

**T. C.
ULUDAĞ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ
YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ BİLİM DALI**

WILLIAM BLAKE: MORE THAN A POET

(YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ)

Ajda DALLILAR

BURSA 2010

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Danışman

Assist. Prof. Dr. Erol BARUT

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EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı'nda 700760001 numaralı Ajda DALLILAR'ın hazırladığı “William Blake: More Than A Poet” konulu Yüksek Lisans Tezi ile ilgili tez savunma sınavı, 19/10/2010 Salı günü 11.00 – 12.00 saatleri arasında yapılmış, sorulan sorulara alınan cevaplar sonunda adayın tezinin başarılı olduğuna oybirliği ile karar verilmiştir.

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ÖZET	
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WILLIAM BLAKE: ŞAİRDEN ÖTE	
<p>William Blake değeri ölümünden yaklaşık iki asır sonra anlaşılan, yaşadığı dönemde yakın çevresi dışında belki de çok az kişinin tanıdığı fakat günümüzde büyük kitlelerin tanıyıp hayranlık duyduğu İngiliz Edebiyatı Romantik döneminin önemli şairlerindedir. Blake şiirlerinde topluma farklı mesajlar vermekte; din, toplum, felsefe gibi alanlarda düşüncelerini şiirleri vasıtasıyla yansıtmaktadır. Fakat Blake'i diğer şairlerden ayırıp incelenmeye değer kılan özelliği mesajlarını verirken kullandığı tek yolun edebiyat yani şiirleri olmayışdır. Blake şairlik özelliğinin yanı sıra görsel sanatlara olan ilgisi ve yeteneğiyle de dikkat çekmektedir. O sadece ünlü bir şair değil aynı zamanda ünlü bir ressam ve gravür sanatçısıdır. Bu nedenle din ve toplumla ilgili mesajlarını verirken kullandığı diğer yöntem de görsel sanatlardır. Edebiyat ve görsel sanatlar konusundaki yeteneklere aynı anda sahip olan nadir insanlardan biri olması dolayısıyla William Blake bu tezin ana konusunu oluşturmaktadır.</p> <p>William Blake'i ele alırken yaşadığı dönem olan Romantik Dönem de göz ardı edilmeyerek tezin birinci bölümünde dönemin genel özelliklerine kısaca yer verilmektedir. Tez, Blake'in yaşamı, şairliği ve bazı şiirlerinin incelenmesi ile devam etmektedir. Tezin son bölümünde de Blake'in şairlikten öte özellikleri ele alınmakta ve tez Blake'in bazı görsel eserleri ile desteklenmektedir. Şiirlerinde, resimlerinde ve gravürlerinde verilen dini ve toplumsal mesajlar sonuç bölümünde ele alınmaktadır.</p>	
Anahtar Sözcükler	
William Blake – İngiliz Edebiyatı - Romantik Dönem – Şiir – Gravür - Ressam	

ABSTRACT	
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WILLIAM BLAKE: MORE THAN A POET	
<p>William Blake is one of the most important poets of the Romantic Period in English Literature, the value of whom had been recognized nearly two centuries after his death. He is a poet probably had known by a few people other than his friends and family when he was alive but is admired by many people now. Blake gives several messages about his ideas on such fields as religion, society and philosophy via his poems. But, what makes Blake worth to be examined is that the poetry is not the only vehicle he uses to share his messages. Blake also stands out for his interest in and special talent for art alongside literature. He is not only a well-known poet but also a famous painter and engraver. That's how he can use art for sharing his messages other than literature. For being one of the rare people who bears two special talents, both for literature and art, William Blake was chosen to be the main focus of this thesis.</p> <p>Though William Blake is chiefly examined, the age he lived, namely Romantic Period, is also taken into consideration in this thesis and general information about the period is included at the first chapter. The thesis keeps on giving information on Blake's life, his poetry and some of his poems. The last chapter considers Blake's characteristics other than being a poet and the thesis is supported by the samples of his paintings and engravings. His messages given via his poems, paintings and engravings on religion and social issues are considered at the conclusion.</p>	
Key Words	
William Blake – English Literature – Romantic Period– Poetry – Engraving - Painter	

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INTRODUCTION

“In 1827 there died, undoubtedly unknown to each other, two plebeian Europeans of supreme originality: Ludwig van Beethoven and William Blake. Had they known of each other, they could still not have known how much of the future they contained and how alike they were in the quality of their personal force, their defiance of the age, and the fierce demands each other had made on the human imagination.”

(Kazin 1965: 1)

Kazin compares Blake to a genius of his own field namely music; Blake is also a genius of his field even though it took much time to appreciate him. William Blake is a poet in terms of English literature who lived at the Romantic period. Though he is a well-known poet now, his value has been recognized long after his death. It has many reasons one the most important of which is that his poems were not printed and made multiple copies because Blake drew his own poems on a copper tablet and multiply his works at his home. These copies were much more expensive than the ones on the books. Though the price might be an important factor, his works were not guaranteed to be sold excessively. Because his poems include Blake's extraordinary ideas on social issues, on religion and philosophy. At his time, Blake's attacks on conventional religion were shocking for people. His messages needed time to be understood and considered as valuable ideas. That time is so long as two centuries which is really a long time for humanity to get accustomed to discuss such taboos as religion. It is a clear evidence that Blake was really ahead of his own age. He had no hesitation to discuss his ideas about religion while most of the people at his age saw this topic as a taboo which was forbidden to be questioned. Another reason why Blake was not largely fancied then was that he was thought to be insane for the visions he claimed to have seen. Blake claimed to experience visions throughout his life. They were often associated with beautiful religious themes and imagery, and therefore may have inspired him further with spiritual works and pursuits. Certainly, religious concepts and imagery figure centrally in Blake's works. Whether these visions are real or not is a mystery. One is free to believe in these visions' reality or not. What really matters is that Blake was a poet who

had courage to speak out loud his extraordinary ideas on religion, sexuality, philosophy and so on at such a conservative age.

At the first glance, one who makes search on Blake would probably encounter his poems such as Songs of Innocence, Songs of Experience, Poetical Sketches and so on. It is such a common incident for literature fans to see Blake as a mere poet but it can be misleading for his only talent is not to be a successful poet but also to be an admired painter and engraver. His great paintings and engravings are admired by many people interested in visual arts. His works are exhibited at the most important art galleries throughout the world. There are many books that were illuminated by Blake. The fans of art are accustomed to his artistic talents while the fans of literature are accustomed to his poetical talent. But isn't it unfair to see Blake's only one aspect? There are only a few people who are aware of Blake's twin dispositions toward art and poetry. He is one of the rare people who bears two special talents, both for literature and art. And this thesis aims to raise people's awareness of Blake's being someone more than just a poet or just a painter. Burdett was one of those who appreciated both talents of Blake and he uttered these words:

“Of his twin dispositions toward art and poetry, the artistic was cultivated, the literary left alone. His observation was fed by watching nature and men in the fields and in the streets; his imagination, already stimulated by these, was nourished by looking at pictures; his intelligence was aroused by religious discussion, heretical opinions, and the entirely uncritical reading of books”

(Burdett 1926: 6)

As it was stated before, William Blake was one of the poets that was taken into consideration as a Romantic Period poet. For this reason, it was thought to be useful to give general information about the period he lived. The first chapter of this thesis consisted of general features of Romantic Period and short informations about major poets of the age. Romantic Period was mainly shaped by the most important revolutions which had great impact on the historical development of the humanity. Two of the most important incidents of the time were the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in England. It is generally accepted that both literature and art are affected by the time they are

produced. For this reason, general information about these revolutions were given to figure out the Romantic Period and the poets of the time better. Though Blake was considered to be a Romantic period poet, Mina Urgan opposes this general statement by claiming that Blake is just accepted as a Romantic Period poet for he lived between 1757 and 1827. She claims that Blake is ahead of both Romanticism and Pre-Romanticism. Instead she believes that Blake is a creator who is unique in all senses and he has no equivalence not only in English literature but also in the world (Urgan 1989).

Second chapter of the thesis consists of information about Blake's personal life and his religious views. The religion is the most important of all the subjects that are taboo. But Blake, having a critical mind, takes this issue into consideration and interpret on the matter without any fear at that time. Although his rejection of religiosity was not a rejection of religion actually, Blake's attacks on conventional religion were shocking in his own day.

Blake's poetical aspect is examined at the third chapter alongside some of his poems. His poems are categorized into two groups: Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. The difference or, if there is, the similarities between to groups of poems is dealt. Blake sees the world from a pure little child's point of view at the *Songs of Innocence*. The world we see in these poems is a place that has no dark sides, filled with joy and hope, like the heaven. When it comes to the Songs of Experience the little child has grown up and get acquainted with the evil of the world and has seen the dark side of the world. There is a huge contrast between two groups of poems. Some examples of poems will be dealt at this chapter.

The last chapter is to engage in the Blake's artistic talent other than poetry. As it is stated before Blake is not just an extraordinary poet but also a very talented painter and engraver. Blake began to experiment with relief etching, a method he would use to produce most of his books, paintings, pamphlets and poems in 1788, at the age of 31. The process is also referred to as illuminated printing, and final products as illuminated books or prints. Illuminated printing involved writing the text of the poems on copper plates with pens and brushes,

using an acid-resistant medium. Illustrations could appear alongside words in the manner of earlier illuminated manuscripts. He then etched the plates in acid to dissolve the untreated copper and leave the design standing in relief. In the normal method of etching the lines of the design are exposed to the acid, and the plate printed by the intaglio method but this is a reversal of the normal method of etching. Some samples of Blake's paintings and engravings is attached to the thesis to visualize Blake's talent in visual arts.

FIRST CHAPTER THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

1.THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

“Strict rules, superficial elegance, formality, orderliness, finite views, artificiality of convention, didacticism, courtly civilization were the characteristics of Neo-Classicism. Yet, in the different works of the years 1740-50 there was an emphasize on the natural, the spontaneous in place of the controlled, freedom instead of discipline and order in poetry. This new trend of freedom was anywhere evident in the new modes of feeling and their more direct expression as well as in the choice of new subjects and aesthetics” (Gültekin 1998: 138). As it could be estimated, the naturalness and spontaneity were sought not only in the emotions but also in the outer world. Interest in urban and courtly life was replaced by a new interest in nature and in simple primitive life. With these new tendencies in life styles and in mentality, there seemed to begin a new period both in social life and consequently in literature which was called The Pre-Romanticism.

1.1.The Romantics

While the Pre-Romantics were in favour of emphasizing spontaneity and naturalness as the main source of creativity, the importance of imagination was emphasized by the Romantics. The Romantic Age brought a more imaginative point of view to both life and consequently to literature. There was not the society but the individual at the center of Romantic vision.

The Romantic Period could be spanned between the year 1798, in which Wordsworth and Coleridge published their Lyrical Ballads, and 1832, when Sir Walter Scott died (Abrams 1979) .

1.1.1. An age of revolution

“The well-marked departure from previous styles did not spring abruptly from a void. Like other periods of change and new ideas, the eighteenth century produced bold

experiment and exciting success. It was not time for high polish or excessive refinement; men were shaken and stimulated by world events and ideas; diction became less leisurely, emotions became larger, more spacious, and often consciously dramatic” (Blyton 1947: 123).

The Romantic Period appeared in the midst of a great era of revolution. There occurred many events which made it seem possible for men to escape the suffering and oppression that had thought inescapable. These events brought a new world of equality, fraternity and liberty. One of the most important events of all was the French Revolution. The French Revolution made it seem possible for some Romantic writers that there would be a society in which there were equality and liberty for all the people. The first wave of romanticism was heavily influenced by the spirit of revolution and the optimistic air of the idea of liberty, equality and fraternity (Gültekin 1998).

The French Revolution contributed later to a sense of disappointment following the Reign of Terror in France. In this period, the oppressed classes became as corrupt and violent as their former rulers. And also they tended to pave the way for Napoleon’s rise to power. There occurred a conflict between political factions and the failures of the revolutionary government and it caused a period of excessive violence. Approximately 40,000 people were killed, and many peasants were accused of trumped-up charges regarding their own ideas, morals and opinions. Even though at the beginning, the idea of the French Revolution gave energy to the early Romantic movement, its reality turned Romantics against it. With the disappointment of the French Revolution's regime of terror and Napoleon Bonaparte, romanticism became a critique of imperialism and the artificial materialism of industrial society.

Romantics living during the period of revolution traced all of the ideas they did not like about its outcome back to Enlightenment thinking, which placed reason as the common factor uniting humanity and promoted logic and science over the religious and mystical. Neither movement respected its predecessors: Enlightenment supporters had denounced the previous, church-based society, just as the Romantics would denounce their reason-based society. The persecution of the religious and promotion of the cult of Reason in Robespierre's regime of terror hearkened back to these times. Romanticism truly flourished when it had an enemy to stand against.

The Romantics of the revolutionary years formed a hard line against the democratic wave that had led to French imperialism whereas the pre-Romantics in the time before the French Revolution supported the ideas of political and social change. Romantics celebrated diversity of the individual and a return to the natural and mystical rather than focusing on the common aspects of man. At first an effort to escape the cruelty of reality, the focus on nature and man's spirit became a non-practical way to describe and think about social, economic and political issues. The idea of a truth outside of reason and physical senses--of a human spirit--was the foundation for support of nationalism, or collective cultural spirit. As Napoleon worked to enlarge the French empire and spread French culture, Romantics put value on the individual spirit of a nation, as expressed by the language and culture before the customs imposed by a foreign entity like the French.

A new generation of Romantics started to criticize the wave of industrialization and city life by the 1820s. The 19th century in the West is characterized by intense social strife and widespread greed, which did not go unnoticed by the Romantic movement. As Enlightenment thinking was viewed as cold, unfeeling and mechanical, so was the industrialization of labor. Materialism and industrial greed seemed to overtake social concern and other virtues prized by the Romantics, and the bourgeoisie were heavily criticized for their perceived lack of morality and taste. In the years after Napoleon, Romantics strove to create change in the form of a new social system to replace what they saw as an old, dying social model. Free exchange of ideas and art allowed for the rise of utopian socialists and other critics who were ready to work toward a brighter future.

While in France there were the effects of the French Revolution and its effects on the Romanticism, in England the Industrial Revolution took place from 1750-1850 during which period England changed from an agricultural to an industrial society and from home manufacturing to factory production. As the Industrial Revolution gathered force more and more villagers forced by economic necessity to seek work in the growing factories, huddled together in filthy slums. These changes in economic life normally effected the social life as well and as a result towns became cities. Men,

women and children who were considered old enough to work by many employers and some parents when they were able to pull a cart in the suffocating coal mines or to sweep a floor in the textile factories labored from sunrise to sunset for meager wages(Abrams 1979). “Meanwhile, the population was becoming increasingly polarized into Disraeli later called the “Two Nations”- the classes of capital and labor, the large owner or trader and the possessionless wageworker, the rich and the poor”(Abrams 1979: 3). There were no religious training, medical care and education for the children of the poor. English society began to awaken to its obligations to the miserable and helpless gradually. And with the efforts of reformers, the church and government assumed their responsibilities. They organized Sunday schools; built hospitals and they initiated some movements to reform the prisons and regulate the conditions of child labor. Every aspect of English life were affected by the effects of revolution abroad, the demand for a more democratic government, and a growing awareness of social injustice at home.

1.1.2. Elsewhere in the world

Latin America were also affected by the age of revolution. In the 1780s, colonists revolted against 300 years of foreign rule in Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Only one uprising was successful at first. In 1794, Pierre Dominique Toussaint I’Overture, a freed black slave in Hispaniola, led a rebellion against the French. He was captured, but his successor led the Haitians to independence in 1803. He became the subject of a poem by Wordsworth. Simon Bolivar who was born in 1783 fought for more than twenty years to win independence for what became Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Bolivar dreamed of a kind of united states for all Spanish america, but his dreams were never realized. In the United States, the population was moving inexorably westward. Settlers from the myriad ethnic groups that had settled the eastern seaboard streamed into Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois in search of land and prosperity, and many more immigrants arrived from Europe. The land area of the United States doubled in 1803 with the purchase from France of the Louisiana territory. The increase in wealth was speculator for many because of the rapid expansion of shipping, trade, manufacturing, and agriculture.

Thousands of acres in the South were planted in cotton after Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin, and every pound of cotton was sold as soon as it was grown. These were the effects of the revolution throughout the world.

1.1.3. A new spirit in life and art

The emergence and spread of the romantic spirit in England gradually became apparent in all aspects of life- fashions, manners, and morals. Simplicity and naturalness rather than artificiality and excess characterized this new spirit and lifestyle.

The emergence of Romantic spirit in literature was particularly evident in the writers' choice of subject matter. "The subjects of authors changed. One man would choose the depths of humble life, seeing dignity or mystery in the manhood of a beggar or ditcher; another would soar into Utopias of the soul and proclaim 'the world's greatest age begins anew'; yet another found his solution in weaving sensuous word pictures from faery lands forlorn" (Blyton 1947: 123).

'Nature' was the principle source of inspiration for most of the Romantic poets. The focus of the poets of the Romantic Age was the ordinary person and common life in order to affirm the worth and dignity of all human beings, and to repudiate the evils of a class system that artificially designated a few select people as more important than others because of wealth, position, or name. Romanticism represented an attempt to go beyond ordinary reality into the deeper, less obvious, and more elusive levels of individual human existence, an attempt to rediscover the mystery and wonder of the world.

Music, architecture, and painting also reflected Romantic ideas. Romanticism emerged as a celebration of emotion, medievalism, folk tradition and classic ideals. Elements of romanticism can be found in the art, literature and music of the time, as well as in political or philosophical writings. In literature, romanticism is often associated with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, poets who were involved in post-revolutionary utopian ideas and valued the use of the common tongue in writing. Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley and John Keats are also associated with romanticism and the rise of the Gothic novel. In music, Beethoven was viewed as

the ideal, while art was turned toward the heroically-influenced styles of William Blake, John Constable and J.M.W. Turner.

1.1.The Concept Of Poetry In Romantic Age

The romantic poetry was dependent on various features peculiar to its time: a reaction against previous literary styles, arguments with eighteenth century and earlier philosophers, the decline in formal Anglican worship and the rise of dissenting religious sects, and the rapid and unprecedented industrialization of Britain and consequent changes in its countryside. Above all, however, it was the impact of the French Revolution which gave the period its most distinctive and urgent concerns.

“In Neo-Classical theory, poetry had been regarded as primarily imitation human life in a favourite figure, a mirror held up to nature, in a form designed to instruct and give artistic pleasure to the reader. In the romantic concept of poetry, the source of poetry is not in the outer world really, but in the individual poet, his personal feelings about the world, instead of men and their actions in general” (Gültekin 1998: 143).

As it was stated before in this thesis, the principle source of inspiration for most of the Romantic poets was ‘nature’. The ordinary person and common life was the focus of poets of the Romantic Age in order to affirm the worth and dignity of all human beings, and to repudiate the evils of a class system that artificially designated a few select people as more important than others because of wealth, position, or name. Nature can be regarded as the most favourite subject chosen by the Romantics. Other than Wordsworth who owed his reputation to the nature poems, there were Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron who also worked on the theme of nature from different aspects. Those poets might have reacted to the rapid spread of the affects of Industrialization to their country or they might have searched for a new ideal instead of religious believes which were rapidly losing interest at that time (Mina 1989). “Because of the prominence of landscape in this period, ‘Romantic Poetry’ has to the popular mind become almost synonymous with ‘nature poetry’ ” (Abrams 1979: 9). One must realize that the movement was still greatly concerned with the pain of composition, of

translating these emotive responses into the form of Poetry though many people seize unfairly upon the notion of spontaneity in Romantic Poetry. Indeed, another prominent Romantic poet and critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge sees art as “the mediatrix between, and reconciler of nature and man” in his *On Poesy or Art*. Such an attitude reflects what might be called the dominant theme of Romantic Poetry: the filtering of natural emotion through the human mind in order to create art, coupled with an awareness of the duality created by such a process. “Wordsworth undertook to justify the new poetry by a critical manifesto or statement of poetic principles, in the form of an extended Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, which he enlarged still further in the third edition of 1802. In it he set himself in opposition to the literary *ancien régime*, those writers of the preceding century who, to his view, had imposed on poetry artificial conventions which distorted its free and natural development” (Abrams 1979: 6).

1.3. Major Romantic Poets

In the period from 1786 to 1830, seven major poets emerged who permanently affected the nature of English language and literature. Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge might be regarded as the first generation of Romantic poets, writing most of the major works from 1786 to 1805. Byron, Shelley, and Keats were the second generation, producing their major works between 1810 to 1824. Though commonly grouped with writers of the eighteenth century because of the time in which they lived and wrote, William Blake and Robert Burns were clearly forerunners of the Romantic movement in subject matter, themes, and style. Both were gifted poets unaffiliated with any literary group, who poured out their lyrics while living lives of hard labor and obscurity.

Robert Burns was a Scottish poet and a lyricist. He was widely regarded as the national poet of Scotland, and was celebrated worldwide. He was the best known of the poets who have written in the Scots language, although much of his writing was also in English and a "light" Scots dialect, accessible to an audience beyond Scotland. It was stated on Burns that “... he did so not by instinct but as a deliberate craftsman who turned to two earlier traditions for his models—the Scottish oral tradition of folklore and folk song, and the highly developed Scottish literary tradition, which goes back to the

late Middle Ages” (Abrams 1979: 89). He was regarded as a pioneer of the Romantic movement and after his death became a great source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism. The publication of *Poems, Chiefly in Scottish Dialect* (1786) by Robert Burns is a landmark in English literature.

William Wordsworth was a major English Romantic poet who, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, gave official birth to the Romantic Age in English literature with the 1798 joint publication *Lyrical Ballads*. As it was stated before in this thesis “Wordsworth undertook to justify the new poetry by a critical manifesto or statement of poetic principles, in the form of an extended Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, which he enlarged still further in the third edition of 1802. In it he set himself in opposition to the literary *ancien régime*, those writers of the preceding century who, to his view, had imposed on poetry artificial conventions which distorted its free and natural development” (Abrams 1979: 6). Age in literature, setting forth a formula for a new kind of poetry and presenting twenty-three poems that demonstrated the formula in use. Wordsworth’s days, they served as a formal declaration of a new spirit in English literature and became a turning point in the history of English poetry.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an English poet, Romantic, literary critic and philosopher who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. “Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Wordsworth’s ‘other self’ was the most subtle influence of his generation: a poetical interpreter to the hardier Wordsworth, the pioneer of a deeper outlook on belief (thus helping to form the Christian socialist movement after he had gone); perhaps the most comprehensive critic we had; a good political journalist; and, as poet, master of exquisite fantasy as any in our language” (Blyton 1947: 127-128). While initially a major source of inspiration for their poetic theory and practice, Wordsworth and Coleridge turned politically conservative as they grew older, leading the young poets, especially Byron and Shelley, to denounce their onetime idols as traitors to their former principles. Coleridge was probably best known for his poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as for his major prose work *Biographia Literaria*.

George Gordon, Lord Byron, was the most popular poet abroad as well as at home and also the most scandalous during his brief lifetime. Reckless, bitter, and in constant

revolt against society, he succeeded in producing his best work, including his masterpiece *Don Juan*, a satirical narrative that sums up his reflections on life and human nature. It is stated on Byron that "... *Don Juan* – one can say of each of them, as Shelley said of *Don Juan*, that it was 'something wholly new and relative to the age'." (Abrams 1979: 14). Romanticism supposed to be synonymous with Byronism for many years from the critics in France to Brandes in Denmark (Blyton 1947).

Percy Bysshe Shelley was also rebellious, scandalous, and charismatic like Byron. Shelley crowded his wonderful achievements into twenty-nine years. Those years included many emotional stress, exile, idealism and regret-and all of it, he transmuted into rich and ringing song whether personal or political suffering (Blyton 1947). To one of his longer poems, *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley always had a passion for reforming the world. But it is as a lyric poet that he is remembered. He became an idol of the next three or even four generations of poets, including the important Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite poets.

John Keats was the last born of the English Romantic poets and, at 25, the youngest to die. He was one of the key figures in the second generation of the Romantic movement along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. "A few suggestions can be offered tentatively-bloom, richness, luxuriance, the patient birth of the rich epithet, a quiet fruition, a luminous ripeness of word and phrase ("I look on words like a lover"), an extreme receptiveness to the immediate touches of Nature through ear and eye, and the courage of his senses" (Blyton 1947: 135). Possibly the most famous line John Keats ever wrote was, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," in his poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*; this work explores the relationship between art and life and expresses the gospel of beauty that guided Keats's brilliant but brief artistic career.

To sum up, the literature of the Romantic Age has about it a sense of uniqueness of the individual, a deep personal earnestness, a sensuous delight in both the common and exotic things of this world, a blend of intensely felt joy and dejection, a yearning for ideal states of being, and probing interest in mysterious and mystical experience.

SECOND CHAPTER

WILLIAM BLAKE'S LIFE

1. EARLY LIFE

William Blake was born in 28 Broad Street, London, England on 28 November 1757, to a middle-class family. He was the third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. Blake's father, James, was a haberdasher. Blake was educated at home by his mother. "His only formal education was in art: at the age of 10 he entered a drawing school and later studied for a time at the school of Royal Academy of Arts" (Abrams 1979: 21). The Blakes were Dissenters, and are believed to have belonged to the Moravian Church. "When dealing with Blake's early life, Beer draws upon recent scholarship, such as Keri Davies's work on the Moravian background of Blake's mother. The opening chapters are also sensitive when dealing with the intellectual contexts for Blake's work, whether pre-Romantic poetry, antiquarianism or Dissenting traditions"(Whittaker 2007: 657). The Bible was an early and profound influence on Blake, and would remain a source of inspiration throughout his life.

A practice that was then preferred to actual drawing, Blake started engraving copies of drawings of Greek antiquities purchased for him by his father. Within these drawings Blake found his first exposure to classical forms through the work of Raphael, Michelangelo, Marten Heemskerck and Albrecht Dürer. His parents knew enough of his headstrong temperament that he was not sent to school but was instead enrolled in drawing classes. He read avidly on subjects of his own choosing. During this period, Blake was also making explorations into poetry; his early work displays knowledge of Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser. Longford, says Malkin, "... His choice was for the most part contemned by his youthful companions, who were accustomed to laugh at what they called his mechanical taste" (Burdett 1926: 7)

Blake became apprenticed to engraver James Basire of Great Queen Street on 4 August 1772, for the term of seven years. Blake was to become a professional engraver at the end of this period when he was just twenty-one years old. No record survives of any serious disagreement or conflict between the two during the period of Blake's apprenticeship. Basire's style of engraving was of a kind held to be old-fashioned at the

time, and Blake's instruction in this outmoded form may have been detrimental to his acquiring of work or recognition in later life. After two years, Blake was sent to copy images from the Gothic churches in London by Basire. His experiences in Westminster Abbey helped form his artistic style and ideas. The Abbey of his day was decorated with suits of armour, painted funeral effigies, and varicoloured waxworks. In the long afternoons Blake spent sketching in the Abbey, he was occasionally interrupted by the boys of Westminster School, one of whom tormented Blake so much one afternoon that he knocked the boy off a scaffold to the ground, upon which he fell with terrific violence. Blake beheld more visions in the Abbey, of a great procession of monks and priests, while he heard the chant of plain-song and chorale.

Blake became a student at the Royal Academy in Old Somerset House, near the Strand on 8 October 1779. As it was stated before in this thesis that it was the only formal education that Blake had. During this education he was expected to supply his own materials throughout the six-year period while the terms of his study required no payment. There, he rebelled against what he regarded as the unfinished style of fashionable painters such as Rubens, championed by the school's first president, Joshua Reynolds. "Blake made an idol of consistency, and thus hindered the development and sympathy of his mind" (Burdett 1926: 7). Over time, Blake came to detest Reynolds' attitude towards art, especially his pursuit of "general truth" and "general beauty". Blake also disliked Reynolds' apparent humility, which he held to be a form of hypocrisy. Blake preferred the Classical precision of his early influences, Michelangelo and Raphael against Reynolds' fashionable oil painting. Submitting works on six occasions between 1780 and 1808 certainly Blake was not averse to exhibiting at the Royal Academy. "... Blake was anxious to enlarge his little collection of prints, and, as his father gave small sums to him for this purpose, the boy had no further difficulties at home than were inevitable" (Burdett 1926: 8).

2. MARRIAGE AND EARLY CAREER

Blake met Catherine Boucher, who was to become his wife in 1782. At the time, Blake was recovering from a relationship that had culminated in a refusal of his marriage proposal. "At 24 he married Cathrine Boucher, daughter of a market gardener.

She was then illiterate, but Blake taught her to read and to help him in his engraving and painting” (Abrams 1979: 21). In addition to teaching Catherine to read and write, Blake trained her as an engraver. Throughout his life she would prove an invaluable aid to him, helping to print his illuminated works and maintaining his spirits throughout numerous misfortunes. She was thought to be Blake’s complement in every way and she was thought to be as obedient as Blake was imperious. Crabb Robinson says that “It is quite certain that she believed in all his visions” (Burdett 1926: 33). They had no children.

Blake's works were admired by George Cumberland who was one of the founders of the National Gallery. Blake's first collection of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, was published circa 1783. After his father's death, William and former fellow apprentice James Parker who was engraving after Sathard at this time became partners and opened a print shop in 1784, and began working with radical publisher Joseph Johnson. Johnson's house was a meeting-place for some of the leading English intellectual dissidents of the time: philosopher Richard Price, theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley, artist John Henry Fuseli early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and American revolutionary Thomas Paine. Along with William Wordsworth and William Godwin, Blake had great hopes for the French revolution and American revolutions and wore a Phrygian cap in solidarity with the French revolutionaries, but despaired with the rise of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror in France. In 1784 Blake also composed his unfinished manuscript *An Island in the Moon*.

Blake began to experiment with relief etching, a method he would use to produce most of his books, paintings, pamphlets and poems in 1788, at the age of 31. The process is also referred to as illuminated printing, and final products as illuminated books or prints. Illuminated printing involved writing the text of the poems on copper plates with pens and brushes, using an acid-resistant medium. Illustrations could appear alongside words in the manner of earlier illuminated manuscripts. He then etched the plates in acid to dissolve the untreated copper and leave the design standing in relief. In the normal method of etching the lines of the design are exposed to the acid, and the plate printed by the intaglio method but this is a reversal of the normal method of etching. Relief etching which Blake also referred to as "stereotype" in *The Ghost of*

Abel was intended as a means for producing his illuminated books more quickly than via intaglio. Stereotype, a process invented in 1725, consisted of making a metal cast from a wood engraving, but Blake's innovation was, as described above, very different. The pages printed from these plates then had to be hand-coloured in water colours and stitched together to make up a volume. In his well-known works *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *The Book of Thel*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *Jerusalem* Blake used illuminated printing.

3. LATER LIFE AND CAREER

While Blake gave drawing lessons, illustrated books, and engraved designs made by other artists, he and his wife for a time enjoyed a moderate prosperity. In 1800, Blake moved to a cottage at Felpham in Sussex to take up a job illustrating the works of William Hayley, a minor poet, when the demand for his work slackened. It was in this cottage that Blake began *Milton: a Poem*. The preface to this work includes a poem beginning "And did those feet in ancient time," which became the words for the anthem, "Jerusalem". Hayley was thought to try to transform Blake into a conventional artist and breadwinner. Over time, Blake came to resent his new patron, coming to believe that Hayley was uninterested in true artistry. Blake wrote that "Hayley is the Enemy of my spiritual Life while he pretends to be the Friend of my Corporeal" (Abrams 1979: 21). In August 1803, Blake's trouble with authority came to a head when he was involved in a physical altercation with John Schofield, a private in the Royal Dragoons. Blake was charged not only with assault, but also with uttering seditious and treasonable expressions against the King. Schofield claimed that Blake had uttered seditious statements about King and country. Blake would be cleared in the Chichester assizes of the charges but Schofield, his fellow-soldier Cock, and other participants in the trial haunted Blake's imagination and were enlarged to demonic characters who played sinister role in *Jerusalem*. Three years later, Blake returned to London in 1804 and began to write and illustrate *Jerusalem* (1804–1820), his most ambitious work. Having conceived the idea of portraying the characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Blake approached the dealer Robert Cromek, with a view to marketing an engraving. Knowing that Blake was too eccentric to produce a popular work, Cromek promptly

commissioned Thomas Stothard, a friend of Blake's, to execute the concept. When Blake learned that he had been cheated, he broke off contact with Stothard. "Gilchrist reminds us that this engraving was finished well in advanced of Stothard's, and that in his turn Stothard was indignant at having been forestalled" (Burdett 1926: 153). He also set up an independent exhibition in his brother's haberdashery shop at 27 Broad Street in the Soho district of London. Along with other Works, the exhibition was designed to market his own version of the Canterbury illustration. As a result he wrote his *Descriptive Catalogue* (1809), which contains what Anthony Blunt has called a "brilliant analysis" of Chaucer. It is regularly anthologised as a classic of Chaucer criticism. It also contained detailed explanations of his other paintings. The exhibition itself, however, was very poorly attended, selling none of the temperas or watercolours. Its only review, in *The Examiner*, was hostile. He was introduced by George Cumberland to a young artist named John Linnell. Through Linnell he met Samuel Palmer, who belonged to a group of artists who called themselves the Shoreham Ancients. This group shared Blake's rejection of modern trends and his belief in a spiritual and artistic New Age. At the age of 65 Blake began work on illustrations for the *Book of Job*. These works were later admired by Ruskin, who compared Blake favourably to Rembrandt, and by Vaughan Williams, who based his ballet *Job: A Masque for Dancing* on a selection of the illustrations.

Blake began to sell a great number of his works later in his life, especially his Bible illustrations, to Thomas Butts, a patron who saw Blake more as a friend than a man whose work held artistic merit; this was typical of the opinions held of Blake throughout his life.

3.1 Dante's Divine Comedy

Blake's commission for Dante's *Divine Comedy* came to him in 1826 through Linnell, with the ultimate aim of producing a series of engravings. When Blake died in 1827 it would cut short the enterprise, and only a handful of the watercolours were completed, with only seven of the engravings arriving at proof form. Blake's illustrations of the poem are not merely accompanying works, but rather seem to

critically revise, or furnish commentary on, certain spiritual or moral aspects of the text. Blake's intent may itself be obscured because the project was never completed. Some indicators, however, bolster the impression that Blake's illustrations in their totality would themselves take issue with the text they accompany. Blake seems to dissent from Dante's admiration of the poetic works of ancient Greece, and from the apparent glee with which Dante allots punishments in Hell. At the same time, Blake shared Dante's distrust of materialism and the corruptive nature of power, and clearly relished the opportunity to represent the atmosphere and imagery of Dante's work pictorially. Even as he seemed to near death, Blake's central preoccupation was his feverish work on the illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*; he is said to have spent one of the very last shillings he possessed on a pencil to continue sketching.

3.2 Death

“Nearly one hundred years ago, in August 1827, confined to a couple of rooms in Fountain Court, an alley off the Strand, William Blake died unnoticed, save by a small but gradually extending circle of friends. They were young artists who revered him and regarded themselves as his disciples. The interest that Blake aroused in these, and indeed in all the finer spirits who chanced to discover, by more than hearsay, his character and his work, quickly began to be communicated to the world.”
(Burdett 1926: 1)

Though Blake is now seen as a valuable asset who contributed a lot both to art and literature then he died unnoticed by many people as it was stated above. He worked relentlessly on his Dante series on the day of his death. At six that evening, after promising his wife that he would be with her always, Blake died. Catherine paid for Blake's funeral with money lent to her by Linnell. He was buried five days after his death – on the eve of his forty-fifth wedding anniversary – at the Dissenter's burial ground in Bunhill Fields, where his parents were also interred. Present at the ceremonies were Catherine, Edward Calvert, George Richmond, Frederick Tatham and John Linnell. Following Blake's death, Catherine moved into Tatham's house as a housekeeper. During this period, she believed she was regularly visited by Blake's spirit. She continued selling his illuminated works and paintings, but would entertain no business transaction without first "consulting Mr. Blake". On the day of her own death, in October 1831, she was as calm and cheerful as her husband, and called out to him "as

if he were only in the next room, to say she was coming to him, and it would not be long now". On her death, Blake's manuscripts were inherited by Frederick Tatham, who burned several he deemed heretical or politically radical. Tatham was an Irvingite, one of the many fundamentalist movements of the 19th century, and was severely opposed to any work that smacked of blasphemy. Also, John Linnell erased sexual imagery from a number of Blake's drawings.

The exact location of William Blake's grave had been lost and forgotten, while gravestones were taken away to create a new lawn since 1965. Nowadays, Blake's grave is commemorated by a stone that reads "Near by lie the remains of the poet-painter William Blake 1757-1827 and his wife Catherine Sophia 1762-1831". This memorial stone is situated approximately 20 metres away from the actual spot of Blake's grave, which is not marked. However, members of the group Friends of William Blake have rediscovered the location of Blake's grave and intend to place a permanent memorial at the site.

"... thirty years later Palmer wrote to Gilchrist:

Blake once known could never be forgotten. He was an astonishment and inspiration to the last. He was energy itself, and shed around him a kindling influence, an atmosphere of life full of the ideal. To walk with him in the country was to perceive the soul of beauty through the forms of matter; and the high gloom buildings between which from his study window a glimpse was caught of the Thames and the Surrey shore, assumed a kind of grandeur from the man dwelling near them."

(Burdett 1926: 176)

As it could be seen in the paragraph that Blake was a kind of person whom the ones to know to be regarded as the lucky ones. Blake is now recognised as a saint in the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica. The Blake Prize for Religious Art was established in his honour in Australia in 1949. In 1957 a memorial was erected in Westminster Abbey, in memory of him and his wife.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF BLAKE'S VIEWS

Blake's late work has been less published than his earlier more accessible work because Blake's later poetry contains a private mythology with complex symbolism. As

done by many critical studies, the recent Vintage anthology of Blake edited by Patti Smith focuses heavily on the earlier work. The earlier work is primarily rebellious in character, and can be seen as a protestation against dogmatic religion. This is especially notable in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in which Satan is virtually the hero rebelling against an imposter authoritarian deity. In the later works such as *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake carves a distinctive vision of a humanity redeemed by self-sacrifice and forgiveness, while retaining his earlier negative attitude towards the rigid and morbid authoritarianism of traditional religion. Not all readers of Blake agree upon how much continuity exists between Blake's earlier and later works. The difference between his late and early Works can also be seen in the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. It can be thought to be normal since human is a social being which grows and gets mature and changes ideas and so on. The difference in the style of art and literature is the normal process of living and changing. It was also noted that discontinuity between *Marriage* and the late works, in that the later Blake emphasised the notions of self-sacrifice and forgiveness as the road to interior wholeness while the early Blake focused on a sheer negative opposition between Energy and Reason. This renunciation of the sharper dualism of *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is evidenced in particular by the humanisation of the character of Urizen in the later works.

5. BLAKE AND SEXUALITY

William Blake has been claimed by various movements who apply his complex and often elusive use of symbolism and allegory to the issues that concern them since his death. Along with Mary Wollstonecraft and her husband William Godwin, Blake is sometimes considered as a forerunner of the subsequent 19th century "free love" movement, a broad reform tradition starting in the 1820s that held that marriage is slavery, and advocated for removal of all state restrictions on sexual activity such as homosexuality, prostitution, and even adultery, culminating in the birth control movement of the early 20th century. "... Blake's writing is one of the great prophecies of the love that is possible between man and woman. He is not a writer of 'erotica'-the honeyed of crumbs of those who have no bread; he rages in his notebooks, but he is never sly" (Kazin 1965: 37). Blake scholarship was more focused on this theme in the

earlier 20th century than today. The 19th century "free love" movement was not particularly focused on the idea of multiple partners, but did agree with Wollstonecraft that state-sanctioned marriage was "legal prostitution" and was monopolistic in character. It has somewhat more in common with early feminist movements. Blake was critical of the marriage laws of his day. "The extent of Blake's preoccupation with sexual love may need critical attention. He seems never to have been at all concerned with details of sensuality-although at one time he paid what seems far more than lip service to its values." (Sutherland 1972: 424). His poetry suggests that external demands for marital fidelity reduce love to mere duty rather than authentic affection, and decries jealousy and egotism as a motive for marriage laws. Poems such as "Why should I be bound to thee, O my lovely Myrtle-tree?" and "Earth's Answer" seem to advocate multiple sexual partners. His poem "London" speaks of "the Marriage-Hearse". Though not universally, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is widely read as a tribute to free love since the relationship between Bromion and Oothoon is held together only by laws and not by love. Blake's later writings show a renewed interest in Christianity, and although he radically reinterprets Christian morality in a way that embraces sensual pleasure, there is little of the emphasis on sexual libertarianism found in several of his early poems, and there is advocacy of "self-denial", though such abnegation must be inspired by love rather than through authoritarian compulsion.

6. BLAKE'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

Blake's view of orthodoxy is evident in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a series of texts written in imitation of Biblical prophecy. "In the Marriage, Blake targets all those moralisers who 'restrain desire'. This is targeted broadly at legalistic attempts to control human behaviour" (Rix 2006: 110). His rejection of religiosity was not a rejection of religion actually but Blake's attacks on conventional religion were shocking in his own day. Blake does not present Jesus as a philosopher or traditional messianic figure but as a supremely creative being, above dogma, logic and even morality in *The Everlasting Gospel*:

“.....
If he had been Antichrist Creeping Jesus,
He'd have done anything to please us:
Gone sneaking into Synagogues
And not usd the Elders & Priests like Dogs,
But humble as a Lamb or Ass,
Obey'd himself to Caiaphas.
God wants not Man to Humble himself ...”

(Kazin 1965: 617)

As it can be anticipated from the lines above, Blake has a different point of view on such a subject that seems to be forbidden to be mentioned by anyone. There are some facts that people do not want to talk or examine in anyway for these subjects are to last the way they are. The religion is the most important of all the subjects that are taboo. But Blake, having a critical mind, takes this issue into consideration and interpret on the matter without any fear at that time. That’s why his attacks on conventional religion were shocking in his own day. People thought of Jesus as a traditional messianic figure about whom it was a sin to talk opposed to him. For this, Blake had been largely criticized for his comments on the Jesus. But what actually Blake wanted to say was that he was a real genius of his time who was blessed with a creative mind. Jesus, for Blake, symbolises the vital relationship and unity between divinity and humanity. In Blake’s *Proverbs of Hell*, he says “*A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees*” (Kazin 1965: 252). By this words Blake shows his appreciation on the mind and human beings who are able to use their mind for interpretation. Blake lists several Proverbs of Hell, amongst which are the following:

“.....
Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.
The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.
Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.
 ...”

(Kazin 1965: 253)

These kinds of words bore some reactions at his time. As it is evident that it took some time to understand Blake and his views on such area. That's because his value had been given long after his death. Blake designed his own mythology, which appears largely in his prophetic books. Within these Blake describes a number of characters, including 'Urizen', 'Enitharmon', 'Bromion' and 'Luvah'. This mythology seems to have a basis in the Bible and in Greek mythology, and it accompanies his ideas about the everlasting Gospel. There are some words that uttered by Los in Blake's *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*. "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's. I will not Reason & Compare; my business is to Create." Who utters these words is not 'Los' actually but Blake himself. One of Blake's strongest objections to orthodox Christianity is that he felt it encouraged the suppression of natural desires and discouraged earthly joy. In *Proverbs of Hell* Blake says "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence" (Kazin 1965: 252). He saw the concept of 'sin' as a trap to bind men's desires, and believed that restraint in obedience to a moral code imposed from the outside was against the spirit of life. He believes that man's desires are limited by his perceptions, none can desire what he has not perceived. Blake supports that desires should not be suppressed. It can be discussed whether it is right or wrong.

Blake does not subscribe to the notion of a body distinct from the soul that must submit to the rule of the soul, but sees the body as an extension of the soul, derived from the 'discernment' of the senses. Thus, the emphasis orthodoxy places upon the denial of bodily urges is a dualistic error born of misapprehension of the relationship between body and soul. Elsewhere, he describes Satan as the 'state of error', and as beyond salvation. Blake opposed the sophistry of theological thought that excuses pain, admits evil and apologises for injustice. He did not hold with the doctrine of God as Lord, an entity separate from and superior to mankind; this is shown clearly in his words about Jesus Christ: "He is the only God ... and so am I, and so are you." A telling phrase in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is "men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast". This is very much in line with his belief in liberty and social equality in society and between the sexes.

7. BLAKE AND ENLIGHTENMENT PHILOSOPHY

In spite of his opposition to Enlightenment principles, Blake thus arrived at a linear aesthetic that was in many ways more similar to the Neoclassical engravings of John Flaxman than to the works of the Romantics, with whom he is often classified. In the sense that he was in accord with that movement's rejection of received ideas, systems, authorities and traditions, Blake has also been viewed as an enlightenment poet and artist. He was also critical of what he perceived as the elevation of reason to the status of an oppressive authority on the other hand. In his criticism of reason, law and uniformity Blake has been taken to be opposed to the enlightenment, but it has also been argued that, in a dialectical sense, he used the enlightenment spirit of rejection of external authority to criticise narrow conceptions of the enlightenment. Blake had a complex relationship with Enlightenment philosophy. Due to his visionary religious beliefs, Blake opposed the Newtonian view of the universe. Blake also believed that the paintings of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which depict the naturalistic fall of light upon objects, were products entirely of the "vegetative eye", and he saw Locke and Newton as "the true progenitors of Sir Joshua Reynolds' aesthetic". The popular taste in the England of that time for such paintings was satisfied with mezzotints, prints produced by a process that created an image from thousands of tiny dots upon the page. Blake saw an analogy between this and Newton's particle theory of light.

8. BLAKE'S VISIONS

William Blake claimed to have seen visions from a young age. The first of these visions may have occurred as early as the age of four when, according to one anecdote, the young artist "saw God" when God "put his head to the window", causing Blake to break into screaming. At the age of eight or ten in Peckham Rye, London, Blake claimed to have seen "a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars." According to Blake's Victorian biographer Gilchrist, he returned home and reported this vision, and he only escaped being thrashed by his father for telling a lie through the intervention of his mother. Though all evidence suggests that his parents were largely supportive, his mother seems to have been especially so, and several of Blake's early drawings and poems decorated the walls of her chamber. On

another occasion, Blake watched haymakers at work, and thought he saw angelic figures walking among them. Blake claimed to experience visions throughout his life. They were often associated with beautiful religious themes and imagery, and therefore may have inspired him further with spiritual works and pursuits. Certainly, religious concepts and imagery figure centrally in Blake's works. God and Christianity constituted the intellectual centre of his writings, from which he drew inspiration. In addition, Blake believed that he was personally instructed and encouraged by Archangels to create his artistic works, which he claimed were actively read and enjoyed by those same Archangels.

THIRD CHAPTER

BLAKE AS A POET

The poetry and art of William Blake expresses wonder and awe of the natural world, and also shares Blake's own, internalised, highly personal and unique world of visions. That universal art he did, during his lifetime, create; for he sang his songs to his own music; and thus, while he lived, he was the complete realisation of the poet in all his faculties, and only complete realisation that has ever known. His combination of talents is his real defence against particular criticism. Blake and Modern Literature gives a coherent commentary on the cultural tradition that has selected Blake's literary followers from the late-nineteenth century onwards. Blake and Modern Literature begins by warning against the simplicity of attempting to trace a linear influence between 'Romanticism' in general and Blake, especially as 'Romanticism' as we have known it until recently comes into being barely before modernism does Blake had been neglected by most eminent Victorians, with the exception of a small coterie of admirers and was only rehabilitated at the turn of the twentieth century by the literary avant garde: they understood Blake in a way that the majority of his contemporaries and immediate literary successors could not. A follower of Emanuel Swedenborg, who offered a gentle and mystic interpretation of Christianity, Blake wrote poetry that largely reflects Swedenborgian views. *Songs of Innocence* shows life as it seems to innocent children. *Songs of Experience* tells of a mature person's realization of pain and terror in the universe. This book contains his famous 'Tiger! Tiger! Burning Bright'. *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are longer and more obscure works. Blake's first printed work, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), is a collection of apprentice verse, mostly imitating classical models. The poems protest against war, tyranny, and King George III's treatment of the American colonies. He published his most popular collection, *Songs of Innocence*, in 1789 and followed it, in 1794, with *Songs of Experience*. Some readers interpret *Songs of Innocence* in a straightforward fashion, considering it primarily a children's book, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics. Both books of *Songs* were printed in an illustrated format reminiscent of illuminated

manuscripts. The text and illustrations were printed from copper plates, and each picture was finished by hand in watercolors. William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* is a collection of poems that present analogous images of children, religion and society in general. However, these poems also invoke the idea that a person in a state of innocence might see certain entities quite differently than would a person who has reached maturity. Blake understands that the words "innocence" and "experience" seem to completely oppose each other, and he skillfully portrays this contrast. However, a closer examination of the poems from each section reveals that these two perspectives are equally important and inseparable. Blake's poems present a contradiction between the states of innocence and experience, two phases through which all people must pass. The two sets of poems juxtapose the untainted, naturalistic world of childhood against the adult world of corruption and restraint. Blake does not ally himself completely with one particular view; in fact many of the poems are written in the voice of a separate speaker, thus somewhat disconnecting the poet from his narratives. It is as if Blake hopes to identify the fallacies and flaws of each. He does not present the two viewpoints with intention to persuade the reader into choosing between them, for Blake believes that no such choice is possible. Rather he decides to simply portray each point of view, infusing his poems with the idea that innocent bliss is not necessarily superior to the anguish of experience. Blake's *Songs of Innocence* depict the naiveté that permeates the hopes and fears of young children before they have begun their progression to adulthood. One particular poem that exhibits this is the *Innocence* version of *The Chimney Sweeper*. The setting of this poem is 18th century London, where it was quite common to find parents selling their children into apprenticeships as chimney sweeps. It was not unusual to find chimney sweeps as young as four years of age, as such small children could maneuver more easily within a chimney than could an adult.

Blake is endowed in a very marked degree with the interest ascribed by Goethe to *Problematische Naturen*, men who must always remain more or less of a mystery to their fellows. In ancient times, and perhaps in some countries at the present day, he would have been accepted as a seer; in his own age and country the question was rather whether he should be classed with visionaries or with lunatics. A visionary he certainly

was, and few will believe either that his visions had any objective reality, or that he himself intended them to be received merely as symbols. "You can see what I do, if you choose," he said to his friends. He thus confused fancy with fact; unquestionably, therefore, he laboured under delusions. But delusions do not necessarily amount to insanity, and, however Blake was in form, it may be doubted whether in essentials he was not nearer the truth than most so-called poets and artists. Every poet and artist worthy of the name will confess that his productions, when really good for anything, are the suggestion of a power external to himself, of an influence which he may to a certain extent guide, but cannot originate or summon up at his will; and in the absence of which he is helpless. In personifying this influence as the Muse, or howsoever he may prefer to describe it, such an one is usually fully aware that, in obedience to a law of the human mind, he is bestowing personality and visibility upon what is actually invisible and impersonal, but not on that account unreal. Some there are, however, whose perceptions are so lively, or their power of dealing with abstractions so limited, that the mental influences of which they are conscious appear to them in the light of personalities. Such was Blake, and the peculiarity in him was probably closely connected with the childlike disposition which rendered him so amiable as a man. Blake was a nonconformist who associated with some of the leading radical thinkers of his day, such as Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. In defiance of 18th-century neoclassical conventions, he privileged imagination over reason in the creation of both his poetry and images, asserting that ideal forms should be constructed not from observations of nature but from inner visions. He declared in one poem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's." Works such as "The French Revolution" (1791), "America, a Prophecy" (1793), "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (1793), and "Europe, a Prophecy" (1794) express his opposition to the English monarchy, and to 18th-century political and social tyranny in general. Theological tyranny is the subject of *The Book of Urizen* (1794). In the prose work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-93), he satirized oppressive authority in church and state, as well as the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish philosopher whose ideas once attracted his interest.

Blake believed that his poetry could be read and understood by common people, but he was determined not to sacrifice his vision in order to become popular. In 1808 he

exhibited some of his watercolors at the Royal Academy, and in May of 1809 he exhibited his works at his brother James's house. Some of those who saw the exhibit praised Blake's artistry, but others thought the paintings "hideous" and more than a few called him insane. Blake's poetry was not well known by the general public, but he was mentioned in *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1816. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had been lent a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, considered Blake a "man of Genius," and Wordsworth made his own copies of several songs. Charles Lamb sent a copy of "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* to James Montgomery for his *Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing Boys' Album* (1824), and Robert Southey (who, like Wordsworth, considered Blake insane) attended Blake's exhibition and included the "Mad Song" from *Poetical Sketches* in his miscellany, *The Doctor* (1834-1837).

1. SONGS OF INNOCENCE

What can be said of the *Songs of Innocence* that has not been said well by other poets? *Songs of Innocence* shows life as it seems to innocent children. Till lately only men of genius busied themselves with Blake; theirs is the prerogative of praising, and there is now presumably no reader of poetry who does not know the most exquisite section of his verse. The boy who had written the *Poetical Sketches* was already a precocious artist. The imagination of the man who wrote the *Songs of Innocence* had not outgrown the simplicity of the child. Blake might be an inspired child writing for children, and these songs are nursery rhymes of pure poetry which children and their elders can equally love. Such sources as have been suggested for them, for example the *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* by Dr. Watts, only emphasise the transforming power of Blake's touch. The real excuse for looking for sources is that Blake had an extraordinary temptation to surpass any influence that came his way. Later in life, and much against the grain, he surpassed even Hayley in the art of complimentary letters. It would, then, be a curious paradox if songs that seem the very rill of poetry issuing from the mouth of the Muse herself should have had an accidental origin. It is just possible that the title may have been inspired by a casual memory, but with the verse of the *Poetical Sketches* before us it would be absurd and uncritical to derive them from

anywhere but the author of the earliest poems. He had shown that he could rival the Elizabethan lyrists, that he could transmute nature into nation itself was his principal and characteristic theme. In these songs Blake sings neither of love, nature, religion, nor sorrow, but of the imagination which, to be communicable, sees itself reflected, especially on the faces of children, in experiences such as these. The lamb, the shepherd, the infant, the cradle, the laughter of childish voices at play, are pretexts for a music as fresh, tender, awkward, soothing, merry as their original selves. For the first time in nursery poetry we feel that the grown-ups are listening, and that it is the child who is telling its mother about the lamb and God. The way in which the simplicities of feeling are conveyed and false sentiment avoided is miraculous (Burdett 1926).

All poetry becomes young again in them, and artless utterance for the first and last time finds its proper music. There are poems which tell stories and poems which speak of religion, taking a child's feelings about sorrow and pain for their end that we hardly know whether the mother or her infant is reflecting, and indeed the second childhood of humanity is the blessing of those who have children of their own and are not strangers to them. Perhaps only a poet who had read no fine literature but as a child reads could have written such things. There is in them an innocence of heart that is not to be found in Shakespeare. A few have the quality of children's hymns, in which God appears a really loving Father, and mercy, pity, peace, and love, the virtues of childhood at its rare best, become the lineaments of his divine image. The emotions aroused by this poetry are instinctive and almost as characteristic of animals as of men. Indeed, it celebrates the life, motions, and feelings of all young things, with the apparent artlessness of a lamb's bleat or the cry of a bird, a baby's shout of astonishment or pleasure. By returning to these poems seems to return to its own infancy, and the language is almost as free from meaning, apart from emotion, as a child's prattle.

As it was stated before, Blake's poems were not printed and made multiple copies because Blake drew his own poems and multiplied his works at his home. Now that he was both an artist and a poet, this was the best way of combining his talents. Here is an example of his drawings on one of his poems from the Songs of Innocence.



The Blossom, as originally printed in Songs of Innocence

The Blossom is one of the most fancied poems of William Blake which takes place in the Songs of Innocence.

“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.”*

(Kazin 1965: 87)

This poem is full of cheerful images of life, such as the "leaves so green", and "happy blossom". The poem tells the tale of two different birds - a sparrow and a robin. The former is clearly content with its existence; whereas the latter is distraught with it, meaning the second stanza becomes full of negative, depressing images. This could be an attempt by Blake to portray the opinions of different groups of society - with one class assumedly the ruling classes content with maintaining the Status Quo, and the other class unfair with the changes required - as Robins traditionally appear during the Winter, one could assume that it is upset at having to miss the exciting, lively critiques that occur with summer - such as Blossoms.

Another possible interpretation is a sexual one, where the poem represents the joy that can be found through innocent sexual love. The sparrow, seeking his cradle 'swift as an arrow' has been interpreted in a phallic sense, and demonstrates the innocence and joy of free love. The 'happy blossom' in this sense is therefore the female sexual organs, which is happy upon seeing the arrival of the sparrow. The 'sobbing, sobbing' robin has been interpreted in several different ways. Either it is the opposite to the sparrow's open love, a creature who has been harmed through love or possibly violated, or it is another creature rejoicing in the joy of sexual love, in which case its sobbing could be orgasmic. Whilst this does sound a rather strange interpretation for a poem in 'The Songs of Innocence', Blake himself believed greatly in the joys of free love. Many of his poems, such as 'The Little Girl Lost and Found', 'The Lilly' or 'The Angel' also follow this theme of giving in to desires and sexual love.

When Blake's Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience are examined there are two poems that have the same title: *The Chimney Sweeper*. As mentioned before Blake sees the world from a pure little child's point of view at the *Songs of Innocence*. The world we see in these poems is a place that has no dark sides, filled with joy and hope, like the heaven. When it comes to the Songs of Experience the little child has grown up and get acquainted with the evil of the world and has seen the dark side of the world. Here in these poems the contrast between two groups of poems is pretty obvious.

“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.*

*Theres little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curled like a lambs back was shav'd, so I said.
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's 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 run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.*

*Then naked & white, all their bags left behind.
They rise 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.”*

(Kazin 1965: 87-88)

In William Blake's poems, Blake gives his characters important traits which are significant to the characters themselves and to the poems. He does a magnificent job with the speaker in his poem, *The Chimney Sweeper*. The speaker- who is a little boy- sweeps chimneys to survive- is characterized as comforting, honest, and hopeful. With these characteristics, the little boy in *The Chimney Sweeper* is able to enhance his character and the poem. The little chimney boy is portrayed as being comforting in *The Chimney Sweeper* for many reasons. The most obvious difference between the two poems would be the length, although this is not necessarily a difference between innocence and experience, it does lure the reader into the right frame of mind to read into the attitude of each poem. Innocence consists of six, four-line stanzas, where as

experience is only three, four-line stanzas. The length of each line is also longer in innocence when compared to experience. When you examine what each of the poems is portraying, this seems like an effective way to draw a distinctive line between the two. Innocence begins in a slightly depressing tone, informing us from a child's first person perspective that he was sold by his family before he had learnt to speak properly. Blake then plays on the word 'sweep', which a young chimney sweeper would have to shout in the streets, and turns it into 'weep'. The repetitive use of the word 'weep!' is ironic and reflects the mood of the opening stanza.

2. SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Songs of Experience tells of a mature person's realization of pain and terror in the universe. *Songs of Experience* is a 1794 poetry collection of 26 poems forming the second part of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Some of the poems, such as *The Little Boy Lost* and *The Little Boy Found* were moved by Blake to *Songs of Innocence*, and were frequently moved between the two books. In this collection of poems, Blake contrasts *Songs of Innocence*, in which he shows how the human spirit blossoms when allowed its own free movement with *Songs of Experience*, in which he shows how the human spirit withers after it has been suppressed and forced to conform to rules, and doctrines. In fact, Blake was an English Dissenter and actively opposed the doctrines of the Anglican Church, which tells its members to suppress their feelings. Blake showed how he believed this was wrong through his poems in *Songs of Experience*. The most notable of the poems in *Songs of Experience* are: "The Tyger", "The Sick Rose", "Ah, Sunflower," "A Poison Tree" and "London". Although these poems today are enjoyed and appreciated, in Blake's time, they were not appreciated at all. Blake lived this whole life in poverty and in heavy debt. *Songs of Experience* only sold 20 copies before his death in 1827. It is now used in the school GCSE and A-level curriculum.

“THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER

*A little black thing in 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 and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his priest and king,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."*

(Kazin 1965: 106)

Unlike the one in Songs of Innocence, "The Chimney Sweeper", in Songs of Experience is very dark and pessimistic. This poem also seems to be very judgmental and gives motives for everything, but unlike Song of Innocence, the sweeper in this poem does not free himself from his misery. In the first two lines, Blake gives us an image of an anguished child in a state of agony or even in a state of corruption. The color black seems to be very important because it is used to represent sin against innocence, the color of the white snow. Blake also shows the same child weeping, when he really means to say sweeping, because that is what has that child in such grief. This stanza ends by someone asking him about his parents, which later end up being responsible for this child's state. In the second stanza, the child is pictured in a very more happier and playful mood. This soon changes when he decides to tell the stranger more about his parents. They are showed to be punishing their child for being so happy by "clothing in clothes of death and teaching him to sing notes of woe." It is very obvious the sweeper's feels hate towards his parents for putting him in such sadness, but instead he chooses to hide it by making himself look happy and satisfied. It is clear in the last Stanza that Blake's criticizing the Church, especially, and the state for letting a lot of these things happen. During this time many children were dying from being, either, worked to death or from malnutrition. Neither the state or the church did anything to stop this and is obviously why Blake feels so much anger towards them. The sweeper's parents are really no help towards their own child. This makes the reader

wonder, if they are worshipping god, the source of good doings, why do they chose to ignore their own child. They would rather turn their heads the other way and instead findlove at church. Children are now welcomed to earth as presents bundled in pinks and blues. In the 1800's children were treated as workers straight from the womb. Children trained early in age to perform unbearable tasks. Imagine how it felt to be unwanted by a parent and sold to a master who also cared nothing about them. Many children earned a few pennies by becoming chimney sweeps or working in the streets running errands, calling cabs, sweeping roads, selling toys or flowers and helping the market porters. The young children did not have much choice on which job or life they wanted, but by far sweeping chimneys was the most dangerous. The children were forced into confined areas filled with comb webs, where they sacrificed their lives to clean. William Blake does a great job depicting hardship of children in the 1800's in "The Chimney Sweeper" through the use of diction and imagery.

Poems from both books have been set to music by many composers, including Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten. Individual poems have also been set by, among others, John Tavener, Jah Wobble, Tangerine Dream. A modified version of the poem "The Little Black Boy" was set to music in the song "My Mother Bore Me" from Maury Yeston's musical Phantom. Folk musician Greg Brown recorded sixteen of the poems on his 1987 album *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and by Finn Coren in his *Blake Project*. Poet Allen Ginsberg believed the poems were originally intended to be sung, and that through study of the rhyme and meter of the works, a Blakean performance could be approximately replicated. In 1969, he conceived, arranged, directed, sang on, and played piano and harmonium for an album of songs entitled *Songs of Innocence and Experience by William Blake, tuned by Allen Ginsberg* (1970). The composer William Bolcom completed a setting of the entire collection of poems in 1984. In 2005, a recording of Bolcom's work by Leonard Slatkin and the University of Michigan on the Naxos label won 3 Grammy Awards: Best Choral Performance, Best Classical Contemporary Composition, and Best Classical Album.

FOURTH CHAPTER

BLAKE MORE THAN A POET

1. BLAKE AS A PAINTER

“Those who dislike Blake often dislike intellectual manifestations in fine art, and those who admire him indiscriminately and are tickled by his oddity not infrequently know nothing about art in any form. Yet painting, however aristocratic it must always be in its aim, can be democratic in its appeal” (Ross 1906: 150). William Blake was a visionary, even hallucinatory English painter who lived at the dawn of the technological era. Unlike most artists of his era he did not draw from life, claiming that the visions that appeared before him were clearer and more vivid than his perception of external reality. Around 1805-1810, Blake was commissioned to create over a hundred paintings illustrating books from the Bible. Blake's fame as an artist and engraver rests largely on a set of 21 copperplate etchings to illustrate the Book of Job in the Old Testament. However, he did much work for which other artists and engravers got the credit. Blake was a poor businessman, and he preferred to work on subjects of his own choice rather than on those that publishers assigned him. A necessary effect of the Illuminated Printing was to restrict his readers to the few, in the manner of an artist who displays not books but pictures. Blake often painted in words, and should be judged rather as an artist than an author. As far back 1793 Blake had issued to the public a prospectus giving a list of works now published and on sale at his house. This, however, was no more than the announcement and defence of the invention of Illuminated Printing. Blake was the first modern artist to assert the doctrine of symbolism. In his day the Romantic Movement, of which he remains the sublime exponent, had hardly begun. The couplet was still the rule for verse; rationalism the habit of philosophy; scepticism and irony the favourite play of the intellect; formalism and authority the conventions of plastic art. “A careful study of Blake's drawings shows from what widely differing sources he drew his inspiration. Like all great painters, however, he borrows elements from the work of others but transmutes them for his own specific purposes” (Nanavutty 1952: 258). In religion, in poetry, and in painting, enthusiasm, the personal play of the

mind, was still suspect. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, William Blake's Paintings are considered seminal and significant in the history of both poetry and the visual arts. Among the various sets of drawings made by Blake, the twelve illustrating Milton's 'Paradise Lost' hold a conspicuous place, especially at the present time, when their intrinsic beauties are advertised by the sensational price paid in a sale-room for ten of them.

The artistic processes used by Blake are a subject of considerable discussion. Notwithstanding his constant description of his pictures as "frescoes," it seems certain that he never resorted to fresco in the ordinary acceptance of the term. Linnell, who must have been exceedingly familiar with his work, told Mr. Gilchrist that he evidently founded his claim to the name fresco on the material he used, which was water-colour on a plaster ground (literally glue and whiting); but he always called it either fresco, gesso, or plaster. Linnell added that when he himself obtained from Italy the first copy that ever came to England of Cennino Cennini's *Trattato della Pittura*, a sixteenth-century treatise, edited in 1822 from the original MS., Blake, who was soon able to read it, "was gratified to find that he had been using the same materials and methods in painting as Cennini describes, particularly the carpenter's glue." "Unfortunately," says Linnell, "he laid this ground on too much like plaster to a wall," and when this was so applied to canvas or linen the picture was sure to crack, and many of Blake's best works have suffered great injury. "...is able to show how the working of Blake's mind over the years affected his colouring of different copies of, for instance, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* ... and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*..." (Egerton 1986: 619). Oil he disliked and vituperated. The reason probably was that, contrary to what might have been expected, his system of execution was by no means bold and dashing, but deliberate and even slow. He drew a rough dotted line with pencil, then with ink, then colour, filling in cautiously and carefully. All the grand efforts of design, he thought, depended on niceties not to be got at once. "As with others of Blake's tempera paintings, the surface is somewhat creased and uneven, and the edges of the stretcher have caused ridges, visible in the photograph; but fortunately no darkening of the picture has taken place, to dim the charm of its limpid colour" (Binyon 1929: 285). He seems, in fact, to have worked very much in the spirit of the medieval illuminators, and the general aspect

of a page of one of his Prophetical Books reminds us forcibly of one of their scrolls. Whether any direct influence from them upon him is traceable would be difficult to determine. Keats had evidently seen illuminated manuscripts, and been deeply impressed by them; but nearly forty years elapsed between the publication of the first of Blake's Prophetical Books and the composition of Keats's *Eve of St. Mark*. In one respect Blake certainly differed from the ancient miniaturists; he wrought mainly from reminiscence, and disliked painting with his eye on the object. His memory for natural forms must have been very powerful. "It has long been established that Blake's designs are full of borrowings from earlier art and that traces can be found in particular of the influence of the Italian renaissance and classical antiquity" (Bindman 1986: 712).

It is exceedingly difficult to obtain a proper idea of Blake as an artist, from the extent to which his designs depend upon colouring, and the great inequality of this colouring, which is often not his own. In Mr. Gilchrist's opinion, the copy of *The Song of Los*, in the Print Room of the British Museum, and a volume of miscellaneous designs, in the same collection, represent him with adequate fairness; and these fortunately are public property. The finest specimens of his work seen by his biographer are apparently in the collection of the Earl of Crewe, and therefore not generally accessible. Those belonging to private collectors must of necessity be continually changing hands, and few students have the time or the opportunity to make the thorough investigation of them accomplished by Mr. Rossetti. Fortunately the illustrations in Gilchrist's biography, where the whole of the *Job* series is reissued, suffice to establish Blake's genius as a designer, even though destitute of the charm of colour. "After the turn of the century, when he was already disillusioned with the aftermath of the French Revolution and when crises in his personal life led him to question various of his prior values, Blake came to associate the Classical world with oppressive, diabolical forces of reason, materialism, war, and tyranny - symbolized, for example, by Newtonian science and geometry or Napoleonic imperialism and despotism" (Howard 1982: 119). Mr. Bell Scott has executed effective etchings after him; Mr. Quaritch has republished the drawings for *Comus*; in 1876 the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and the Prophetic Books up to *Los* were reprinted together, but only to the extent of a hundred copies, nor was the execution very satisfactory. It cannot be said that Messrs. Ellis and Yeats have

entirely overcome the difficulties of reproduction; yet, perhaps, for those unable to obtain access to the copies tinted by the artist, or even to the uncoloured plates in the original edition, nothing so well displays the wilder and more weird aspects of his genius as the reprints in their third volume, especially those from *Jerusalem*.

In 1809 London's art lovers could visit a one-man exhibition of 'Poetical and Historical Inventions' by the engraver, visionary poet and painter William Blake. The show was held in the upstairs rooms of his brother's hosiery shop in Golden Square, Soho. Inside were sixteen paintings in watercolour and tempera. Visitors were charged two shilling and sixpence, for which they also received a 66-page pamphlet entitled *A Descriptive Catalogue*, in which Blake discussed the pictures and his ambitions as an artist. Blake hoped the exhibition would launch him as a painter of large-scale public schemes, what he termed 'the Grand style of art'. But almost no-one came to the exhibition, and even his friends were baffled by his strange descriptions of his pictures. Only one review appeared at the time. Blake was bitterly disappointed, becoming increasingly withdrawn and depressed. Exactly two centuries later, ten of the surviving pictures are exhibited here. The missing works, including a large-scale painting of 'The Ancient Britons', are represented by blank spaces. Pictures by other artists exhibited during 1809 are also shown, giving a sense of what was different about Blake's exhibition - and why contemporaries may have found his work so strange and confusing. No 28 Broad Street, Golden Square, where Blake held his exhibition, was an ordinary London town house and shop. Blake had grown up at this address; his father kept a hosiery shop there. By 1809 Blake's older brother James was running the business. The upstairs space where the exhibition was held was a living area; the pictures must have been shown in cramped conditions and the lighting may have been poor. The strangeness of Blake's pictures must have been all the more alarming in these conditions. Only a handful of people left any record of visiting the exhibition. Sadly, the fullest report was also the most critical. Today, Blake is considered one of the greatest of British artists. The reception of the 1809 exhibition is a reminder of how dramatically reputations may change over time. "The Melbourne collection of Blake's work is particularly important because it has the biggest single group of the late Dante watercolours, bought from the Linnell sale in 1918" (Bindman 1990: 75).

2. SOME SAMPLES OF BLAKE'S PAINTINGS



Picture 1

Handmade oil painting reproduction of *Dante and Virgil at the Gates of Hell* (*Illustration to Dante's Inferno*), a painting by William Blake. Blake seems to dissent from Dante's admiration of the poetic works of ancient Greece, and from the apparent glee with which Dante allots punishments in Hell. At the same time, Blake shared Dante's distrust of materialism and the corruptive nature of power, and clearly relished the opportunity to represent the atmosphere and imagery of Dante's work pictorially.



Picture II

Handmade oil painting reproduction of *Isaac Newton 1795*, a painting by William Blake. Blake's *Newton (1795)* demonstrates his opposition to the "single-vision" of scientific materialism: Newton fixes his eye on a compass to write upon a scroll that seems to project from his own head. Blake had a complex relationship with Enlightenment philosophy. Due to his visionary religious beliefs, Blake opposed the Newtonian view of the universe.



Picture III

Handmade oil painting reproduction of *Good and Evil Angels Struggling for the Possession of a Child*, c.1793-94, a painting by William Blake. Blake uses the image of child both at his poems and the paintings. In his poems, Blake sees the world from a pure little child's point of view at the *Songs of Innocence*. The world we see in these poems is a place that has no dark sides, filled with joy and hope, like the heaven. When it comes to the *Songs of Experience* the little child has grown up and get acquainted with the evil of the world and has seen the dark side of the world.

3. BLAKE AS AN ENGRAVER

Blake's artistic ability also became evident while he was still a child. At age ten he was enrolled in Henry Pars's drawing school, where he learned to sketch the human figure by copying from plaster casts of ancient statues. His father encouraged his interest and even bought him some casts of his own. The influence of his early exposure to Greek and Roman sculpture can be seen in Blake's later work. The Farnese Hercules, for example, is the model for the figure of Giant Despair in *Christian and Hopeful Escape from Doubting Castle*, one of Blake's illustrations to Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In his last illuminated work, *Laocoön* he surrounds a well-known classical sculpture with his own commentary on art, religion, and commerce. "First, and most important to students of literature, was his discovery of the engraving process which he used for most of his poems" (Frye 1951: 35). Besides plaster casts, the young Blake also began to collect inexpensive prints from shops and auctions. His taste ran to Raphael, Michelangelo, Giulio Romano, Albrecht Dürer, and Maerten Heemskerck, artists whose work was not widely appreciated at the time. "He was, by comparison, a trivial and vulgar seer, but the richness and ex-pressive power of the forms which lay to his hand in Titian's and Michelangelo's art enabled him to attain a more unquestion-able achievement" (Fry 1904: 205). He never wavered in his conviction that they were superior to the more fashionable painters of the Venetian and Flemish schools. In the catalogue for an exhibition of his own work in 1809, he accuses artists "who endeavour to raise up a style against Rafael, Mich. Angelo, and the Antique" of attempting to destroy art (Erdman 1981: 538). In 1772, having left Pars's school, the fourteen-year-old Blake began his apprenticeship under James Basire, engraver to the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Society. Basire was best known for his simple line engravings—a style many of his contemporaries considered outdated, but one that fit well with Blake's preference for the firm outlines of artists like Albrecht Dürer. Basire's usual subjects were antiquities and monuments, which he reproduced with austere precision; although he occasionally took on higher-profile projects, such as Benjamin West's *Pylades and Orestes*, these were the exception rather than the rule. Prominent artists like West tended to prefer the services of Basire's rivals, William Woollett (who

engraved West's best-known painting, *The Death of General Wolfe*) and Robert Strange. Many years later, Blake, remembering the slight to his employer, would call these two men "heavy lumps of Cunning & Ignorance" (Erdman 1981: 573). In Basire's shop at 31 Great Queen Street in London, Blake learned the craft of copy engraving as it was practiced in England at the end of the eighteenth century. The standard method of preparing a copperplate for etching or engraving was time-consuming and labor-intensive. The original large sheet of copper had to be cut into appropriate sizes and the edges beveled to facilitate cleaning the ink off the plate and to prevent it from tearing the paper. The plate also had to be squared and its corners rounded, because the pressure of the printing press would leave an impression of the plate's edges in the paper. Next, the surface had to be polished, cleaned, and covered with an acid-resistant film, or "ground," which was then darkened with soot to contrast with the copper. Onto this ground the design was then transferred and traced with a needle to expose the plate's surface to acid, which bit the design into the copper. In a shop like Basire's, most of the tedious preparatory work was carried out by apprentices like Blake. It is difficult to know which of the works produced in Basire's shop during this period Blake himself may have engraved, because engravers' apprentices were discouraged from developing their own individual styles, and their work was usually signed by the master. Among the projects in which modern scholars believe Blake probably had a hand were Jacob Bryant's *A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology* and Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, Part I. These books represent two subjects—mythology and British history—in which Blake never lost interest. Bryant was an antiquarian and mythographer who, like many others in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, attempted to reconcile pagan mythology with the biblical account of history. He theorized that the original monotheism of the *Old Testament* had degenerated after the Flood into various forms of sun worship, from which all the other pagan gods and heroes descended. His work had a lasting influence on Blake, who as late as 1809 cites the authority of "Jacob Bryant, and all antiquaries" in support of his claim that "The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven" are equally sacred (Erdman 1981: 543). The plates for Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* were engraved after pencil sketches Blake made of the tombs of kings and queens in

Westminster Abbey. Basire is said to have given him that assignment in order to get him out of the shop and away from the dissension that was brewing among the newer apprentices. Blake probably engraved a number of the sketches himself, including the portraits of Henry III, Eleanor of Castile, Edward III, and Richard II. Eleanor in particular seems to have appealed to Blake's imagination, for he returned to her as a subject for the historical print *Edward & Elenor* and, much later, for one of his *Visionary Heads*. Edward III, meanwhile, reappears as the protagonist of a dramatic fragment in Blake's first volume of poetry, *Poetical Sketches*. The earliest engraving that scholars can confidently attribute to Blake reflects his interest in early British history and legend. He later reworked and reprinted it with the title *Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion* and dated it 1773, the second year of his apprenticeship. The young Blake's technique in the first state of this work, though competent, does not reveal much about him as an artist; his distinctive imagination emerges only in the way he combines the compositional elements. He takes the pensive, muscular figure from Michelangelo's *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, but places him against a spare, brooding background of sea and rocky coast that evokes a mood reminiscent of the bleak seascapes of Anglo-Saxon verse. On the later state of this engraving, Blake identifies the figure as "One of the Gothic Artists who Built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages" (Erdman 1981: 671)—an allusion to the legend that Joseph of Arimathea traveled to Britain and founded Glastonbury Abbey.

Blake's fame as an artist and engraver rests largely on a set of 21 copperplate etchings to illustrate the Book of Job in the Old Testament. However, he did much work for which other artists and engravers got the credit. Blake was a poor businessman, and he preferred to work on subjects of his own choice rather than on those that publishers assigned him. Besides being a poet and painter, Blake was a professional engraver and a tireless and versatile experimenter in a great variety of media. He was an artisan or craftsman who was an expert in an important minor art as well as two major ones. His political sympathies were anarchist and revolutionary. "Traditionally, scholars who have discovered lost or unknown cultural artifacts have reported these finds to the academic community with the greatest possible objectivity. When presenting such material, scholars usually confine their remarks to a physical description of the object at

hand, as well as to its specific origins and provenance. Interpretation, aesthetics, cultural context, and other such issues, if considered at all, are relegated to a secondary role—often a separate section at the end of the article or book.” (Cole 1999: 485).

Blake discovered a totally original method of "relief etching" when he was 31. The method created a single, raised printing surface for both text and image. The idea came to him in a vision of his younger brother soon after he died. His unique “illuminated printing” involved writing his designs, usually of his unique religious visions, onto copper plates with wax pens and similar acid-resistant tools. Then he would etched the plates in diluted acid so the untreated copper would be dissolved away or reduced, thus leaving the design standing in relief. Herein lies the origin of the descriptive name "relief." Blake's method is a reversal of the normal method of etching, where the lines of the engraved design which have been scratched into the copper are exposed to the diluted acid. In this etching process, the lines are deepened, incised, and softened so that the lines themselves are the design. The plate would be printed by the intaglio method where the design itself is scratched away in order to be filled with ink and pressed. Relief etching, which Blake invented, became an important commercial printing method. Although there have been well-defined competing interpretative theories about the literary aspects of Blake’s works for example David Erdman *versus* Northrop Frye, historicism *versus* proto-structuralism, nothing has generated so much controversy as academic discussion about Blake’s artistic processes. The chief aspects of the arguments have gathered around the production of the illuminated books, particularly those produced between 1789 and 1795, and Blake’s use of relief etching and colour printing.

4. SOME SAMPLES OF BLAKE'S ENGRAVINGS



Picture IV

The archetype of the Creator is a familiar image in Blake's work. Here, the demiurgic figure Urizen prays before the world he has forged. The *Song of Los* is this third in a series of illuminated books painted by Blake and his wife, collectively known as the Continental Prophecies.



Picture V

In this work, Blake engraved a part from the bible. Blake's interest in religion is something obvious. Blake designed his own mythology, which appears largely in his prophetic books. Within these Blake describes a number of characters, including 'Urizen', 'Enitharmon', 'Bromion' and 'Luvah'. This mythology seems to have a basis in the Bible and in Greek mythology, and it accompanies his ideas about the everlasting Gospel.



Picture VI - Blake's engraving (1820-1821)

This work is an example of Blake's wood engravings which was produced between 1820 and 1821.

CONCLUSION

Blake was a disturbing prophet who desired social change. He rebelled against the traditions and authoritarianism of organized religion, believing that Christianity preached against physical pleasures and thus meant a loss of imagination and death of the soul. He was a man of personal force who, in his artwork, made strong demands on the imaginations of others. His art is considered the most extreme example of Romanticism. William Blake was one of the poets that was taken into consideration as a Romantic Period poet. For this reason, it was thought to be useful to give information about Romantic Period. Romantic Period was mainly shaped by the most important revolutions which had great impact on the historical development of the humanity. The French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in England took place at this period and both literature and art were affected by the time they were produced. Though Blake was considered to be a Romantic period poet, Mina Urgan opposes this general statement by claiming that Blake is just accepted as a Romantic Period poet for he lived between 1757 and 1827. She claims that Blake is ahead of both Romanticism and Pre-Romanticism. Instead she believes that Blake is a creator who is unique in all senses and he has no equivalence not only in English literature but also in the world (Urgan 1989). William Blake is considered to be one of the most important poets of the Romantic Period in English Literature now. But at his own time his value hadn't been recognized. It took nearly two centuries after his death. On this issue, Schultz said that "The phenomenon of Blake's art is awesome. The past twenty-five years have witnessed his emergence from a second-rank eighteenth-century pre-romantic poet to one of the six major Romantic poets" (Schulz 1970-71: 225). It is really a pity for the history of English literature. The ideas he wanted to express through his poems were hard to be accepted at that time for Blake is ahead of his time. He dared to mention about the things that people feared even to think let alone speak out loud. Blake does not present Jesus as a philosopher or traditional messianic figure but as a supremely creative being, above dogma, logic and even morality. People thought of Jesus as a traditional messianic figure about whom it was a sin to talk opposed to him. For this,

Blake had been largely criticized for his comments on the Jesus. Blake has a different point of view on such a subject that seems to be forbidden to be mentioned by anyone. There are some facts that people do not want to talk or examine in anyway for these subjects are to last the way they are. The religion is the most important of all the subjects that are to be forbidden to comment on. But Blake, having a critical mind, takes this issue into consideration and interpret on the matter without any fear at that time. “Blake's view of the dynamics of the human personality can be summed up, very nearly, in a single statement of his: "Without contraries is no progression." That is, for Blake as for Freud the central fact regarding human character is conflict; both men believe such conflict is necessary in order for the self to take form.” (Majdiak and Wilkie 1972: 94). That’s why his attacks on conventional religion were shocking in his own day. For most of these reasons, Blake and his poems waited the right time to be revealed though two centuries is pretty long time. “To be sure, Blake was far from unknown before 1863- anyone who could be described as "the greatest of poets" by W. S. Landor to Carlyle, Henry Crabb Robinson, and Monckton Milnes (in 1838) obviously has canonical potential to be reckoned with. And in fact, only three years after his death an account of Blake appeared in Allan Cunningham's popular "Family Library" volume, *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1830).” (Hilton 1988: 135). Then it was also hard to find enough sources on Blake. Now that he is a well-known poet recently it is pretty easy to access information on Blake. “Professor Bentley’s *Blake Records* is an extremely welcome addition to the corpus of bibliographical works on William Blake. The aim of the book is 'to collect and publish as many as possible of the references to Blake made by his contemporaries'.” (Bindman 1971: 218). There are only a few people who are aware of Blake’s twin dispositions toward art and poetry. He is one of the rare people who bears two special talents, both for literature and art. And this thesis aimed at raising people’s awareness of Blake’s being someone more than just a poet or just a painter. “The ability to paint and the ability to write have often belonged to the same person; but it is rare to find them equally developed. Most people so gifted have been either writers who have made a hobby of painting, like D. H. Lawrence, or painters who have made a hobby of writing, like Wyndham Lewis. When the two are combined, one usually predominates. It is not uncommon for poets who can draw to

illustrate their poems, like Edward Lear; nor is it uncommon for painters who can write to provide inscriptions to their paintings, like Rossetti. In a world as specialized as ours, concentration on one gift and a rigorous subordination of all others is practically a moral principle. Mr. Eliot uses the word "schizophrenia" even about the attempt to write both poetry and philosophy. Blake, it is clear, had a different attitude, and the reasons for his different attitude are of some interest." (Frye 1951: 35). Blake's poetical aspect was also examined in this thesis. His poems are categorized into two groups: Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. There is a huge contrast between two groups of poems. While Blake sees the world from a pure little child's point of view at the *Songs of Innocence*, the little child has grown up and get acquainted with the evil of the world and has seen the dark side of the world in the Songs of Experience.

Shortly, Blake was examined from all aspects of his life in this thesis. Not only his poetical talents but also his great talent of painting and engraving was considered. Someone who is as extraordinary as Blake worths to be examined.

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