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William Blake | The Book of Urizen

London, ca. 1818



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The Book of Urizen

Commentary by Nicolas Barker

The Book of Urizen, originally entitled *The First Book of Urizen*, occupies a central place in William Blake's creation of his "illuminated books," both chronologically and in the thematic and structural development of the texts.

They are not "illuminated" in the sense that medieval manuscripts are

illuminated—that is, with pictures or decoration added to an existing text. In Blake's books, text and decoration were conceived together and the printing process, making and printing the plates, did not separate them, although he might vary the colors from copy to copy, adding supplementary coloring as well. Like the books themselves, the technique for making them came to Blake by inspiration, connected with his much-loved younger brother Robert, whose early death in 1787 deeply distressed William, though his "visionary eyes beheld the released spirit ascend heavenward through the matter-of-fact ceiling, 'clapping its hands



Plate 26 of *The Book of Urizen*, copy G (ca. 1818).

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for joy.” The process was described by his fellow-engraver John Thomas Smith, who had known Robert as a boy:

After deeply perplexing himself as to the mode of accomplishing the publication of his illustrated songs, without their being subject to the expense of letter-press, his brother Robert stood before him in one of his visionary imaginations, and so decidedly directed him in the way in which he ought to proceed, that he immediately followed his advice, by writing his poetry, and drawing his marginal subjects of embellishments in outline upon the copperplate with an impervious liquid, and then eating the plain parts or lights away with *aqua fortis* considerably below them, so that the outlines were left as a stereotype.¹

From a technical point of view, there was nothing very novel about this. Blake had been apprenticed to the engraver James Basire in 1771, and would have learned all the techniques in professional use. Using acid to create a three-dimensional surface to a copper plate was an ancient practice. The plate could be coated with wax and a design created by working on it with a needle; the acid would penetrate where the needle had cut through the wax and eat away the surface of the plate. Next the plate would be covered with ink, which was then wiped away; a sheet of paper would be laid on it and run through a rolling-press which would transfer the ink from the hollows in the plate to the paper. This is an intaglio process.

1. John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and His Times: Comprehending a Life of That Celebrated Sculptor; and Memoirs of Several Contemporary Artists, from the Time of Roubiliac, Hogarth, and Reynolds, to That of Fuseli, Flaxman, and Blake* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), Vol. II, p. 461.

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Etching with acid could also be used to create a relief plate. In this process the design is created by drawing or writing on the plate with a resist, such as gum arabic. The acid then eats away the parts not so treated, and the plate, when inked, only prints the surface untouched by the acid. This was the technique used by Blake, with individual touches of his own: he might vary the level of the plate and its recesses by reapplying the resist and acid a second or third time; and rather than dip the plate in a tray of acid, he would build a frame round the edges of the plate with an acid-resistant wax, such as tallow, and add acid to the surface, controlling its action on the plate within the frame. The plate thus created could be inked in one or more colors and a print created by the same process; individual prints could be worked on by hand in other water-based colors, opaque or transparent.

If Blake's techniques for giving his designs physical form were complex and individual, so were the designs themselves. If much scholarly work has been devoted to identifying the technical aspects of Blake's work (only to find that it was essentially empiric, varying from plate to plate), much more has been spent on the sources of his inspiration. A great deal has been learned in the process, which began ninety years ago with the publication of Joseph Wicksteed's *Blake's Vision of the Book of Job* (London: Dent, 1910), continuing with Geoffrey Keynes' *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: Grolier Club, 1921) and edition of *The Writings of William Blake* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1925), S. Foster Damon's *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (London: Constable, 1924), and Mona Wilson's *The Life of William Blake* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1927). It has grown in volume enormously in the last thirty years, and a new biography is needed, taking account of all the influences, written and visual, that have been

discovered in the process. These have made possible not one but several new views of the meaning and sequence of the “illuminated books,” and it is clear that there is much still to be discovered, not least about why Blake chose to express his visions in this form.

Blake was born in an era of a new sensibility, and he was clearly aware of the new current of interest in the literature of the past, typified by Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Brought up a Christian but also a Nonconformist (his mother may have been a follower of the apocalyptic doctrines of the still active sect of the seventeenth-century radical Lodowicke Muggleton), the Bible was and remained the central source of inspiration, textual, verbal, and artistic, to him. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was almost as important and pervasive. He turned away from the certainties of a material universe to a spiritual world, from the realism of Reynolds and the rationalism of Locke and Newton to the visionary figures of Michelangelo and the mysticism of Emanuel Swedenborg and Jakob Böhme. But it was the more immediate and practical impact of revolution, the War of American Independence, the Industrial Revolution that was blackening “England’s green and pleasant land,” and, immediately, the French Revolution, that formed the background and inspiration of Blake’s prophetic books. In the foreground were a number of significant figures: Thomas Paine was only the most notorious member of the group that included the Swiss artist Henry Fuseli (who translated the *Aphorisms* of the physiognomist Johann Lavater), the radical bookseller Joseph Johnson, the rationalist philosopher William Godwin, and the “English Platonist” Thomas Taylor, all of them known to Blake. If he did not accept Paine’s *Age of Reason*, his religious views became increasingly antinomian and Gnostic. All this colored the visions that came to him after Robert’s death.

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Color was at once the essence of the visions and the major problem in transmitting them. The last decade of the eighteenth century had seen an upsurge in the number of books published with color plates, not unconnected with the sudden availability of French émigrés whose only marketable skill was an ability to draw. Such luxury products were far beyond Blake's means; the two compositions that had reached ordinary print, *Poetical Sketches* (1783) and *The French Revolution* (1791), had hardly got further. It was not economics, however, but the plain incapacity of conventional media to express the unity of word and image that he needed that led Blake to develop his own methods. He began in black and white with *All Religions Are One* and *There Is No Natural Religion* in 1788, but color was essential to *Songs of Innocence*, which first appeared the following year. This most familiar and accessible of the illuminated books can be read in two ways: as simply the poetry that it is, and also as a statement of Blake's rejection of rationalism, with constant reference to Swedenborg's distinction between the spiritual and natural worlds, emanating from an invisible God. This vision was disturbed in Blake's mind by the violence of the times, expressed in *The French Revolution* and in the next of the illuminated books, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. If the first of these deals literally with violence, the second is a Miltonic pilgrimage from the world of the Old Testament (from which Blake distances himself) to a lyrical world inhabited by mythical figures, among them Urizen, here equated with the Roman god Jupiter, and Orc, new-born, who represents energy. The whole is interspersed with Blake's own aphorisms, parodying Swedenborg, some of which, such as "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression," have become famous.

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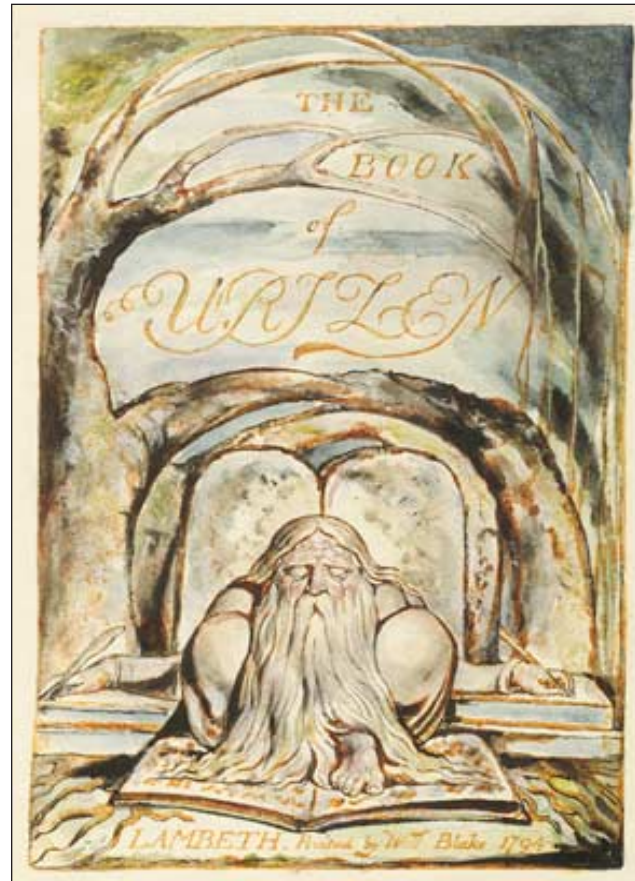
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The books that followed—*Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *For Children: the Gates of Paradise*, and *Songs of Experience*, the last mirroring and answering *Songs of Innocence* from the sadder fallen state of mankind—show hope fading and a harder universe. Urizen is the god of reason, who binds the world and with it himself by imposing universal laws. The next books, *America* (the new world) and *Europe* (Blake’s world within a reflection of history from the Nativity to the French Revolution), with *The Song of Los* (in two parts, “Africa” and “Asia”) elaborate this myth, creating a history in which the figures of Urizen and Orc seem to shadow Milton’s Satan and Christ. Throughout these works, the outline of Blake’s imaginings becomes firmer, and *The Book of Urizen* finally gives form to the beginning of it all, the creation. Here again, Blake is shadowing the work of one of his earlier influences, Swedenborg, whose theogony was set out in *Arcana Coelestia*, an extended commentary and meditation on the biblical books of Genesis and Exodus. *The Book of Urizen* was, like Genesis, an account of the Creation. It was originally *The First Book...*, because Blake must have intended a sequel, an Exodus, now represented by *The Book of Ahania*, while *The Book of Los* recounts the same events as *The Book of Urizen*, as seen by Los. For some reason Blake seems to have been dissatisfied with these two, which now only survive in single copies, whereas there are eight of *Urizen*.

The eight copies all differ from each other, and were produced over a long period. The earliest were printed in 1794–95; the Rosenwald copy in the Library of Congress (copy G), reproduced here, is printed on paper watermarked 1815, and is the latest known; it is also the most finished. However, it is not formally complete; when Blake offered a copy for sale in 1818, he listed 28 plates, of which this copy has 27 (a transcript of the miss-

ing leaf, containing the text that falls between that on plates 3 and 5 of copy G, is included at the appropriate place in the transcription). The differences do not end there, because in addition to the leaves with text on them (which number 17 in this copy), there are 10 purely pictorial plates that appear in differing places in all the copies, thus complicating the task of divining the subject matter and relating it to the text. One copy, in the British Museum (copy D), has the leaves all numbered by Blake, and its order is thus considered canonical, although it lacks two leaves. The Rosenwald copy agrees with it as to the text, and the arrangement of the picture pages is not very different. The two surviving complete copies, copy A at the Yale Center for British Art and copy B at The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, differ more significantly—in particular, in the order of the text pages. It is clear that the eight copies, despite a text divided like a biblical book into chapters and verses, represent an idea, in text and pictures, in more or less unresolved motion over twenty years.

The book invariably opens with a title page, showing the bearded figure of Urizen, seated and writing simultaneously with both hands on books



Title page of *The Book of Urizen*, copy G (ca. 1818).

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open to left and right of him, behind him two stones with semicircular tops; like Moses, he is a lawgiver, and like Moses, his laws are set in stone. When the text begins, however, they are not yet written. Urizen is one of the Eternals, who are horrified as he creates the Newtonian universe, fixing both space and time. In chapter II, the Eternals gather round the rock where stands Urizen, brazen book in hand, with eternity condensed into the four elements. They cast him out, and he falls like Satan into a hell of his own making. Enter Los, sent by the Eternals to watch Urizen, to whom, with great pain and suffering, he gives bodily form. He is himself so incarcerated, and in union with the female principle, Enitharmon, who gives birth to Orc, the spirit of energy. Los conspires with her to chain Orc to a mountain. Urizen now stirs, and the beings that emanated from him in Eternity are reborn from the four elements and plants and animals as his children. He curses them and wanders over the world, weeping over its pain, his greatness diminishing as he casts “The Net of Religion” over it, holding it up even as it binds him to the earth. The end sees his son Fuzon calling together all the remaining children of Urizen (IX:8–9):

And they left the pendulous earth:
They called it Egypt, & left it.

And the salt ocean rolled englob'd.

Some shreds of hope are expressed in the little birds flying upwards, interspersed in the text, and in the redeeming figure of Orc, a baby now grown to a boy, alone but now free on a bare mountaintop.

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The Rosenwald copy is printed in orange (others are in brown and green), but also elaborately hand-colored with brush and watercolor pigments, heightened with gold and silver. All the details, some obscure in the earlier copies, are here elaborated and made clear, as if Blake had come to some final determination about the order and function of both the text and the pictures of *The Book of Urizen*. As such, it has an heroic splendor, and forms, with its two sequels, a grand finale to the first part of Blake's great prophetic vision.

Nicolas Barker retired as the Head of Conservation at the British Library in 1992. He continues to serve as advisor to libraries and museums in the United Kingdom and in North America, as well as to the British National Trust in its project of cataloguing the libraries of the hundreds of country houses in its care, the riches of which remain almost unknown. His many books include the standard biography of Stanley Morison (1972), accounts of Aldus Manutius and early Greek types, and a study of Besler's *Hortus Eystettensis* (1994). The friend and executor of the great Blake scholar, Geoffrey Keynes, he has reviewed and published many books on Blake, and has written the standard bibliography of Blake's friend and patron, William Hayley. Since 1966, he has edited *The Book Collector*, the world's leading journal of scholarly bibliophily.

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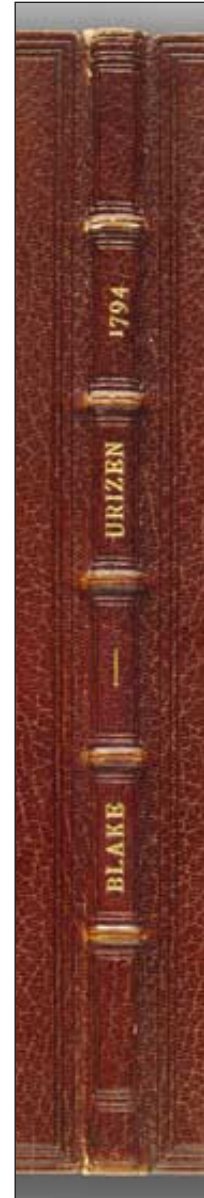
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Binding & Collation

Binding Bound by the Club Bindery in 1908 in brown morocco, “BLAKE — URIZEN 1794” in gilt letters running up spine, raised bands.

Collation 17 plates bearing text in orange ink, 10 full-page illustrations, in all 27 plates relief-etched and hand-colored, numbered by pen in Blake’s hand 1–27 corresponding to Bentley-Erdman-Keynes numbers 1, 2, 3, 9, 5, 12, 6, 14, 7, 8, 22, 10, 11, 16, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 27, 24, 25, 26, 28; plate 4 lacking. Wove paper, 11³/₈ x 9 inches (289 x 230 mm), watermarked Ruse & Turners/1815 on seven plates.



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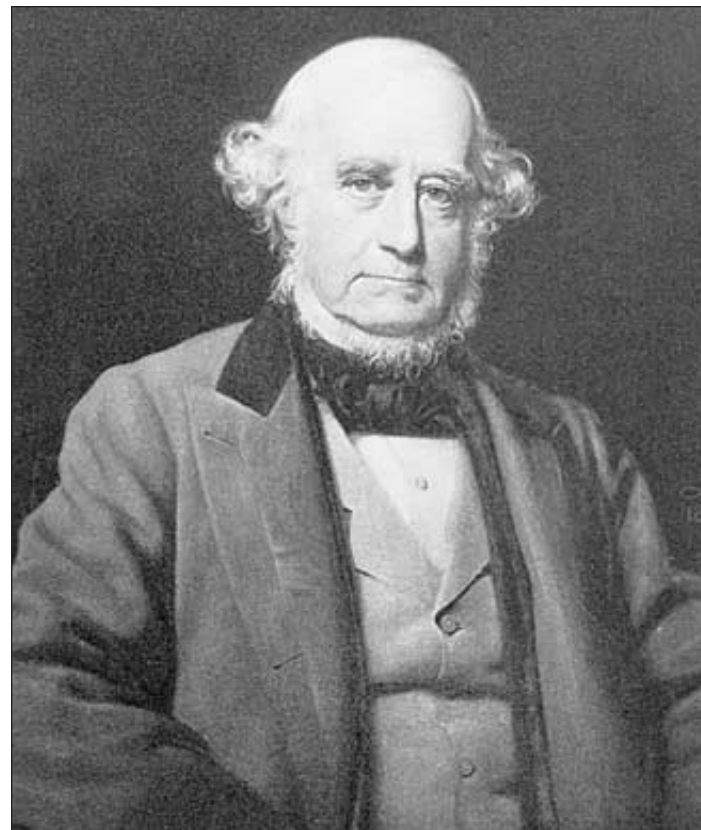


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Like genealogical research, the tracing of a book's provenance is often an unprofitable exercise, of interest only as part of some wider prosopographical endeavor. Past owners are often unremarkable, and possession of a book is no indication of its having been read, or otherwise influential. This copy of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, however, can be shown to have affected the study and appreciation of the works of William Blake at every stage in its passage from collection to collection.

Blake inspires a particular devotion, and his works have always remained concentrated in the hands of a comparatively few collectors in each generation, from John Linnell and Thomas Butts to Geoffrey Keynes, Graham Robertson, Frank Rinder, and Robert Essick. This style of connoisseurship is often more graphic than literary, more closely allied to print collecting than to bibliophily. It was taken to excess by the first authority to describe this particular copy of *Urizen*, Allan Cunningham, in his "Family Library" set of *Lives of the*



Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton.

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Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (London, 1830). He regarded Blake as a talented draftsman and engraver whose “visionary fits” produced “utterly wild” verse with which he “seasoned” his plates. Cunningham appears to have read this copy of *Urizen* (recognizable by its unique number of leaves) with some little attention, for he prints a more detailed account of the book than he offers for other of Blake’s works. *Urizen*, he concludes, “has the merit or fault of surpassing all human comprehension.” For his facts (as opposed to such opinions) Cunningham relied on friends and associates of Blake, such as John Linnell and John Varley. This *Urizen* was then presumably in the hands of one of these several unacknowledged sources. Not until its anonymous sale at Sotheby’s on January 20, 1852, does the book at last acquire an identifiable owner. It was purchased at the sale by Richard Monckton Milnes, later first Lord Houghton, for £8 15s.

Monckton Milnes (1809–85) was apparently introduced to Blake’s works in 1838 by the aged poet Walter Savage Landor, who had himself only recently come across them in a bookshop. With his usual enthusiasm, Landor described Blake to Milnes as “the greatest of poets.” Monckton Milnes was then a well-connected, well-traveled youth of agreeable and irresistible effrontery, a college friend of Tennyson and Thackeray who had become a minor poet and a minor parliamentarian in an age (now almost unimaginable) in which to be literate was an asset in politics. His acquaintance, like his sympathies, was vast. He took the name Baron Houghton on his elevation to the peerage in 1863, but long before had acquired many other nicknames. His friend Thomas Carlyle insisted that Milnes deserved to be appointed to “the office of perpetual president of

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the Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Society.” Another phrase, “The Bird of Paradox,” aptly summarized his unwearied pursuit of the conventionally incompatible. The term was coined by his close friend Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, like Milnes a literary man, a book collector, a celebrated host, and a Member of Parliament. Together with the Belgian antiquary Sylvain Van de Weyer, they formed the Philobiblon Club in 1853 in order to assemble the dozen or two most refined book collectors of the day for congenial company and private publication.

Milnes had long had an interest in the Romantic poets, editing the essential *Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats* in 1848, and the works of Thomas Love Peacock in 1875. Inspired by Landor, Milnes had also hoped to produce a Blake anthology. As he wrote to the Irish poet Aubrey De Vere in the 1830s, “Have you ever seen any of Blake’s poetry? I think of publishing some selections from him which will astonish those who are astoundable by anything of this kind.” The projected book never appeared, but Milnes did form perhaps the finest collection of Blake’s works in his generation. Books from his library inspired the twin monuments of Blake scholarship and criticism of the mid nineteenth century: Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake, “Pictor Ignotus.” With Selections from His Poems and Other Writings* (London, 1863), and A.C. Swinburne’s dazzling *William Blake: A Critical Essay* (London, 1868), a volume that had its origin in the draft of a review of Gilchrist’s *Life*. That biography, with its second volume of “selections,” made Blake’s writings widely available for the first time, although with a Victorian “Golden Treasury” favoring of the short memorable lyrics over the unwieldy prophetic books. This was the Pre-Raphaelite “life,” defining Blake for a new generation. Dante Gabriel and William Rossetti

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saw it through the press after Gilchrist's death, editing, revising, and supplementing extensively. Gilchrist had already borrowed his original texts from Monckton Milnes, and the Rossettis borrowed again: the extent of the Houghton collection is evident from their *catalogue raisonné*.

Swinburne's *William Blake*, like his tastes in literature, both fine and coarse, owed much to the tutelage of Monckton Milnes—he introduced him to Landor, revered as “the most ancient of the demi-gods,” and gave him the freedom of his library. Offhand remarks in Swinburne's letters reveal the extent to which *Urizen* (assuredly read in Milnes' copy) had influenced the young poet's vocabulary and worldview. Other books from Milnes' library entered into the making of Swinburne's essay on Blake, which would have been a very different book without the hyperwarburgian synaesthesia induced by immersion in that very diverse collection.

Milnes married late, to the younger daughter of the second Baron Crewe. Their only son, Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes (1858–1945), succeeded his father as second Baron Houghton at the age of 27, and on the death of his uncle, the third Baron Crewe, in 1894, inherited the Crewe estates. A year later he was permitted to assume the family title of Earl of Crewe. He shared many of his father's qualities and tastes—poetry, politics, and book-collecting—but was much more of a statesman and rather less of a literary man and bibliophile.

He sold a portion of his father's Blake collection at Sotheby's on March 30, 1903, in eighteen lots that included not only books and engravings, but two large portfolios of original watercolors for Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and the Book of Job. Our copy of *Urizen* was bought by the leading London book dealer, Bernard Quaritch, for £307, presumably on

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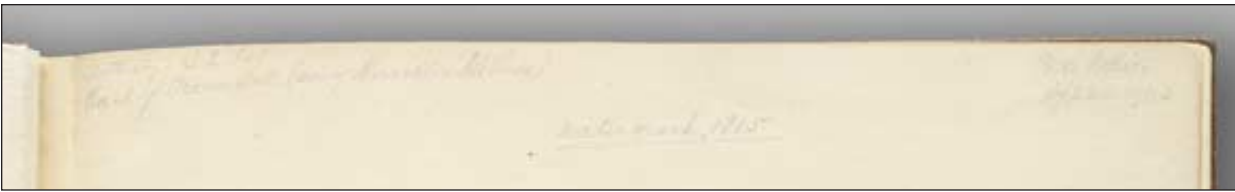
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Pencil notations by W.A. White on the first flyleaf of *The Book of Urizen*.

behalf of W.A. White. (The book was in White's possession in Brooklyn three weeks later at a 5% increase in price—the small profit and quick return strongly suggesting a commission bid.) White added his name and a record of the cost to the first and last flyleaves, arranging for its present binding in brown morocco at the Club Bindery (1908).

William Augustus White (1843–1927) was perhaps the greatest collector of the works of Blake of all time. The actor and artist Graham Robertson, who had a superb collection of Blake paintings, described him as “the great Mr. White, whose collection of Blake books and MSS was the despair of other collectors.” As senior partner in the family firm of New York investment bankers, White began serious collecting in 1885, devoting his attention to Shakespeare, the Elizabethan poets and playwrights, and William Blake, of whose works he was (along with E.W. Hooper) the first significant American collector. He freely shared his treasures, lending them to scholars and for exhibition: Henrietta Bartlett's several authoritative bibliographical surveys of Shakespeare owe much to his collection, as does American appreciation of Blake as an artist. He was the chief lender to the Grolier Club Blake exhibitions of 1905 and 1919, and the leading force behind the Club's publication in 1921 of Geoffrey Keynes' *A Bibliography of William Blake*.

In his later years White sold certain duplicates at auction (1911 and 1920) and a few Elizabethan rarities privately (at what he considered extrav-



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agant prices) through A.S.W. Rosenbach to Folger and Huntington in the 1920s. After his death, his remaining Shakespeare quartos were sold to his Alma Mater, Harvard; the family gave the folios to Princeton. Most (but not all) of the Blake books were retained by his daughter Frances White Emerson. She gave the original watercolors for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* to the Print Room of the British Museum in 1928; the rest of her collection was sold at Sotheby's in 1958, the year after her death. The remainder of her father's books, including this copy of *Urizen*, had been entrusted by the estate to Rosenbach to sell on consignment in 1928. The bookseller, as it happened, had just acquired the ideal customer, Lessing J. Rosenwald.

Rosenwald (1891–1979) was a print collector at first, but Rosenbach had sold him a few important illustrated incunables in October 1928 that were to form the foundation of one of the finest American collections of illustrated books. Soon after, on May 1, 1929, Rosenwald bought several Blake books from the White estate, including not only this copy of *Urizen* (for roughly \$5,000), but three others that had also belonged to Monckton Milnes: *Jerusalem*, *The Ghost of Abel*, and *The Book of Ahania*. Rosenwald gave the book, with a great many others, to the Library of Congress in 1945, although he retained possession until his death. Like its previous owners, he encouraged the use of his collection. Many of the William Blake Trust facsimiles executed by the Trianon Press (1952–78) were made from Rosenwald's copies, giving students for the first time access to extraordinarily accurate facsimiles and ensuring that Blake's designs will always henceforth be considered in company with his text. THE EDITORS

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Transcription Note

This transcription of *The Book of Urizen* has been newly prepared by the editors of this Octavo Digital Edition as a tool to facilitate access to Blake's text. As such, it attempts to replicate the spelling and punctuation of the copy reproduced here literally, with a minimum of editorial interpretation.

A scrutiny of Blake's original printed pages will readily demonstrate that the artist routinely engraved punctuation marks in an ambiguous way: thus, even at high magnifications, it can be impossible to conclusively distinguish commas from periods, and semicolons from colons. This searchable transcription, designed as an access tool, makes no claims to authoritative resolution of such ambiguities, and the reader is encouraged to view Blake's plates—here accessible to all—as the ultimate authority and resource.

The Rosenwald copy of *The Book of Urizen* lacks one plate (present in only three of the eight known copies) that includes a significant portion of the original poem. The text of that plate has been inserted at the appropriate place in the transcription, in the interest of providing readers with the complete work as originally conceived. (An imperfect impression of this plate, printed for the Rosenwald copy but rejected by the artist, survives in a private collection.)

Both plates 10 and 12 of this copy identify their contents as chapter IV, verses 1–6; these have been distinguished as “[a]” and “[b]” in the Transcription and Book Contents.

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Transcription

The Book of Urizen

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THE
BOOK
of
URIZEN

PLATE 1

LAMBETH. Printed by Will Blake 1794.

PRELUDIUM
TO
THE
BOOK OF
URIZEN

PLATE 2

Of the primeval Priests assum'd power,
When Eternals spurnd back his religion:
And gave him a place in the north,
Obscure. shadowy. void. solitary.

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Eternals I hear your call gladly,
Dictate swift winged words. & fear not
To unfold your dark visions of torment.

Chap: I

PLATE 3

1. 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? Some
said
"It is Urizen". But unknown, abstracted
Brooding secret, the dark power hid.

2. Times on times he divided, & measur'd
Space by space in his ninefold darkness
Unseen, unknown: changes appeard
In his desolate mountains rifted furious
By the black winds of perturbation

3. For he strove in battles dire
In unseen confictions with shapes
Bred from his forsaken wilderness.
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent & element
Combustion, blast, vapour and cloud.

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4. Dark revolving in silent activity:
Unseen in tormenting passions;
An activity unknown and horrible;
A self-contemplating shadow,
In enormous labours occupied

5. But Eternals beheld his vast forests.
Age on ages he lay, clos'd, unknown,
Brooding shut in the deep; all avoid
The petrific abominable chaos

6. His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen
Prepar'd; his ten thousands of thunders
Rang'd in gloom'd array stretch out across
The dread world. & the rolling of wheels
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds
In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains
Of hail & ice; voices of terror,
Are heard, like thunders of autumn,
When the cloud blazes over the harvests

Chap: II.

-tion

1. Earth was not: nor globes of attrac-
The will of the Immortal expanded
Or contracted his all flexible senses.
Death was not, but eternal life sprung

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2. The sound of a trumpet the heavens
Awoke & vast clouds of blood roll'd
Round the dim rocks of Urizen, so nam'd
That solitary one in Immensity

Shrill the trumpet: & myriads of Eter
-nity

[The following transcription of a plate omitted from copy G of *The Book of Urizen* (Bentley-Erdman-Keynes plate 4) is included for textual completeness: see [Transcription Note](#) for details.]

I Urizen:C II.

Muster around the bleak desarts
Now fill'd with clouds darkness & waters
That roll'd perplex'd labring & utter'd
Words articulate, bursting in thunders
That roll'd on the tops of his mountains

4. From the depths of dark solitude,

From

The eternal abode in my holiness,
Hidden, set apart in my stern counsels
Reserv'd for the days of futurity.
I have sought for a joy without pain,
For a solid without fluctuation
Why will you die O Eternals?
Why live in unquenchable burnings?

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5 First I fought with the fire; consum'd
Inwards, into a deep world within:
A void immense, wild dark & deep
Where nothing was; Natures wide womb
And self balanc'd stretch'd o'er the void
I alone, even I! the winds merciless
Bound; but condensing, in torrents
They fall & fall; strong, I repell'd
The vast waves, & arose on the waters
A wide world of solid obstruction

6. Here alone I in books form'd of me-
-tals

Have written the secrets of wisdom
The secrets of dark contemplation
By fightings and conflicts dire.
With terrible monsters Sin-bred:
Which the bosoms of all inhabit;
Seven deadly Sins of the soul.

7. Lo! I unfold my darkness: and on
This rock, place with strong hand the Book
Of eternal brass, written in my solitude.

8. Laws of peace, of love, of unity;
Of pity, compassion, forgiveness.
Let each chuse one habitation;

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His ancient infinite mansion;
One command, one joy, one desire,
One curse, one weight, one measure
One King, one God, one Law.

Chap: III.

1. The voice ended, they saw his pale
visage
Emerge from the darkness; his hand
On the rock of eternity unclasping
The Book of brass. Rage siez'd the strong

2. Rage, fury, intense indignation
In cataracts of fire blood & gall
In whirlwinds of sulphurous smoke:
And enormous forms of energy;
All the seven deadly sins of the soul

[Full-page illustration]

PLATE 4

In living creations appear'd
In the flames of eternal fury.

PLATE 5

3. Sund'ring. dark'ning. thund'ring!
Rent away with a terrible crash
Eternity roll'd wide apart
Wide asunder rolling

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Mountainous all around
Departing; departing: departing;
Leaving ruinous fragments of life
Hanging frowning cliffs & all between
An ocean of voidness unfathomable.

4. The roaring fires ran o'er the heav'ns
In whirlwinds & cataracts of blood
And o'er the dark desarts of Urizen
Fires pour thro' the void on all sides
On Urizens self-begotten armies.

5. But no light from the fires, all was
 darkness
In the flames of Eternal fury

6. In fierce anguish & quenchless
 flames

-ging

To the desarts and rocks he ran ra-
To hide, but he could not; combining
 He dug mountains & hills in vast strength.
 He piled them in incessant labour,
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.

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7. And a roof vast petrific around,
On all sides he fram'd: like a womb;
Where thousands of rivers in veins
Of blood pour down the mountains to cool
The eternal fires beating without
From Eternals; & like a black globe
View'd by sons of Eternity, standing
On the shore of the infinite ocean
Like a human heart struggling & beating
The vast world of Urizen appear'd.

8. And Los round the dark globe of
 Urizen,
Kept watch for Eternals to confine,
The obscure separation alone;
For Eternity stood wide apart,

[Full-page illustration]

PLATE 6

1 Urizen C: III.

PLATE 7

As the stars are apart from the earth

9. Los wept howling around the dark
 Demon:
And cursing his lot for in anguish,
Urizen was rent from his side;



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And a fathomless void for his feet;
And intense fires for his dwelling.

10. But Urizen laid in a stony sleep
Unorganiz'd, rent from Eternity

11. The Eternals said: What is this? Death
Urizen is a clod of clay.

[Full-page illustration]

12: Los howld in a dismal stupor,
Groaning! gnashing! groaning!
Till the wrenching apart was healed

13: But the wrenching of Urizen
 heal'd not
Cold, featureless, flesh or clay
Rifted with direful changes
He lay in a dreamless night

14: Till Los rouz'd his his fires
 affrighted
At the formless unmeasurable
 death.

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PLATE 9

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Chap: IV: [a]

-ment

1: Los smitten with astonish-
Frightend at the hurtling bones

2: And at the surging sulphure-
-ous

Perturbed Immortal mad raging

3: In whirlwinds & pitch & nitre
Round the furious limbs of Los

4: And Los formed nets & gins
And threw the nets round about

5: He watch'd in shuddring fear
The dark changes & bound every
change

With rivets of iron & brass;

6. And these were the changes
of Urizen.

[Full-page illustration]

Chap: IV. [b]

1. Ages on ages roll'd over him!
In stony sleep ages roll'd over him!

PLATE 10

PLATE 11

PLATE 12

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Like a dark waste stretching chang'able
By earthquakes riv'n, belching sullen
fires

On ages roll'd ages in ghastly
Sick torment; around him in whirlwinds
Of darkness the eternal Prophet howl'd
Beating still on his rivets of iron
Pouring sodor of iron; dividing
The horrible night into watches.

2. And Urizen (so his eternal name)
His prolific delight obscurd more & more
In dark secrecy hiding in surgeing
Sulphureous fluid his phantasies
The Eternal Prophet hevd the dark
bellows.

And turn'd restless the tongs; and the
hammer
Incessant beat; forging chains new & new
Numb'ring with links, hours days & years

3 The eternal mind bounded began to roll
Eddies of wrath ceaseless round & round
And the sulphureous foam surgeing thick
Settled, a lake, bright, & shining clear:
White as the snow on the mountains cold

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4. Forgetfulness, dumbness, necessity!

In chains of the mind locked up,
Like fetters of ice shrinking together.

Disorganiz'd, rent from Eternity.

Los beat on his fetters of iron:

And heated his furnaces & pour'd

Iron sodor and sodor of brass

5. Restless turnd the immortal inchain'd

Heaving dolorous! anguish'd! unbearable

Till a roof shaggy wild inclos'd

In an orb, his fountain of thought.

6. In a horrible dreamful slumber;

Like the linked infernal chain;

A vast Spine writh'd in torment

Upon the winds; shooting pain'd

Ribs, like a bending cavern

And bones of solidness, froze

Over all his nerves of joy.

And a first Age passed over,

And a state of dismal woe.

i Urizen. C:IV

7. From the caverns of his jointed Spine,

Down sunk with fright a red

Round globe hot burning deep

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Deep down into the Abyss;
Panting: Conglobing, Trembling
Shooting out ten thousand branches
Around his solid bones.

And a second Age passed over,
And a state of dismal woe.

8. In harrowing fear rolling round;
His nervous brain shot branches
Round the branches of his heart
On high into two little orbs
And fixed in two little caves
Hiding carefully from the wind.
His Eyes beheld the deep,
And a third Age passed over;
And a state of dismal woe.

9. The pangs of hope began,
In heavy pain striving, struggling:
Two Ears in close volutions.
From beneath his orbs of vision
Shot spiring out, and petrified
As they grew. And a fourth Age pass[ed]
And a state of dismal woe.

10. In ghastly torment sick;
Hanging upon the wind;

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[Full-page illustration]

Urizen C: V.

Two Nostrils bent down to the deep.
And a fifth Age passed over;
And a state of dismal woe.

11. In ghastly torment sick;
Within his ribs bloated round,
A craving Hungry Cavern:
Thence arose his channel'd Throat.
And like a red flame a Tongue
Of thirst & of hunger appear'd.
And a sixth Age passed over:
And a state of dismal woe.

12. Enraged & stifled with torment
He threw his right Arm to the north
His left Arm to the south
Shooting out in anguish deep,
And his Feet stamp'd the nether Abyss
In trembling & howling & dismay.
And a seventh Age passed over:
And a state of dismal woe.

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PLATE 15

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Chap: V.

1. In terrors Los shrunk from his
task;
His great hammer fell from his hand:
His fires beheld, and sickening,
Hid their strong limbs in smoke.
For with noises ruinous loud:
With hurtlings & clashings & groans
The Immortal endur'd his chains,
Tho' bound in a deadly sleep.

2. All the myriads of Eternity:
All the wisdom & joy of life:
Roll like a sea around him.
Except what his little orbs
Of sight by degrees unfold.

3. And now his eternal life
Like a dream was obliterated

4. Shudd'ring, the Eternal Prophet smote
With a stroke, from his north to south
region
The bellows & hammer are silent now
A nerveless silence, his prophetic voice
Siez'd; a cold solitude & dark void
The Eternal Prophet & Urizen clos'd

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5. Ages on ages rolld over them
Cut off from life & light frozen
Into horrible forms of deformity
Los suffer'd his fires to decay
Then he look'd back with anxious desire
But the space undivided by existence
Struck horror into his soul.

6. Los wept obscur'd with mourning:
His bosom earthquak'd with sighs,
He saw Urizen deadly black,
In his chains bound, & Pity began.

7. In anguish dividing & dividing
For pity divides the soul
In pangs eternity on eternity
Life in cataracts pourd down his
 cliffs
The void shrunk the lymph into Nerves
Wand'ring wide on the bosom of night
And left a round globe of blood
Trembling upon the Void

Urizen C:V.

Thus the Eternal Prophet was divided
Before the death-image of Urizen
For in changeable clouds and darkness

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In a winterly night beneath,
The Abyss of Los stretch'd immense:
And now seen, now obscur'd to the eyes
Of Eternals, the visions remote
Of the dark seperation appear'd.
As glasses discover Worlds
In the endless Abyss of space,
So the expanding eyes of Immortals
Beheld the dark visions of Los,
And the globe of life blood trembling.

[Full-page illustration]

Urizen. C:V.

8. The globe of life blood trembled
Branching out into roots:
Fib'rous, writhing upon the winds:
Fibres of blood, milk and tears:
In pangs. eternity on eternity.
At length in tears & cries imbodyed
A female form trembling and pale
Waves before his deathly face

9. All Eternity shudderd at sight
Of the first female now separate
Pale as a cloud of snow
Waving before the face of Los

PLATE 17

PLATE 18

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10. Wonder, awe, fear, astonishment,
Petrify the eternal myriads;
At the first female form now separate

They call'd her Pity, and fled

11. "Spread a Tent, with strong cur-
-tains around them
"Let cords & stakes bind in the Void
That Eternals may no more behold them"

12. They began to weave curtains of
darkness
They erected large pillars round the Void
With golden hooks fastend in the pillars
With infinite labour the Eternals
A woof wove. and called it Science

Chap: VI.

1. But Los saw the Female & pitied
He embrac'd her, she wept, she refus'd
In perverse and cruel delight
She fled from his arms, yet he followd

2. Eternity shudder'd when they saw,
Man begetting his likeness,
On his own divided image.

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3. A time passed over, the Eternals
Began to erect the tent;
When Enitharmon sick,
Felt a Worm within her womb.

4. Yet helpless it lay like a Worm
In the trembling womb
To be moulded into existence

5. All day the worm lay on her bosom
All night within her womb
The worm lay till it grew to a ser-
-pent
With dolorous hissings & poisons
Round Enitharmons loins folding.

6. Coild within Enitharmons womb
The serpent grew casting its scales,
With sharp pangs the hissings began
To change to a grating cry.
Many sorrows and dismal throes,
Many forms of fish, bird & beast
Brought forth an Infant form
Where was a worm before.

7. The Eternals their tent finished
Alarm'd with these gloomy visions

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When Enitharmon groaning
Produc'd a man Child to the light.

8. A shriek ran thro' Eternity:
And a paralytic stroke:
At the birth of the Human shadow.

9. Delving earth in his resistless
way:
Howling, the Child with fierce flames
Issu'd from Enitharmon.

10. The Eternals, closed the tent
They beat down the stakes the cords

Urizen C: VII

Stretch'd for a work of eternity:
No more Los beheld Eternity.

11. In his hands he siez'd the infant
He bathed him in springs of sorrow
He gave him to Enitharmon.

Chap.VII.

1. They named the child Orc, he grew
Fed with milk of Enitharmun

2. Los awoke her; O sorrow & pain!
A tight'ning girdle grew,

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Around his bosom. In sobbings
He burst the girdle in twain,
But still another girdle
Opressd his bosom. In sobbings
Again he burst it. Again
Another girdle succeeds
The girdle was form'd by day;
By night was burst in twain.

3. These falling down on the rock
Into an iron Chain
In each other link by link lock'd

4. They took Orc to the top of a
mountain.
O how Enitharmon wept!
They chain'd his young limbs to the
rock
With the Chain of Jealousy
Beneath Urizens deathful shadow

5. The dead heard the voice of the
child
And began to awake from sleep
All things, heard the voice of the child
And began to awake to life.

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6. And Urizen craving with hunger
Stung with the odours of Nature
Explor'd his dens around

7. He form'd a line & a plummet
To divide the Abyss beneath.
He form'd a dividing rule:

8. He formed scales to weigh;
He formed massy weights;
He formed a brazen quadrant;
He formed golden compasses
And began to explore the Abyss
And he planted a garden of fruits

9. But Los encircled Enitharmon
With fires of Prophecy
From the sight of Urizen & Orc.

10. And she bore an enormous race

Chap. VIII.

1. Urizen explor'd his dens
Mountain, moor, & wilderness,
With a globe of fire lighting his
 journey
A fearful journey, annoy'd
By cruel enormities: forms

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[Full-page illustration]

1 Urizen.C.VIII.

Of life on his forsaken mountains

2. And his world teemd vast enormities

Frightning; faithless; fawning

Portions of life; similitudes

Of a foot, or a hand, or a head

Or a heart, or an eye, they swam mis

-chevous

Dread terrors! delighting in blood

3. Most Urizen sicken'd to see

His eternal creations appear

Sons & daughters of sorrow on mountains

Weeping! wailing! first Thiriell appear'd

Astonish'd at his own existence

Like a man from a cloud born, & Utha

From the waters emerging, laments!

Grodna rent the deep earth howling

Amaz'd! his heavens immense cracks

Like the ground parch'd with heat; then

Fuzon

Flam'd out! first begotten, last born.

All his eternal sons in like manner

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PLATE 22

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His daughters from green herbs & cattle
From monsters, & worms of the pit.

4. He in darkness clos'd, view'd all his
race

And his soul sicken'd! he curs'd
Both sons & daughters: for he saw
That no flesh nor spirit could keep
His iron laws one moment.

5. For he saw that life liv'd upon
death

[Full-page illustration]

PLATE 23

[Full-page illustration]

PLATE 24

The Ox in the slaughter house moans
The Dog at the wintry door
And he wept, & he called it Pity
And his tears flowed down on the winds

PLATE 25

6. Cold he wander'd on high, over
their cities
In weeping & pain & woe!
And where-ever he wanderd in sorrows
Upon the aged heavens

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A cold shadow follow'd behind him
Like a spiders web. moist, cold, & dim
Drawing out from his sorrowing soul
The dungeon-like heaven dividing.
Where ever the footsteps of Urizen
Walk'd over the cities in sorrow.

7. Till a Web dark & cold, throughout all
The tormented element stretch'd
From the sorrows of Urizens soul
And the Web is a Female in embrio
None could break the Web, no wings
of fire.

8. So twisted the cords, & so knotted
The meshes: twisted like to the
human brain

-gion

9. And all calld it, The Net of Reli-

Chap: IX

1. Then the Inhabitants of those Cities:
Felt their Nerves change into Marrow:
And hardening Bones began
In swift diseases and torments,
In throbbings & shootings & grindings

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Thro' all the coasts; till weaken'd
The Senses inward rush'd shrinking,
Beneath the dark net of infection.

2. Till the shrunken eyes clouded over
Discern'd not the woven hypocrisy
But the streaky slime in their heavens
Brought together by narrowing perceptions
Appear'd transparent air; for their eyes
Grew small like the eyes of a man
And in reptile forms shrinking together
Of seven feet stature they remain'd

3. Six days they shrunk up from existence
And on the seventh day they rested
And they bless'd the seventh day, in sick
 hope:
And forgot their eternal life

4. And their thirty cities divided
In form of a human heart
No more could they rise at will
In the infinite void, but bound down
To earth by their narrowing perceptions

[Full-page illustration]

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They lived a period of years
 Then left a noisom body
 To the jaws of devouring darkness

5. And their children wept, & built
 Tombs in the desolate places.
 And form'd laws of prudence, and
 call'd them
 The eternal laws of God

6. And the thirty cities remaind
 Surrounded by salt floods, now call'd
 Africa; its name was then Egypt.

7. The remaining sons of Urizen
 Beheld their brethren shrink together
 Beneath the Net of Urizen:
 Perswasion was in vain:
 For the ears of the inhabitants,
 Were wither'd, & deafen'd, & cold:
 And their eyes could not discern,
 Their brethren of other cities.

8. So Fuzon call'd all together
 The remaining children of Urizen:
 And they left the pendulous earth:
 They called it Egypt. & left it.

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9. And the salt ocean rolled englob'd

The End of the
book of Urizen.

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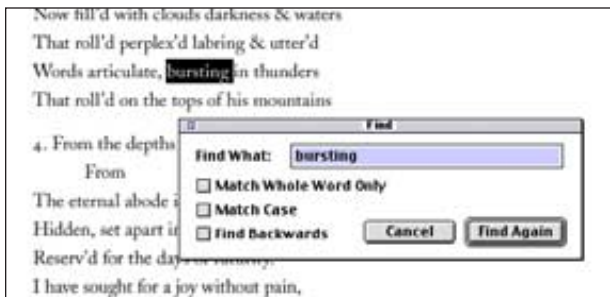
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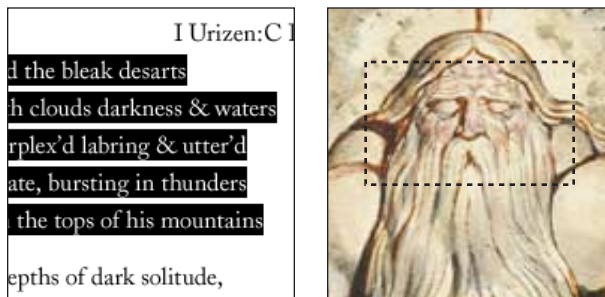
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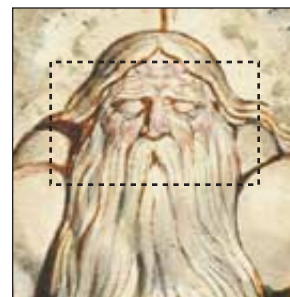
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Rare Book and Special Collections Division

The Library of Congress is the world's largest library, containing more than 115 million items in nearly every language and format—from ancient Chinese woodblock prints to compact discs. Founded in 1800 to serve the reference needs of Congress, the Library is now recognized as the national library of the United States, charged with the acquisition, organization, and preservation of a comprehensive record of American history. It has, moreover, grown into an unparalleled treasure-house of human knowledge and creativity, adding materials to its collections at a rate of 10,000 items per working day and making many of these treasures available electronically at www.loc.gov.

Although there was no separate Rare Book Division in the early history of the Library, a gathering of rare books, pamphlets, and broadsides were stored in the office of



The main reading room at the Library of Congress.
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Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Librarian of Congress from 1864 to 1897. The institution had also actively acquired collections that contained rare materials throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including John Boyd Thacher's collections of early printed books, autographs of European notables, and materials on the French Revolution. By 1927, the Library's considerable number of rare books necessitated the creation of a special section to house and care for them. The Rare Book and Special Collections Division moved into its present reading room in 1934.

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and Walt Whitman reflect the depth of the holdings in American literature. Students of Americana will also take note of sizable collections of almanacs, cookbooks, dime novels, African-American imprints, Confederate States imprints, and juvenile books.

The division's European collections are highlighted by a gathering of nearly 5,700 incunabula (fifteenth-century imprints), including one of three perfect vellum copies of the Gutenberg Bible. Imprints of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are also strongly represented. The Hans and Hanni Kraus Sir Francis Drake Collection and the John Boyd Thacher Collection are especially rich in materials dealing with European travel and exploration. The religious upheavals of the sixteenth century are documented in the Reformation Collection and the Martin Luther Collection. The Russian Imperial Collection contains the royal library of Czar Nicholas II and his wife Alexandra Fedorovna. Russian imprints of the eighteenth and nineteenth century on history and literature are housed in the Yudin Collection. Among European personages represented in special collections are Hans Christian Andersen, Rudyard Kipling, William Morris, and Jules Verne.

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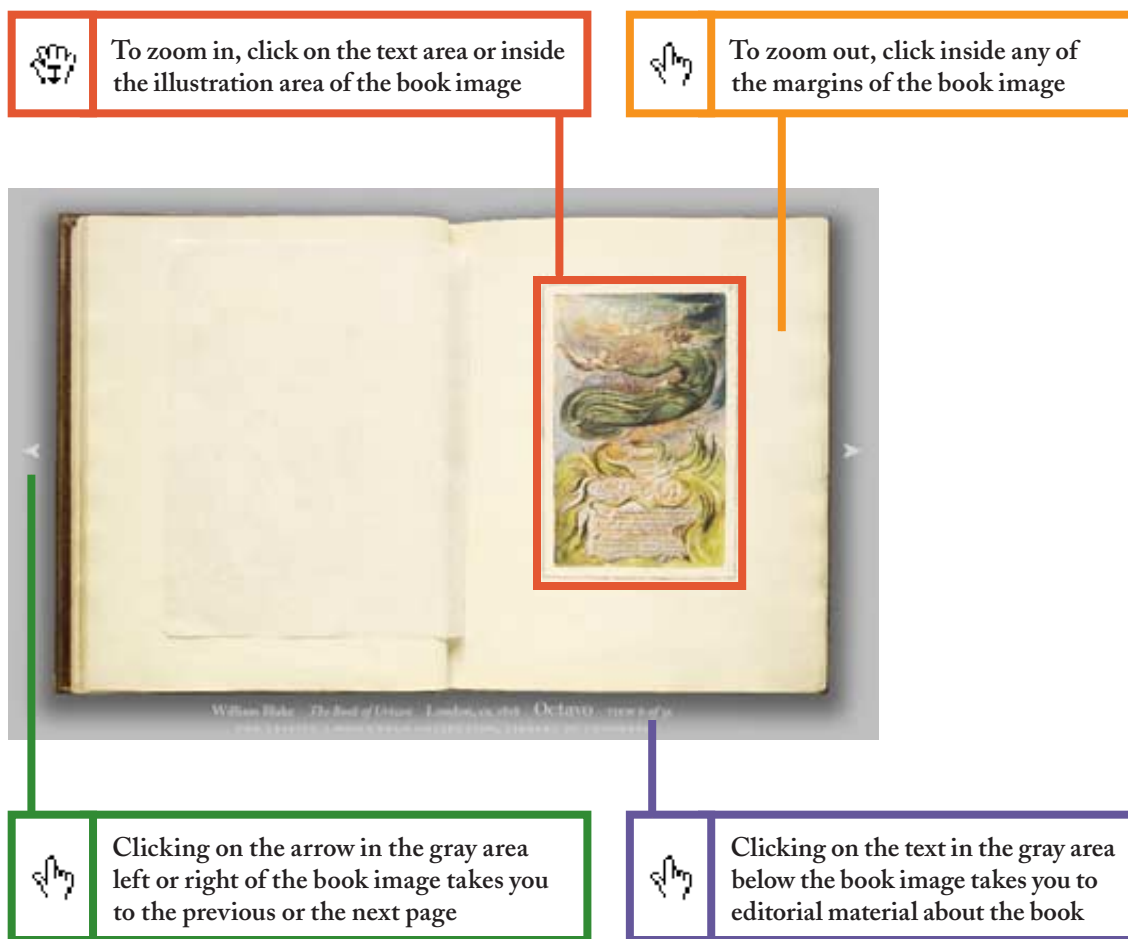


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<i>function</i>	<i>keyboard command</i>
Escape to Acrobat's standard interface	<i>esc</i>
Enter full-screen mode	<i>control-L</i>
Display the previous page	<i>page up, left arrow</i>
Display the next page	<i>page down, right arrow</i>
Display the first page	<i>home</i>
Go back to the last page viewed	<i>control-left arrow</i>
Go to a specific page	<i>control-N</i>
Enlarge view (zoom in)	<i>control-+</i>
Shrink view (zoom out)	<i>control--</i>
Fit image to screen	<i>control-0</i>
Hand tool	<i>H</i>
Zoom tool	<i>Z</i>
Text Selection tool	<i>V</i>
Adobe Acrobat help	<i>help</i>
Find a word or phrase of text	<i>control-F</i>
Quit Acrobat	<i>control-Q</i>

(Mac OS users: use the *Command* key instead of the *Control* key.)

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