

William Blake

England's radical prophet & visionary

Andy Wilson

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour*

Blake: Introduction: **Birth**



1757: William Blake was born on 28th Nov in his family home, in Soho, at the junction of Broadwick St and Marshall St. He was the third of seven children.

Blake: Context: **Civil War & Industrial Revolution**



Blake: Context: **Politics & Religion, Apocalypse & Revelation**



Blake: Introduction: **Birth and Childhood**



1757: Blake was born on 28th Nov in his family home, in Soho, at the junction of Broadwick St and Marshall St. He was the third of seven children.

The shop below was a hosiery, owned and run by his father, James.

As a child, Blake has visions, including seeing angels in a tree on Greenwich Common.

Blake was mostly educated at home by his parents, with a great emphasis on Bible study.

Blake spent most of his life in London (in Soho, Lambeth & Pall Mall) apart from a few years spent in Felpham, on the Sussex coast.

1768: He is sent to Henry Parr's drawing school on the Strand, and was then apprenticed for seven years to the engraver, James Basire.

Blake: Introduction: **Later Life**



1782: Blake meets and marries Catherine Sophia Boucher (or Butcher), daughter of a market trader, He teaches her to read and write, and to paint.

1788: Blake invents the relief etching method of printing, which he says was taught him by the ghost of his brother, Robert.

1800-1803: Blake is living in Felpham, Sussex, working for his patron, William Hayley.

1804: Blake is tried for sedition, for assaulting a soldier and crying 'Damn the King!'

1827: Blake dies on the 12th August, clapping his hands in joy.

1863: Alexander Gilchrist publishes the first biography of Blake.

Blake: Bunhill Fields



Blake: Bunhill Fields: **The Blake Society: Aug 2021**



Blake: Introduction: **His Significance**



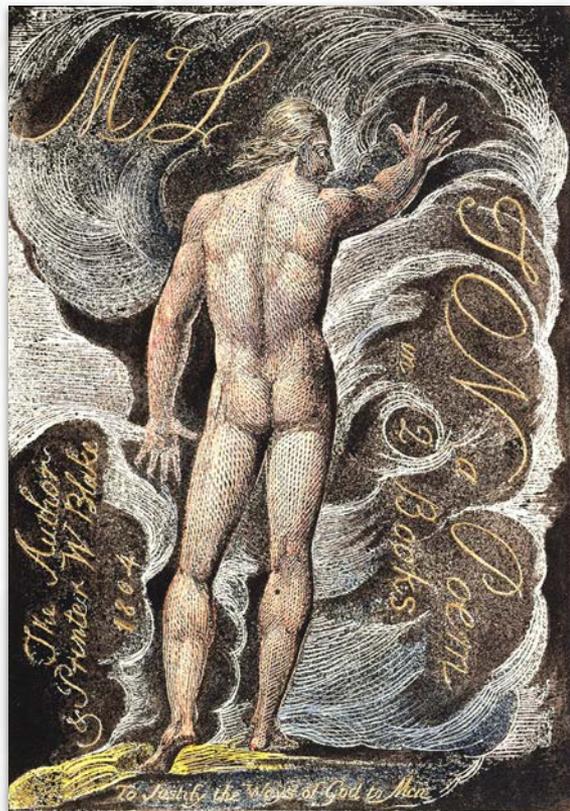
*Far and away the greatest artist
Britain has ever produced*
Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*

- Engraver & Printmaker
- Poet
- Artist
- Radical
- Prophet

Blake: **Blake's Press in his Lambeth Studio**



Blake: Introduction: Major Works



- 1789: Songs of Innocence (£3.3s / £277)
- 1789: The Book of Thel (£2.2s / £185)
- 1790: **The Marriage of Heaven and Hell**
- 1791: The French Revolution
- 1793: Visions of the Daughters of Albion
- 1793: **America: A Prophecy** (£5.5s / £461)
- 1794: **Europe: A Prophecy** (£5.5s / £461)
- 1794: Songs of Experience (£3.3s / £277)
- 1794: **Songs of Innocence and Experience**
- 1794: The First Book of Urizen (£5.5s / £461)
- 1795: The Song of Los
- 1795: The Book of Ahania
- 1795: The Book of Los
- 1795: The Song of Los
- 1796: Small / Large Book of Designs
- 1797: The Four Zoas / Vala
- 1797: Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts
- 1804: **Milton** (£10.10s / £923)
- 1820: **Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion**
- 1808: Designs for Robert Blair's The Grave
- 1820: The Pastorals of Virgil
- 1826: Illustrations to The Book of Job
- 1827: Laocoön
- 1827: Illustrations to Dante's Divine Comedy



Blake's Influences

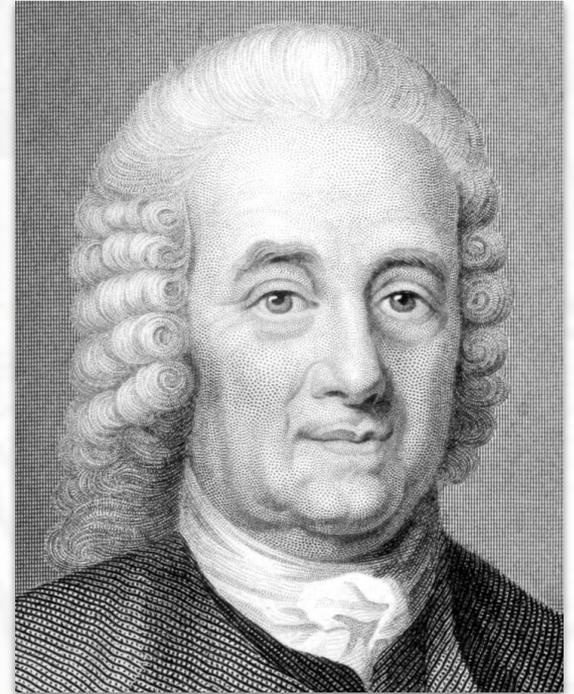
Blake: Influences



Jacob Böhme
1575-1624



John Milton
1608-1674



Emanuel Swedenborg
1688-1772

Blake: Influences: **Böhme** (1575-1624)



Jacob Böhme (1575–1624) was a German philosopher, mystic, and theologian. His work caused a great scandal. Böhme had a great influence on German idealism and romanticism. Böhme thought it necessary for humanity to return to God, and for all original unities to undergo differentiation, desire and conflict in order for creation to evolve to a new state of harmony, allowing God to achieve a new self-awareness.

Paracelsus and Böhme appeared to me.

William Blake, *Letter to John Flaxman*, 21st Sep 1800.

Left: *Byss and Abyss, Nothing and All, Time and Eternity*, from the first English *Collected Works of Jacob Böhme* (1764-1781), illustrations by Dionysius Andreas Fisher.

Blake: Influences: Milton (1608-1674): **Paradise Lost**



*Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World...*

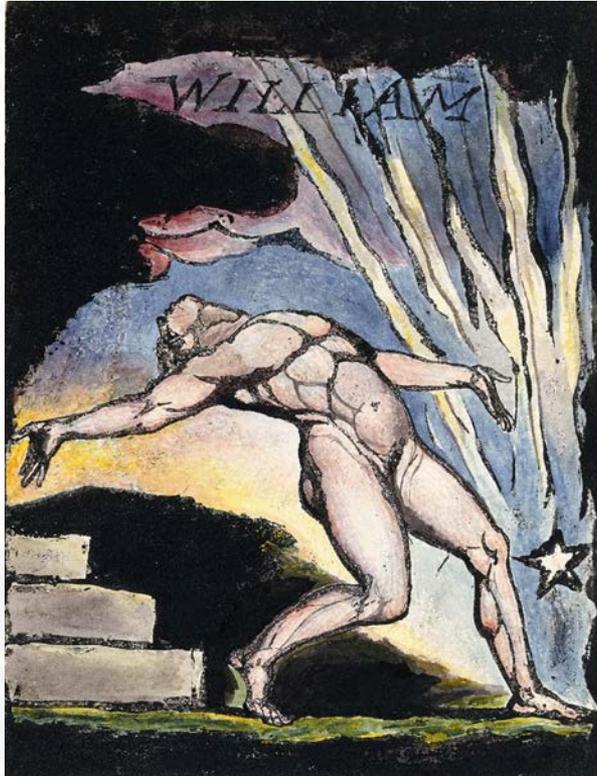
*... What in me is dark
Illumin, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And **justify the wayes of God to men.**
Milton, opening stanzas of *Paradise Lost*.*

*The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God,
and at liberty when of Devils & Hell is because he was a true Poet
and of the Devil's party without knowing it.*

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Left: Gustave Doré, *The Rebel Angels Fall*, from *Illustrations to Milton's Paradise Lost*.

Blake: Influences: Milton (1608-1674): **Milton Possesses Blake**

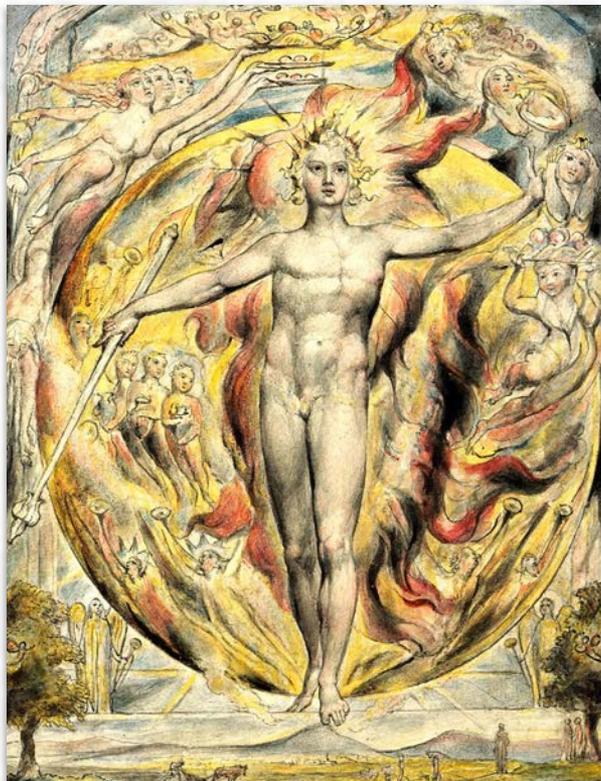


*... the Sea of Time & Space thunderd aloud
Against the rock, which was inwrapped with the weeds of death
Hovering over the cold bosom, in its vortex Milton bent down
To the bosom of death, what was underneath soon seemd above.
A cloudy heaven mingled with stormy seas in loudest ruin;
But as a wintry globe descends precipitant thro' Beulah bursting,
With thunders loud and terrible: so Miltons shadow fell
Precipitant loud thundring into the Sea of Time & Space.*

*Then first I saw him in the Zenith as a falling star,
Descending perpendicular, swift as the swallow or swift;
And on my left foot falling on the tarsus, enterd there;*
William Blake, *Milton* 15:39-49.

Left: Blake, *The Spirit of Milton Descends into Blake's Foot*, from *Milton* (1804).

Blake: Influences: Milton (1608-1674): **The Sun at His Eastern Gate**

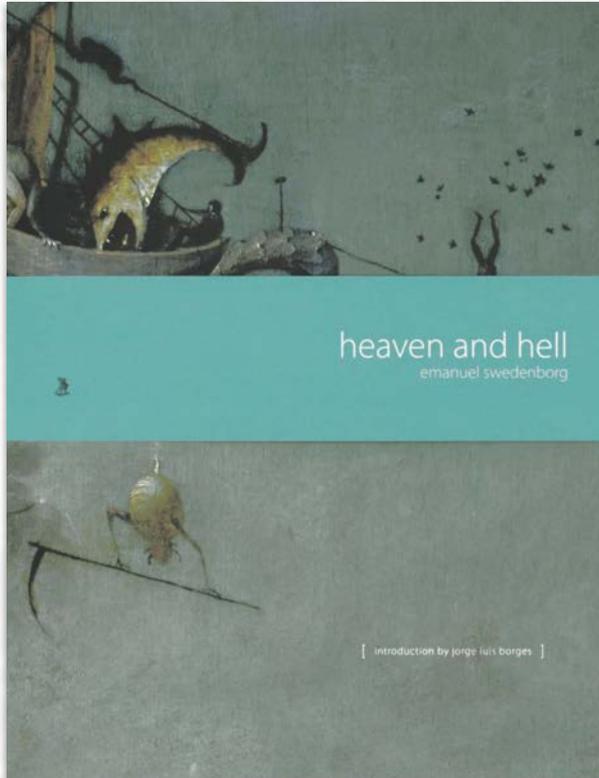


I assert for My self that I do not behold the Outward Creation & that to me it is hindrance & not Action it is as the Dirt upon my feet No part of Me. What it will be Questiond When the Sun rises do you not see a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it.

William Blake, Letter to John Flaxman, 21st Sep 1800.

Left: Blake, *The Sun at His Eastern Gate*, from Illustrations to Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* Copy 1 (Composed c. 1816-20).

Blake: Influences: Swedenborg (1688-1772): **Heaven and Hell**



O Swedenborg! strongest of men, the Samson shorn by the Churches!

William Blake, *Milton*.

The works of this visionary are well worthy the attention of Painters and Poets; they are foundations for grand things

William Blake, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Pictures*.

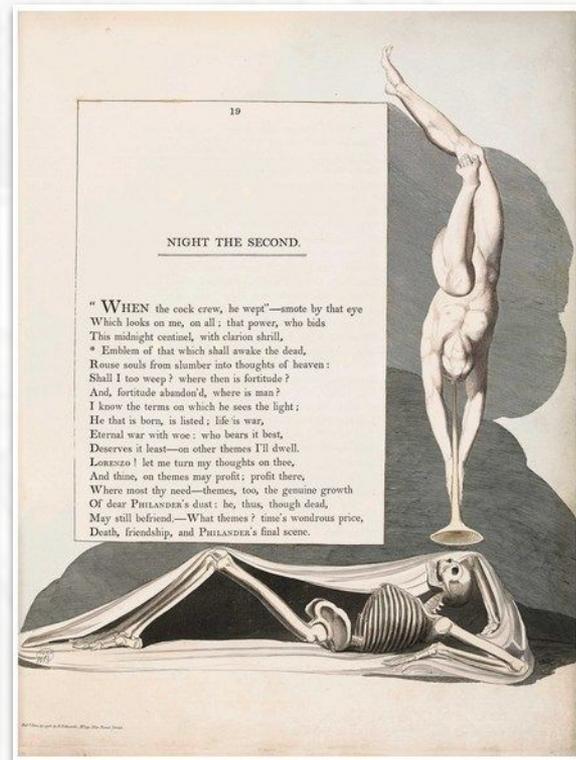
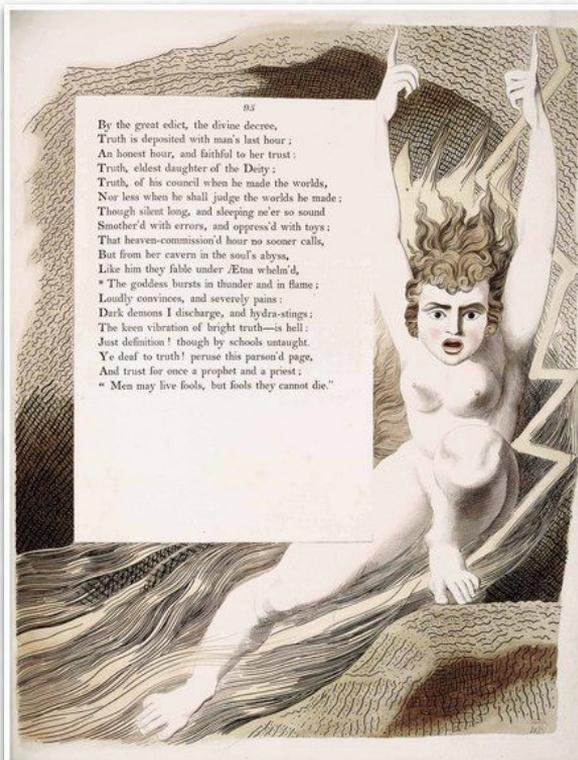
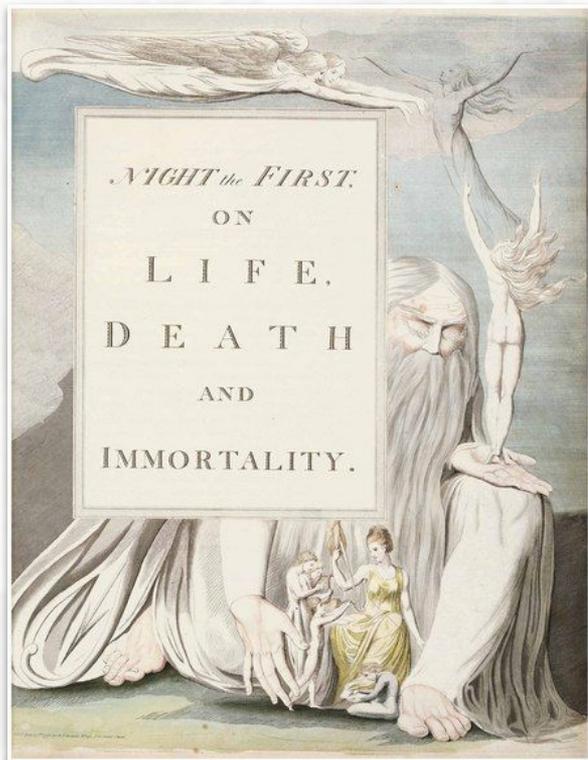
Among the propositions taken from Swedenborg's works which Blake's agreed with were those affirming free will, condemning predestination, and declaring that "*all have a capacity to be regenerated, because all are redeemed, each one according to his state.*"

Left: Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, published by the Swedenborg Society.

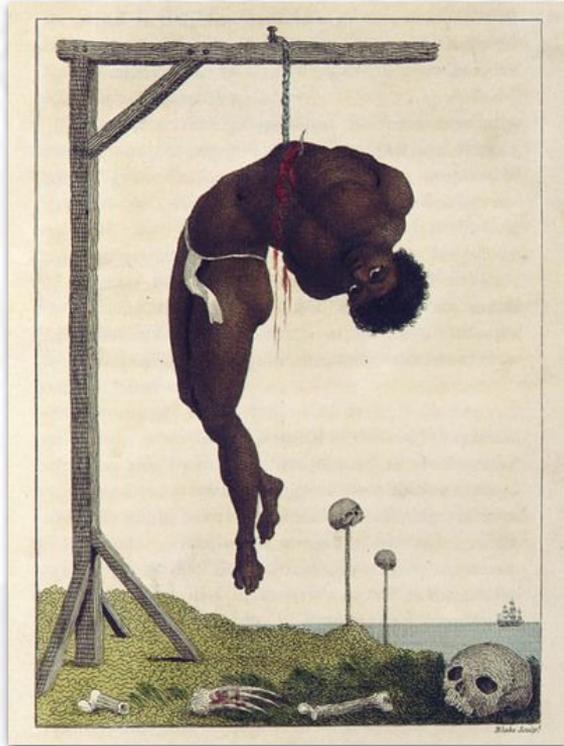


Blake the Illustrator

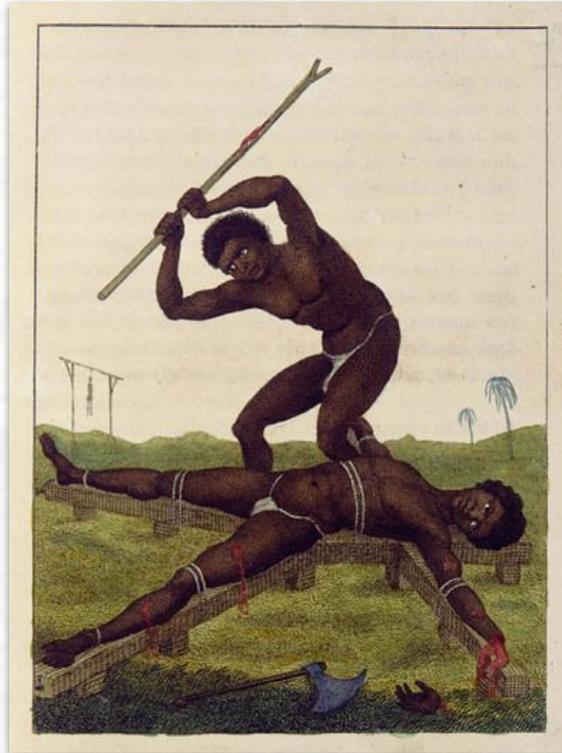
Blake the Illustrator: Edward Young's Night Thoughts



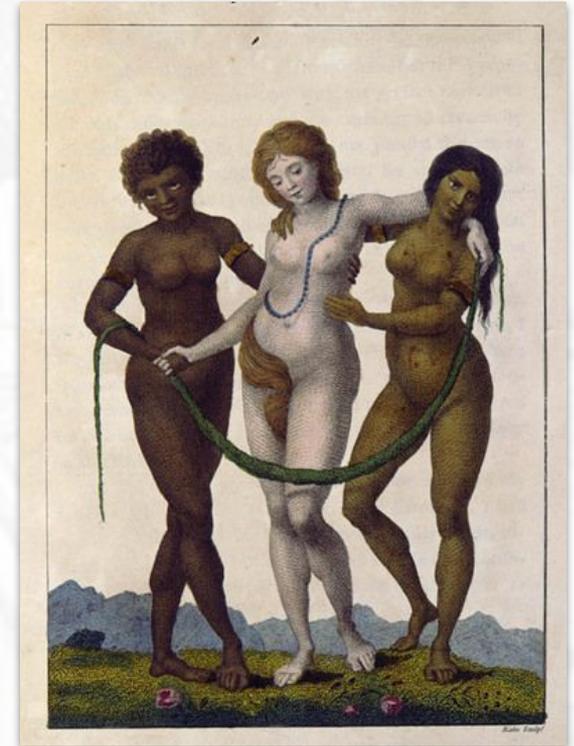
Blake the Illustrator: **Stedman's Narrative of a Five Years Expedition**



A negro hung alive by the ribs to a gallow



The execution of breaking on the rack



Europe supported by Africa and America

Blake the Illustrator: **Robert Blair's The Grave**



Portrait of Blake in the Schiavonetti edition



Our time is fixed



The reunion of the soul and the body



Blake's Mythology

Blake: Mythology: **The Four Zoas**



The **Four Zoas** were created when Albion, the primordial man, was divided as he fell from his original unity:

*I see the Four-fold Man. The Humanity in deadly sleep
And its fallen Emanation. The Spectre & its cruel Shadow.*

I see the Past, Present & Future, existing all at once

Blake, *Jerusalem* 15:6-8

- **Urizen** (element: **air**, emanation: **Ahania**) is the Zoa of reason, the embodiment of conventional reason and law. He is usually depicted as a bearded old man; he sometimes bears architect's tools, to create and constrain the universe. In terms of Blake's Orc cycle, Urizen serves as a Satanic force similar to Milton's **Satan**.
- **Luvah** (element: **fire**, fallen: **Orc**, emanation: **Vala**) represents love, passion, and rebellious energy. Throughout Blake's mythological system, he is opposed to Urizen, the representation of reason. He is also connected to **Jesus**, who takes upon his form as the being of love.
- **Urthona** (element: **earth**, fallen: **Los**, emanation: **Enitharmon**) is the Zoa of inspiration and creativity, and he is a blacksmith god. He is aligned with the Christian Trinity in the aspect of the **Holy Ghost** and is opposed to Urizen, the Zoa of reason.
- **Tharmas** (element: **water**, emanation: **Enion**) represents sensation. His female counterpart represents sexual urges. He is connected to the **God the Father** aspect of the Christian Trinity and is the begetter of Los. Tharmas is mostly peaceful, and flees during most of his fights with Urizen

Blake: Mythology: **Urizen**



Left: Urizen, from *The First Book of Urizen*, by William Blake (1794).

Am I not God said Urizen. Who is Equal to me.

Blake, *The four Zoas III* 42:19.

*For Urizen fixd in Envy sat brooding & coverd with snow
His book of iron on his knees he trac'd the dreadful letters
While his snows fell & his storms beat to cool the flames of
Orc*

Blake, *The Four Zoas VII* 78:1-3.

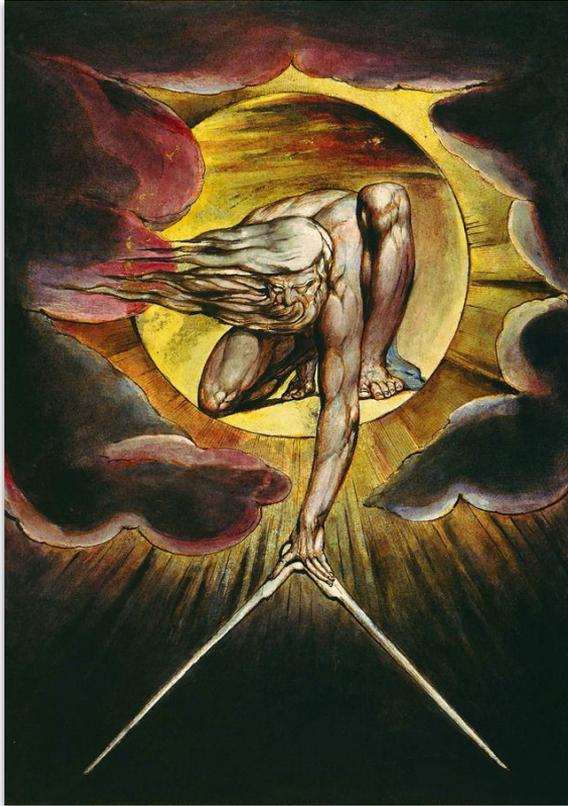
*Thundring & hail & frozen iron hail from the Element
Rends thy white hair yet thou dost find obdurate
brooding sit
Writing they books. Anon a cloud filld with a waste of
snows*

Blake, *The Four Zoas VII* 79:9-11.

*The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands...
That Stony law I stamp to dust.*

Blake, *America a Prophecy* 8: 3-5.

Blake: Mythology: Urizen: **Ancient of Days**



Left: *The Ancient of Days*, by William Blake (1794).

Right: *The Ancient of Days* projected onto St Paul's Dome, London, during the Blake exhibition at the Tate Gallery (2019).

Blake: Mythology: Urizen: **Ancient of Days**

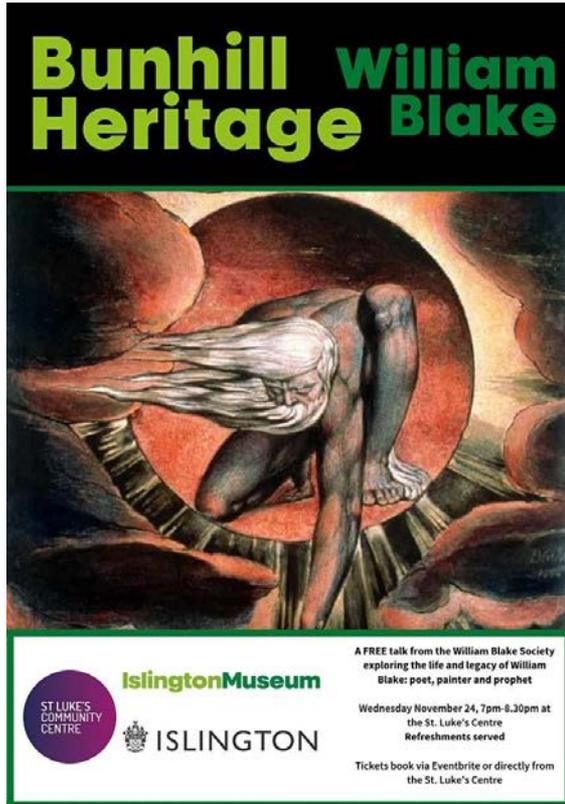


Left: Entrance to the Rockefeller Centre, New York.

The entrance to the Rockefeller Centre draws on Blake's image of 'God', but reversed so that he now divides with his 'Right' hand. Presumably Rockefeller didn't realise that this figure actually represents a dissociated and psychopathic form of hyper-rationality dominating and dividing the world. Or perhaps he did.

Albert S Roe, *The God of This World.*

Blake: Mythology: Urizen: **Ancient of Days**



**Bunhill William
Heritage Blake**

A FREE talk from the William Blake Society
exploring the life and legacy of William
Blake: poet, painter and prophet

Wednesday November 24, 7pm-8.30pm at
the St. Luke's Centre
Refreshments served

Tickets book via Eventbrite or directly from
the St. Luke's Centre

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ST LUKE'S
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Left: Poster for a contemporary meeting in North London, 2021.

Mans perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception. he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.

Reason all the ratio of all we have already known. is not the same that shall be when we know more.

*The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a universe would soon become **a mill with complicated wheels.***

Conclusion. If it were not for the poetic or prophetic character. the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things & stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.

He who sees the infinite in all things please God. He who sees the ratio only sees himself only.

Blake, There is No Natural Religion.

Blake: Mythology: **Los**



Left: Blake, Los, from *Jerusalem* (1804-1820).

‘The eternal prophet’

*Urthona he beheld mighty labouring at
His Anvil, in the Great Spectre Los unwearied labouring &
weeping
Therefore the Sons of Eden praise Urthonas Spectre in
songs
Because he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble.
Blake, *Jerusalem IV* 95:19-20.*

*The labours of Los follow one pattern: to prepare for
apocalypse by transforming Urizenic war into the
intellectual combat of the eternal world. So he harvests the
flames of Orc, gathering up again the energies of natural
man show us to shape them from mental fight.
Harold Bloom, *Commentary*.*

Blake: Mythology: **Vala**



Left: Blake, from *Jerusalem* (1804-1820).

*the Goddess Virgin-Mother
She is out Mother! Nature!*

Blake, *Jerusalem III* 18:28-9.

*... what may Woman be?
To have power over Man from Cradle to corruptible
Grave.*

...

*Albion is the Tabernacle of Vala & her Temple
And not the Tabernacle & Temple of the Most High
O Albion why wilt thou Create a Female Will?
To hide the most evident God in a hidden covert, even
In the shadows of a Woman & a secluded Holy Place
That we may pry after him as after a stolen treasure*

Blake, *Jerusalem III* 64:6-17.

Cathedron is the body of woman, particularly the womb. Here Enitharmon weaves bodies of vegetation (living flesh) for the spectres, and her daughters weave the ovarium and the integument in soft silk drawn from their own bowels in lascivious delight.

Blake: Mythology: **Orc**



Left: Blake, from *Jerusalem* (1804-1820).

*... I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree:
The times are ended; shadows pass the morning gins to break;
The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to **ten commands**,
What night he led the starry hosts thro' the wide wilderness:
**That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion
abroad***

*To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves;
But they shall rot on desert sands, & consume in bottomless
deeps;
To make the deserts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their
fountains,
And to renew the fiery joy, and burst **the stony roof**.*

...

*For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life;
Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.
Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consumd;
Amidst the lustful fires he walks: his feet become like brass,
His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like gold.*

Blake, *America a Prophecy* 8:1-17.



Blake's Impact

Blake: 'Pictor Ignotus' / The Unknown Artist

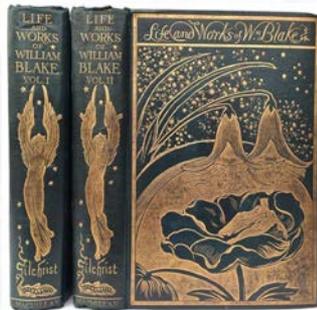


In my Brain are studies & Chambers fill'd with books & pictures of old which I wrote & painted in ages of Eternity, before my mortal life & whose works are the delight & Study of Archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality.

Blake, Letter to John Flaxman, 21st Sep 1800.

Art in London flourishes. Engravers in particular I wanted. Every engraver turns away work that he cannot Execute from his superabundant employment. Yet no one brings work to me. I am concerned that it shall be so as long as God pleases.

Blake, Letter to William Hayley, 7th Oct 1803.



Left: Alexander Gilchrist, *The Life of William Blake, 'Pictor Ignotus'*, With selections from his poems and other writings (first published, 1863; this edition, 1880).

This was the first ever biography and study of Blake, published 35 years after his death. The first volume is a biography and the second a compilation of Blake's work.



Blake and the Counterculture

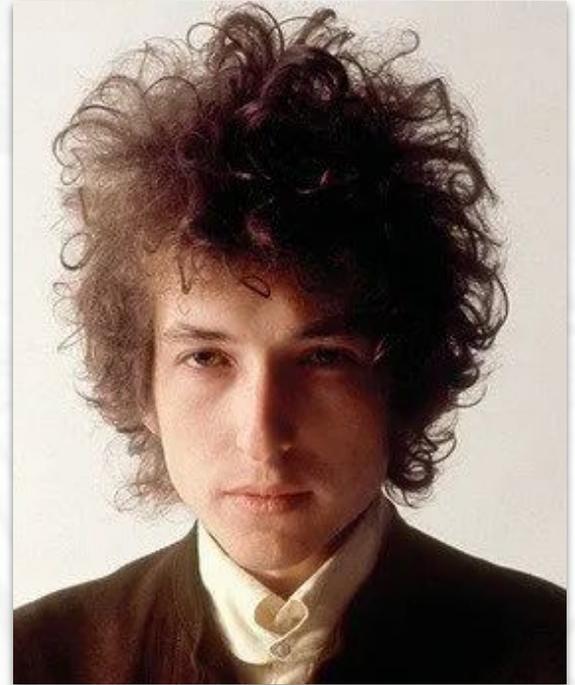
Blake and the Counterculture



Aldous Huxley
1894-1963

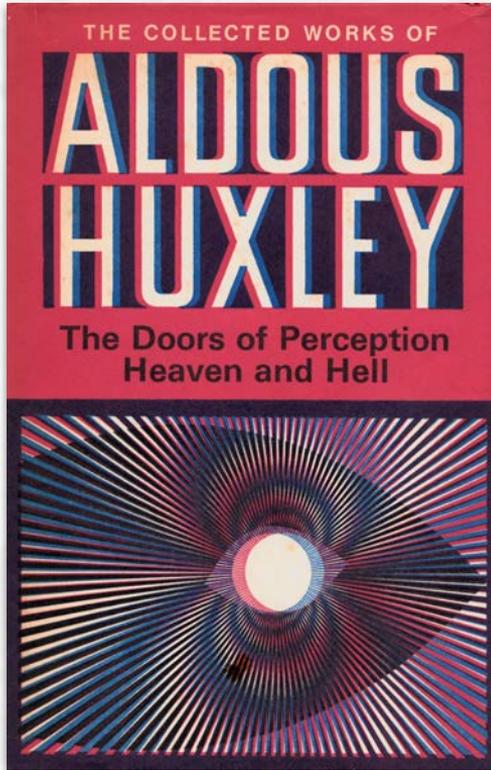


Allen Ginsberg
1926-1997



Bob Dylan
1941-

Blake and the Counterculture: **Aldous Huxley**



The Doors of Perception by Aldous Huxley (1954) elaborates on his psychedelic experience under the influence of mescaline. Huxley recalls the insights he experienced, and reflects on their philosophical and psychological implications. In 1956, he published **Heaven and Hell**, another essay which elaborates these reflections further.

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.
William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790).

Blake and the Counterculture: **Allen Ginsberg**



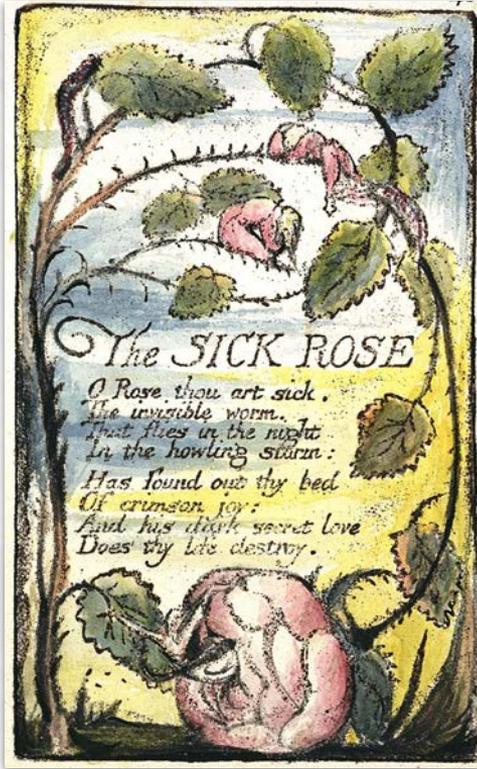
In 1948, at the suggestion of William Burroughs, the young Allen Ginsberg read Blake's **Songs of Innocence & Experience**. While reading the poem *Ah! Sun-Flower* a visual and auditory vision occurred. While reading *The Sick Rose*, he understood that he was the metaphorical 'sick rose' and he was "*hearing the doom of the whole universe*" and its "*inevitable beauty*".

*O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.*
Blake, The Sick Rose (1794).

*Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
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Ginsberg recorded versions of many Blake poems, and lectured extensively on Blake's work.

Blake and the Counterculture: **Allen Ginsberg**



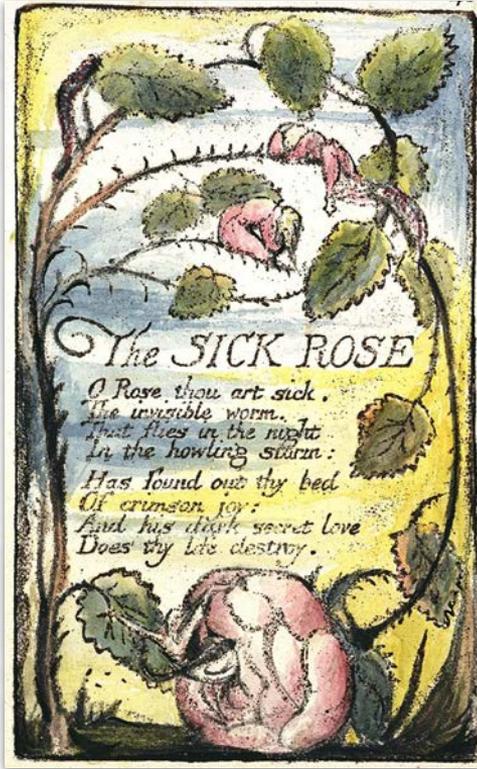
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*Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.
Blake, Ah! Sun-flower (1794).*

*Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.*

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Blake and the Counterculture: **Allen Ginsberg**



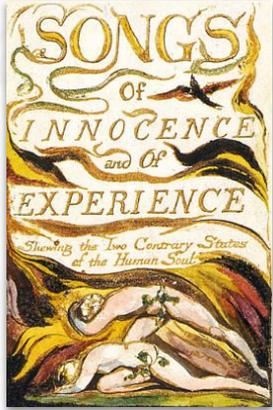
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Blake: Influence in his own time



**Songs of
Innocence &
Experience**
49 copies



Milton
4 copies



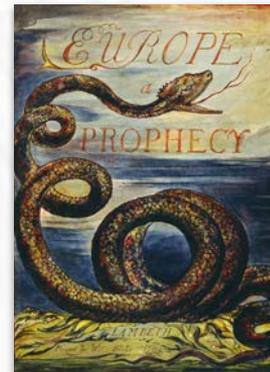
**America: A
Prophecy**
14 copies



**The Marriage of
Heaven & Hell**
12 copies



Jerusalem
8 copies



**Europe: A
Prophecy**
12 copies

Blake: Influence & impact in our time: **London**



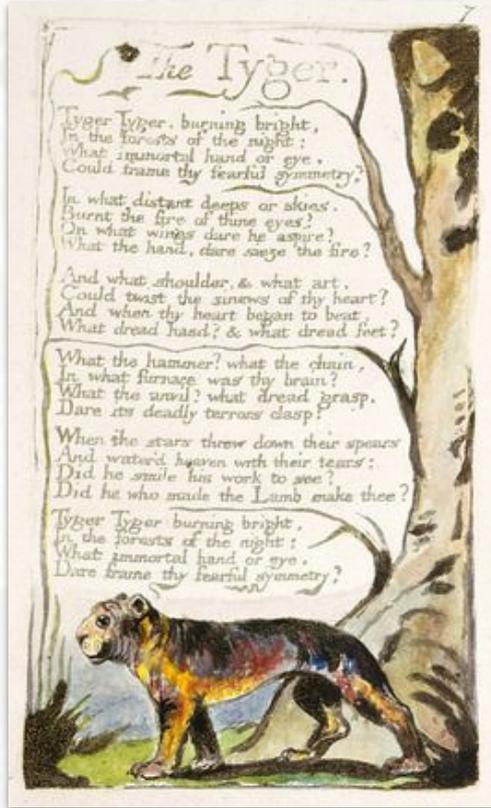
*I wander thro' **each charter'd street**,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.*

*In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The **mind-forg'd manacles** I hear*

*How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls*

*But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse*

Blake: Influence & impact in our time: **The Tyger**



***Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?***

*In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?*

*And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?*

*What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!*

*When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?*

*Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*

Blake: Influence & impact in our time: **Jerusalem**



*And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was **the holy Lamb of God**,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!*

*And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these **dark Satanic Mills**?*

*Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my **Chariot of fire!***

***I will not cease from Mental Fight,**
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built **Jerusalem**,
In Englands green & pleasant Land.*

Blake: Influence & impact in our time: **Jerusalem**

Sir Hubert Parry at The Proms (2018)



*And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was **the holy Lamb of God**,
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In Englands green & pleasant Land.*

Blake: Influence & impact in our time: **Jerusalem**

Mark Stewart and the Maffia (1982)



*And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!*

*And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?*

*Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!*

***I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
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Blake's Influence

Blake: In Popular Culture: **Thomas Harris: The Red Dragon**



Left: From the film, *The Red Dragon*, based on the novel of the same name by **Thomas Harris** (1981).

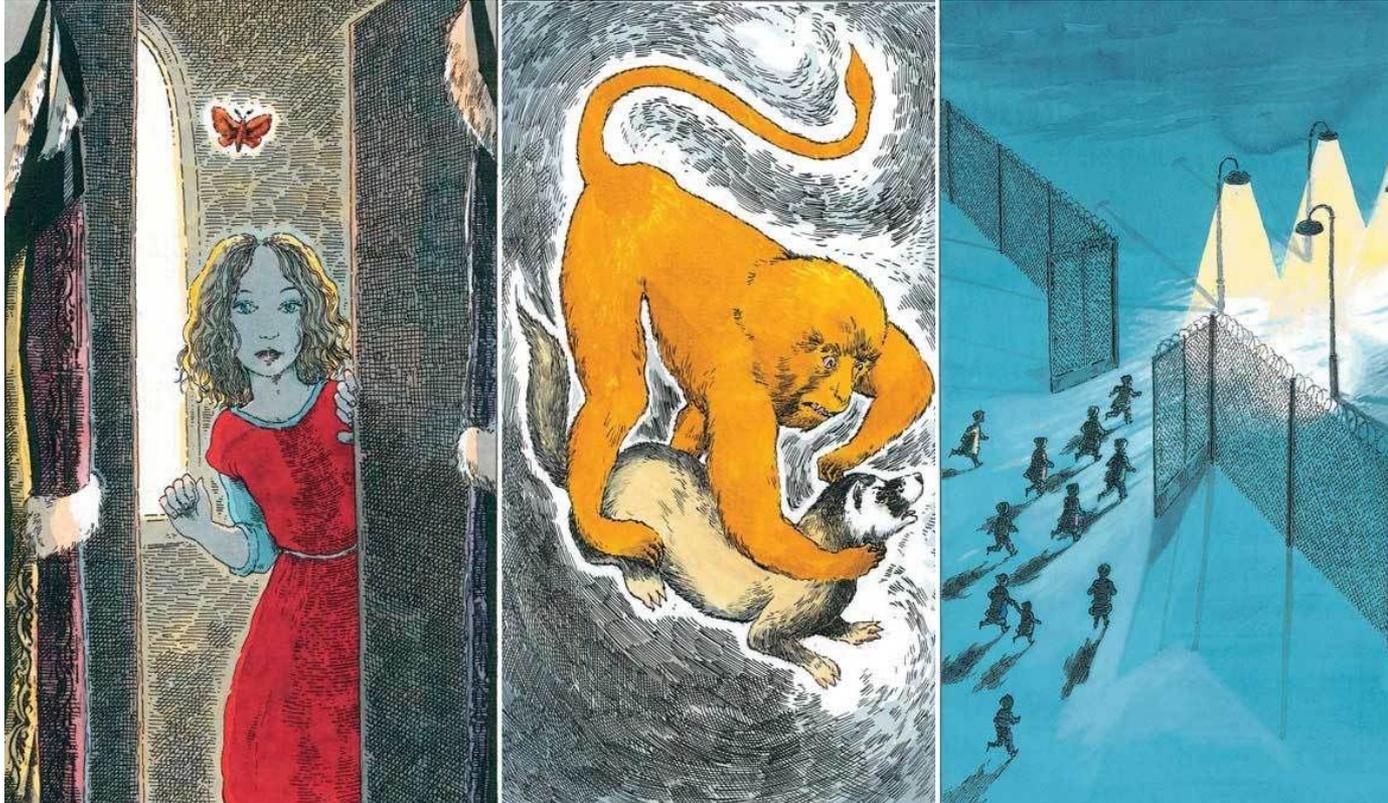
Right: Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun* (detail).

And behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.

Revelations 12:3–4

Thomas Harris, author of *Hannibal*, has a serial killer, the Tooth Fairy, in his earlier novel, *The Red Dragon*, obsessed with Blake's image.

Blake: In Popular Culture: **Philip Pullman: His Dark Materials**



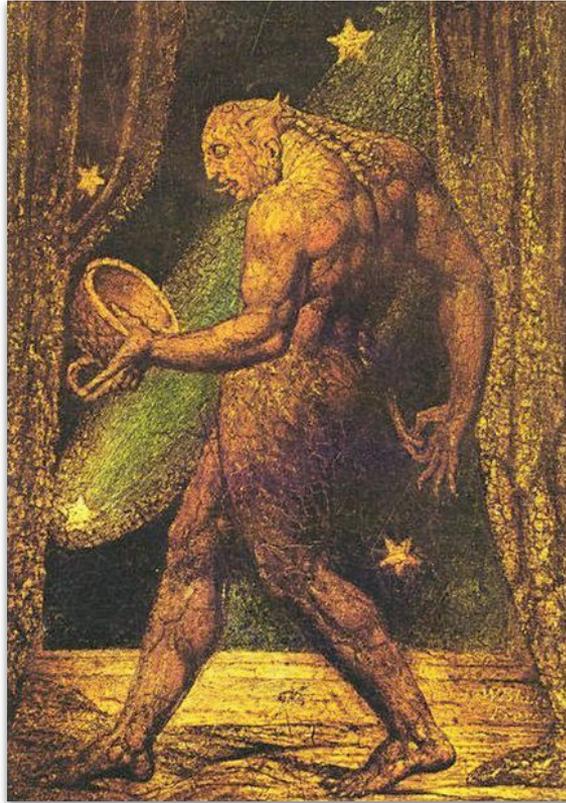
Left: Peter Bailey, illustrations for the Folio Society's edition of *His Dark Materials* trilogy: *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

*I came to Blake through Allen Ginsberg... I knew who Blake was... I must have come across *The Tyger* in some school anthology. But if Blake could inspire the sort of hellish rapture celebrated and howled about by Ginsberg, then he was the sort of poet I needed to read. Hellish rapture was exactly what I most wanted.*

Philip Pullman, William Blake and me, *The Guardian*, 28th Nov 2014.

Philip Pullman is a patron of The Blake Society.

Blake: In Popular Culture: Alan Moore: From Hell



Left: Frame for Alan Moore's graphic novel, *From Hell*, telling of the story of Jack the Ripper (1989-1998).

Right: Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea*, for John Varley (1820).

William Blake also becomes an important figure in Moore's later work, and is a featured character in *From Hell* (1991-1998) and *Angel Passage* (2001). In *From Hell*, Blake appears as a mystical and occultic foil to William Gull's aristocratic plot to murder the prostitutes of Whitechapel in London.

Alan Moore is the most acclaimed writer in the graphic story medium, for works such as *Watchmen*, *V For Vendetta*, *Swamp Thing* and *From Hell*.

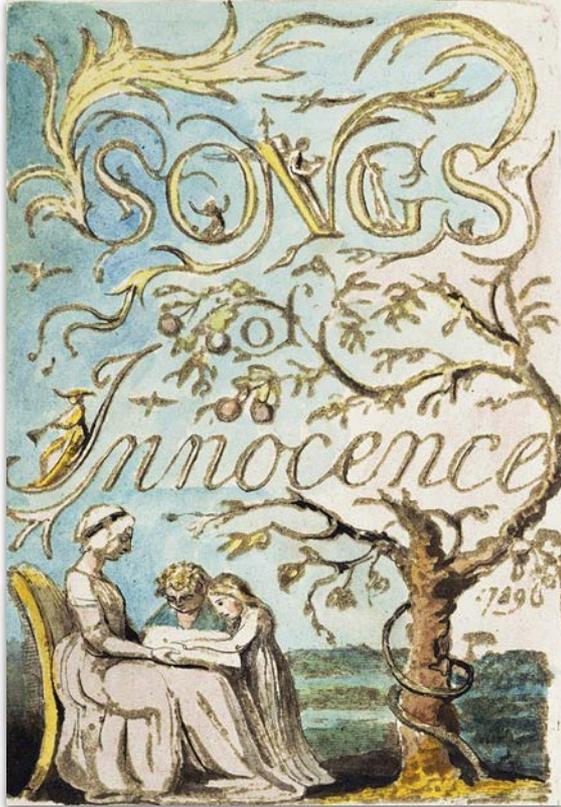
Like Pullman, Moore is a patron of The Blake Society.



Blake's Variations

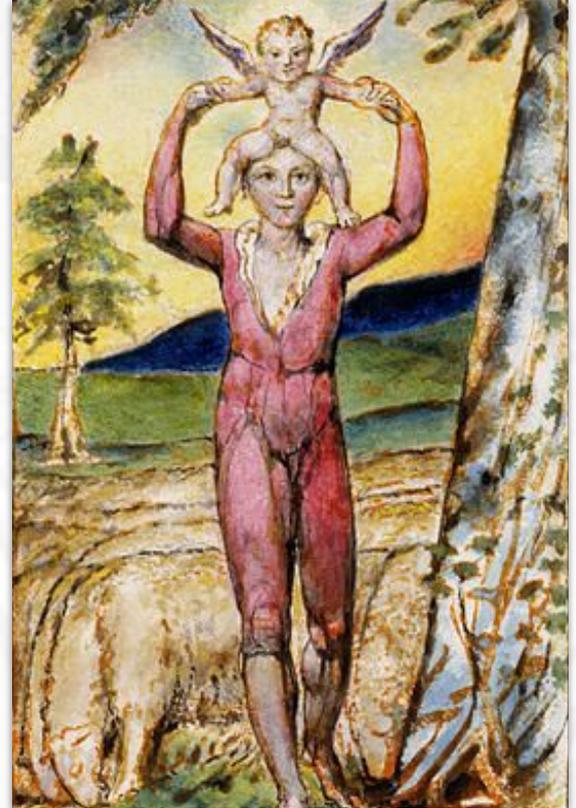
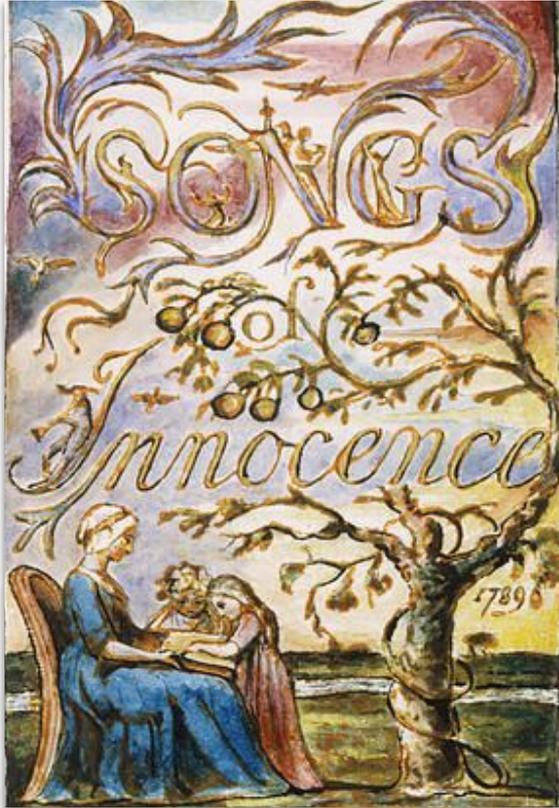
Blake's Variations: **Songs of Innocence and Experience**

COPY A (1795)



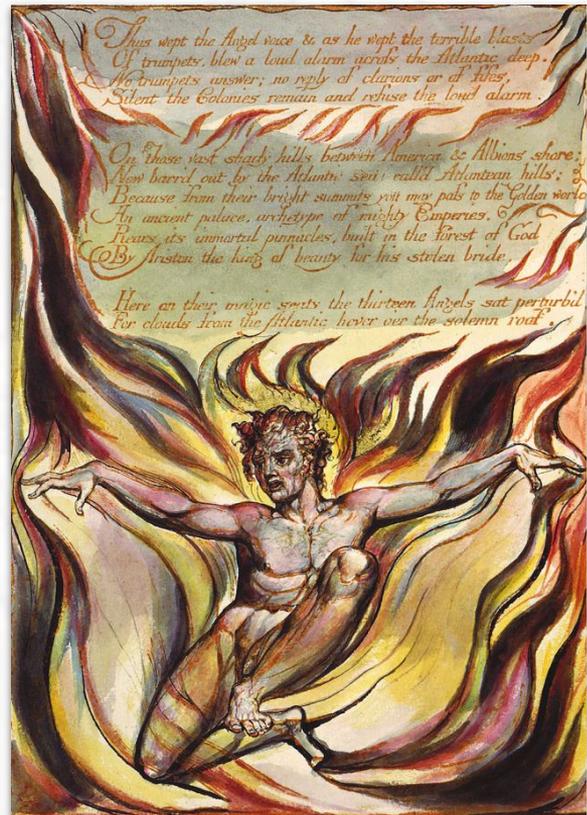
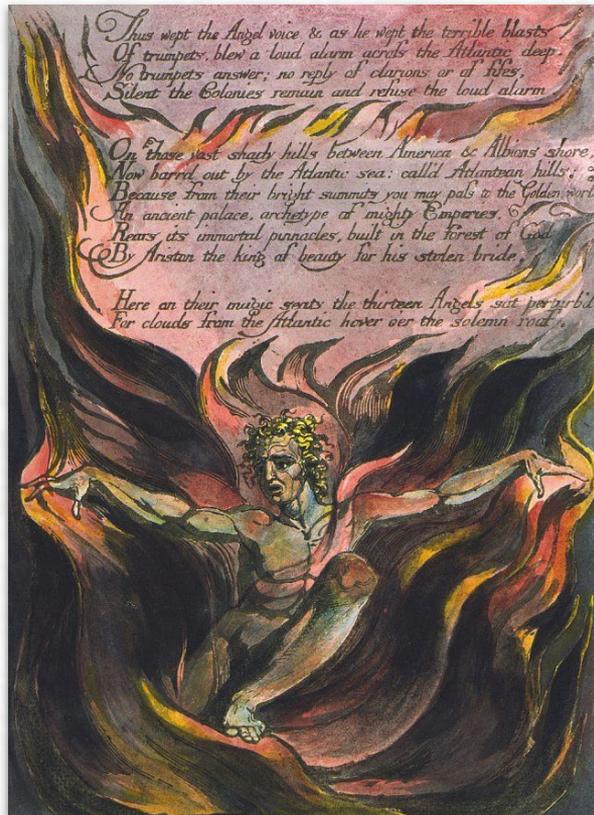
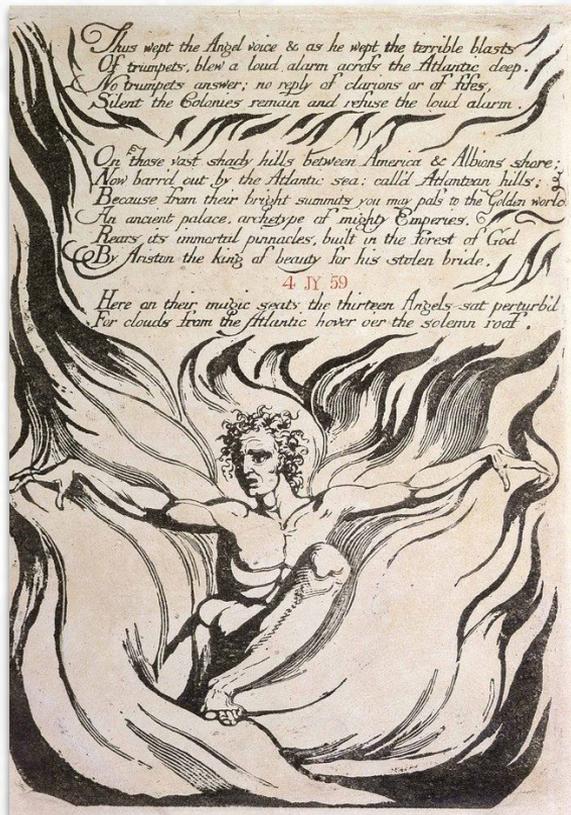
Blake's Variations: **Songs of Innocence and Experience**

COPY Y (1825)



Blake's Variations: America

COPIES E (1793), M (1807) and O (1821)





**Late
Blake**

Late Blake: **The Pastorals of Virgil**



Although almost rejected as too radical, these engravings are among Blake's most influential works. The group of artists who gathered around Blake in his final years—The Shoreham Ancients—were deeply inspired by them. Samuel Palmer called them "*visions of little dells, and nooks, and corners of Paradise*"—perhaps ignoring the darker implications of some designs. Several recent British artists, including Graham Sutherland, were also influenced by these wood engravings.

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Late Blake: **The Shoreham Ancients**



Samuel Palmer
1805-1881



George Richmond
1809-1896



Frederick Tatham
1805-1878

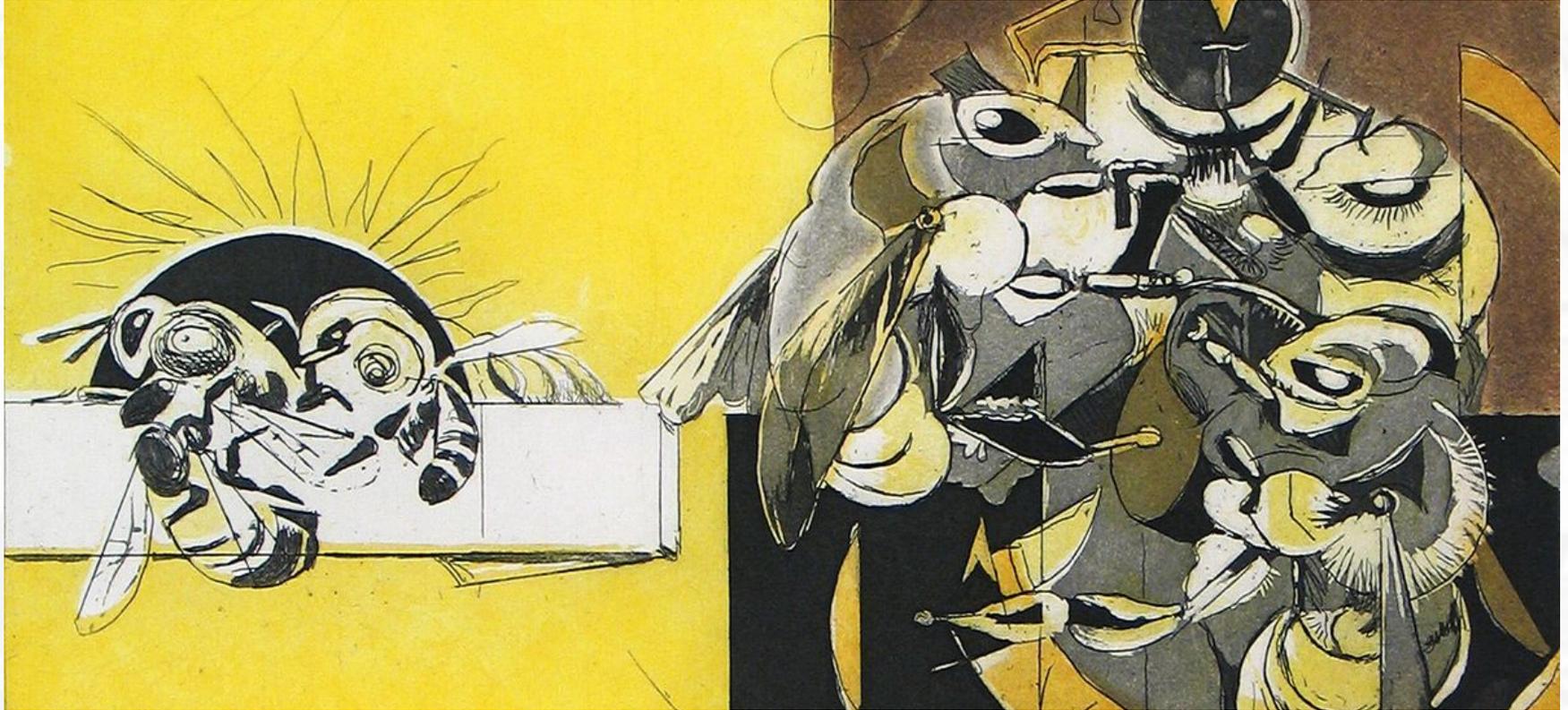
Late Blake: The Shoreham Ancients: **Samuel Palmer**

Eventide (1858)



Late Blake: Influence: **Graham Sutherland**

Bees, detail (1964)



Late Blake: Illustrations to Dante: **Minos**

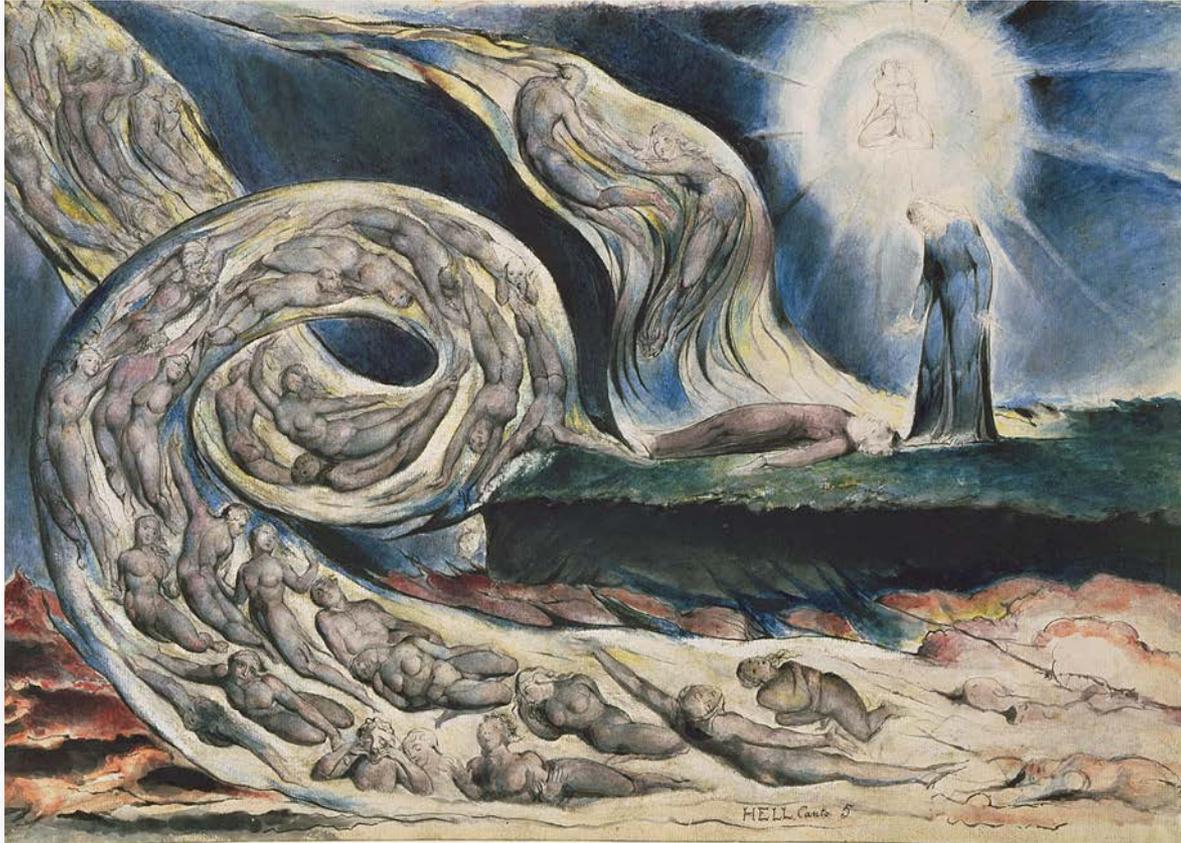


Left: *Minos*, illustration to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Hell, Canto 5. Commissioned by John Linnell (1827).

*From the first circle I descended thus
Down to the second, which, a lesser space
Embracing, so much more of grief contains
Provoking bitter moans. There, Minos stands
Grinning with ghastly feature: he, of all
Who enter, strict examining the crimes,
Gives sentence, and dismisses them beneath*

King Minos was the Judge of the Damned, who resided in the circle of Limbo. He was the second boss encountered in Dante's *Inferno*. He is the judge of every soul damned to Hell, determining which of the Nine Circles that particular soul was condemned to for eternity.

Late Blake: Illustrations to Dante: **The Circle of the Lustful**

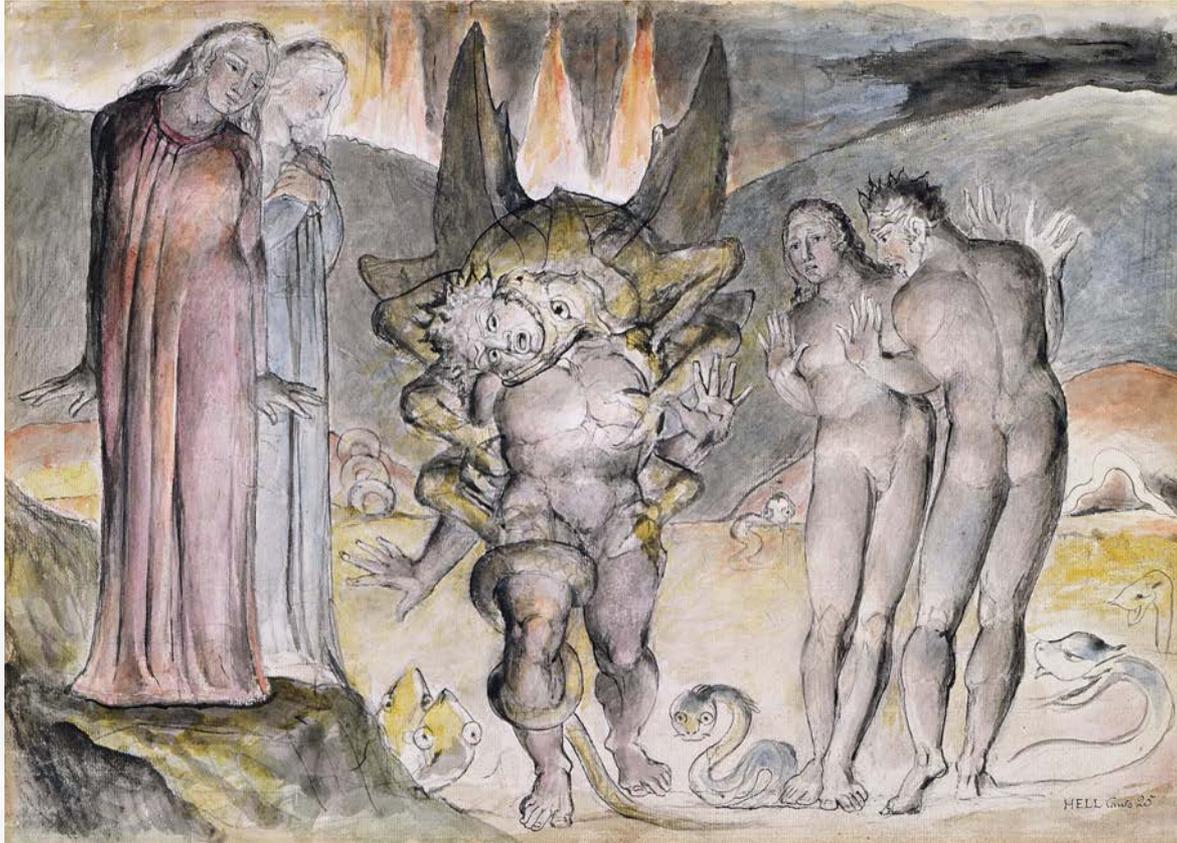


Left: *The Circle of the Lustful*, illustration to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Hell, Canto 5. Commissioned by John Linnell (1827).

*I understood that to this torment sad
The carnal sinners are condemn'd, in whom
Reason by lust is sway'd. As in large troops
And multitudinous, when winter reigns,
The starlings on their wings are borne abroad;
So bears the tyrannous gust those evil souls.
On this side and on that, above, below,
It drives them: hope of rest to solace them
Is none*

In the Second Circle of Hell, Dante and his companion Virgil find people who were overcome by lust. They are punished by being blown violently back and forth by strong winds, preventing them from finding peace and rest. Strong winds symbolize the restlessness of a person who is led by the desire for fleshly pleasures.

Late Blake: Illustrations to Dante: **Agnolo Brunelleschi**

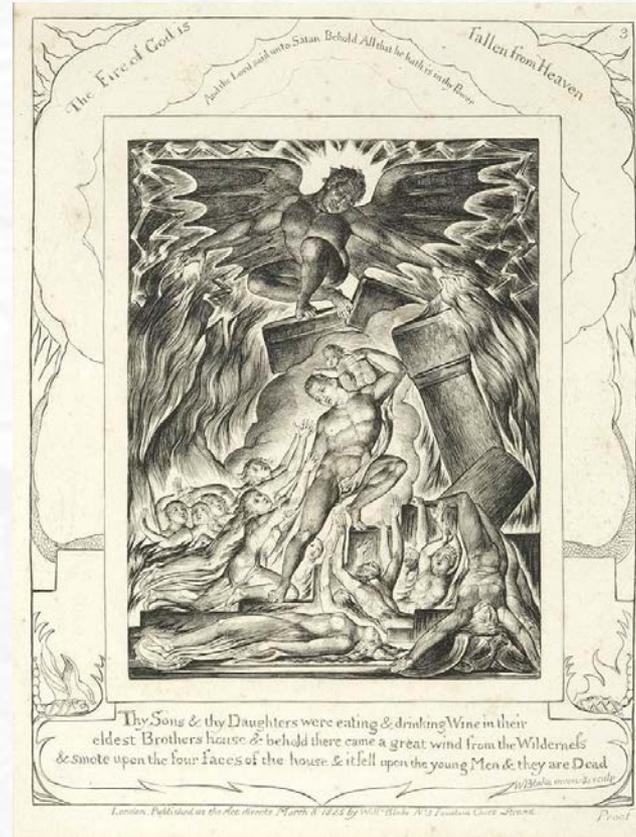
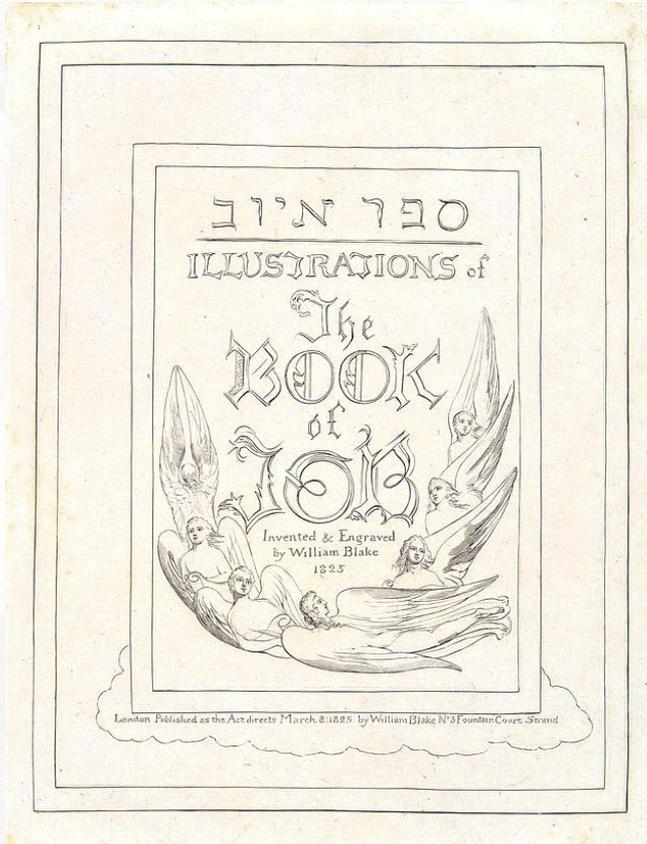


Left: *The Six-Footed Serpent Attacking Agnolo Brunelleschi*, illustration to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Hell*, Canto 25. Commissioned by John Linnell (1827).

*... a serpent with six feet
Springs forth on one, and fastens full upon him:
His midmost grasp'd the belly, a forefoot
Seiz'd on each arm (while deep in either cheek
He flesh'd his fangs); the hinder on the thighs
Were spread, 'twixt which the tail inserted curl'd
Upon the reins behind. Ivy ne'er clasp'd
A dodder'd oak, as round the other's limbs
The hideous monster intertwin'd his own.
Then, as they both had been of burning wax,
Each melted into other, mingling hues*

Agnolo Brunelleschi was a thief whose punishment was to be attacked for all eternity by a serpent. Their two bodies merge into one another, so that Brunelleschi's appearance befits his sin. Blake shows the moment at which the serpent begins to inhabit Brunelleschi's body, as its jaws engulf his head and it sinks its claws into his skin.

Late Blake: **The Book of Job**



Left: Title page of Blake's prints for *The Book of Job* (1826).

Right: *Job's Sons and Daughters Overwhelmed by Satan*, engraving to *The Book of Job* (1826).

A series of twenty-two engraved prints by Blake illustrating the biblical Book of Job. The engraved Illustrations are considered to be Blake's greatest works in the medium of engraving, and were also a rare commercial and critical success.

Blake identified with Job, as he spent his lifetime unrecognized and impoverished.

Late Blake: **The Book of Job**



Left: *Job's Sons and Daughters Overwhelmed by Satan* (detail), illustration to *The Book of Job*. Commissioned by Thomas Butts (1806).

Thy Sons & thy Daughters were eating & drinking Wine in their eldest Brothers house & behold there came a great wind from the Wilderness & smote upon the four faces of the house & it fell upon the young Men & they are Dead

based on **Job** 1:18–1:19

Satan ('the accuser') asks God whether Job is only righteous because he is blessed. God allows Satan to test Job.

Late Blake: **The Book of Job**



Left: *Job's Evil Dreams*, illustration to *The Book of Job*. Commissioned by Thomas Butts (1806).

When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaints; Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life. I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity.

Job 7:13-16

In Blake's version, Job's major flaw is attending to the letter, rather than the spirit, of God's law. In doing so, Job falls under Satan's spell and his suffering progresses into the horrible vision of a cloven-hoofed demon in the eleventh plate.

Late Blake: **The Book of Job**



Left: *Job and His Daughters*, illustration to *The Book of Job*. Commissioned by Thomas Butts (1806).

So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.

Job 42:12-17

In Blake's version, Job's major flaw is attending to the letter, rather than the spirit, of God's law. In doing so, Job falls under Satan's spell and his suffering progresses into the horrible vision of a cloven-hoofed demon in the eleventh plate.



**Blake the
Radical**

Blake the Radical



Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University: who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War.

Blake, Preface to *Milton* (1804).

Blake the Radical: **Religion**



All deities reside in the human breast.

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Thinking as I do that the Creator of this World is a very Cruel Being & being a Worshipper of Christ I cannot help saying the Son O how unlike the Father

Blake, *A Vision of the Last Judgement*.

Henry Crabb Robinson, asking Blake re. the divinity of Jesus:
“He is the only God, and so am I and so are you.”

Blake, *Dec 1825*.

Christ died an Unbeliever.

Blake, *Annotations to an Apology for the Bible*.

The Modern Church Crucifies Christ with the Head Downwards.

Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel*.

Blake the Radical: **Forgiveness**



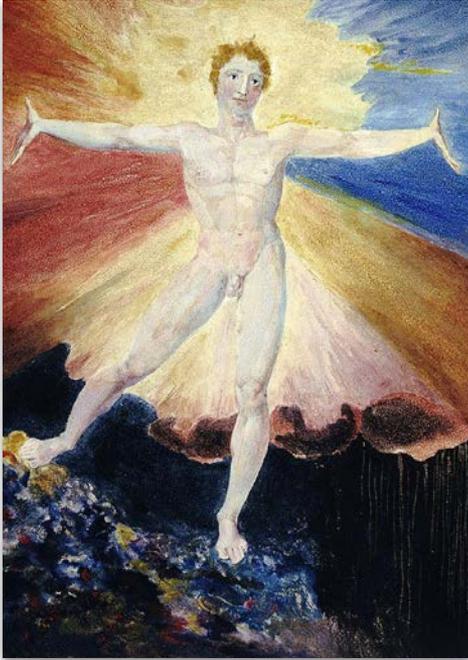
Christ comes as he came at first to deliver those who are bound under the Knave not to deliver the Knave. He comes to deliver man the Accused and not Satan the Accuser.

Blake, A Vision of the Last Judgement.

These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence. Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two. Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword.

Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Blake the Radical: **Revolution**



Left: *Albion Rose*, also known as *Glad Day*, by William Blake (1789).

Right: *Orc Rising*, in *America: A Prophecy*, by William Blake (1793).

Blake the Radical: Revolution: **Bladerunner**



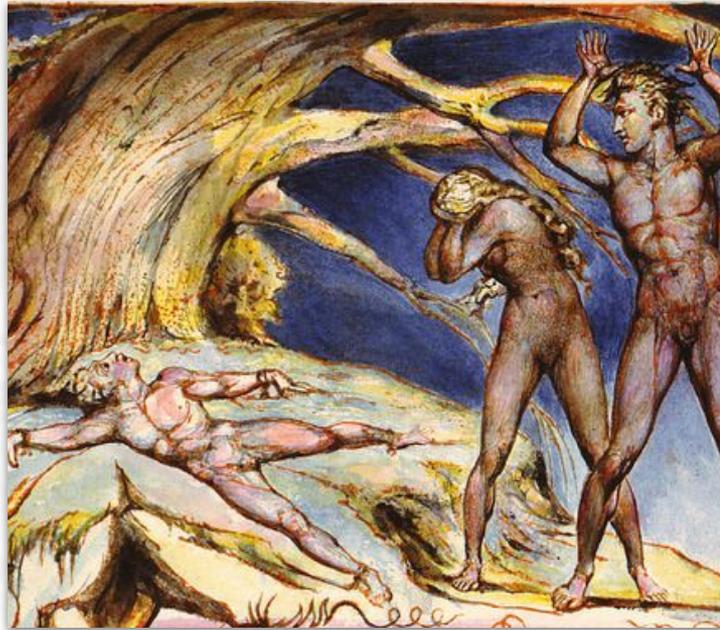
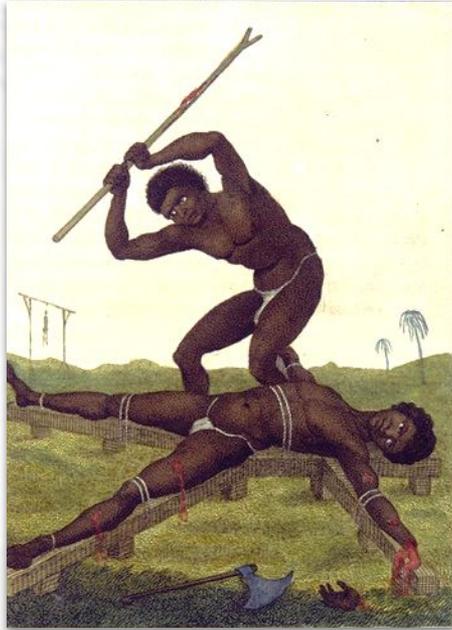
Fiery the Angels rose, & as they rose deep thunder roll'd / Around their shores: indignant burning with the fires of Orc

Blake the Radical: Revolution: **Bladerunner**



Fiery the Angels rose, & as they rose deep thunder roll'd / Around their shores: indignant burning with the fires of Orc

Blake the Radical: **Slavery**

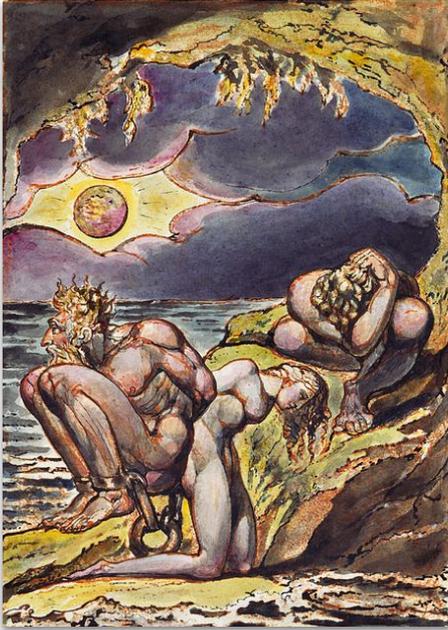


Left: The Execution of Breaking on the Rack, from Captain J G Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796), Illustrated by William Blake.

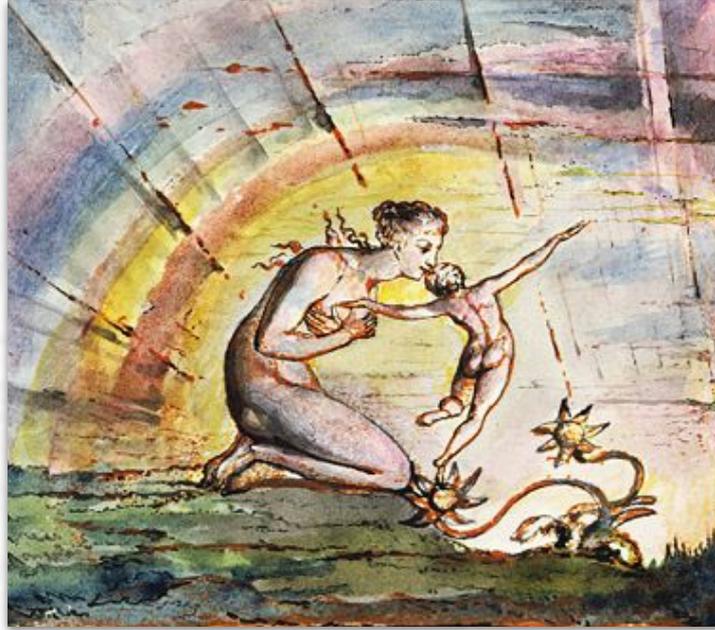
Right: The Binding of Orc, in *America: A Prophecy*, by William Blake

The shadowy daughter of Urthona stood before red Orc / When fourteen suns had faintly journey'd o'er his dark abode / His food she brought in iron baskets, his drink in cups of iron

Blake the Radical: **Sexual Freedom**



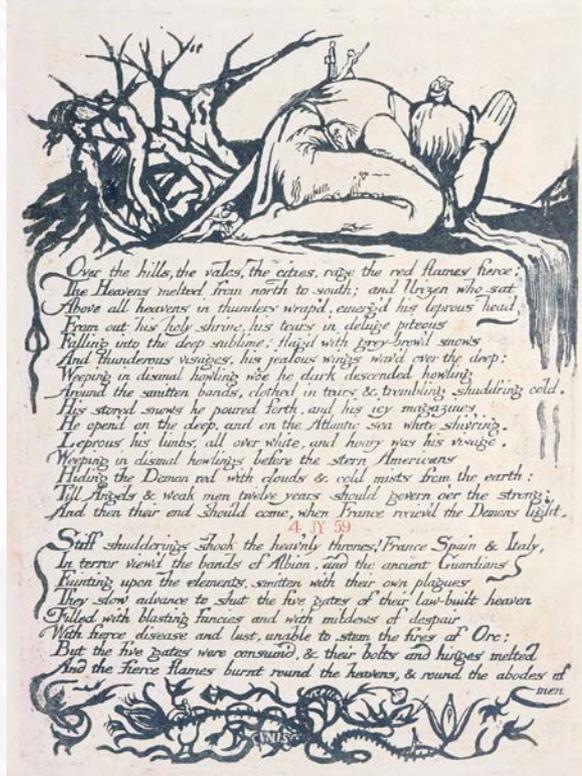
Left: Frontispiece, from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), by William Blake.



Right: Plate 3, *The Argument*, from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), by William Blake.

*I loved Theotormon / And I was not ashamed / I trembled in my virgin fears / And I hid in Leutha's vale!
I plucked Leutha's flower, / And I rose up from the vale; / But the terrible thunders tore / My virgin mantle in twain.*

Blake the Radical: Revolution: **Orc's Permanent Revolution**



*Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France Spain & Italy,
In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues
They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven
Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of despair
With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the fires of Orc;
But the five gates were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men*

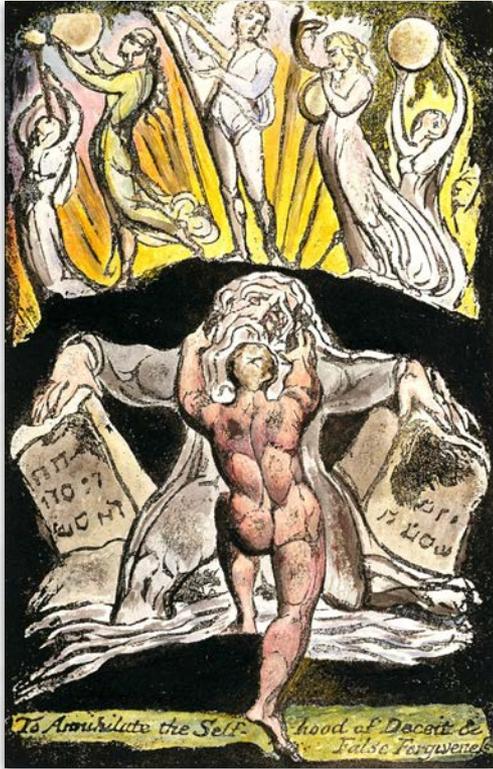
Blake, America: A Prophecy, Plate 16.





**Blake
Today**

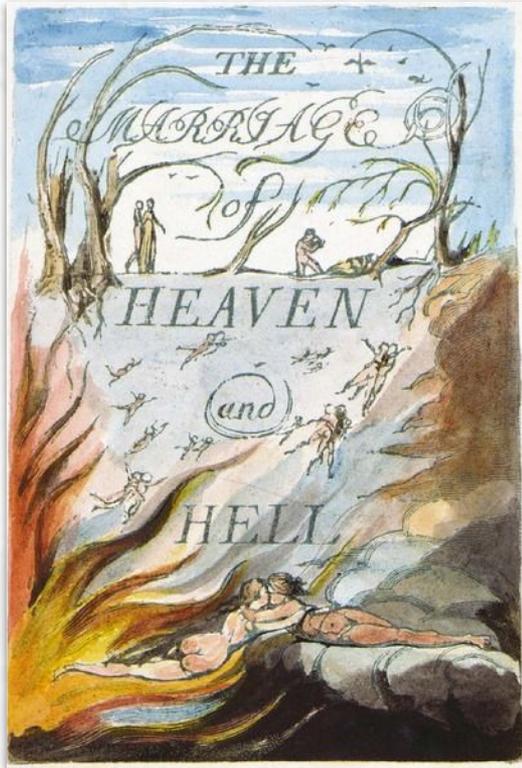
Blake Today: **Annihilation of the Self**



To Annihilate the Selfhood of Deceit and False Forgiveness
Blake, Milton Plate 15 (1804).

*Albion! Our wars are wars of life, & wounds of love,
With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought:
Mutual in one another's love and wrath all renewing
We live as One Man; for contracting our infinite senses
We behold multitude; or expanding: we behold as one,
As One Man all the Universal Family; and that One Man
We call Jesus the Christ: and he in us, and we in him,
Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life,
Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other's trespasses.*
Blake, *Jerusalem II* 34:14-22.

Blake Today: **Nature & Environment**

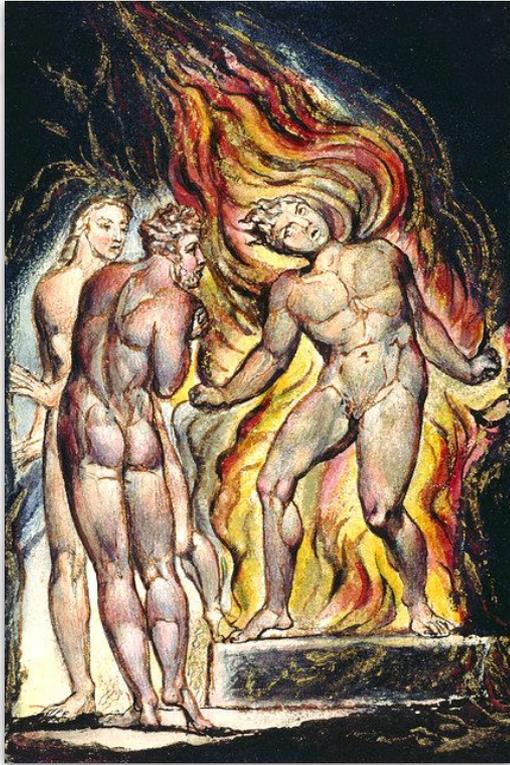


*How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?*

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790).



Blake Today: **Nature & Environment**



*Seest thou the little winged fly, smaller than a grain of sand?
It has a heart like thee; a brain open to heaven & hell,
Withinside wondrous & expansive; its gates are not clos'd,
I hope thine are not:*

Blake, *Milton* Plate 20 (1804).



Blake Today: **A Mountaintop**



It is... proper to state that Blake never had, strictly speaking, any influence and that it is extremely probable that he never will. The reason is that in Blake we behold not so much a fountain, a source, as a mountaintop.

Phillippe Soupault

THE EVENING THE TRAVELLER IN THE

