

Colby



Colby Quarterly

Volume 23
Issue 2 *June*

Article 7

June 1987

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Recommended Citation

Colby Library Quarterly, Volume 23, no.2, June 1987, p.99-107

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Added and Omitted Plates in The Book of Urizen

by HELEN B. ELLIS

THERE ARE seven extant copies of Blake's *The Book of Urizen*, each one of which is different.¹ The order of the ten pictorial plates, numbers 9, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, differs in each copy; in addition, Plate 16 is omitted in four copies (C, D, E, F), and 9 and 24 are omitted from one copy (E). As David Erdman comments in *The Illuminated Blake*, the differing orders of these plates give us seven different picture narratives, and a study of the significance of these orderings could perhaps tell us much about Blake's shifting perceptions of his work. But this larger problem of pictorial narrative is not my concern; I am interested primarily in the written text, and specifically in the omission of Plate 4 from four of the seven copies (D, E, F, G), and the addition of Plates 7 and 8 to all but one copy (C). The difficulties in accounting for these changes are compounded by the fact that Plate 8, which apparently was meant to replace Plate 10 because both are headed "Chap: IV," is not only included with 10 in the six copies in which it occurs, but in three of these six copies Plate 8 follows Plate 10 (B, E, F). When all of these changes in the written text are taken into account the effect on the poem is twofold: there is a significant loss of narrative clarity and satiric force (primarily as a result of omitting Plate 4), and emphasis shifts from Urizen, "Your Reason" and the titular subject of the poem, to at least an equal emphasis on Los, the Imagination. The focus of the poem is changed by Blake's emendations.

Surprisingly, no critic has discussed in any detail what would happen to our understanding of the written text if the plates were read in their various orders, and when the omission of Plate 4 is noted, the discussion is brief. Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson include the deletion of Urizen's self-justifying speech on Plate 4 as evidence for their assertion that "To be in Urizenic error . . . is to be unable to hold meaningful conversation."² G. E. Bentley, Jr., expresses bewilderment:

1. See *The Illuminated Blake*, annotated David V. Erdman (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1974), p. 182; *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, revised, ed. David V. Erdman, Commentary by Harold Bloom (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1982), pp. 804-05; G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books: Annotated Catalogues of William Blake's Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 166-82; Karl Kroeber, "Graphic-Poetic Structuring in Blake's *Book of Urizen*," *BS*, 3 (1970), p. 18, n. 7.

All quotations of Blake's poetry are from Erdman, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, and will be cited by Plate, line, and page number in the text.

2. Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, eds., *William Blake: The Book of Urizen* (Boulder, Colo.: Shambhala; New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 69-70.

. . . it seems unaccountable that copies D-G should lack pl. 4, which bears the end of Chapter II and the beginning of Chapter III. The omission of the beginning of Chapter III is never rectified by corrections to the text in the copies lacking this plate, and its absence must have been very puzzling to anyone concerned with the narrative continuity of the poem.³

W. J. T. Mitchell, who develops at considerable, persuasive length the argument that in *Urizen* Blake precisely wished to disrupt narrative continuity, "to convey a sense of time as a simultaneous presence," both argues that "certain plates (title page, Preludium, and the sixteen plates containing text) keep the same relative order in every copy," and, later, that his own discussion is based on "a partly nonexistent copy," and that "one must *assume* [italics added] that the title page, Preludium, and sixteen text plates always remained in the same sequence."⁴ But the four plates of text I wish to discuss, 4, 7, 8, and 10, are, in actual fact, bound in five variant orders: Copy A: 4, 7, 8, 10; Copy B: 4, 7, 10, 8; Copy C: 4, 10; Copies D and G: 7, 8, 10; Copies E and F: 7, 10, 8.

Editions of Blake's poetry print all sixteen of the plates with text in their numerical order, and it is certainly reasonable, with Mitchell, to study the text in this ordering. Still, it also seems obvious that any definitive interpretation of the poem must take into account what happens to it when the variant orderings are acknowledged.⁵ The following discussion does not pretend to be definitive, but it does seek answers to the following questions: What do Plates 7 and 8 add to our understanding of the poem? What surmises can be made about Blake's possible motives for adding them? Since both Plates 8 and 10 are headed "Chap: IV," why does Blake include both in all editions of the poem after he had engraved Plate 8? In other words, why not omit either 8 or 10? Is there any significant difference in our interpretation when Plates 8 and 10 are reversed, as occurs in half the copies? And, finally, and most importantly, what happens when we omit Plate 4, as Blake did in four of the seven extant copies?

Plates 7 and 8 occur in all copies of the poem except C, and for this reason and because their page format and lettering differ markedly from the rest of the plates Erdman suggests that Copy C is the earliest copy.⁶ It would seem, then, that after Blake had engraved and printed the first copy of the poem he saw the need for a change in the text and then added Plates 7 and 8 to all subsequent copies. The texts are two of the shortest in *The Book of Urizen*, with nine and twelve lines of print respectively,

3. Bentley, *Blake Books*, pp. 167, 170.

4. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 128, 137, 139n.

5. Blake made a number of minor changes in the text, but I am not concerned with these. They are generally discussed by Bentley and Erdman. Perhaps most significant here is the deletions of ll. 3:44 and 5:1-2 in Copy A in order to mend the breach in the poem caused by the omission of Plate 4. But as Erdman observes, "Plate 4 is not lacking in A, while in those copies that do lack it, this deletion is not indicated. To erase 3:44 yet keep Plate 4 makes no sense" (*Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 804). This mending does, however, show that Blake had some concern about narrative continuity.

6. See *Illuminated Blake*, p. 182; *Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 804. Bentley agrees: see *Blake Books*, pp. 167, 170.

and the brevity of the text leaves room for illustrations that fill three-fourths of the page. The new illustrations are among the poem's most memorable. Plate 7 is the first pictorial appearance of Los in the poem,⁷ and he is shown howling in fury and horror at the sight of the fallen Urizen and at his own pain over the separation of Urizen from his side. Plate 8 shows the foetal skeleton of the aged Urizen curled in the womb: in no other picture in *Urizen* does Blake so graphically illustrate that the creation is the fall, that conception and birth are not emergence into a world of life but a world of death. If Plates 7 and 8 had no text they would still deepen our understanding of the poem.

But Plates 7 and 8 make a major textual addition to the poem, in that they add significantly to the presence and activity of Los. In the first six plates Los is mentioned only twice, briefly. At the end of Plate 5 he keeps watch for the other Eternals over the new and vast world created by Urizen; at the beginning of Plate 6 he howls in anguish because "Urizen was rent from his side" (6:4). Without Plates 7 and 8, his next mention is on Plate 10, where "the Eternal Prophet howl'd / Beating still on his rivets of iron" (10:7-8), thereby beginning the process of forging a body for Urizen. The new Plate 7 reiterates Los's anguish at the wrenching apart, but adds the information that Los's wrenching heals, unlike that of Urizen, thus implying that even a maimed imagination has healing powers that the unaided intellect does not. Plates 7 and 8 also describe Los as rousing his fires and forming "nets & gins" to contain the "hurtling bones" of Urizen, helpful background information for the otherwise abruptly introduced action of Los's use of iron rivets on Plate 10. The most significant addition to the text, however, is found in the last paragraph of Plate 7. The original version of the poem did not explain Los's motive for forming a body for Urizen. Plate 7, however, states that "Los rouz'd his fires,

7. Erdman (*Illuminated Blake*, p. 185) suggests that the youthful, virile figure running in flames on Plate 3 is Los.

"The Plate 3 picture will adapt to verses 8, 9, and 14 of chapter 3 if we see Los as rousing his fires and circling round 'the dark globe of Urizen' or 'around the dark Demon' Urizen himself (5:38; 6:2). . . . We may also—although Urizen was never that youthful, being 'Born Poor, Aged Sixty three' (*P&P* 631)—see this Plate 3 picture as *his* vision of his heroic fighting 'with the fire' " (4:14).

The poem itself does not support Erdman's contention that Urizen was never as youthful as the figure on Plate 3; rather, the text shows Urizen aging as a result of the separation:

"In howlings & pangs & fierce madness
Long periods in burning fires labouring
Till hoary, and age-broke, and aged,
In despair and the shadows of death." (5:24-27)

Further, the reference to "Born Poor, Aged Sixty three" in the *Annotations to Reynolds* is not to Urizen but to the fate of artists in England:

"When Nations grow Old. The Arts grow Cold
And Commerce settles on every Tree
And the Poor & the Old can live upon Gold
For all are Born Poor, Aged Sixty three" (E642)

The quotation hardly seems relevant to Urizen, and while the figure in flames on Plate 3 may be Los, it is much more likely to be Urizen, fleeing the flames of Eternity.

Mitchell, however, suggests that the figure may be either Urizen, or Orc, or Fuzon, or none of these, and argues that this deliberate ambiguity is intended by Blake to involve us in the poem (*Blake's Composite Art*, pp. 145-46).

affrighted / At the formless unmeasurable death" (7:8-9). His action in binding Urizen is therefore caused by terror, and an important dimension is added to the poem: the imagination, horrified by the "formless," "dead," fallen intellect, gives it a body, a form, that continues Urizen's separation from Eternity.

Plates 7 and 8, then, both make Los a more prominent participant in the activities of the first part of the poem, and give a psychological explanation for his activities. Since *The Book of Urizen* is as much a study of the disintegration that occurs in each individual mind when the reason shuts itself off from the other faculties as it is an account of the creation-fall of the universe, this detailing of Los's motivation is important in the over-all scheme of the poem. The question then arises as to why Blake did not thereafter omit Plate 10, since he termed both 8 and 10 "Chap: IV." The reason for the non-omission of Plate 10 is obvious, for its last two paragraphs describe the beginning of Los's labors over Urizen with the creation of his skull and spine. Omission of Plate 10 would omit the creation of Urizen's bone structure, the first of the seven "Ages of dismal woe" that Los spends creating a form for him. Why Blake did not simply erase the phrase "Chap: IV" from Plate 10, and renumber paragraphs as necessary, is an unanswerable problem, since he freely, in this poem and elsewhere, omits lines and stanzas. Even odder, however, is the inversion of the order of Plates 8 and 10 in three of the copies (B, E, F). Two things happen to the poem when these plates are inverted: the consecutive numbering of the paragraphs across Plates 10, 11, and 13 is interrupted and, much more important, the sequence of the seven ages of creation is interrupted by a plate giving Los's motivation for his activities. Inverting Plates 8 and 10 simply makes nonsense of this section of the poem, and the fact that this inversion occurs in half of the copies in which both plates are found is astonishing. Erdman says that Blake "evidently committed this work to copper in haste";⁸ the order of these plates would also suggest a hasty or careless binding.

The net effect of the addition of Plates 7 and 8 is to stress the importance of Los, the imagination, as a counterweight to Urizen, the intellect. The two plates also make clearer the symbiotic relationship between imagination and reason, thus adding to the psychological aspects of the early sections of the poem, which are otherwise largely devoted to Blake's cosmological myth. Blake's afterthought improved the written text as well as adding significantly to the pictorial narrative. But the same judgment cannot be made about his decision to omit Plate 4 in four of the seven copies, as is evident when one examines what is missing from the poem when it is read without this plate. The first loss to the poem is the explanation for Urizen's separation from the Eternals. In his first and only speech he addresses the other Eternals:

8. *Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 804.

I have sought for a joy without pain,
 For a solid without fluctuation
 Why will you die O Eternals?
 Why live in unquenchable burnings? (4:10-13)

Plate 4 thus parallels the later engraved Plate 7, which explains Los's reason for forging a body for Urizen, in that it gives Urizen's motive for separating himself from eternity: to avoid what he believes to be a life of "unquenchable burning," a life which inevitably ends in death, a life in which every joy is accompanied by or followed by pain. However one interprets Urizen's motives and Blake's theme at this point, the fact remains that in omitting Plate 4 and adding Plate 7 Blake gives motive to Los, while taking it away from Urizen. Thus while the psychological aspect of the poem was reinforced by the addition of Plate 7, it is diminished by the omission of Plate 4—and Los's significance with respect to Urizen in the poem is again increased.

Omitting Plate 4, moreover, omits other vital aspects that influence our understanding of the entire poem. *The Book of Urizen* is the first book of the "Bible of Hell" with which Blake threatened the public at the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* ("I have also: The Bible of Hell: which the world shall have whether they will or no," *MHH* 24),⁹ and it is vital that readers understand that this "Demon" whom Blake names Urizen represents not only Satan but the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures who became the "God" of the Old Testament in the Christian tradition. If they do not make this identification of Urizen with God early in the poem—before the obvious equation of him with Jehovah when he establishes the "Net of Religion" on Plate 23—much of the satiric power of the poem is lost. And that identification takes place most strongly on Plate 4. The equation of Urizen with Milton's Satan is relatively obvious: he dwells in the "North," and in the darkness, the flames, the ice of Milton's Hell; like Satan, he prepares his thunders in secret. Even readers not well acquainted with *Paradise Lost*, however, would realize that Blake intends his audience to be horrified by his central character:

Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
 In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!
 Self-closd, all-repelling: what Demon
 Hath form'd this abominable void
 This soul-shudd'ring vacuum? (3:1-5)

Having established a character who is so Satanically repellent, it is necessary that Blake make Urizen's equation with Jehovah equally obvious if his satire is to be effective, and while there are numerous subtle clues to this relationship, it does not become fully apparent until the crea-

9. For discussions of *Urizen's* relationship to the Bible, and Blake's parodic interpretation of biblical cosmology, see E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Innocence and Experience: An Introduction to Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1964, pp. 73-81); Leslie Tannenbaum, "Blake's Art of Crypsis: *The Book of Urizen* and Genesis," *BS*, 5 (1972), 141-64.

tion of the "Book of Brass," Blake's version of the Ten Commandments handed down by Jehovah to Moses on Mt. Sinai, on Plate 4. Earlier the reader is meant to perceive that Urizen is like Jehovah when he creates "beast, bird, fish, serpent & element," but unlike Jehovah he strives "in battles dire / In unseen conflictions with shapes / Bred from his forsaken wilderness" (3:14-16). This is hardly in accord with the orthodox interpretation of Jehovah's actions in either Genesis or *Paradise Lost*. Urizen also creates a "petrific abominable chaos" but in this action Blake's searing parody of Christ's pun on Peter's name, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18) may not at first be recognized. The trumpets, the thunders, the clouds of blood that accompany Urizen (3:28-54) are meant to identify Urizen with the Christ of the Apocalypse as seen by Saint John in Revelation (8, 14:14-18), but this Apocalypse of blood and destruction does not presage a new heaven and a new earth, but a continued fall. These identifications of Urizen with Jehovah/God/Christ reach their climax with the last three paragraphs of Chapter II on Plate 4, where Urizen, fighting the "Sin-bred . . . Seven deadly Sins of the soul," writes his Book of Brass. Like Jehovah, commanding that "I am the Lord thy God. . . , Thou shalt have no other gods before me . . . , for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God (Exodus 20:2-5), Urizen commands:

Let each chuse one habitation:

 One command, one joy, one desire,
 One curse, one weight, one measure
 One King, one God, one Law. (4:36-40)

Readers who might have earlier not recognized that Urizen is a parody of Jehovah can no longer be in ignorance; Urizen, "I alone, even I," is the "I AM THAT I AM" of Exodus (3:14).

To omit Plate 4 is to omit this powerful, climactic identification of Urizen with God; without it the poem loses much of its satiric thrust. The poem also loses the major verbal referent to one of Urizen's (and Jehovah's) most characteristic activities, that of lawgiver and author. Except for a brief reference on Plate 23, "he saw / That no flesh nor spirit could keep / His iron laws one moment," the creation of the Book of Brass is otherwise not mentioned in the poem. As a result, both the illustration on Plate 5, in which Urizen holds out his newly formed Book of Laws toward the reader, and the Title Page, showing Urizen in the action of writing (or engraving, depending upon the copy) his books, have little meaningful referent in the poem without Plate 4.¹⁰ The fact that Blake

10. Bentley again expresses the problem succinctly: "the designs on pl. 1, 3-5, and 12 seem to derive from the text on pl. 4, and these designs must have seemed yet more enigmatic without pl. 4" (*Blake Books*, p. 170).

For a discussion of the significance of the Title Page see Morris Eaves, "The Title-Page of *The Book of Urizen*," *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed. Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 225-30.

depicts Urizen composing his books on the Title Page shows the importance he placed on this activity of Urizen the lawgiver and author of the Decalogue, and it is indeed this Title Page that lingers in readers' minds as being perhaps the most significant of all the pictorial representations of him in *The Book of Urizen*.

The deletion of Plate 4 leaves serious gaps in *Urizen*: Urizen's only speech is omitted; his justification for his separation from the other Eternals is likewise omitted; the cumulative effect of the reader's gradual realization that Urizen is Jehovah as well as Satan is vitiated; two of the most important illustrations, of Urizen with his Book of Laws, lose their major textual referent. One is therefore tempted to speculate why Blake would make a change that caused such serious dislocations in the clarity, narrative coherence, symbolism, and satiric force of his poem.¹¹ Writers other than Mitchell have argued that Blake is not interested in a linear narrative based on cause and effect, but in depicting what is essentially a single event, the separation of Urizen, the reason, from the unified consciousness that signifies Eternity. As Mollyanne Marks describes the structure of the poem: ". . . all the events of the poem are only apparently separate. They form not so much a sequential narrative, as a series of differing views of a single event—the fall of man in all his generations."¹² Blake would therefore be relatively unconcerned as to whether the addition or omission of a plate obscured or clarified conventional narrative sequence. In this respect, as in many others, *The Book of Urizen* anticipates the longer poems which were to follow, with so much confusion in the final version of *Milton* that Northrop Frye suggests that the plates not be read in numerical order but in a sequence that would clarify the narrative: 2, 7, 4, 6, 3, 8, omitting Plate 5.¹³ Susan Fox, however, argues that the disruption of the narrative sequence of *Milton* by the addition of Plates 3, 4, 10, 18, 32 and then 5 to the original poem was deliberate: "The main structural contribution they [Plates 3, 4, 5, and 10] make seems to be confusion; they interrupt the narrative, and although polite rearrangement can minimize the interruption, it cannot dispense with it altogether. Blake apparently intended to interrupt his narrative."¹⁴ As Blake himself

11. If one does not take into account Blake's omission of Plate 4 in copies D, E, F, and G, then one's interpretation is based on one's own poem, not Blake's. See, for instance, Harold Bloom's discussion of *Urizen* in *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (1965; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1965), pp. 176–89, where Plate 4 is crucial to his interpretation.

Robert E. Simmons, on the other hand, includes Plate 4 in his elaborate analysis of the symmetries of *Urizen*, but, noting that "there seems to be two versions (two different plates) of the first six verses of chapter IV," and that "Both versions are retained in all but copy C," counts only one in his textual calculations. To include Plate 4, actually missing in four of the seven copies, and to omit "one of" the first six verses of either 8 or 10, both present in six of the seven copies, hardly seems logical—and certainly skews the symmetries Simmons constructs. See "*Urizen*: The Symmetry of Fear," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, eds. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 149, n. 3.

12. "Structure and Irony in Blake's 'The Book of Urizen,'" *SEL*, 15 (1975), 583. See also W. J. T. Mitchell, "Poetic and Pictorial Imagination in Blake's *The Book of Urizen*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 3 (1969–70), 91–92.

13. "Notes for a Commentary on *Milton*," *The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry and Art of William Blake*, ed. Vivian de Sola Pinto (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), p. 130n.

14. *Poetic Form in Blake's Milton* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 29.

wrote: "You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care."¹⁵

Thus, while Blake might not have deliberately set out to confuse his readers by omitting what seem to be fairly crucial aspects of his narrative when he omitted Plate 4, he himself would not see this narrative confusion as being necessarily a flaw. And, of course, he was not deliberately trying to confuse his readers: on the contrary, Blake wished to make his account of Urizen's fall as explicit as possible, but his own "vision" of the event changed. He was, after all, trying to perceive with fallen senses an event that really needed at least the "enlarged & numerous senses" possessed by "The ancient Poets" (*MHH* 11). Faulty and imperfect vision meant that he had constantly to rearrange, omit, and expand the plates and texts of the long poems on which he was soon to embark, as is especially evident in *Vala*, which changed so drastically as Blake had further visions it became another poem altogether, *The Four Zoas*. If, as G. E. Bentley suggests, *Vala* is itself a continuation of *The Book of Urizen*,¹⁶ then the process of emendation we have been noticing here is itself a simple version of that later vast and confusing process through which Blake tried to clarify his myth.

The combination of the addition of Plates 7 and 8 and the omission of Plate 4 changes the meaning of the poem greatly: Los's importance in the activities carried on in the poem is greatly expanded, and Urizen's central importance is accordingly lessened. A simplified outline of the plot of the revised poem makes this change evident: Urizen separates himself from the Eternals, and in war and flames creates the universe, to their horror and retaliation (Plates 3, 5);¹⁷ Los, howling in pain and fright as Urizen is wrenched from his side, rouses his fires to bind into form the "stony sleep" of Urizen (Plates 6, 7, 8, 10); Los creates Urizen's form in human shape through Seven Ages, and the senses of Urizen are finally cut off from Eternity (Plates 10, 11, 13); Enitharmon, "the first female now separate," is created from Los's pity at the sight of the fallen Eternal (Plates 13, 15, 18); Los rapes Enitharmon, who gives birth to Orc, and the Eternals consequently shut Los off from beholding Eternity (Plates 19, 20); Los, in jealousy of his son, chains Orc to the rock (Plate 20); the cries of Orc awaken Urizen, who explores his dens and creates the world and Eden (Plate 20); Los hides Enitharmon from Orc and Urizen and "she bore an enormous race" (Plate 20); Urizen creates the Net of Religion because of his horror at his deformed creations (Plates 23, 25); this Net of Religion shrinks the senses of Urizen's sons and daughters and the poem

15. To Reverend Dr. Trusler, August 23, 1799, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, p. 702.

16. *Vala or The Four Zoas*, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 176-77.

17. I am deliberately simplifying here. As Mitchell notes, Urizen's "place in the North" may have been created by the Eternals as well as Urizen, and Blake is deliberately being ambiguous. See "Poetic and Pictorial Imagination in Blake's *The Book of Urizen*," pp. 87-88.

moves recognizably into Jewish history and the exodus of “the remaining children of Urizen” from Egypt, led by Fuzon, his “first begotten, last born” son (Plates 25, 28).

This simplified account of the plot of *The Book of Urizen* as it is found in copies D, E, F, and G makes it immediately obvious that well over half of the revised poem is concerned with Los, not Urizen. And I would suggest that the major reason for Blake’s adding Plates 7 and 8 and omitting Plate 4 was to give Los at least equal importance in the activities of the poem. Blake had been developing the symbolic attributes of Urizen since “Winter” of *Poetical Sketches*, and he was committed to a “Bible of Hell” which not only equated Satan with God, but also with the human faculty of “Reason,” so deified — as the Romantic poets thought — by their immediate predecessors, and so limited in its understanding of human life. But already, by the time he engraved the first version of his poem, his interest was shifting to the faculty that could make it possible for man to perceive Eternity again, the faculty of the Imagination. But while Los takes over center stage in the plot of the central plates of *Urizen*, Plates 6 through 20 of the text, it is not his creative aspects that are emphasized, but his furthering of the fall.¹⁸ It is as if Blake, in the process of engraving *Urizen*, perceived that the human reason was not the sole villain in a fallen world, and that man’s other faculties could be equally culpable in either beginning or continuing the separation from the unified consciousness of eternity. The long poems which followed, *Vala*, *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, explore the relationship of man’s various faculties and their responsibility for man’s fall into disunity, but their major emphasis is on the nature and responsibility of the human imagination, as symbolized by Los, in the process of fall and redemption. In his revisions to *The Book of Urizen*, Blake began an investigation which was to consume the rest of his poetic career.

18. Blake’s realization of Los’s culpability in the creation-fall of man’s consciousness is clearly seen in *The Book of Los*, engraved in 1795, probably concurrently, according to Erdman, with the engraving of Plates 7 and 8 and also *The Book of Ahania*. *The Book of Los*, in fact, is another version of the events that begin on Plate 5 where Los, watching in horror the separated Urizen, rouses his fires and forges Urizen’s fallen body. This event also takes place in *The Book of Los* but it is greatly condensed; the larger part of the poem describes Los’s activities before he forges Urizen, and in this version of the Fall it is Los, not Urizen, who creates the fallen universe.

For a discussion of the gradual emergence of Los, see Leonard W. Deen, *Conversing in Paradise: Poetic Genius and Identity-as-Community in Blake’s Los* (Columbia, Mo., and London: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1983). In the Lambeth prophecies, Deen argues, Blake “apparently saw Los only in terms of fall and loss” (p. 60).