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Is He the Divine Image?

Blake's Luvah and Vala

*For to be carnally minded is death;
but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

St. Paul Rom. 8:6

Of all Blake's Zoas (and indeed of all the figures in Blake's mythology) Luvah has created the greatest controversy and confusion as he is the „figure through whom Blake primarily expressed his own imaginative breakthroughs, and he embodies all the ambivalence of an initial stroke of vision.”¹ Critics have discussed his genuinely complex character from diverse points of view, ranging from the more traditional historical and political approaches to psychological, psychoanalytical readings as well as to feminist interpretations. Although there is still no settled unitary opinion about about Luvah (and indeed about where in the body of literature Blake belongs) all the different approaches - albeit differently and to a varying extent - contribute to a better understanding of this most elusive figure. My argument will be essentially psychological but I shall use the findings and rely on the support of other critical approaches, be they structuralist, feminist or mythological, as no single reading has yet - and is ever likely to be - sufficient to account for Blake's revolutionary insights.

¹ Altizer 78

Assisted by arguments from diverse critics, Lipót Szondi's theory of mental functioning shall be used as a main framework for clarifying my understanding of Blake and a technique for exploring his psychic preoccupation in the poems. Luvah and his Emanation, Vala shall be analysed with the help of the findings of the Szondi test as Blake's and Szondi's systems show deep affinities and Szondi's detailed descriptions have been found instrumental in complementing the hiatus in the narrative field; his analyses of the character types contribute to a better understanding of the Zoas and their motives, illuminating a number of the interpretative cruxes of the dream vision.

The platform of the analysis will be *The Four Zoas*, the first of Blake's major prophecies, a supreme example of the poet's idiosyncratic cosmology, in which Blake first elucidates his intricate system of fourfold correlations and describes in detail the four main characters of his myth.

The name 'Luvah' is most often regarded as a derivation from "love" or "lover", as befits the Zoa of Passion. Martin Bidney suggests that the name may also imply "lava"² probably referring to the heat and bursting energy of emotions. Luvah's counterpart is Vala, who was originally to be the main character of the poem (as the first title - VALA / OR / The Death and Judgement of the Ancient Man - suggests). There have been several attempts at deciphering her name, the most common of which seems to be the notion that it can be traced back to "veil", an implication of her elusiveness. (In *Jerusalem* she is often referred to as a veiled beauty: "Vala replied weeping & trembling, hiding in her veil."³). Alicia Ostriker suggests further associations; she conjectures that the word "veil" as the source of Vala's name is a reference to the membranous "veil" which preserves virginity as well as to the "veil" covering the tabernacle of the Old Testament, as she "stands at the intersection between corrupt sexuality and institutional religion"; she is Fortuna, Babylon, the Great Whore, the chaste mistress and femme fatale, the like of whom is mainly to be found in French literature (in Gautier and Baudelaire) and in the figures of Swinburne and Shakespeare.⁴ The problem with these interpretations (together with the other prevailing explication of the etymology as Vala = vale, the valley of shadow and death) is that they concentrate exclusively on the *fallen aspect* of the Emanation, while in her fallen form, Vala is very often distinguished as "the

²Bidney 106

³*Jerusalem* 20:11

⁴Ostriker 160

Shadowy Female” or “Rahab” or “Mystery”⁵. Much more sophisticated is Northrop Frye’s suggestion - which accounts for both the fallen and unfallen perspectives of Vala - according to which her name is that of the Scandinavian prophetess and guardian spirit of the earth in the *Völuspá* in the Elder Edda⁶.

Luvah is mentioned first in *The Book of Thel*⁷ (“O virgin know’st thou not. our steeds drink of the golden springs / Where Luvah doth renew his horses”⁸) where he represents innocent sexuality, and does not return until *The Four Zoas*, in which we first meet his Emanation, Vala. Under different names, however, they are both known from the earlier poems; Luvah as Orc while Vala as the Shadowy Female.

Orc is the fallen aspect of Luvah. His story is fully depicted in *The Four Zoas* but a great part of it is adumbrated in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, America, Europe* and *The Book of Urizen*. He is “Blasphemous Demon Antichrist, hater of Dignities; / Lover of wild rebellion, and transgressor of Gods Law”⁹, which makes him a chief antagonist of Urizen. All these characteristics explain his name, which is probably derived from ‘orcus’, as his prime identity, his abundant energy, is often assigned to the realm of hell. The name is also an anagram for ‘cor’, heart, which refers to his connection to Luvah.

The Shadowy Female is the fallen form of Vala and her story, too, is sketched in the earlier poems of *America* and *Europe*, but her character is hardly as elaborated as Orc’s, her consort’s. We know that she is Enitharmon’s daughter, sister and lover to Orc, the principle of fertility and an ambiguous woman, in whose figure Blake foreshadowed his nascent concept of the Female Will, but who is also a redemptive force in that she can see the apocatastasis. (This double nature of the female, as destroyer and preserver, will be typical of all the Emanations.) Just like Orc’s, her story, too, is expanded in *The Four Zoas*.

The complexity of this most elusive character is manifested in the fact that he is depicted as three different figures, who are yet one and are simultaneously present in the poem. The unfallen aspect of Luvah seems to be almost completely absorbed by Jesus, the fallen one by Orc, while the Zoa under the name of Luvah may stand for both these aspects. According to Wilkie and Johnson two conceivable explanations for Luvah’s lack of definition as a character suggest themselves.

⁵*The Four Zoas* VII, 93:224; VIII, 106:329-330

⁶Frye 270

⁷He might also be associated with “the prince of love” of “How sweet I roam’d from field to field” of the *Poetical Sketches*.

⁸*The Book of Thel*, Plate 3

⁹*America a Prophecy*, Plate 7

One is the obvious artistic problem of representing love in a way that will appear neither too aethereally sacred nor too earthly profane to a fallen audience. (...) The second explanation has to do with the relation between energy [Orc] and love [Luvah] in Blake's evolving mythology. (...) Whether Blake intended all along to identify Luvah with Orc or whether in reconsidering his own view of Christianity he came to see hatred and lust as perverted forms of love, Blake makes Orc a vivid personage but keeps Luvah's character shadowy, implying that there is something inexplicable about the redemptive action of love.

(Wilkie-Johnson 44.)

In the following pages the actions of Luvah-Orc-Jesus shall be examined with the intention of trying to find an answer to the apparent vagueness of the character. The entanglement of the narrative shall necessitate a somewhat more detailed description of their story.

We first encounter Luvah and Vala in Enitharmon's account of the fall in Night I: "Luvah and Vala woke & flew up from the Human Heart / Into the Brain; from thence upon the pillow Vala slumber'd. / And Luvah seiz'd the Horses of Light, & rose into the Chariot of Day"¹⁰. As we learn later, Luvah's usurpation of Urizen's place (man's emotional life against his intellect) was one of the prime reasons for the sickness of Albion, as the ensuing warfare led to the fall of the Zoas. The messengers of Beulah relate the story from a somewhat different perspective: Urizen wants to conspire with Luvah to gain dominion over Man, offering Luvah his own realm, himself trying to occupy Urthona's domain:

(...) do thou alone depart
 Into thy wished Kingdom where in Majesty & Power
 We may erect a throne. deep in the North I place my lot
 Thou in the South listen attentive. In silent of this night
 I will infold the Eternal tent in clouds opake while thou
 Siezing the chariots of the morning.

(*The Four Zoas* I, 21:489-494)

Although Luvah refuses the pact, he seizes Urizen's chariot thus engendering a bloody war in which the Emanations leaving their counterparts flee to Tharmas and

¹⁰*The Four Zoas* I, 10:262-264

Luvah's seizure of the Sun, a version of the Phaeton myth, was already adumbrated in Blake's poetry 30 years before in "How sweet I roam'd from field to field" of the *Poetical Sketches*.

disintegration begins. Luvah and Vala feel triumphant, unaware that the fall of Tharmas will inevitably bring about their fall as well. For a while it seems that Luvah has managed to gain dominion over Albion, who - mistaking him for Urizen - worships him as God¹¹. But as Albion realizes his mistake, he indignantly puts forth Luvah from his presence and casts both Luvah and Vala out: "And as they went in folding fires & thunders of the deep / Vala shrunk in like the dark sea that leaves its slimy banks / and from her bosom Luvah fell"¹². Their separation is precipitated by the fact that the dying Albion resigns his rule to Urizen ("Take thou possession! take this Scepter! go forth in my might / for I am weary, & must sleep in the dark sleep of Death / Thy brother Luvah hath smitten me but pity thou his youth"¹³), who casts Luvah into his furnaces of affliction and completely melts him (an indication of the repression of emotions by reason) to build the Mundane Shell upon the ashes (of passion). To further complicate the story of the fall of Luvah and Vala, Blake employs a prequel (a unit composed later but relating an earlier part of the story) and it turns out in Night VII that Vala seduced Albion and became pregnant with Urizen:

Vala was pregnant & brought forth Urizen Prince of Light
 First born of Generation. Then behold a wonder to the Eyes
 Of the now fallen Man a double form of Vala appeard. A Male
 And a female shuddring pale the Fallen Man recoil'd
 From the Enormity & call'd them Luvah and Vaia.

(*The Four Zoas* VII, 83:244-248.)

The birth of Urizen, then, seems immediately to bring about the separation of Luvah and Vala, while earlier we were told that Urizen's (thwarted) conspiracy with the then-unfallen Luvah led to the latter's disintegration. Thus Blake seems to suggest that Urizen's birth is coincidental with his existence.

With the division (fall) of Luvah and Vala now consummated, there is a significant change in their character. Once lover and beloved, the Eros and Psyche in Man, now they have turned into their opposite: "I was love but hatred awakes in me"¹⁴. Simultaneously with the transformation of the Prince of Love, however,

¹¹*The Four Zoas* III, 40:48-66

¹²*The Four Zoas* III, 42:102-104

¹³*The Four Zoas* II, 23:5-7

¹⁴*The Four Zoas* II, 27:104

Jesus puts on Luvah's robes of blood, "lest the state call'd Luvah should cease"¹⁵, a motive, whose significance is underlined by the fact that it is repeated several times in the poem like a textual refrain. When in the furnaces of affliction Luvah is melted (and Vala's fire with which she feeds the furnaces die out), the reader would expect that he disappears from the scene. This expectation seems to be supported by the fact that "the Eastern vacuity the empty world of Luvah"¹⁶ is now a horrid bottomless void. Yet, conversely, not only is Luvah's role taken on by Jesus, but - with a Blakean twist in the narrative - he is also reborn as Orc from the heart of Enitharmon (another possible source for the name as the anagram of 'cor'). As his conception - he is begotten immediately after the fall of his parents - so is his birth: "The groans of Enitharmon shake the skies the labring Earth / Till from her heart rending his way a terrible Child sprang forth / In thunder smoke & sullen flames & howlings & fury & blood"¹⁷. The birth of Orc plants jealousy into his father's heart and as child grows up, Los can no longer curb his jealousy, which he so far has tried to sublimate by building Golgonooza. What follows is the most beautiful rendering of the phenomenon, which Freud came to call "the Oedipal conflict", in poetic terms. (It is important to note here that while for Freud the Oedipal conflict is primarily a crisis for the child, Blake adheres to the original myth, in which the aggression starts with the parent's fear of his offspring. In both of Blake's minor prophecies, *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Ahania*, where he develops this theme, he is true to the myth.)

But when fourteen summers & winters had revolved over
 Their solemn habitation Los beheld the ruddy boy
 Embracing his bright mother & beheld malignant fires
 In his young eyes discerning plain that Orc plotted his death
 Grief rose upon his ruddy brows. a tightening girdle grew
 Around his bosom like a bloody cord. in secret sobs
 He burst it, but next morn another girdle succeeds
 Around his bosom. Every day he viewd the fiery youth
 With silent fear & his immortal cheeks grew deadly pale
 Till many a morn & many a night passd over in dire woe
 Forming a girdle in the day & bursting it at night
 The girdle was formd by day by night was burst in twain

¹⁵*The Four Zoas* II, 33:264

¹⁶*The Four Zoas* VI, 71:156

¹⁷*The Four Zoas* V, 58:36-38

Falling down on the rock an iron chain link by link lockd

(...)

Calld it the chain of Jealousy.

(*The Four Zoas* V, 60:79-95.)¹⁸

With the chain of Jealousy Orc is nailed to the rock, an interesting motive simultaneously referring to the myth of Prometheus and foreshadowing the death of Jesus in Luvah's robes of blood. Even though Los repents his horrible deed, he cannot free his son as the chain has stricken root into the rock and become one with Orc, a living chain sustained by his life. Just like Luvah before, Orc has been repressed, and thwarted energy rages now in vain in front of his arch-enemy: reason. For Urizen descended into the caves of Orc out of pity with the intention of teaching him his wisdom.¹⁹ Orc passionately rejects him, and in his answer to Urizen he dramatically establishes himself as completely opposite to the Prince of Light²⁰. He is enchained, burning with fierce energy, flaming in fury, young and restless, while Urizen is free yet sitting still, obdurate, aged, hoary and as cold as hail. Orc's defying Urizen is so intense that one is reminded of the notion of "conflictual undifferentiation": "The more our characters tend to see one another in terms of black and white, the more alike they really *make* one another. (...) The more these characters deny the reciprocity among them, the more they bring it about, each denial being immediately reciprocated."²¹

A cogent testimony for Orc's mistake in regarding himself as completely different from Urizen is revealed by Orc himself: "I well remember how I stole thy

¹⁸Based on the above lines Aaron Fogel suggests another possible reading of Orc's name:

Orc's chains (...) are pictured in the *Zoas* as having been created out of Los's sobbing: each sob is described as a *cord* around Los's chest that bursts, each burst band becoming one of the links in Orc's youthful bondage. (...) The name "Orc" itself, looked at as a kind of picture-in-letters, could be drawn as a complete circle followed by two broken or semi-circles: a small chain. (...) Orc's name both as sound as picture-in-letters evokes the abrupt, the truncated, the broken-off. In the story of the chains and their origin, Blake implies that the word "cord" recoiled to form the name "Orc" itself, so that "Orc" contains, represses, in its abruptness, a kind of involuted or twisted grief. Revolutionary anger is described as solidified mourning. (Fogel 223.)

¹⁹Abrahams identifies Urizen's motives as fear because as he says "the state of Orc exists always where art or freedom is suppressed and is thus a constant source of fear to tyrants." (Abrahams 5)

²⁰*The Four Zoas* VII, 78-79:28-89

²¹ Bidney (129-130) here cites from R. Girard, "Myth and Ritual in Shakespeare," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1979

light & it became fire / Consuming. Thou Knowst me now O Urizen Prince of Light"²². This speech of self-revelation establishes Orc as reborn Luvah; the Promethean youth is identical with the Prince of Love. The light that becomes fire consuming may be seen as a reference to the myth of Prometheus as well as an ingenious reminder of Luvah's seizure of Urizen's horses of light which led to his consummation in the fires of the furnaces of affliction. What happens here is strikingly similar to what Gaston Bachelard termed as the *Promethean complex*. He pointed out that the *Promethean complex* is an endeavour to know as much as - or more than - our fathers, to apprehend as much as - or more than - our masters, in other words, the *Promethean complex* is the Oedipal complex on the intellectual plane²³. Luvah's intention to usurp Urizen's domain expresses his desire to know as much as him, to become intellect, an eloquent proof that not only does he not consider themselves incongruous, he even wants to become identical with his quasi-opposite. A similar tendency is discernible in the case of Orc facing Urizen in Night VII; Orc is unable to resist Urizen's wisdom: "thou beginnest to weaken / My divided Spirit Like a worm I rise in peace unbound / From wrath Now When I rage my fetters bind me more"²⁴, and (in the process that in psychoanalytical terminology is called "the identification with the aggressor") Orc becomes entirely Urizenic, "turning affection into fury & thought into abstraction"²⁵ to finally put on a Serpent body and be crucified on the Tree of Mystery.

The birth of Orc goes hand in hand with the appearance of Vala as the shadowy female, who cumulatively represents the single vision of Ulro and the double vision of Generation²⁶. The changes that took place in both of their characters (compared to their role in the earlier myths) are significant. We have seen how Orc gradually becomes a complementary figure to Urizen; a similar process is discernible in case of her consort: "Earlier the Vala-figure was the gaoler's daughter of folk-tale and myth, an Ariadne who helps the liberating hero and, becoming his lover, is liberated by him."²⁷ In *The Four Zoas* the 'nameless shadowy Vortex' is the main instrument of Orc's repression. Her motives are clearly stated: "With sighs & howling & deep sobs that [Orc] might lose his rage / And with it lose himself in meekness she

²²*The Four Zoas* VII, 80:147-148

²³Bachelard 26-27

²⁴*The Four Zoas* VII, 80:135-138

²⁵*The Four Zoas* VII, 80:155

²⁶Verma 201

²⁷Fuller 135

embraced his fire”²⁸. Of the passionate lover she becomes a tyrant, and “the constant mixture of military and sexual violence in the poetry surrounding her and her pleasure in violence of which she is the source also associate her with Urizen.”²⁹

We have seen that Luvah has so far been destroyed twice and so by the eighth night, with the crucifixion of Orc (or in other words: his assimilation into Urizen at the end of a process that Frye termed the Orc-cycle) all that Luvah once stood for appear to have been eliminated. Yet, providentially one aspect of his remains: that which was taken on by Jesus.

When Urizen saw the Lamb of God clothed in Luvahs robes
Perplexed & terrifid he Stood tho well he knew that Orc
Was Luvah But now he beheld a new Luvah. Or One
Who assumd Luvahs form & stood before him opposite
(The Four Zoas VIII, 101:61-64)

Just like in the previous nights, there is a confrontation between Luvah and Urizen and Urizen yet again manages to win, so in the antepenultimate night Christ incarnated in Luvah is crucified. Simultaneously with the incarnation of Jesus we face the transformation of Vala into Rahab, a member in the Synagogue of Satan.

It would appear that with this third aspect of Luvah eradicated (together with the complete deterioration of his Emanation) we witness the ultimate victory of Reason over Passion, but Blake’s thought is more complex than that. Luvah’s total extinction is prevented - thus his reappearance in Night IX is made possible - by two circumstances. 1. As the climax of the Orc-cycle in Night VII, Orc organized a Serpent body. The fact that Blake chose to depict this ultimate state of Orc as a serpent shows his determination to preserve this state from complete disappearance, since the serpent - a most complex symbol - does not only stand for its most immediate connotation as ‘evil’ or ‘tempter’, but it is also emblematic of immortality, as it can slough its skin and so perpetually regain its youth³⁰. 2. Luvah’s rendering as the incarnation of Christ is also suggestive of transcendence as the crucifixion of Jesus symbolizes the death of his *physical* aspect only, and not the extinction of the totality it represents. The motives of Orc’s turning into a serpent and Luvah’s crucifixion as Jesus, then, explain what otherwise would seem

²⁸*The Four Zoas* VII, 90:127-128

²⁹Fuller 135

³⁰For the positive aspect of the serpent see Raine 236-240

inexplicable: how it is possible for Luvah - after the destruction of all three of his forms - to reappear in Night IX.

In the apocalypse we see all the three aspects of the Zoa of Passion mingled together. Orc now burns in raving fire, but as his rage is no longer curbed by Urizen, who is ordered by the recuperating Albion to "Let Luvah rage in the dark deep even to Consummation / For if thou feedest not his rage it will subside in peace"³¹, he soon burns himself out. As the consummation of Orc is complete, Luvah and Vala take over the place of Orc and Rahab, who no longer appear in the poem (thus the triple aspect of Luvah is reduced to a twofold one, containing only Jesus as an extra layer over the original Zoa). Albion gives Luvah and Vala into the hands of Urizen, who assigns them a new place: "return O Love in peace / Into your place the place of seed not in the brain or heart"³². With the Zoa of Passion in the loins, the brain is re-established as Urizen's domain while the heart is now ready for the reception of resurrected Tharmas. As the human integral is now almost resumed, Luvah and Vala reassume their eternal form as lover and beloved and in a pastoral interlude they are born into Beulah, Vala's Garden of innocence.

Invisible Luvah in bright clouds hoverd over Valas head
 And thus their ancient golden age renewd for Luvah spoke
 With voice mild from his golden Cloud upon the breath of morning

Come forth O Vala from the grass & from the silent Dew
 Rise from the dews of death for the Eternal Man is Risen

She rises among the flowers & looks toward the Eastern clearness
 She walks yea runs her feet are wingd on the tops of the bending grass
 Her garments rejoice in the vocal wind & her hair glistens with dew
 (*The Four Zoas* IX, 126: 385-392)

The bucolic setting and Vala's answer are reminiscent of *The Book of Thel*, but while Thel failed to enter the world of experience, regenerate Vala is more like Oothoon, Thel's redeeming contrary, in that she consciously descends into the valley and plucks its flowers and fruits, symbolic references to resurrected sexuality.³³

³¹*The Four Zoas* IX, 120:142-143

³²*The Four Zoas* IX, 126:364-365

³³ Our understanding of Oothoon's sexuality is in line with the most representative trend in the interpretation of the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, put forth by Erdman, Bloom and Ostriker.

It is customary to look at this interlude as a moment of unclouded happiness. Yet, beautiful and reassuring as this scene may seem among the tumult of the final night, a closer reading of the text reveals that this is not yet the final, ideal state for Luvah and Vala. Vala's Garden is

The land of doubts & shadows sweet delusions unformd hopes
They saw no more the terrible confusion of the wracking universe
They heard not saw not felt not all the terrible confusion
For in their orb'd senses within clos'd up they wander'd at will
(*The Four Zoas* IX, 126:379-382)

Their unawareness of the pain of the apocalypse that surrounds them and the closed senses strongly suggest a state similar to prenatal existence, a reading in which Vala's Garden may stand for *hortus conclusus*, 'closed garden', in medieval works symbolic of the Virgin Mary's womb. "Even when his language recalls pastoral and hymn, even as he soothes us (...) Blake lulls us into a false sense of security. (...) Perhaps in *The Four Zoas*, Vala's Garden, veiled in darkness belongs more to the shadowy dead than the living lovers. Elysian Fields are beautiful, but for all that in Hades."³⁴

Still, the reunion of Luvah and Vala has a redeeming effect, Urizen "Cried Times are Ended he Exulted he arose in joy he exulted / He pour'd his light & all his Sons & daughters pour'd their light / To exhale the spirits of Luvah & Vala thro the atmosphere"³⁵. The reconciliation of reason and passion finally takes place. "Luvah's liberation is precisely what accomplished in Night IX of *The Four Zoas*. As he drinks the 'wine of ages' and sings a new song, 'his crown of thorns fell from his head'³⁶ Luvah has ceased to define himself in opposition to Urizen; he has realized that Urizen is a 'Man' and not a 'God'.³⁷ The falling off of the crown of thorns is also symbolical of the termination of the double aspect of Luvah; he is no longer to be associated with Jesus but has regained his original, undivided essence as one of the Quaternals. The reconciliation of Luvah and Urizen is mutual: Urizen, who has so far treated Luvah as his principal victim, no longer strives to subdue him

Laura Haigwood in her thoughtful essay, "Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*: Revising an Interpretive Tradition" (in Punter 94-107) challenges this reading of Oothoon's sexuality and sees it as much more sinister and sinister than critics claim it to be.

³⁴ Haigney 117

³⁵ *The Four Zoas* IX, 131:368-370

³⁶ *The Four Zoas* IX, 135:709, 710

³⁷ Rosso-Watkins 186

and has learned to accept his fellow Zoa as an indispensable agent of the apocalypse. Luvah's task is to gather the vintage. With an interesting shift in tone the pastoral world of Luvah and Vala now turns into a wild orgy of exuberant joy ("How red the sons & daughters of Luvah how they tread the Grapes / Laughing & shouting drunk with the odors many fall oerwearied / Drownd in the wine is many a youth & maiden") and pain ("But in the Wine Presses the Human Grapes Sing not nor dance / They howl & writhe in shoals of torment in fierce flames consuming"³⁸). The previous aspects of Luvah as a god dying for mankind (Jesus), and demigod suffering for humanity (Prometheus-Orc) are now transformed into a completely different one: Luvah has become a Dionysian wine-god. It seems that instead of atoning for the world, Luvah and his rule now inflict pain on their victims:

They Dance around the Dying & they Drink the howl & groan
 They catch the Shrieks in cups of gold they hand them to one another
 These are the sports of love & these the sweet delights of amorous play
 Tears of the grapes the death sweat of the Cluster the last sigh
 Of the mild youth who listens to the luring songs of Luvah
 (*The Four Zoas IX, 136-137:767-771*)

What we witness here is the result of the repression of emotions in the previous nights. Just like the energy of Orc before, by the end of the apocalypse the passions of Luvah and Vala is consumed in the bacchanalic intoxication, frenzy and violence, and the Zoa, who at first may have seemed the most likely to produce the Messiah, has become "dung on the ground"³⁹ to fertilize the ground before Urthona-Los.

After summarizing the main actions of Luvah and Vala in the poem, it shall now be examined how Szondi's descriptions might help us understand certain ambiguous points. Szondi's fate analysis (commonly known as Schicksal analysis) postulates the presence of four basic drives in every individual, sharing Blake's contention that „Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity / Cannot

³⁸*The Four Zoas IX, 136:743-745, 748-749.* For those who see the pastoral interlude as an ideal - final - state for Luvah and Vala this shift in tone may seem unaccountable but once we accept it as a step in the culmination of error it is intelligible.

³⁹*The Four Zoas IX, 137:791* The death of the corporeal, physical aspect of Luvah must be annihilated before Albion may assume his truly Human form, as "Hell is the being shut up in the possession of corporeal desires which shortly weary the man, for *all life is holy*". *Annotations to Lavater's 'Aphorisms on Man'*

Exist. but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden”⁴⁰. These four drives define four character types, whose particulars show striking resemblance to Blake’s Zoas: the Contact drive with Tharmas, the Sexual drive with Luvah, the Paroxysmal drive with Urizen and the Ego drive with Los.⁴¹ In the mentally healthy, claims Szondi, all the four drives are present in a stable equilibrium and the extreme prevalence of any of them may lead to various psychological diseases - a notion poetically rendered in *The Four Zoas*, whereby the contentions of the Zoas to gain dominion leads to the sickness/fall of Albion.

The category that Luvah and Vala seem to be most apt examples of is the *Category of Dual Unionism* (or in other words: the category of the unsatisfied sadistic impulses⁴²) of the sexual drive. This assumption seems to be substantiated by the Luvah-lava reading of the Zoa’s name as it is then the mirror image of Vala. Just like the members of this category cannot function without their partner, needing his/her continued presence, Luvah and Vala also seem to be inextricably bound to each other:

But Luvah & Vala standing in the bloody sky
 On high remaind alone forsaken in fierce jealousy
 They stood above the heavens forsaken desolate suspended in blood
 Descend they could not. nor from Each other avert their eyes
(*The Four Zoas* I, 13:359-362)

But they are doomed to separation, and as we have seen, their sundering brings about a complete transformation of their characters. Szondi’s investigations have shown that “if the dual union is disrupted, repressed aggressions may be aroused and the person may become vengeful”⁴³. This is exactly what happens to Vala after she is rent from Luvah; when his separated consort is cast into Urizen’s furnaces of affliction, she willingly assists Urizen and feeds “in cruel delight the furnaces with fire” and “in joy she heard his howlings”⁴⁴. She retains this cruelty all through the poem and exhibits violence and malevolence towards all three aspects of Luvah. Luvah himself cannot escape the effects of the breaking up of the original integrity,

⁴⁰ *The Four Zoas* I, 3:4-5

⁴¹ For a detailed description of the drives see Szondi (1952) 180-196

⁴² Noszlopi 99

⁴³ Szondi (1952) 183

⁴⁴ *The Four Zoas* II, 25:73, 26:78

from love he now turns to hate and in a beautiful lament he relates the birth and death of their dual union:

(...) in times of Everlasting
 When I calld forth the Earth-worm from the cold & dark obscure
 I nurturd her I fed her with my rains & dews, she grew
 A scaled Serpent, yet I fed her tho' she hated me
 Day after day she fed upon the mountains in Luvah's sight
 I brought her thro' the Wilderness, a dry & thirsty land
 And I commanded springs to rise for her in the black desert
 Till she became a Dragon winged bright & poisonous
 I opend all the floodgates of the heavens to quench her thirst
 And I commanded the Great deep to hide her in his hand
 Till she became a little weeping Infant a span long
 I carried her in my bosom as a man carries a lamb
 I loved her I gave her all my soul & my delight

(...)

And they have taken her away & hid her from my sight
 (*The Four Zoas* II, 26-27:82-98)⁴⁵

Luvah's song and his brooding over the loss of Vala is very similar to what can be seen in the case of Tharmas. According to the findings of the Szondi test the categories of Tharmas ("everlasting search") and Luvah ("dual unionism") are psychologically closely related.⁴⁶ In the subsequent nights not much is revealed about Luvah's attitude to Vala because it is his dying-god aspect that is emphasized. More is disclosed about Vala; she does not give herself up to depression but, as it is appropriate in this category, she apparently takes revenge by seeking new partners and establishing promiscuous relationships⁴⁷ - or at least this is what Orc is led to believe: Orc was "Silent as despairing love & strong as Jealousy / Jealous that she

⁴⁵Blake provides a striking illustration of the transformation of Vala. "Vala as dragon and as harpy-vulture-mermaid with emphatically drawn genitals depicts the corruption of sexual life into something cruel, brutal, devouring. The partially erased marginal drawings, a woman hugging a bat-winged phallus and a moth-winged woman with abnormally large breasts, make a similar point: the corruption of Luvah signifies the birth of pornography." Fuller 103-104

⁴⁶Szondi (1952) 183

⁴⁷Szondi (1942) 73

was Vala now become Urizen's harlot / And the Harlot of Los & the deluded harlot of the Kings of Earth"⁴⁸.

This degenerated, sadomasochistic relationship that resulted from the separation of Luvah and Vala cannot be ameliorated until their reunion, which takes place in the pastoral interlude of the last night (in which Blake, quite appropriately, gives a detailed description of their now-idyllic relationship)⁴⁹.

We may wonder why Blake chose to depict the fallen Luvah and Vala as characters that are bound to each other in dual unionism. Our contention is that the inextricable relationship of Luvah and Vala is due to a conscious irony on Blake's part, as it shall be proved that Luvah is the historical (physical) aspect of Jesus, while Vala stands for the Church, which - to Blake's abhorrence - came to worship the past and particular body of Christ, and became bound to the mere remembrance of the dead body of Jesus, believing that the literal body that perished on the cross and the sepulcher is the foundation of Christianity⁵⁰ thus turning the Christianity of the soul into the Churchianity of outward religion and ignoring the spiritual aspect of the descent of the Messiah, which is the only valid interpretation of his incarnation. The first part of our hypothesis is substantiated by the fact that Jesus's descent and/or suffering and crucifixion in Luvah's robes of blood is unmistakably emphatic in the poem: "Eternity appeard above them as One Man infolded / In Luvah[s] robes of blood & bearing all his afflictions" (Night I); "And the Divine Vision appeard in Luvahs robes of blood" (repeated twice in the next few lines in Night II); "Saviour (...) / Appearest clothd in Luvahs garments" (already stated nine lines earlier in Night IV); "They vote the death of Luvah & they naild him to the tree / They pierced him with a spear & laid him in a sepulcher" (Night VII); the

⁴⁸*The Four Zoas* VII, 91:136-138

⁴⁹Their relationship is idyllic (as they are reunited), just the circumstances will have to be changed.

It would be tempting to add one more point of analogy to our comparison, as the assertion that "the loss of the partner" in subjects of this category "may be reacted to by excessive drinking" could well correspond to the orgy of the last night, but by the time of the bacchanal Luvah and Vala are already reunited. Another enticing point of comparison presents itself in Szondi's observation that after the disruption of the dual union, members of the category may attempt to comfort themselves by striving for purity and atonement. Purity and atonement, of course, would seem to perfectly fit in with Luvah's Promethean-, and Jesus-aspects but we must remember that Luvah was forced to undergo the afflictions, and his sufferings (which are usually associated with the atonement) were not his conscious choice. (However, to mention a valid parallel as well, we would like to draw the attention to the fact that according to Szondi one of the most frequent pursuits in the category is to be a musician which is in harmony with Blake's association of Luvah with music.) Szondi (1952) 183-184

⁵⁰For a discussion of related matters see Altizer

topic of Jesus assuming a dark Satanic body and putting it off on the cross is reiterated all through Night VIII (nine times):

The Lamb of God descended thro the twelve portions of Luvah
Bearing his sorrows & rec[iev]ing all his cruel wounds
 Thus was the *Lamb* of God condemnd to *Death*
 They *nailed him upon the tree of Mystery* weeping over him
 And then *mocking* & then worshipping calling him Lord & King

until finally in Night IX "His *crown of thorns* fell from his head"⁵¹. The metaphor of Jesus descending in Luvah's robes of blood all too clearly refers to the incarnation as Christ's putting on a *vegetated* body; so also the emphasis on the crucifixion and the cross signify the *mortal* death of Jesus⁵². Another proof for the claim that in Luvah we are presented the physical body of Christ can be found in the fact that the Zoa corresponding to him in Ezekiel is the ox or bull (we have allusions to the "bulls of Luvah" in Nights II, V, VII and IX). With the Luvah-bull association Blake refers not so much to the strength of passions (as for this implication the other Zoa-animal, the lion, would be much more appropriate, being not only mighty but also untamed), but much rather to the notion of Luvah as a sacrificial victim.

Nancy M. Ide's computer analysis of *The Four Zoas* also supports our argument. She claims that

the overall pattern of alternation between areas of high and low image density, affects the reader's perception of the poem. (...) A reduction in imagistic connotations places more emphasis on narrative meaning. (...) The text segments characterized by low image density are, for the most part, more plot oriented than the sections of the poem containing the densest concentrations of imagery.

(Ide 128-129)

As we can see in her graph (Appendix), the image levels reach their lowest point in the middle of Night VIII; here the imagery becomes so sparse that - because of the almost total lack of imagistic meaning - our attention is exclusively drawn to the act

⁵¹*The Four Zoas* I,13:363-364; II,32:247; IV,56:254-258; VIIb, 92:166-167; VIII,105-106:323-327; IX, 135:711 (Italics mine)

⁵²In the 1809 illustration of *The Last Judgement* (Rosenwald Collection) Blake no longer depicts the cross as exulted into Heaven; it is falling headlong - with the serpent wound about - into the abyss.

itself, obviously yielding it a heightened significance. What happens then in the climactic passages of the eighth night. The middle sections of the night are devoted to the description of the crucifixion of Jesus, but even more crucial than that (as Christ's death on the cross was already related in the previous night so this in itself would not account for the increased importance of the passage) is that we learn at this point what happens *after* the crucifixion: his dead body is taken off of the cross to signal the beginning of a mistaken worship of his physical aspect:

Jerusalem saw the Body dead upon the Cross She fled away
Saying Is this Eternal Death Where shall I hide from Death
Pity me Los pity me Urizen & let us build
A Sepulcher & worship Death in fear while yet we live
Death! God of All from whom we rise to whom we all return
And Let all Nations of the Earth worship at the Sepulcher
With Gifts & Spices with lamps rich embossed jewels & gold
(*The Four Zoas* VIII, 106:331-337)

Blake did not deny the significance of the crucifixion, but his idea of it was completely different from that of the Church, whose "cruciolatry"⁵³, worship of death and materialism he could not accept. He regarded the crucifixion as an *internal* event, taking place in every man when he casts out his Selfhood (this is what his final great poem, *The Everlasting Gospel* of 1818 is about) and assumes his true spiritual body. He believed that the Lamb of God descended "To put off Mystery *time after time* & as a Man / Is born on Earth so was he born of Fair Jerusalem / In mysterys woven mantle"⁵⁴. The significance of the crucifixion is precisely in the fact that Jesus had "first to give his vegetated body / To be cut off & separated that the Spiritual body may be Reveald"⁵⁵. This is certainly not a once-for-all event so the Church's confinement to the mere remembrance to the past and particular body of Christ is a destructive error, for when the death of Jesus is known only as an event of the past, it cannot be repeated as an eternal and universal occurrence. The fact that the death of Luvah (whose identity with Jesus is so painstakingly emphasized all through the nine nights) is related several times in the poem may be seen as Blake's ingenious way of expressing his rejection to accept Christ's death as an event that took place once, at one particular time in history.

⁵³Damon 84

⁵⁴*The Four Zoas* VIII, 104:263-265 (Italics mine)

⁵⁵*The Four Zoas* VIII, 104:266-267

Of the many subtle hints scattered in the poem which suggest that Luvah is the historical aspect of Christ one shall be explored that is connected to Luvah-Orc. In Night VII we learn from Vala that Orc (who hides Luvah) "torments me for Sin / For all my Secret faults which he brings forth upon the light / Of day"⁵⁶. This avenger is certainly not Blake's real Jesus, whose religion is the Forgiveness of Sins, but much rather the Son of God, who came to promulgate the Decalogue. For Blake, however, the Ten Commandments were abhorred abstract rules that "no flesh nor spirit could keep"⁵⁷, as they imposed general regulations on the particular individuals, and he saw in them the culmination of materialism:

Thus the terrible race of Los & Enitharmon gave
Laws & Religions to the sons of Har binding them more
And more to Earth: closing and restraining:
Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete
(Song of Los 5:13-16)

The only ethics Blake could accept was embodied in the Everlasting Gospel, and the only Jesus that he recognized as the true Messiah was the Antinomian Christ of this gospel. The idea of the Everlasting Gospel, which lies at the centre of Blake's thought, goes back to the 12th century Italian mystic, Joachim of Flora. He taught that history fell into three great periods: 1. *ordo conjugatorum* (the Age of the Father, Old Testament) 2. *ordo clericorum* (the Age of the Son, New Testament) 3. *ordo monachorum* (the Age of the Holy Spirit). The first period was characterized by fear and servile obedience, the second by faith and filial obedience, while the last, Joachim believed, would be the age of love and spiritual liberty⁵⁸. The visible Church of the second age was to be absorbed by the spiritual Church of the third, and the historical Jesus (remembered by Christendom), the cultic Christ of *The Four Zoas* was to give way to the epiphany of the universal Divine Humanity.

In the coming age of the Spirit the full truth of the Everlasting Gospel will be revealed, not in a new sacred book but in a new revelation of the spiritual sense of the Bible with which God will illuminate the hearts of men. In this age God will be within man and therefore all existing forms of worship, ceremonies, churches, legal and moral codes will become

⁵⁶*The Four Zoas* 94:249-251

⁵⁷*Book of Urizen* 23:25

⁵⁸Cross 727

superfluous. Instead of appearing as a force from without, God will now be within, and the unity of God and man will be fully accomplished.

(Morton 37)

The Four Zoas depicts the transformation from the second to the third age, the sufferings that are inevitable for the historical Christ (Luvah) to be replaced by a truly Antinomian one, Los (or rather: the new integrity of Albion, with Los as *primus inter pares*, not excluding Urizen and Luvah, who had to come first in order that a higher integrity may be achieved). One slight alteration between the ages of Joachim of Flora and the phases presented in *The Four Zoas* needs to be pointed out. Although the Eternity from which the Zoas fell was indeed the age of the Father, Tharmas, it cannot be corresponded to the first age of the Everlasting Gospel, as it appears much more idyllic and free than that. It seems that in Blake's poem Eternity or original Innocence answers the Golden Age of myths, while Experience comprises both *ordo conjugatorum* and *ordo clericorum*⁵⁹. While Joachim called the three periods the Ages of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost, the Muggletonians (an English Joachite sect⁶⁰) changed the denomination to the Ages of Water, Blood and Spirit which appear to be echoed in Blake's poem, as the Age of Water is that of Tharmas, a furious sea-god in his fallen aspect, the Age of Blood is that of Urizen, initiator of bloody wars and - as the God of the Old Testament - of bloody revenges, as well as of Luvah, in whose robes of blood Jesus descended so that his blood can be spilled to prepare the way for the Age of the Spirit, presided over by Urthona-Los.

We have previously pointed out that Luvah and Vala belong to the Szondian category of dual unionism and then demonstrated that Luvah represents the historical aspect of Christ. Once we accept these two theses, we can logically infer that Luvah's partner in the dual union is the Church. In the following passages we shall endeavour to substantiate this conclusion.

First and foremost it needs to be clarified that for Blake there existed two types of Church: the Church Universal and the Church of Rome. The Church Universal is the only church Blake acknowledged as "it is composed of the Innocent <civilized> Heathen & the Uncivilized Savage who having not the Law do by nature the things contained in the Law."⁶¹ This church corresponds to the third age of the Everlasting Gospel, while the Church of Rome - with its adherence to the Ten Commandments

⁵⁹This observation is confirmed by the fact that Luvah and Urizen are inextricably bound in the poem.

⁶⁰The sect flourished in the seventeenth century but survived in London until Blake's time.

⁶¹*A Vision of the Last Judgement* 81

and promulgation of conventional moral virtues - belongs to the second one⁶². The two are each other's opposite, as the basic tenet of the first is the Forgiveness of Sins while the second is based on the Punishment of Sins. Obviously, when we say that Luvah's partner in the dual union is the Church, we mean the Church of Rome.

Instead of citing the evident textual references to Vala as Church⁶³, we shall concentrate on some contextual elements that prove their identity. Because of Blake's notion of the essential interconnectedness of the Church of Rome and the Old Testament, upon whose doctrines Blake thought it was based, we would expect that Vala have strong links with Urizen (Old Testament God). And indeed, apart from a few brief encounters with Tharmas and Los, she is associated with Luvah and Urizen all through the poem. Vala's continuous conjunction with Urizen, her revengefulness, cruelty and militancy ("Rahab & Tirzah far different mantles prepare webs of torture / Mantles of despair girdles of bitter compunction shoes of indolence / Veils of ignorance covering from head to feet"⁶⁴) well correspond to Blake's idea of the false Church⁶⁵. Vala assists Urizen in the demolition of all three aspects of Luvah, first by firing Urizen's furnaces, which melt her counterpart (Night II, 26-27), then by curbing Orc's rage which leads to the Demon's crucifixion on Urizen's Tree of Mystery (Night VII, 91 and Night VIII, 101⁶⁶), and finally - as a member in the Synagogue of Satan - by voting for Jesus's death (Night VIII, 105). It cannot be accidental that her role in the murdering of Christ is most

⁶²Blake's rejection of this Church is already formulated on plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

(...) a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental dieties from their objects: thus began Priesthood.

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

⁶³In her fallen form she is referred to as "Rahab / Who is Mystery Babylon the Great Mother of Harlots", who belongs to the "Synagogue of Satan", which "Clothed her with Scarlet robes & Gems / and on her forehead was her name written in blood" (*The Four Zoas* VIII, 106:329-330, 105:281-282), a straightforward allusion to the Revelation 17:4-5 and 2:9.

⁶⁴*The Four Zoas* VIII, 113:218-220

⁶⁵The best summary of this idea is given in *Jerusalem* 52

Man must & will have Some Religion; if he has not the Religion of Jesus, he will have the Religion of Satan, & will erect the Synagogue of Satan. calling the Prince of this World, God; and destroying all who do not worship Satan under the Name of God. (...) Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger; and not the Forgiver of Sin, and their God is Satan, Named by the Divine Name

⁶⁶It is also interesting to note that when Orc is born, Vala takes charge over him, just like the Church appropriated Jesus. (*The Four Zoas* VII, 85:332)

emphatic when Luvah's Jesus-aspect is killed; she does not only vote for and then triumph over the crucifixion, but she herself slays him:

But thou O Universal Humanity who is One Man blessed for Ever
Receivest the Integuments woven Rahab beholds the Lamb of God
She smites with her knife of flint She destroys her own work
Times after times thinking to destroy the Lamb
(The Four Zoas VIII,
113:232-235)

We can find further indications of Vala's intricate connection with Urizen in the fact that "she spread herself thro all the branches" of the Tree of Mystery and "The Synagogue Created her from Fruit of Urizen's tree"⁶⁷. But just like Vala is born from Urizen, Urizen is also born from Vala; her seduction of Albion and giving life to Urizen can be seen as Blake's poetic rendering of the process, whereby the Church created a false conception of religion in Man. In the figure of Albion, the whole of mankind has fallen into Vala's trap:

For nothing could restrain the dead in Beulah from descending
Unto Ulros night tempted by the Shadowy females sweet
Delusive cruelty they descend away from the Daughters of Beulah
And Enter Urizens temple
(The Four Zoas VIII, 99:25-
28)

Even Jerusalem cannot escape her influence (the most frequently applied adjective to describe Vala is 'delusive' and 'cruel') whom Rahab takes "A Willing Captive by delusive arts impell'd / to Worship Urizens dragon form to offer her own Children / Upon the bloody Altar"⁶⁸. Rahab's delusion then leads Jerusalem to weep over the dead body of Jesus (mistaking his garment for his essence) and to initiate the worship of death, the ultimate error in the teaching of the Church.

Finally, there remains one element that seems to bear special significance in our analysis. We know that Apocalypse starts immediately after the culmination of error. This climax in Urizen's case is the moment when he embraces the Shadowy

⁶⁷*The Four Zoas VIII, 101:85, 105:287*

⁶⁸*The Four Zoas VIII, 111:598-600*

Female, which is Blake saying that when false religion is completely absorbed by the false Church, the moment is ripe for the regeneration of both.

We have started our investigation of Luvah and Vala with a question: What could account for the apparent vagueness of the character of Luvah? After our analysis the following explanation suggests itself. Because of the dual unionism between Luvah and Vala, the Zoa can only be examined together with his partner, with whom he is essentially one, as the historical Christ can only be understood when studied together with the Church of Rome, which latter is intricately bound with the (traditional idea) of God/Urizen, all three notions being inextricably bound.

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