

- “If the doors of perception were Cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern”
- “The marriage of Heaven and Hell”

William Blake



- Born November 28, 1757
 - ◆ London, England
- Died August 12, 1827
 - ◆ London, England
- 69 years old

Blake's Life

- Early years

- ◆ Began his artistic career at 10 years old
- ◆ his father sent him to the best drawing school in England
- ◆ Apprenticed to an engraver at 14

Adult life

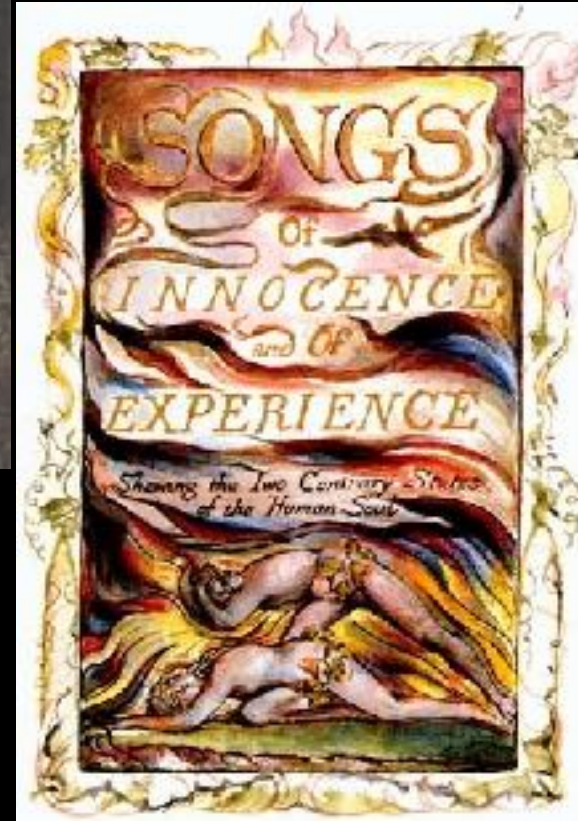
- ◆ Always worked as an engraver and professional artist
- ◆ Was very poor, especially later in life
- ◆ Always felt rich in spirit

Blake's Art









Blake's Life

- His life is considered “simple,”
“boring,” when compared to the
lives of his contemporaries
(Coleridge, Shelley, Keats)
- Never traveled

Blake's Wife

- Married Catherine Boucher in 1782
- She assisted with the printing and hand colouring of his poems



Blake's Death

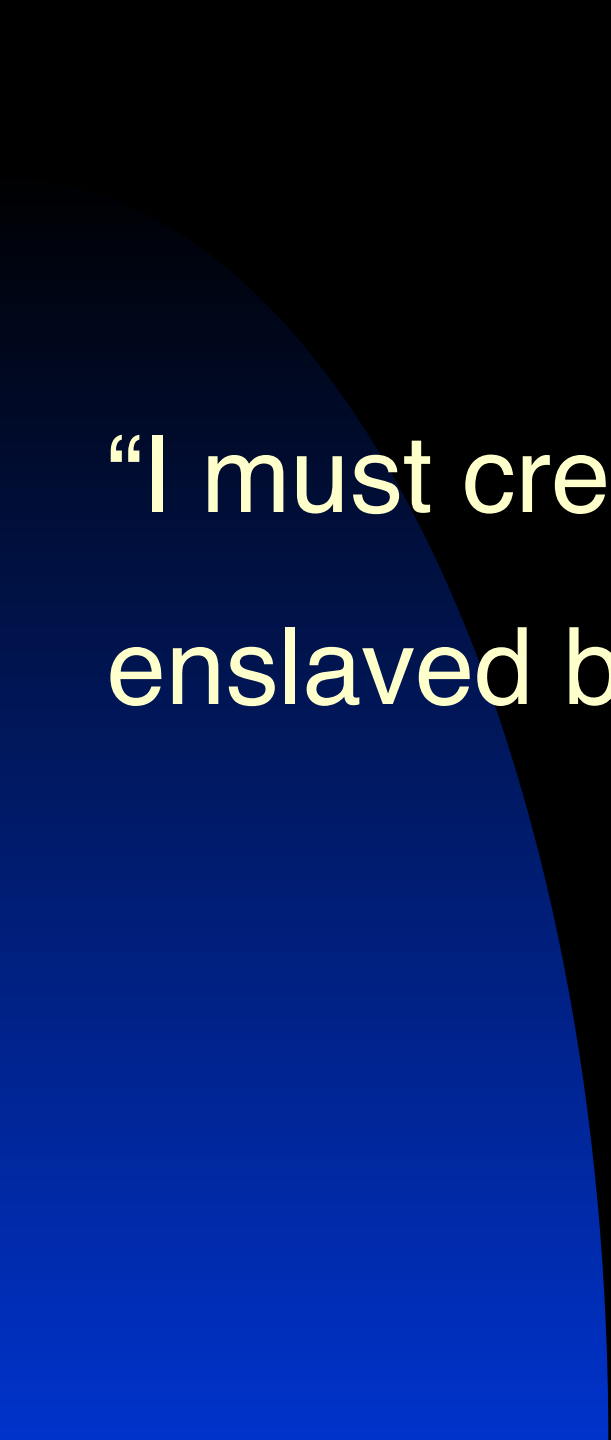
- Suffered in his last years “that Sickness to which there is no name.”
 - ◆ Caused by prolonged exposure to the fumes produced when acid is applied to copper plates
 - ◆ This was one of his methods of engraving

- Claimed to see visions of angels, spirits,
and ghosts of kings and queens

- ◆ First vision seen at age 4 (God at the window)
 - ★ age 9 (tree filled with angels)
- ◆ Favourite brother Robert died and came back to William in a vision to teach him an engraving technique
- ◆ Saw visions until his death; on his deathbed, burst into song about the things he saw in Heaven

Blake's Poetry

- Work received little attention during his lifetime
- Most of his poetry was not widely published
- When his work was noticed, people thought it (and therefore Blake himself) was weird, confused, or mad



“I must create a system or be
enslaved by another man’s.”

- Illustrated most of his poems
- as well as those of other writers
- Printed most of his poetry himself



<http://wiredforbooks.org/blake/milton2a.jpg>



<http://4umi.com/image/art/blake/introduction.jpg>



<http://colophon.com/gallery/minsky/jpegs/blakemh2.jpg>

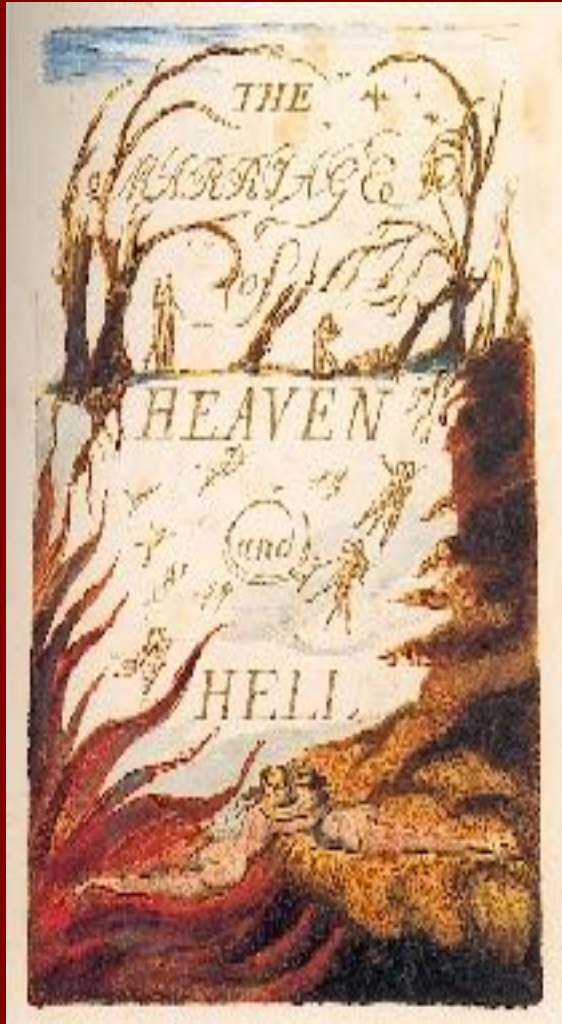
Blake's "Romantic" Tendencies

- If we see with our imaginations, we see the infinite "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 Hold Eternity in an hour"
- if we see with our reason, we see only ourselves
- Believed everything in life (every object, every event) -
- a symbol with a mystical or spiritual meaning

Blake's "Romantic" Tendencies

- His poems spoke out against social injustice
- His poetry and art reflect his struggles with the big spiritual questions:
 - Why is there evil?
 - Why do evil people sometimes prosper?
 - Why do the innocent suffer?

Blake Bibliography



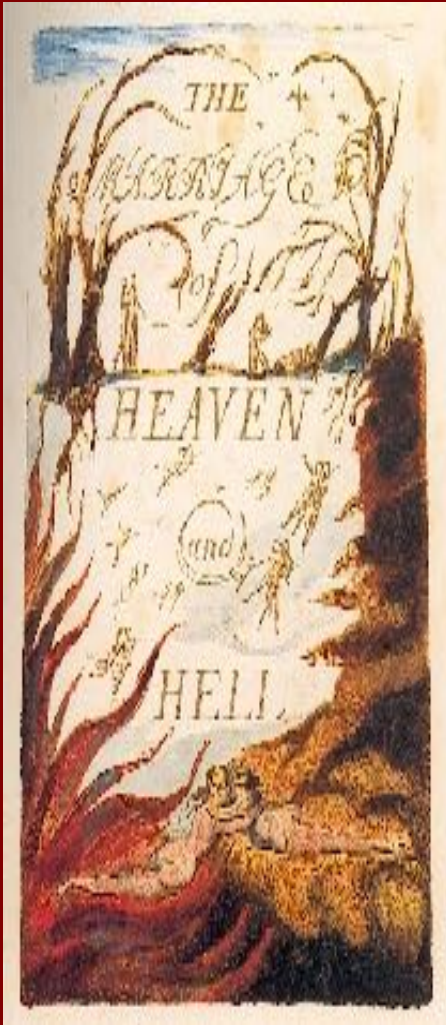
Poetical Sketches (1783)

All Religions Are One (1788)

There Is No Natural Religion (1788)

Songs of Innocence (1789)

Blake Bibliography



The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1790)

Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793)

America, a Prophecy (1793)

For Children: The Gates of Paradise (1793)

Blake Bibliography



Europe, a Prophecy (1794)

Songs of Experience (1794)

The First Book of Urizen (1794)

The Song of Los (1795)

The Book of Ahania (1795)

The Book of Los (1795)

For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise (1820)

Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794)

- Subtitle: “The Contrary States of the Human Soul”
- Innocence: genuine love, trust toward humankind, unquestioned belief in Christianity
- Experience: disillusionment with human nature and society
- Poems in either “Innocence” or “Experience” are coloured by the speaker’s state

"The Lamb"

Little lamb, who made thee?

Does thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?

Little lamb, who made thee?

Does thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;

Little lamb, I'll tell thee:

He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.

He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.

I a child, and thou a lamb,

We are called by His name.

Little lamb, God bless thee!

Little lamb, God bless thee!



“The Lamb” Explication

- Companion piece to “The Tyger”
- Connotations of innocence
- Symbolism: Lamb = Jesus (“Lamb of God”)
 - Jesus is also known as a shepherd who leads stray sheep (sinners) back to the flock (humanity)
- Tone: joyful, bright, happy (contrast with “The Tyger”)

“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 sieze the fire?

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

“The Tyger” Explication

- Companion piece to “The Lamb”
 - “Did he who made the Lamb make thee?”
- Questions the reason for the existence of evil in the world; did God create evil? Blake can't answer that question.



“The Tyger” Explication

- Symbolism:
 - Blacksmith = God/Creator
 - Tyger = evil/violence
- Tone: dark, fearful, questioning



“A Poison Tree”



I was angry with my friend:

I told my wrath, my wrath did end.

I was angry with my foe;

I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,

Night and morning with my tears;

And I sunned it with my smiles

And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,

Till it bore an apple bright;

And my foe beheld it shine,

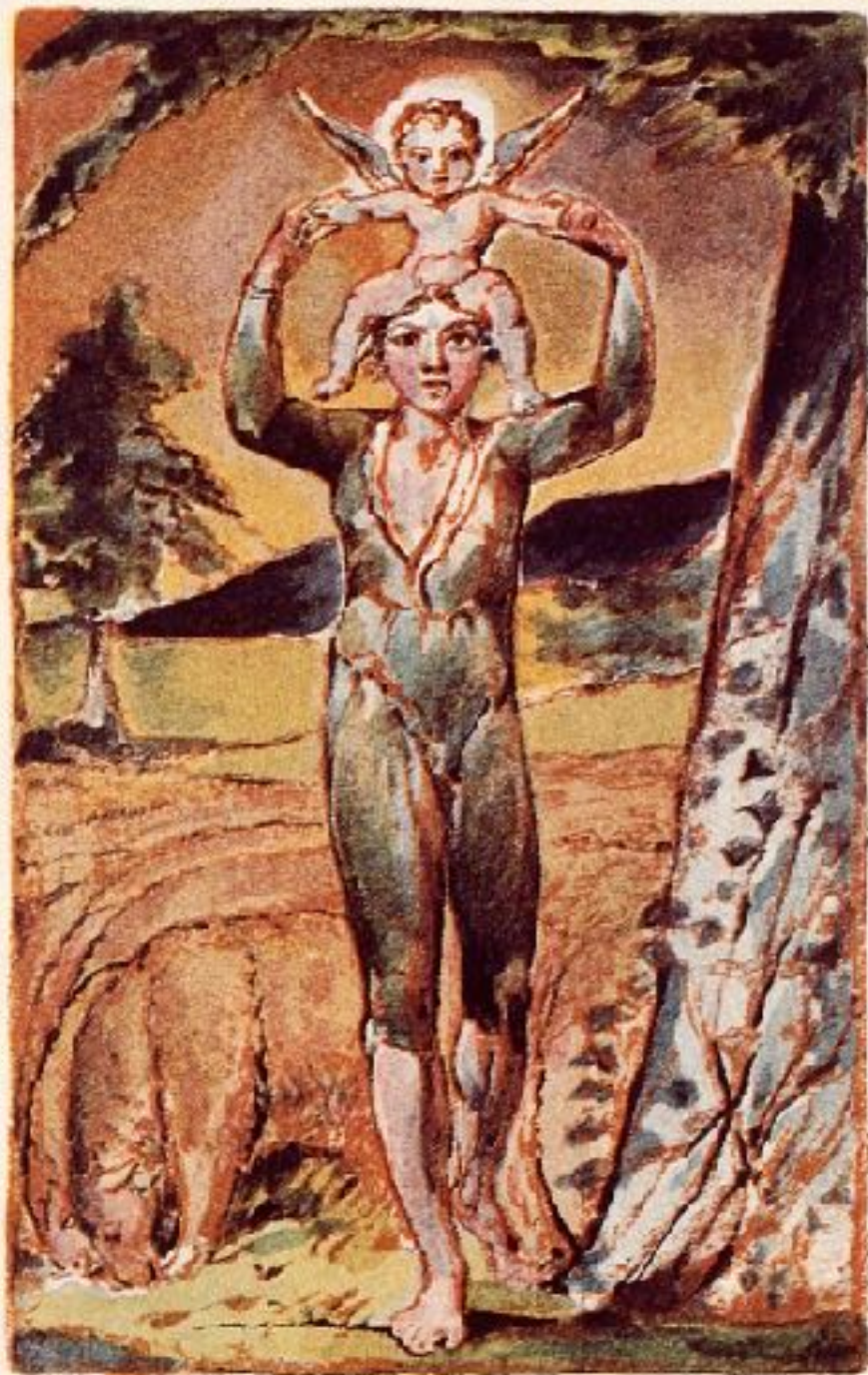
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole

When the night had veil'd the pole:

In the morning glad I see

My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.



INFANT SORROW

My mother groined! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fawn hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands:
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary I thought best
To suck upon my mother's breast.



The Runes Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down,
And the stars of night arise.

Come, come leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies.

No, no let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep.

Besides in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep.

Well, well go & play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed.

The little ones leaped & shouted & laughed,
And all the hills echoed.



“My Face Turns
Green and Pale.”

NURSES SAING

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whistlers are in the pale
The days of my youth rise back in my mind
My face grows young and pale

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dew of night is on
Your spring & your lay are wasted in play
And your mother and night in disguise



“They Raise
To Heaven
The Voice Of
Song.”

“Can It Be A
Song Of Joy
And So Many
Children Poor?”



HOLY THURSDAY

Is this a fair thing to see,
In a rich and feudal land
Babies reduced to misery
And with cold and unkind hand?

Is this trembling cry a song?
That is the cry of joy?
That so many children poor?
In the midst of plenty?

And that these things must come
And that these things are done
And that these things are done
In the name of Jesus Christ

For when the sun has shone
And when the moon is full
And when the stars are bright
The people are still small

“And Mutual
Fear Brings
Peace; Till Selfish
Loves Increase.”

The Human Abstract.

It would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be;
If all were as happy as we;
And mutual fear brings peace;
Till the selfish love increase.
Then Cruelty knots a snare
And spreads his bait with care.
He sits down with holy fears,
And enters the ground with tears;
His Humility tugs the root
Underneath his foot.
Soon grows the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Cut-throat and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.
And it bears the fruit of Devils.
Ravens and vultures to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.
The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree,
But their search was all in vain;
There grows one in the Human Brain.



“The Blossom” from Innocence

“A Happy
Blossom”




The Blossom.

Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom.

“The Sick
Rose”

“O Rose
Thou Art
Sick.”



The SICK ROSE

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.

“The Chimney
Sweeper”
from
Innocence

“An Angel Who
Had A Bright
Key. . . .
Set Them All
Free.”

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep,
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd, so I said,
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your heads bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

And so he was quiet & that very night
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight
That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe Ned & Jack
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they ran,
And wash'd in a river and shined in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They run upon clouds, and sport in the wind,
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm,
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.



“The Chimney
Sweeper”
from
Experience

“They Think
They Have Done
Me No Injury.”

The Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father and mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smiled among the winter's snow;
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy to dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury;
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery.



“The Lamb”

from

Innocence

“Little Lamb
Who Made
Thee?”

The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed;
By the stream & over the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing whiter than light;
Gave thee even a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee:
He is called by the name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He keeps us a little wild;
And a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by the name,
Little Lamb God bless thee,
Little Lamb God bless thee.



“The
Shepherd”
from
Innocence

“For He
Hears The
Lambs’
Innocent
Call”

The Shepherd

How sweet is the Shepherd's sweet lot:
From the morn'g to the evening he strays,
He shall follow his sheep all the day,
And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;
He is watchful while they are in peril,
For they know when their Shepherd is nigh.



“The Tyger”

from

Experience

“What Immortal
Hand or Eye
Could Frame Thy
Fearful Symmetry?”

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 shores
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he appear?
What dares he grasp 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?

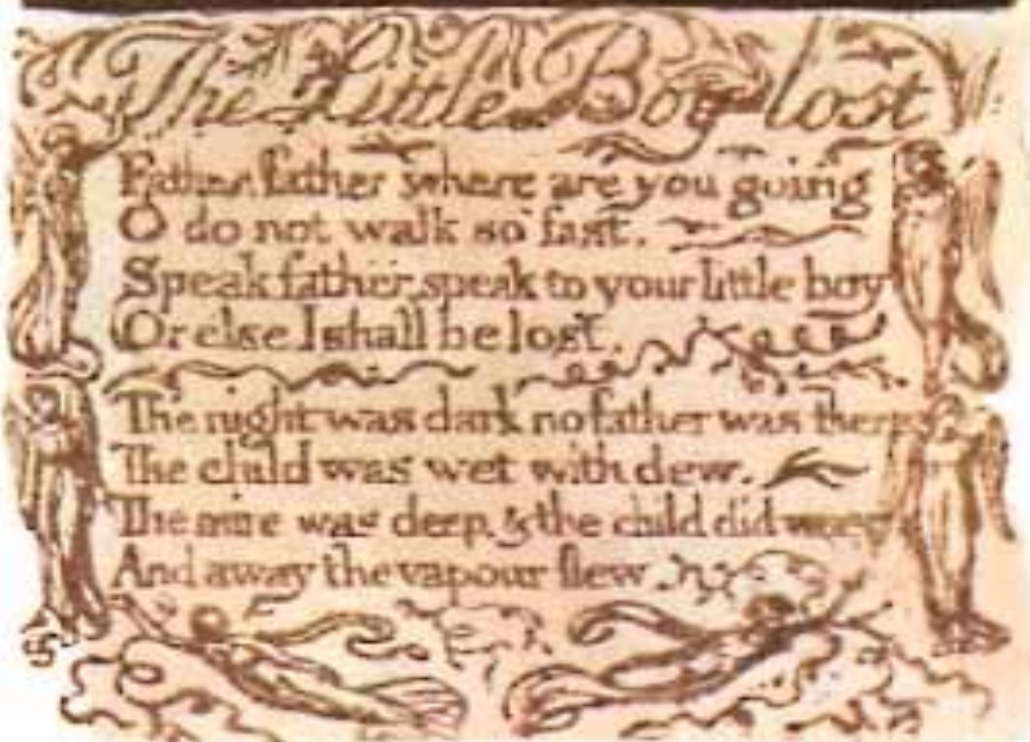
Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?





“The Little
Boy Lost”
from
Innocence

“And The
Child Did
Weep”



The Little Boy lost

Father father where are you going
O do not walk so fast.
Speak father speak to your little boy
Or else I shall be lost.

The night was dark no father was there
The child was wet with dew.
The mine was deep & the child did weep
And away the vapour flew.

“A Little Boy
Lost” from
Experience

“The Weeping
Child Could
Not Be Heard”

A Little BOY Lost

Naught loves another as itself
Nor venerates another so.
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know:

And Father, how can I love you,
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.

The Priest, sat by and heard the child
In trembling zeal he seized his hour:
He led him by his little coat
And all admired the Priestly care.

And standing on the altar high
Lo what a fiend is here! said he:
One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy Mystery.

The weeping child could not be heard.
The weeping parents wept in vain.
They striped him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain.

And burnt him in a holy place,
Where many had been burnt before:
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore.



From Songs Of Innocence

“Night”

“They Pour
Sleep On Their
Head.”



The sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine,
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon like a flower,
In heavens high bower,
With silent delight,
Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell green fields and happy groves,
Where flocks have took delight;
Where lambs have nibbled, silent flocks
The feet of angels bright:
Unseen they pour blessing,
And joy without ceasing,
On each bud and blossom,
And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest,
Where birds are opened wings;
They visit caves of every beast
To keep them all from harm;
If they see any weeping,
That should have been sleeping,
They pour sleep on their head
And sit down by their bed.

“The Little
Black Boy”

“That We May
Learn To Bear
The Beams Of
Love.”



The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say,

Look on the rising sun, there God does live
And grows his light, and gives his heat away,
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud and like a shady grove.

For

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice.
Saying: come out from the grove my love & cure
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.
Thus did my mother say and kiss'd me
And thus I cry to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:
Ill shade him from the heat till he can bear,
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee,
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And he like him and he will then love me.



From Innocence to Experience

“The Little
Girl Lost”

“How Can
Lyca Sleep If
Her Mother
Weep?”

The Little Girl Lost

In forty
prophecy see,
That thy earth from sleep
(Grieve the sentence deep)
Shall arise and seek
For her maker's weep;
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,
Where the summers prime
Never fades away,
Lovely Liza lay.

Seven summers old
Largely Liza told,
She had wandered long,
Hearing wild birds' song.
Sweet sleep came to her
Underneath the tree;
Do father, mother weep—
Where can Liza sleep?

Lost in desert wild
Is your little child,
How can Liza sleep,
If her mother weep?
If her heart does ache,
Then let Liza wake;
If my mother sleep,
Liza shall not weep.

From my sorrowing night,
Over this desert bright,
Let thy voice be heard,
While I close my eyes.
Oh, my Liza lay,
While the beasts of prey
Came from caverns deep,
Viewed the maid asleep.

The lion, lion, roared,
And the hyena howled,
But he passed them round
Over the hollowed ground.



“The Little
Girl Found”

“In My Palace
Deep, Lyca Lies
Asleep”

Leopards, tigers play,
 Round her as she lay;
 While the lion old,
 Bow'd his mane of gold,
 And her bosom lick,
 And upon her neck,
 From his eyes of flame,
 Ruby tears there came;
 While the lioness,
 Laced her slender dress,
 And naked they cameyd
 To nurse the sleeping maid.



The Little Girl Friend

All the night in vain
 Lured parents see
 Over valleys deep
 While the desert winds
 Howl and wail around
 House with a loud moan
 Shout as they sweep down
 They tread the desert sands
 Seven nights they sleep
 Hearing no sound of life
 And when they see their child
 Dead in desert wild
 Pale the pathless way
 The fancied image stays



Embold'ning weeping weak
With hollow pitious shriek
Hailing from heaven,
For trembling women's prayer
With fast of weary weal;
She would no further go
In his arms he bore
Her soul with marrow sore
Till lodged their way,
A smothering kiss lay

Turning back soon won,
Soon but heavy won
Down them to the ground,
Then he staid around.

Smiling to his prey
Not still from allay
When he laid their hands
And slept by them staid

They look upon his eyes
Fild with deep murmurs
And wondering behold,
A Spirit arm'd in gold

On his head a crown
On his shoulders down
Shed his golden hair,
Gave them all their care

Follow me he said
Weep not for the dead
In my palace sleep,
You live and sleep

Then they followed,
Where the water led:
One saw their sleeping child
Among fishes wild

To that place they dwell
In a lonely dell
Till the vaulted head
For the best food



“The School- Boy”

“But To Go To
School In A
Summer Morn, O It
Drives All Joy Away”

The School Boy

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the sky-lark sings with me.
O, what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn
O! it drives all joy away,
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Al! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor is my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
When thro' with the dreary shower

How can the bird that is born for joy,
Set in a cage and sing,
How can a child whose fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring.

O, father & mother, if buds are nip'd,
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are strip'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and cares of woe.

How shall the summer arrive in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear,
Or how shall we gather what grief has
Or laid the mellowing year,
When the halls of winter appear.



“The Voice
Of The
Ancient Bard”

“Tangled
Roots Perplex
Her Ways”

The Voice of the Ancient Bard.

Youth of delight come hither,
And see the evening morn,
Image of truth new born,
Doubt is fled & clouds of reason,
Dark diaspores & artful teasing,
Folly is an endless maze,
Tangled roots perplex her ways,
How many have fallen there!
They wamble all night over bones of the dead;
And feel they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others when they should be led.



The Voice of the Ancient Bard.

Youth of delight come hither!
And see the opening morn.
Image of truth new born.
Doubt is fled by clouds of reason
Dark disputes & artful teasing.
Folly is an endless maze.
Tangled roots perplex her ways.
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead
And feel they know not what but care
And wish to lead others when they should be led.



From Songs of Experience

“The Clod
And The
Pebble”

“Love Seeketh
Only Self To
Please”



The CLOD & the PEBBLE

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

So sang a little Clod of Clay
Troddden with the cattle's feet:
But a Pebble of the brook,
Warbled out these metres meet.

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight:
Jealous in another's love it sees,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.



“A Poison
Tree”

A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fear,
Night & morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with my smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine.

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole,
In the morning glad I see:
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.



“The Little
Vagabond”

“Dear Mother,
The Church Is
Cold”



The Little Vagabond

Dear Mother, dear Mother the Church is cold.
That the Ale house is hotter & pleasant & warm.
Happier I can tell where I am well well.
Such songs in houses are sung as well.
But if at the Church you would give us some Ale
And a pleasant fire, our songs be true.
We'll sing and wait, say all the time long day
For you have with you the Church is cold.
Then the Parson might preach & drink & sing.
And we be as happy as birds in the spring.
And when the Church is so cold & the Parson
Should not have hungry children nor fasting nor lack
And God be a father giving us more.
And children be merry and happy as he.
And we be as merry as the Devil or the Parson.
And we be as merry as the Devil and the Parson.



“The Fly”

“Or Art
Thou A Man
Like Me?”

THE FLY.

Little Fly
By quiverous play,
Thy thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I so
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink & sing;
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength & breath;
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly.
If I live,
Or if I die.



“London”

“In Every Face I
Meet Marks Of
Weakness Marks
Of Woe.”



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 glories with plagues the Marriage hearse



“My Heart Is
At Rest
Within My
Breast.”

- In 1818 - S. T. Coleridge made a comment on W. Blake
- - a man of genius

- “I have this morning been reading a strange publication - poems with very wild and interesting picture, as the swathing, etched but it is said- printed and painted by the Author W. Blake.
- He is a man of Genius... certainly a mystic emphatically.

- Charles Lamb- 1824
- A most extraordinary Man- Blake is a real name, I assure you, and a most extraordinary man, if he be still living... He paints in water colours marvellous strange pictures, visions of his brain, which he asserts that he has seen.

-

- Charles Lamb- 1824
- They have great merit... His poems have been sold hitherto only in Manuscript... I must look on him as one of most extraordinary persons of the age....
-

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

- uses the same tenets used in **Songs of Innocence** and **Songs of Experience**
- the construction of both an innocent, child-like narrative, and a mature, adult narrative

- to show the hypocrisy and the chaos of Blake's contemporary life

- William Blake was an unknown among his contemporaries
- Considered at times - a genius, and at times a complete madman

- he is only seen as a great poet, and indeed a great artist, posthumously
- in 2002, Blake was placed at number 38 in a list of the 100 Greatest Britons

- His works : mythological, philosophical, and mystical
- he eschewed (refrain) and derided (mock) all forms of organised religion, but worshipped the Bible

- one of his influences
- - Milton, and Milton's Paradise Lost
- can find quite a few influences to Paradise Lost in more than one of Blake's works If one follow Blake's mind

- the peculiarity is seen to be the peculiarity of all great poetry
- something which is found in Homer, Dante
- Shakespeare,
- also in another form in Montaigne and in Spinoza

- The poet's argument –
- the natural world is in a state of constant cycle

- the world, which is reborn and remade throughout nature
- symbolises the innocence of man that is forgotten and pushed aside as man advances closer to adulthood

- It explores the value and limitations of the human perspective as opposed to the cycle of nature
- which grows ever older and more experienced, and yet also, in some cases, remains untouched and unblemished

- Throughout the poem, Blake's anger at the **corruption within his country**
- **and within humanity**
- this is a trait indicative of Blake's personal style
- while heavily symbolic, is also heavily critical and powerful.

- 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
-

-
- The four lines
- most often quoted and remembered
- leaving the rest of the poem to wither away
in complete anonymity

- they open with the paradox of holding infinity in 'the palm of your hand'
- - holding something immeasurably big in a space that is almost immeasurably small.

- The concept of **infinity** - mathematically, is an abstract idea
- too large to be withheld by the mind, and therefore it cannot be held in the palm of the hand

- Is there a **didactic** intention

- designed to **illuminate** more
than to **entertain**

- One crucial question is-
- whether the poem is to be understood as
- **auguries delivered by those in the**

state of innocence for the

benefit of those in the state of

experience

- JOHN E. GRANT “Apocalypse in Blake's Auguries of Innocence”
- word "Auguries" in the title –
- not a synonym for the words "Visions" or "Prophecies,"

- dictionary equivalents such as
"Predictions" or **"Omens"** not entirely
render the rich suggestiveness

- it contains an **allusion to the Roman augures**, who interpreted omens for the guidance of public affairs.

- They particularly observed the activities of birds and sometimes undertook the sacrifice of dogs
- closely related haruspices (hə'ɹʌspɛks) -
 - a religious official who interpreted omens by inspecting the entrails of sacrificial animals

- while they closely related haruspices (hə'ɹʌspɛks) practiced extispicy- divination based on the entrails of animals, particularly sheep

- This allusion - prepares the reader for the concern for victimised birds and other animals
- “A dog starved at his Masters Gate
- Predicts the ruin of the State”

- Though modern scholarship denies that Roman augures were supposed to foretell the future
- in the Christian era, augurs were proverbial (well-known) examples of the vanity of forecasting

- as in Shakespeare's line "the sad augurs mock their own presage."(foretell)

- Blake distinguished sharply between
"prophecy" and prognostication (prediction)
because of the imposture (pretence)

-

- But Blake could have had no sympathy whatever with Roman augures for they were pseudo-prophets, **functionaries of the state religion in the archetypal empire**, and thus on every score deserved the deepest abhorrence (hatred)

- But the mere fact that **such men, who could only deliver "auguries of experience,"** existed at some time in the dim past was of little significance

- What is really important is that the same kinds of men persist in all ages:
- human life displays **"the same characters repeated again and again,"** for though **"names alter, things never change**

- Blake's title thus implies that **his poem will present an imaginative alternative**

- the reader should not expect a comprehensive vision of innocence, but rather a series of distinct **epiphanies of innocence**

- Reader also can recognise a large amount of philosophical polemic in the body of "Auguries of Innocence"
- "He who shall hurt the little Wren
- Shall never be beloved by men"
- a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something.

- Like all writers in the apocalyptic tradition, Blake was concerned to define the character of the visionary, whom he called a prophet to indicate that the **task of such a man is to perfect the message of Elijah.**

- He also believed it essential to know what a prophet is not:
- "Prophets in the modern sense of the word, have never existed. Jonah was no prophet in the modern sense, for his prophecy of Ninevah failed.

- Every honest man is a Prophet; he utters his opinion both of private and public matters.

- Thus : If you go on So, the result is So. He never says, such a thing shall happen let you do what you will. A Prophet is a Seer, not an Arbitrary Dictator."

- Geoffrey Keynes, ed., The Complete Writings of William Blake (London, 1957) , p. 459.

- 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.
- "in order to see a World and a Heaven, you must hold Infinity and Eternity"

- First line Blake asks us to "see a World in a Grain of Sand," **not this world, but a World** (with greater potentialities) in any grain of sand, because **each particle may be perceived to be macroscopic by the seer**

- As Isaiah explains in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”:
- "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception ; but my senses discovered the infinite in every thing"

- A "Grain of Sand" is the **mineral nadir**
(lowest point) **of vision**, which becomes one
of Blake's most important symbols.

- Note that in *Milton* 20:27, the "little winged fly" is spoken of as being "smaller than a grain of sand."
- It is the **essence of the fly, its heart and brain** (1. 28) that Blake conceives to be something smaller than the grain of sand.

- Any mineral object, such as a **grain of sand, is neutral and may function either to obscure vision or to inspire it by reflecting the divine sun**

- an inanimate object, like a grain of sand, is poetically most effective when used as a symbol for the essence of the natural world, rather than a préfiguration of Eden, and it is in this sense that it functions in the motto of "Auguries..."

- S. Foster Damon, William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols (Boston, 1924), p. 299, quotes from occidental writers several examples of the **grain of sand being used as a microcosmic symbol**. The Zen masters Jimyo and Yengo **saw the same potentiality in a particle of dust** : "As soon as one particle of dust is raised, the great earth manifests itself there in its entirety." "One particle of dust is raised and the great earth lies therein." Quoted in William Barrett, ed., Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki (New York, 1956),

- If a new "World" is imagined in the first line, a new "Heaven" is imagined in the second,
- for Blake agreed with St. John that both heaven and earth, as they are usually conceived, leave something to be desired.


- The focus of vision in the second line is a "Wild Flower," which implicitly invokes the Blakean doctrine of **free love**.
- The wild flowers song (K, 170-175) or Visions of the Daughters of Albion I, 4 ff. (AT, 189) The "Marygold of Leutha's Vale" plucked by Oothoon is presumably the wild swamp marigold, used for medicinal purposes, rather than the common garden flower. But in "My Pretty Rose Tree" and "The Garden of Love" (/£, 215) even **"sweet flowers" symbolize free love**. The flower symbol is discussed by Joseph H. Wicksteed, Blake's Innocence and Experience (London, 1928), p. 12

- the first line of the motto suggests how the World may be redeemed through macroscopic vision of inorganic minutiae
(details) mɪ'njuːʃi

- whereas the second suggests how Heaven may be redeemed through sympathetic vision of organic minutiae that grow from the inorganic.

- Blake, like Whitman some fifty years later, was attracted by the miracle in the minute and the simple, which is as much a feature of the elaborate symbolic and mythic fabric of his later complex visionary works

- Like Whitman, a poet of grand statement and the creator of an ever-expanding collection of poems about a personal vision, Blake values his equivalents.....

- 
- Richard Maurice Bucke, a Canadian born, one of the earliest biographers and scholars of Whitman treats him as a
 - **case of Cosmic Consciousness** and compares him, with world illuminants such as Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Mohammed, William Blake, etc.

There Was a Child Went Forth

- poet's **identification of his consciousness** with all objects
- continual **process of becoming** is at the heart of the poem.
- “There was a child went forth every day; And the first object he look’d upon, that object he became; *And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years, or stretching cycles of years*”

- For Blake, the wild flower and the worm, the fly and the lark, the seed and the grain of sand, while they are indeed to be treasured in and for themselves, are essentially visionary thresholds.

- Nothing can with- stand the **power of a perception** that makes it possible for the poet to see the world of objects from the object's point of view

- The possession of such a power means, of course, that **each and every object ceases to be an object and becomes instead a subject**, a subject in the fellowship or brotherhood of subjects.

- This power resides in all objects not potentially but actually, and every object (to itself a subject) is open to the perceiving mind, the pan-visionary intelligence of which all interiors are parts and parcels

- Like Whitman, once again, Blake conceives of the visionary power (Whitman writes that he is "afoot with vision") as a "vehicular form" or "vehicular power." Hence, the social gospel that emerges from the work of both these poets can be seen to be ancillary to the pan-visionary power that is forever one, despite the individuation of manifold objects. In Milton, Blake writes:

- . . . the poor indigent is like the diamond
which tho cloth 'd In rugged covering in the
mine, is open all within And in his hallo wd
center holds the heavens of bright eternity
[.]

- Such verse (the simile is striking) clearly emphasizes the inward reality of the individual form which though hidden in the mass is a "simple, separate person," the same celebrated by Whitman when he sings of self. It is obvious that Paradise is within.
- Like Blake, Whitman is a son of Los- all visionary poets are.

- And as Blake writes in Milton, they (the sons of Los) build "Moments & Minutes & Hours / And Days & Months & Years & Ages & Periods" and "every moment has a Couch of gold for soft repose." Los' messenger to the fallen world (the result of fallen vision) is the English

- Skylark, who is really a "mighty Angel." Its "Nest is at the Gate of Los." Why?

Because Los, the pan-visionary power, is at the threshold of all things. The gate of Los is everywhere and the lark is a symbol of the prophetic character of that pan-visionary power.

- "To see a World in a Wild Flower" and to "Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour" are the aphoristic verses with which the "Auguries of Innocence" begin, but they are also the key not only to Blake's social gospel (as the subsequent aphorisms in the "Auguries" make clear), but to the meaning of many of the most important symbols and images in Blake's work.

- The power to see the all in each indicates that loving-kindness- not a pretense to loving-kindness- attends the imagination at all times. Much of the discussion that follows is an attempt to show (especially in the major Blake prophecies) how symbols of the minute and infinitesimal are employed repeatedly by Blake to describe the character of the pan-visionary power, which penetrates the least of things and thus opens the gate of Los to "Worlds of Vision

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- It is necessary for readers of Blake to understand the relation between the temporal and spatial symbols for the infinitesimal particular: the moment and the grain of sand. Both of these symbols are associated explicitly with Los, and in Milton and Jerusalem are beyond the power of Satan or his Watch-fiends to discover or pervert. There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious find This Moment & it multiply. & when it once is found It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed [.] (M35:E135)

- As there is a moment that Satan cannot find, so there is a grain of sand that neither he nor his Watch- fiends can find: There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find Nor can his Watch Fiends find it: tis translucent & has many Angles But he who finds it will find Oothoons palace, for within Opening into Beulah every angle is a lovely heaven But should the Watch Fiends find it, they would call it Sin (J37[41]:E181)

- The implication that the grain of sand is discoverable only in that moment in each day that renovates every other moment is not necessary to verify- attractive as such an assumption is- in order to establish the temporal-spatial symbolic parallel, since both the grain and the moment are said to be precisely what the Accuser cannot locate in Human Existence. Although it is possible that Blake may mean angel and not angle, the grain of sand- like the moment or pulsation of the artery- is a visionary

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- The visionary act of seeing into and through a grain of sand -the infinitesimal particular that is also multitudinous

- While it is true, as Raine says, that according to Blake "it is not necessary to undergo physical death in order to enter immortal life, for the Gate of Paradise is everywhere; it opens in 'another principle,'"6 a passage of some sort must be made. He who can see a world in a grain of sand will also know that any visionary act is a death and a birth, for "Such are the Gates of Paradise": mutual forgiveness and ceasing to behold error are the spiritual results of a spiritual cause- the mental act of dying "several times" in London where the Gate of Los is situated in Albion

- time. The crucial role that human perception plays in the preparation for the final harvest of the grain-star-seed^the myriad divine particulars which appear as particles in the vegetative universe- is best outlined by Blake in his "Mock on Mock" parody of empiric patriotism, an explicit attack on empire and the empirical method. Every sand that the mocking eye throws against the divine wind blinds that eye, yet every sand is a visionary gem in the divine eye beam. Hence the sands shine like jeweled stars in the paths of Israel, yet appear to the blinded and blinding eye as either the atoms of Democritus or Newton's particles of light. The eye harvests what it sees- creates its own atmosphere and medium. As Blake writes in the "Proverbs of Hell," "He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star." If Perceptive Organs vary: Objects of Perception seem to vary: If the Perceptive Organs close: their Objects seem to close also: (J30[34]:E175)

- The spirit of Thomas Traherne reasserts itself in Blake's vision the grain of sand: "You never enjoy the world aright, till you how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God." Voltaire and Rousseau, Democritus and Newton symbolize a kind of ness that makes them into Satan's Watch-fiends. Between the Watch-fiends and the visionary-prophets, therefore, an eternal war is waged for dominion over the eye of man, the gate of

- because his perception had insisted on the object's otherness. In visionary terms, each grain of sand, seed, or star is identifiable with or as

- Many of Blake's earlier " prophecies " are intimately concerned with the religious and political upheaval of his day. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell[^] America, as well as the lost poem entitled The French Revolution, are almost exclusively devoted to this subject. He was never tired of inveighing against the disastrous tyranny of those laws and moralities which had been framed by abstract philosophy and false religion for the suppression of the " interior vision," and urging the people to shake off, before it is too late, " the heavy iron chain " which is " descending link by link " to enslave them. The dominion of this malignant spectre was daily increasing, and even Blake himself, who was in so little the child of his own age, was not able to escape entirely from its pernicious influence. For every man is born with the instincts of his time, which are ineradicable from his natural state, and if these instincts are altogether corrupt and worldly, it is only in the power of a supreme imaginative intelligence to eliminate their tendency.

