lane, London," that set the second prospectus of Blake's "Canterbury Pilgrims." This connection provides, however, no reason to suppose that Blake was involved in the re-engraving for the third edition. He was by then engaged with other work.

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REASON AND "URIZEN": THE PRONUNCIATION OF BLAKEAN NAMES

Francis Wood Metcalf

The suggestions put forward by Kerrison-Preston concerning the pronunciation of Blake's invented names (Blake Newsletter, 3 [May 1970], 106) are useful for spurring discussion of this vexing subject, but are in some cases difficult to assess. There probably is no way to test the pronunciation of "Los," "Luvah," and "Vala," and a number of other names, because the question is one of vowel-quality, not placement of accent. Where stressing is the issue, as in "Urizen" and "Ololon," the name can be checked against the metrical contexts in which it occurs (see below). But since no such technique exists for testing vowels, we may eternally muddle along with hunches based on wordechoes, philosophical associations, and phonological probability. There surely is substance for debate on these grounds, but nothing like the hard evidence provided by metrics in the matter of accent.

The great bone of accentual contention, more often stubbornly mouthed at both ends than fought for with intellectual spears, is the name "Urizen." At either end are YUR / I / ZEN and YU / REE / ZEN (or, alternatively, UR / AXE / ZEN). Doubtless there are other variants, but these seem to be the main ones. The question may be put: is "Urizen" correctly pronounced with the primary stress on the first or the second syllable? The aim of the following is to settle this question by means of a method which will, I hope, also be helpful with regard to other names. The conclusion—that Blake pronounced "Urizen" with a primary stress on the first syllable—is not intended to inflict One Law, but only to demonstrate Blake's practice.

Fortunately for our purpose, Blake adhered to a rather strict iambic heptameter scheme in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion, America*, and *Europe*. These poems not only provide a common, and firm, metrical context (as *The Book of Urizen* does not), they also contain the first ten appearances of "Urizen," fresh as it were from Blake's forehead:

1. O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of

2. The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten

¹⁸Blutman, p. 184.

¹⁹Geoffrey Keynes, "Some Uncollected Authors
XLIV: George Cumberland 1754-1848," Book Collector, 19 (1970), 38.

²⁰Keynes, p. 60.

²¹See David V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, 4th printing, rev. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), p. 559.

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3. The Heavens melted from north to south; and

/ . / . /
Urizen who sat (A 16:2)

Urizen who sat (A 16:2)

4. In that dread night when Urizen call'd the stars round his feet (A canc. b:5)

5. And Urizen unloos'd from chains (E 3:11)

6. Till all the sons of Urizen look out and envy

Los (E 4:2)

7. He saw Urizen on the Atlantic (E 11:2)

8. For Urizen unclaspd his Book; feeding his soul

with pity (E 12:4)

9. Between the clouds of Urizen the flames of Orc

roll heavy (E 12:32)

10. Waking the stars of Urizen with their immortal

songs (E 14:33)

Notice that in every context except the seventh, "Urizen" begins on an even-numbered, stressed syllable unless preceded by an anapest (as in two and three), in which case the syllable is stressed and odd-numbered. The apparent exception of context seven is equivocal since it occurs in a group of short and metrically irregular lines.
Context five is also short, but sturdily iambic.
To remove the primary stress from the first syllable of "Urizen" and the secondary stress from the last, and to accent arbitrarily the name's middle syllable, would be to commit unjustifiable violence on each line. We then would have an unbroken series of pyrrhic feet followed by medial inversions, or else no heptameters at all. Later on in Blake's poetry, when the metrical scheme is less clearly defined, the mid-stress could in isolated cases perhaps be reasonably suggested; but these very rhythmic lines allow no alternative to a front-stressed "Urizen."

A contrast with "Urthona" is instructive. In each of its first ten occurrences, "Urthona"--to the contrary of "Urizen"--begins on an odd-numbered, unstressed syllable unless preceded by an anapest.

This positioning would prevail in the case of "Urizen" were it mid-stressed like "Urthona," but since it is not, it begins on the contrary syllable.

Further evidence for a front-stressed "Urizen" may also be seen in contrast to an "Urthona" paradigm. In its ninety-four occurrences in Blake's poetry (counting possessives), "Urthona" begins nine times in a line's first syllable but only once in its second: "Of Urthona. Los embracd" (FZ VII: 85:29). Blake deliberately avoided the latter placement because it gives the effect of anacrusis—an extra unstressed syllable before the proper beginning of an iambic line. But "Urizen" begins in a line's second syllable about sixty times—almost characteristically. The initial syllable is usually a conjunction—cf. "And . . ." and "For Urizen," above—which forms, with front-stressed "Urizen," a normal iambic opening. That "Urizen" should also by itself begin many lines is not surprising in view of the Miltonic and even Augustan precedents for initial inversion. In such cases, the name's third syllable becomes the unstressed first half of the succeeding iamb: "Urizen knew them not" (FZ VI:67:7).

Whether Blake usually spoke "Urizen" as a pure dactyl or with a secondary final stress—as "Benjamin" or as "Benjamite"—is not finally deducible from the metrics, and raises the forbidding problem of vowel-quality. On this subject our only assurance is that the middle vowel is neither EE or AYE, but a swallowed short "i" or a schwa. One is tempted to speculate that the doubly-emphasized "-zen!"—"men!" pairing of the first appearance of "Urizen," quoted above, is an internal rhyme designed to aid pronunciation, and that the attachment of an off-glided "y" to the first vowel is probable since it eliminates hiatus, but Blake's practice remains obscure—excepting, of course, the initial stress. In this connection, it would seem that despite Mr. Preston's suggestion that "Ololon" be accented on the second syllable, Blake stressed it on the first. It begins in a line's second syllable proportionately even more often than "Urizen" does. All students of Blake will be pleased to know, however, that on the basis of the method outlined above, "Bromion" and "Enion" have been pronounced by them correctly all along.

^{**}Mona Wilson, in Keynes's new edition of **The Life of William Blake* (Oxford, 1971), p. 106, states in a footnote about "Urizen" that ". . . the i scans short." Her judgment agrees with mine, but its bearing upon the stressing of the whole name is not entirely clear. Does she advocate **YUR* / I / ZEN or YU / **RIZZ / EN?