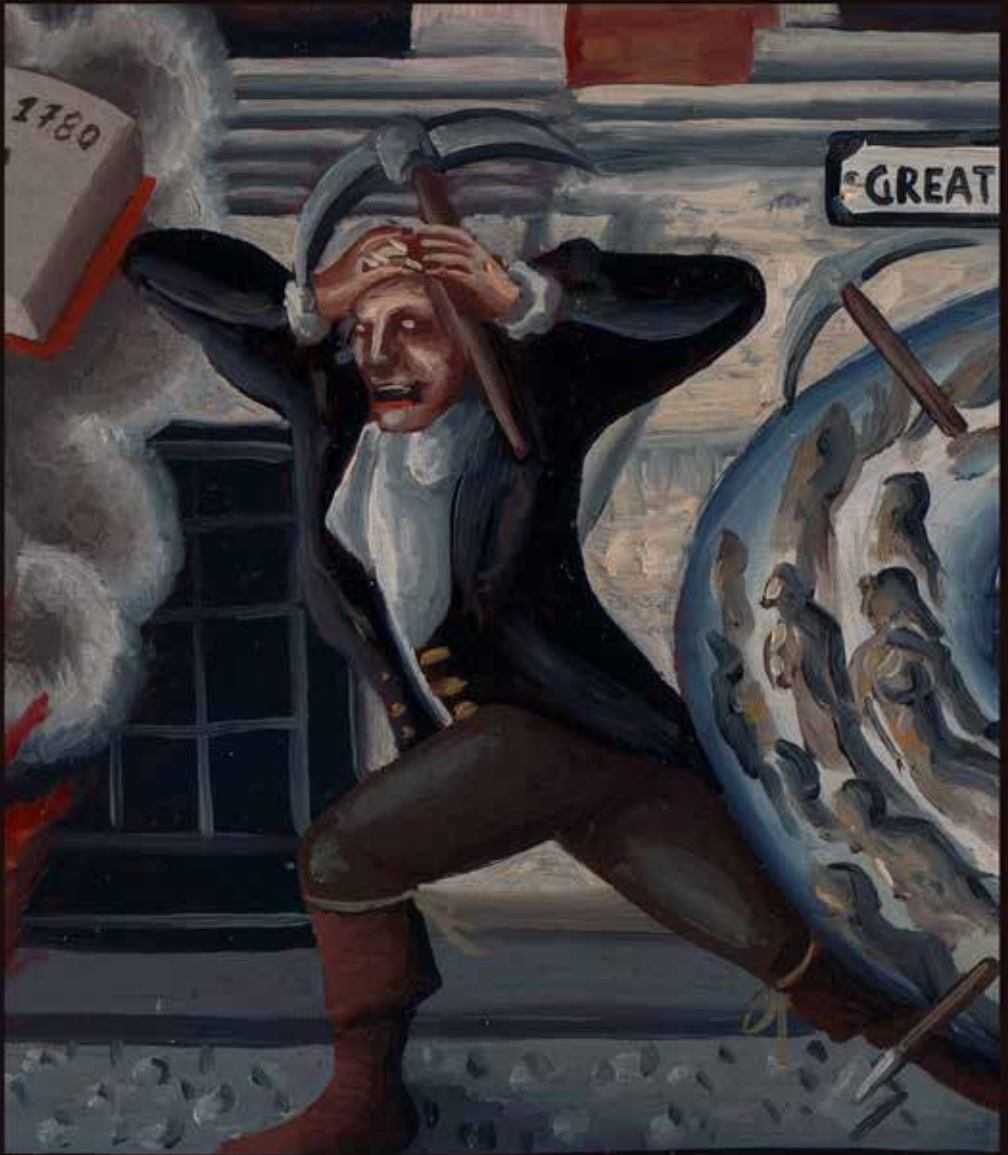


# Papakura Post Office

a spazmodical



Mind-Forg'd Manacles





# Mind-Forg'd Manacles



William Blake



\* Don't do your homework at  
William Blake by James luncheon!

William Blake was a famous but not when he was alive for making poems and prints and paintings. Everyone thought he was mad but he was a seminal figure in ~~the~~ history. He ~~to~~ did not like church but he liked the bible but he believed in free lovers until he got old. He was a bit bald. He married a wife called Catherine who he ~~made~~ <sup>taught to</sup> work as an ~~engraver~~ engraver.

William Blake wrote the words for a famous song called Jerusalem. He was ~~arrested~~ also arrested for fighting with a soldier after he said bad things about the King and soldiers. His wife loved him and his lodger loved him. After he was dead a bad man called Fred Tatham burned some of his ~~manu~~ manuscripts and another bad man called John Linnel ~~rubbed out~~ erased the naughty bits from his drawings. If you go to his grave at Bunhill Cemetery near where my mum lives it is not his real grave but somebody is trying to find the real one. William Blake was not an ~~enviro~~ <sup>ENVIRONMENTAL</sup> activist because there was no pollution when he was alive.

My mum says William Blake was not good because he didn't do what he was ~~sup-~~posed to but I like him because I do not like my mum. Or my dad.

Very good James.  
8/10 \*

I MUST CREATE A SYSTEM OR BE ENSLAVED BY ANOTHER MAN  
I WILL NOT REASON & COMPARE: MY BUSINESS IS TO CREATE

NEAR BY LIE THE REMAINS OF  
THE POET-PAINTER  
**WILLIAM BLAKE**  
1757 — 1827  
AND OF HIS WIFE  
**CATHERINE SOPHIA**  
1762 — 1841





# Urban shaman and psychogeographer



1. William Blake is the first urban shaman of the first industrial city. He is London's 'technician of the sacred', a magican and healer as well as poet. The psychology of Blake and geography of London combine in an astonishing way, 200 years ahead of the psychogeographers. He is - of all the great Romantic poets - the one who made London his own. Byron, Shelley and Keats may as well be Italians; Wordsworth and Coleridge may as well be bumpkins. Beginning with the 'Golden Square' ward he was born in, Blake single-handedly transforms the base metals of London into alchemical gold:

*"I write in South Molton Street what I both see and hear,  
In regions of Humanity, in London's opening streets."*

2. Blake is a religious poet but one who believes neither in God nor Church. God is 'Nobodaddy' (ie. Daddy Nobody) and the Church is the Whore of Revelation. Blake looks to a past before organised religion and looks to a future without sectarian strife, insisting that 'All Religions Are One' and that all are inspired by 'The Poetic Genius'.

He regularly invokes the triumvirate of great English poets - Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton - as antidote to the overly scientific and rational Bacon, Newton and Locke. Imagination is primary:

*"The Atoms of Democritus"*

*And Newton's Particles of Light  
Are sands upon the Red Sea shore,  
Where Israel's tents do shine so bright."*

3. For Blake - as for the Old Testament prophets - there is no difference between poetry and prophecy. A poem is an inspired teaching. (It was Tom Paine who taught this to Blake, one of the many reasons why Blake so admired him).



4. Blake's take on Christianity is radical/libertarian/aesthetic e.g. "Jesus and his Apostles were all artists". As such, Jesus is "the Divine Humanity" and "Jesus the Imagination". He is an emblem of artistic freedom - in its fullest sense: "I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination". Blake also celebrates "Forgiveness" and arbitrates for a society ruled by the virtues of "Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love".

5. Blake is a British-Israelite who sees ancient parallels between Albion and the Holy Land. His hymn 'Jerusalem' is such a powerful statement of this belief that it unites all the warring factions of his country, and draws in everyone. Though unofficial, it must be the finest national anthem available to humanity. What could be more charmingly perverse than a national anthem which contains the word 'satanic' and which is named after somewhere else? (Can you imagine if the Israeli national

anthem was called 'London'?) Despite his British-Israelism, there is no doubt that if Blake were alive today he would look upon modern Jerusalem with despair, and would be furious at the conditions in which Palestinians are forced to live.

6. Blake is an Anglo-Celtic poet who is always returning Britain to its ancient roots in Albion, its Celtic heritage. For him, the 'bard' is the native equivalent of the Jewish prophet and is anti-authoritarian. The 'druid' is the equivalent of the 'priest' or 'pharisee' and is authoritarian. Blake is anti-authoritarian because he passionately opposes the Powers-that-Be engaging - as the druids did - in "human sacrifice" e.g. the public hangings at Tyburn or the Battle of Trafalgar.



7. Blake's level of compassion for all human beings and for all living creatures is unparalleled in English poetry. His tenderness of soul is huge, as is his anger when he witnesses any type of social injustice:

*"A Robin Red breast in a Cage  
Puts all Heaven in a Rage  
A dove house filld with doves and pigeons  
Shudders hell through all its regions"*

8. Blake's message is urgent. He is not a comic poet, an entertainer, a light versi-



fier. He writes to transform individuals and, thereby, to transform society. The third verse of *London* contains an acrostic (ie. the first letter of each line spells a word that can be read vertically):

*“How the Chimney-sweepers cry  
Every blackning Church appals,  
And the hapless Soldiers sigh,  
Runs in blood down palace walls”*

Blake is not only describing the sweeper’s cry and the soldier’s sigh, he is asking us to ‘HEAR’.



9. Blake’s gift of prophecy is evident in the way his work re-invents itself so as to be utterly compelling for each new generation, from the pre-Raphaelites to the Symbolists to the Irish Modernists, to the Beats, to the British Poetry Revival, and beyond. What better credit crunch poem is there than ‘Holy Thursday’?

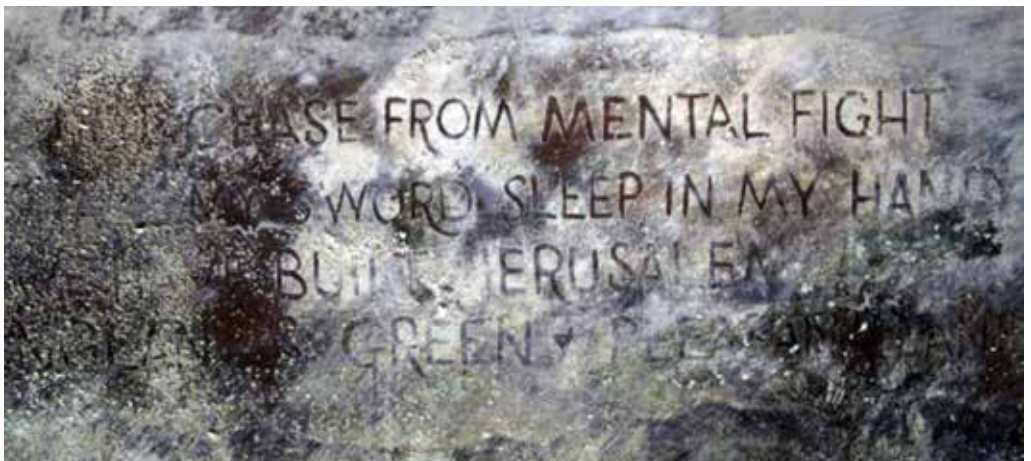
*“Is this a holy thing to see,  
In a rich and fruitful land,  
Babes reduced to misery,  
Fed with cold and usurous hand?”*

*Is that trembling cry a song?  
Can it be a song of joy?  
And so many children poor?  
It is a land of poverty!  
And their sun does never shine.  
And their fields are bleak and bare.  
And their ways are fill'd with thorns.  
It is eternal winter there.  
For where-e'er the sun does shine,  
And where-e'er the rain does fall:  
Babe can never hunger there,  
Nor poverty the mind appall."*

Written in the 1790's, this is chillingly relevant. Child poverty is to blame on the "cold and usurous hand" that feeds it ie. the banking system.

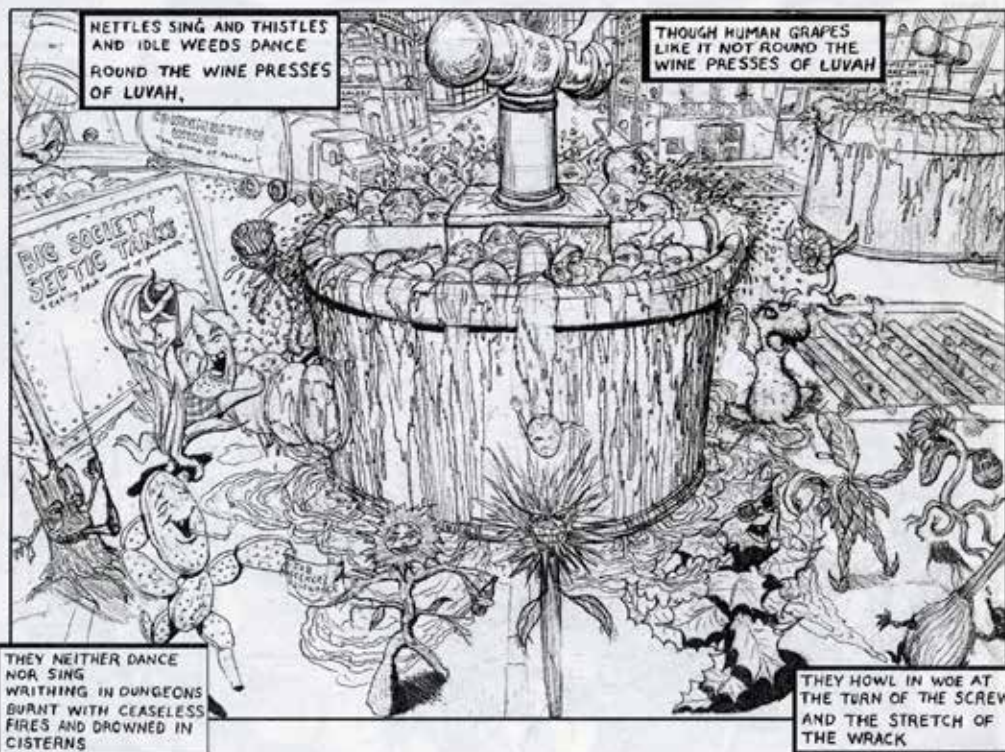
10. Dismissed as "an unfortunate lunatic" in his lifetime by the influential critic Robert Hunt, there are still those who oppose him. A consensus has formed among such writers as T.S. Eliot, Jacob Bronowski, and Michael Schmidt that Blake's longer poems are no-go areas. This is rubbish! If you like Jerusalem the lyric, you'll love Jerusalem the epic; only you'll just have to work a little harder! Drawing on ancient magic, philosophy and symbolism, he is trying to teach us how to align the four aspects of our being: intellect, emotion, intuition and sensation. Until we do this, we will not be whole. Albion himself has fallen into error and fearfulness, and will not be saved until he is re-united with his female emanation, Jerusalem.

Niall McDevitt 2011











WHILE THE WISE EMMETT  
DRUNK  
AND THE GOLD BEETLE  
DELIRIOUS  
DANCE ROUND THE  
WINE PRESSES OF LUVAH



AND THE TAPEWORM  
AND ALL THE ARMIES  
OF DISEASE SING  
SWARMING ROUND THE  
WINE PRESSES OF  
LUVAH

ALL THINGS INVISIBLE OR  
KNOWN TO SLOTHFUL  
VEGETATING MAN  
ARE THERE  
DANCING ROUND THE  
WINE PRESSES OF LUVAH



THE LUCKY SPINNER-  
AMBIGUOUS SPIDER  
AND HIS WIFE  
THE GLORIOUS CENTIPEDE  
AND THE MANY-EYED  
GROUND SPIDER  
ARE ALL THERE  
SINGING AND  
DANCING



HAVING AN UPROARIOUS  
TIME  
ROUND THE WINE PRESSES  
OF LUVAH

BUT THE POOR HUMAN  
GRAPE SINGS NOT  
NOR DANCES - WRITHING IN  
CEASELESS FIRES

IN THE PAIN OF SAWS  
AND CHORDS  
TORTURED

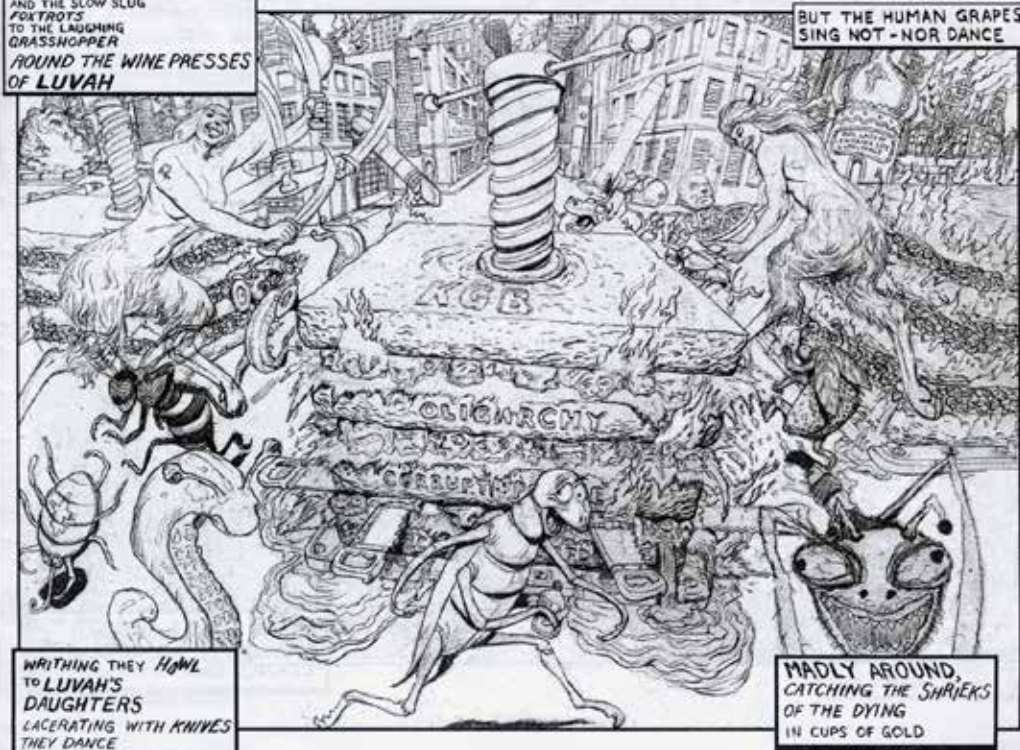
WHILST THE MOLE CAPE  
IN VELVET, THE HAPPY  
EARTHWIG JIG A JIG

AND THE SLOW SLUG  
PORTROTS  
TO THE LAUGHING  
GRASSHOPPER  
ROUND THE WINE PRESSES  
OF LUVAH

BUT THE HUMAN GRAPES  
SING NOT - NOR DANCE

WRITHING THEY HOWL  
TO LUVAH'S  
DAUGHTERS  
LACERATING WITH KNIVES  
THEY DANCE

MADLY AROUND,  
CATCHING THE SHRIEKS  
OF THE DYING  
IN CUPS OF GOLD







# The Wine Presses of Luvah

Luvah in Blake's Mythology is one of the four zoas and stands for Passion and Love. Zoa is a Greek word meaning 'living one'. In the Book of Ezekiel, Zoa is the name of the four creatures who pull the chariot of God's Spirit. Man invents miseries and carnage for himself in search of profit and the insects and animals, untouched and uncorrupted play amongst the corpses of Man's vanity.

Blake's Wine Presses of Luvah are his image for War on Earth – a recurring image in his visionary and prophetic poems, is inspired by The Book of Revelations in the Bible. The Angel thrust his sickle into the earth, the vine gathered and cast into the great Wine Press of the Wrath of God and blood pours forth. The apocalyptic Wine presses of Luvah derives from the violent imagery of the last harvest and vintage in Revelation, being the Wrath of God crushing the Nations of the Earth.

Blake first wrote his anti-war hymn against bloodshed in Vala or The Four Zoas about the beauty and exhilaration of the early French Revolution that soured into the ugly random executions at the guillotine, in The Terror, with the mass destruction escalating into full European War with the Wine Presses of Luvah being the machinery of War, and the march for Equality, Freedom and Brotherhood degenerating into Napoleon finally crowning himself Emperor.

Blake repeats the hymn in Milton and refers to the Wine Presses in Jerusalem. Europe became a mountain of corpses for all its idealism, and this great pulp of wine was left to the true victors – the maggots and the worm. The idealism swirls into the sacrifice like the vintage of love – The Dionysian orgy turns into a vicious blood let of unstoppable violence. Passion screams in suffering but suffering is transformative. A new stage of Humanity has been reached.

David Byers-Brown has updated the dystopian imagery of a grasping, unspiritual materialism of the world's snatch and grab multi-national disaster, creating a masterpiece, with Micallef's out of the Blakean carnival of Chaos – tweaked for the modern ear and eye. Bringing Blake's profound message from 200 years ago to a fresh audience, as radically urgent today as it was then.





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to complete  
your **census**  
questionnaire

L U V A H

DOES



NOT TICK BOXES

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Your census response is required by law

Help tomorrow take shape

[www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk)



# The eternal fate of Angels & other apes

"But now [said I to the Angel], we have seen my eternal lot, shall I show you yours?" He laughed at my proposal; but I by force suddenly caught him in my arms... then I flung myself with him directly into the body of the sun... & then leaped into the void between Saturn & the fixed stars.

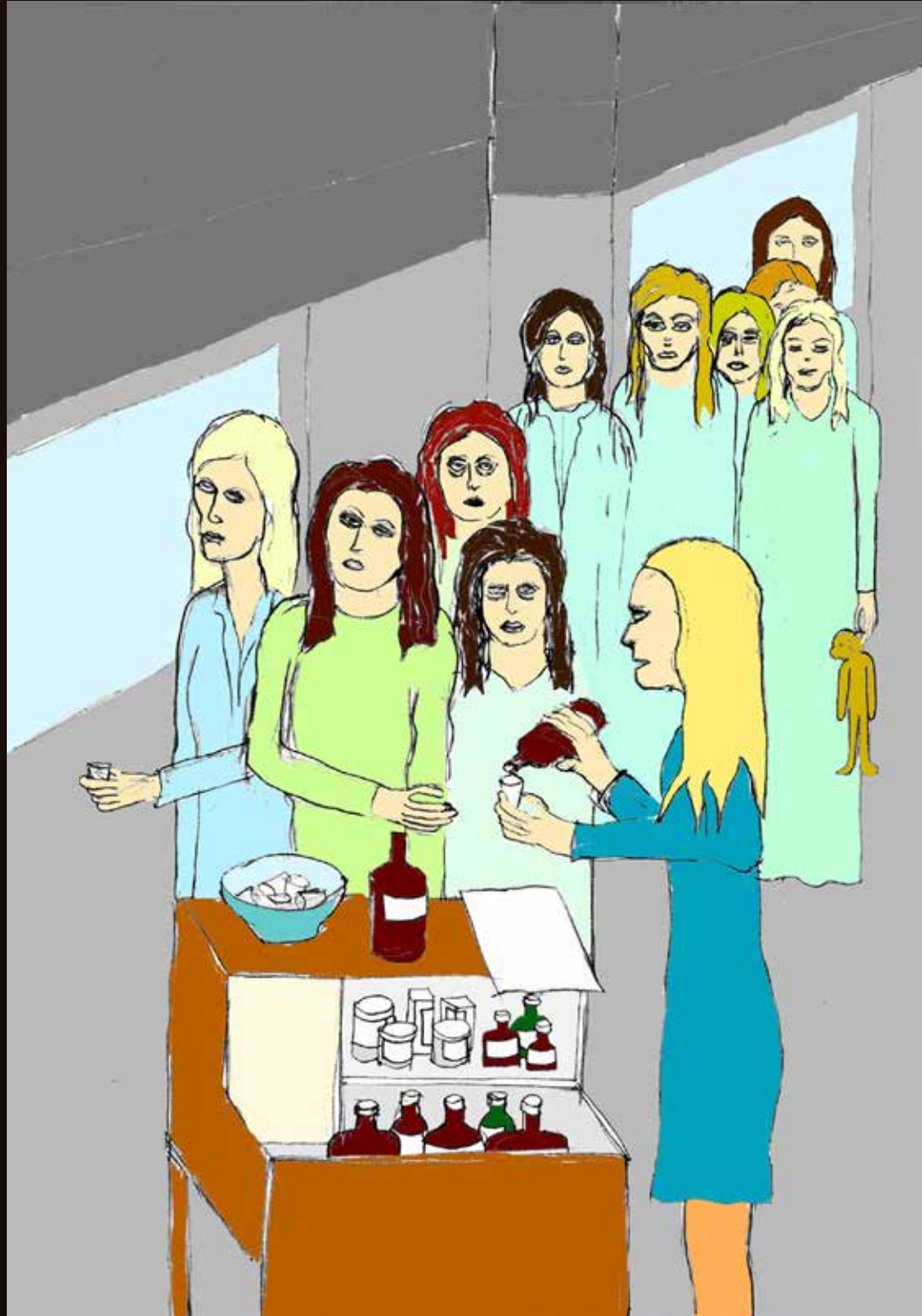
"Here," said I, "is your lot, in this space - if space it may be called." Soon we saw the stars and the sun, & I took him to the altar and opened the Bible, and lo! it was a death pit, into which I descended, driving the Angel before me; soon we saw seven hours of trouble; one we entered; in it were a number of monkeys, baboons, & all of that species, chained by the middle, grinning and snatching at one another, but withheld by the shortness of their limbs; however, I saw that they sometimes grew numerous, and then the weak were caught first one limb and then another, till the body was left a helpless trunk; then, after gnawing & kissing it with seeming fondness, they devoured too; and here & there I saw one savourily picking the flesh off his own tail;



as the stench terribly annoyed me, we went out of the mill, & I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was subjected to analysis.

So the Angel said: "why ghastly has inspired upon me, & when oughtest to be inspired?" I answered: "we inspire in one another, & it is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics."







August 1803 ~ William Blake removed John Scofield, a drunk soldier, from his garden in Felpham. Scofield afterwards claimed that Blake "damned the King" and said that soldiers were all slaves". Blake was charged with High Treason and put on trial. After he was acquitted of the charge he moved back to London.





June 1780, while walking to work, William Blake was swept up by a rampaging mob that stormed Newgate Prison with shovels and pickaxes in London, setting the building ablaze and releasing the prisoners. Blake was reportedly in the front rank of the mob during this attack. These riots, in a response to a bill revoking sanctions against Roman Catholicism, became known as the Gordon Riots. They provoked a flurry of legislation from the government of George III, including the creation of the first Police force.

# Blake's Absence

*A fool sees not the same tree as a wise man sees.*

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Walking around Peckham Rye Common in 1767 the young William Blake glimpsed a vision of angels glittering in the branches of a tree. In the UK PLC of the 21st century this would be the imaginary jittering of an imbecile, a child that might prove not only unfit for future work but would probably be unfit for anything much except remedial education, therapy and pills. Even in Blake's time Mommy Blake had to dissuade Daddy Blake from thrashing him. Angels seem wholly absent from Peckham Rye in 2012, unless one is occasionally conjured up from the skunk smoke of bored teenagers or the desperate yearnings of the Sunday leisure time of middle class families. Needless to say, angels are more likely to respond to the former than the latter.

One could look around for the tree in which the inter-dimensional messengers appeared but this only reinforces the *absence of Blake* via an archaeological positivism that would place him right there and then, in the sad continuum of London history and trade marked heritage. I've not had time to look but I imagine that Blake-or at least the 'Jerusalem' appropriated by successive political overlords- occupies some kind of place in the cultural fairground of the London Olympiad. Dark Satanic Mills of leisure upheld by the rotor blades of surveillance helicopters, the division of city space into a theme park of disciplinary control and the joy of both old and new corruption in a million sponsorship deals and security contracts. Blake would have probably puked.

Just like those angels sitting in profane splendour upon a tree Blake is absent when reduced to being part of the once upon a time that would lead inevitably to him being part of 'our'- a synonym for national capital as 'community'- cultural heritage. Or rather, Blake is made absent and becomes absent, plays a role and becomes another swollen, comfortable myth to re-en-





chant nation and city in a time of the even more malign enchantments of economic austerity and national unity. Even the psychogeographical scattering of the skein of Blake's bones to divine the lineaments of London can collapse back into the comfortable inanity of heritage. Once seen as class warfare, when viewed as literature psychogeography easily lends itself to being a distraction for hipsters.

This subsumption in an inanely self-celebrating national culture means that Blake is absent to anything remotely pertinently antagonistic in the present. The question then becomes one of restoring Blake's presence as antagonistic to the myths of cultural capital. A few lines of his poetry might contain some clues in how to do this.

Excessive Time

The Road of Excess leads to the Palace of Wisdom.

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Reading Blake what becomes apparent is his fury, drunken dismissal of limits, theological anarchism, materialist religion, an Edenic espousal that the naked limit of time is now and a lack of measure expressed through ethical grace. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is more akin to one of the desperately antagonistic pamphlets that emerged from the communist, anarchist and artistic ultra-left during the long neo-liberal ascendancy of the 1980's and 1990's than just another epistle of classic English literature. Blake's radical, artisanal, early modern pre-proletarian sensibility can still cut acutely into our own degraded late capitalist space-time continuum. Or as he writes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*:

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock, but of wisdom: no clock can measure. The 'hours of folly', those of work time and wage labour time, empty and repetitive, tightly measured by timepieces became increasingly important to nascent 18th century English capitalism as the ongoing enclosure of land created and formed the bodies of workers for the factories. An ongoing component of this is that time itself is enclosed, emptied and rendered to the folly of commodified leisure and corporate track and field. But what of 'wisdom', how might it have no time and how might it be expressed?

Wisdom is excess, energy, desire becoming present in a revolutionary now- time that might only last for the duration of a poetic aphorism or a looted shop, the exemplary, shining revolutionary terror of 'Tyger Tyger' or those rare moments when the abstract, repetitive time of our capitalist present is dissolved by strike, occupation and insurrection. I think Blake would have understood those 1848 Parisian revolutionaries who shot out the public clocks on municipal buildings. Poetry such as Blake's always contains a remnant, a remainder, of a time that is not entwined with the time of Economy, Commodity, History, and Value, those structuring implements

that make desiring energy less eternal delight than purgatorial disgrace. Conversely, in the midst of seizing back time, its restored to us as something sensual and gratuitous, to be experienced rather than bought and sold. Poetry-whether that of Blake, Arthur Rimbaud, Cesar Vallejo and innumerable other malcontents- contains a trace of this rupture with the quantitative time of capital.

## **Ranting William**

I have also: The Bible of Hell: which the world shall have whether they will or no. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

Of course, it might be seen as too much to include Blake in our own centuries 'Devils Party' of antagonism to capital. But I do not posit a simple resemblance or similitude. Part of the messianic now-time quality that Blake possesses subsists in its very discontinuity with any already constituted time or power and this opens up other juxtapositions, decomposing history as the story of those who think they own the common. Blake often seems to have little resemblance to the enlightenment radicals of his own day and to be speaking in place of yet another absence whose history has been erased, forgotten or at best written by its enemies.

This absence is that of a counter-tradition of heretical dissent that had one of its final flowerings in the 1640's during the English Revolution whose outward signs were the triumph of merchants, trade and puritan zeal in working to measure. But threatening the ascendancy of the landed parliamentary classes were the artisans, New Model Army soldiers, apprentices, peasants and minor gentry who described themselves as Diggers, True Levellers, and Ranters. There's a whole other history here of expropriating land, declaring the flesh of Christ to be present in all things including the tavern, cursing out the priests and landowners and annulling sin since God, Christ, Holy Spirit are expressed through the desires of a ragged elect of millenarian communists not the prescriptions of some priest. Such a *ranting tendency* put into play what Blake termed the contraries- 'good' and 'evil', Bible tradition and transgression- in the service of a very materialist theology. As the Ranter Abiezer Coppe, disavowing the sword, wage labour and any zealous activity whatsoever, wrote in 1649:

Not by sword; we (holily) scorn to fight for anything; we had as lief be dead drunk every day of the week and lie with whores i'th market place; and account them as good actions as taking the poor abused enslaved ploughman's money from him... Or as he wrote even more succinctly, 'Have ALL THINGS common, or else the plague of God will rot and consume all that you have.' Ranting William Blake shares in this spirit. A spirit sadly missing as we cower under the vain- glorious display of power that is the 2012 Olympics and such kitsch neo-liberal architectural



follies of the rich as the Shard.

## **A Brief Dialogue concerning Angelus Novus**

Note. This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend: we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense which the world shall have if they behave well.



William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.



X: Do you think Blake actually saw an angel on Peckham Rye Common that day in 1767?

Y: I don't know, it's hard to put oneself in the field of vision of a ranting non-conformist like Blake. If he did I like to imagine that through the cross hatch of messianic time Blake glimpsed the slightly demonic angel that the painter Paul Klee dubbed 'Angelus

Novus'. Claws, staring eyes, out stretched wings: an angel that the Kabbalistic Marxist Walter Benjamin thought of as being a witness to the ongoing catastrophe of capitalist history. The 'angel of history', condemned to always be looking back at the accumulated debris but awaiting her chance to become one with profane time and redeem this through destruction. It's in Benjamin's *Theses on History*.

X: Why Angelus Novus, why that particular conceptual creature?

Y: Maybe Angelus Novus briefly had a look at Blake. Also, Blake is part of the cultural debris that our present Lords and Masters-or more accurately the abstraction of capital that structures time and subjects- would have as its own and use to bolster its claims on this eternal present. This little essay is a minor attempt to pull that apart.

X: There's something you're not saying.

Y: Yeah. The thing with this Angelus Novus is that it's an image of a very materialist, profane revolutionary theology that I think Blake might have appreciated. Reading the good book in an infernal sense means not literally reading the text but recognising that the world and flesh is also the book and can be redeemed because they're irredeemable. Or as Walter Benjamin suggested, the task of revolutionary politics should be to ensure it:



Corresponds to a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of messianic nature, is happiness. (Theologico-Political Fragment)

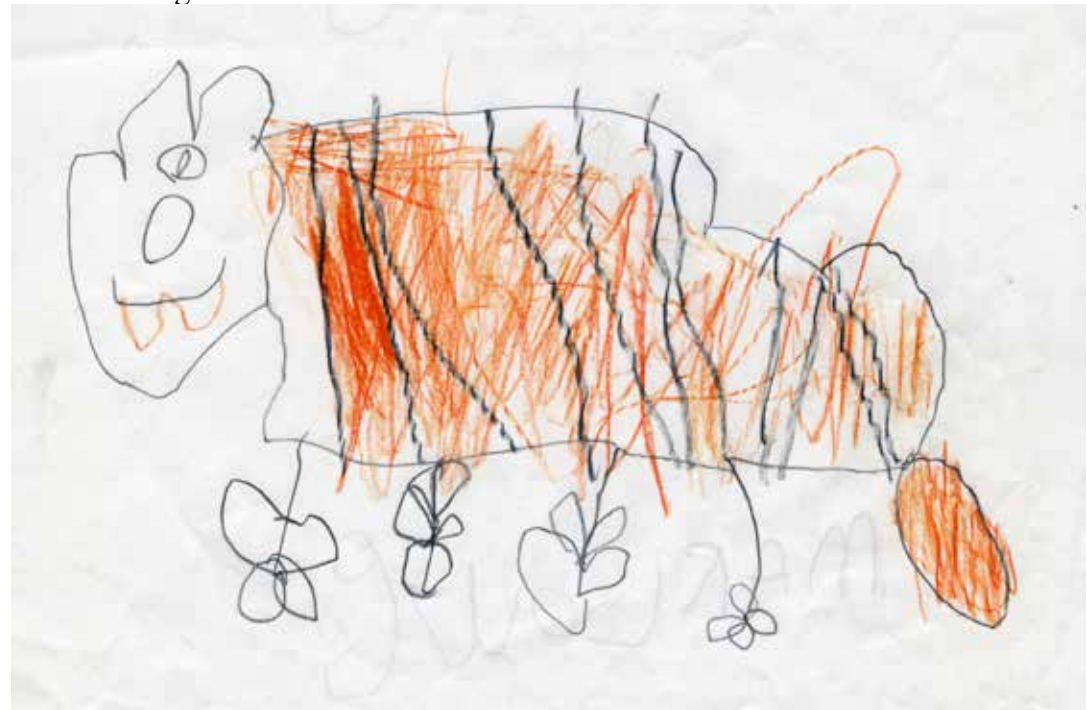
X: I still don't understand.

Y: Well, lets just say that if this worldly restitution ever happens then we all get to lie around like Ranters, read the diabolical bible and share in the sudden happiness of Angelus Novus as she gets to liquidate the entire inherited catastrophe. Happiness or energy is an eternal delight (as Blake said) and part of that delight is in negation. In that act, even if its only through apprehending the comedic repetition of capitalist history, 'humanity may happily separate itself from its past' (Marx). To say that ranting Blake- along with Abeizer Coppe and Walter Benjamin- are still part of our contemporary theologico-political paradigm doesn't even come close.

Or to leave the last words to Blake:

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.  
William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

John Cunningham 2012



## NEW PROVERBS OF HELL

Dictated by a Ghost of Lambeth to the *Clinical Wasteman*

- Shame is pride.
- Community is killing communism.
- 'We' = aggravated 'I'.
- Your country's dead man, but your continent is soiled.
- All Adventure not imposed by necessity is Tourism.
- *There's two kinds of people in this world: fools and total fools.\**
- If you can talk as fast as you can think, it only goes to show: your thinking is too slow.
- Self esteem = consent to the conditions that compose the Self.
- *I decided to retire from private life.*
- Hardworking families should resign & dissolve.
- Training is for circus animals.
- Kill your mentors.



- Split the atomized.
- Aspiration ha ha ha!
- Grassroots greed is good.

- *Play yourself but never be yourself.*
- *Don't wait to be hunted to hide.*
- Buildings cost less than the clay they were made from.



- Your inflated assets will all be Perpetual Bonds.
- God is ignorant enough to think of individual humans as owners of their thoughts and masters of their actions.
- The legend of children happy never to grow up is bitter adult propaganda.
- Help is a gift from someone who kicks down your door to make sure you get it.
- Empathy is Self-satisfaction.
- The Emotionally Literate find signs of personal salvation in all kinds of squalor, for only the reprobate suffer from diffidence.
- Without contrarians there is no digression.
- *Do they owe us a living? Course they do, course they do, course they fucking do!*

\*Where Mr. B. was twice mischannelled – through Fourth Parties, so to speak – the Accident is marked by *Italic* script.

In order of Intrusion:

- Royal Trux
- Karl Kraus
- Daniel Malone
- Samuel Beckett
- Crass





# LON

TYBURN

THE  
MIND-FORGED  
MANACLES I  
HEAR.

KING MOB

IN MARK OF EVER  
MARKS OF WEAR

# IDON

HOW THE  
CHIMNEY  
SWEEPERS  
CRY



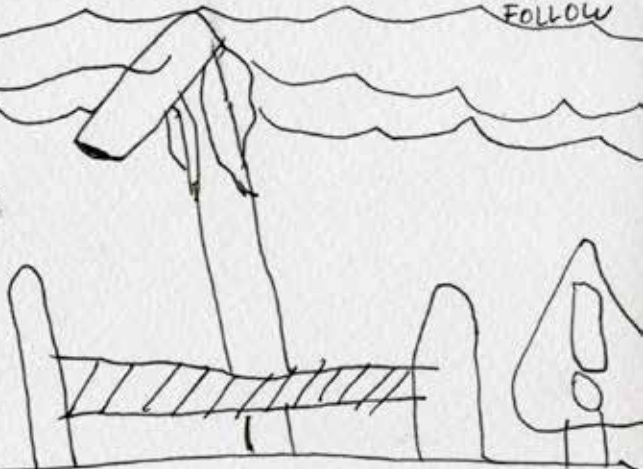
EVERY  
BLACK'N'GH  
CHURCH  
APPALLS



NEARWHERE THE CHARTER'D THAMES

DEOS  
FOLLOW

WANDER THROUGH EACH  
CHARTER'D  
STREET



FACE / MEAT  
KNESSE MARKOF WOE



# M

ARLOWE

## A Poison Tree - Reflections

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

*And I watered it in fears,  
Night & morning with my tears  
And I sunned it with my smiles  
And with soft deceitful wiles*

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

*And into my garden stole,  
When the night had veiled the pole  
In the morning, glad I see  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.*

William Blake (1857 – 1727)

I have long been fascinated by this poem and its various musical settings. It is beautifully simple in rhyme and meter, but it speaks of one of the huge challenges and dangers of all human relationships – the consequences of our internal repressions.

I view this poem as someone in whose delicate human breast, about forty years ago, began to bloom a horrifying mental illness. It was an illness that began when I was a child. It remained unexpressed for many years, but was to lead me on an adult path of chaos, destruction and repeated incarceration for almost forty years. It was an illness that I am now profoundly learning had its strange, pale roots in the black soil of repression – my own and other people's.

Repression is a human condition. I have sometimes felt tempted to say it is, most particularly, English disease. But really I don't think so, different cultures deal with it differently. Repression's common characteristic is that something important troubling a human soul remains inexpressible. It sits nameless and undefined in the shadows. And from this position, it exerts a much more powerful effect than it if it was brought more immediately into the light of full and shared awareness.



This is what Blake speaks of in *A Poison Tree*. He is not, in this case, speaking of repression in any general or social sense. Right in the first verse, it is clear that the setting of the repression he is exploring is in the minute interactions of human to human relationship.

This poem charts in four verses the insidious four stage course of unarticulated anger. And it's a situation that's familiar to all human beings. We've all had confusing occasions in our

lives, time and time again, when we have felt angry or betrayed by the actions and words of people we call our 'friends'. And yet, on some of these occasions, we have not felt able, in the moment of our true feeling-



sensation, to voice our dismay. Blake immediately points out in the open verse that if you cannot give voice your true feelings, you had better watch out, because your 'friend' is now turning into your 'foe'. For Blake, human relationships have to be open, expressive and resilient.

'And I watered it with my fears, Night and morning with my tears'. For Blake fear is the driver. We are frightened to express what we feel – our true feelings might overwhelm us, or overwhelm our friends, or lead to rejection or chaos. And tears, well they are the expression of the hurt that lies beneath our anger. Our hurt makes us feel vulnerable or pathetic or perhaps most of all, ashamed. We don't want to expose our friends to our tears, so we share them only with ourselves, we keep them out of sight, 'night and morning' in the hours of darkness or before we step out into the light of day.

With the habit of masking our true feelings, we have become false; false to our friends and false to ourselves. Consciously or not, we pretend our wrath doesn't exist, we try to forget it, we bury it. Instead we embark on showing to our now 'friend-foes', a false face.

But as Blake knows only too well, this strategy of containment only intensifies the situation, this approach to pain only feeds it and gives it space to grow. ‘And I sunned it with my smiles, and my soft deceitful wiles’  
‘And it grew both day and night, ‘til it bore an apple bright’. The pain expands and deepens in the darkness of non-expression. Yet the truth will out, it will find a way to force itself into the light of day. With the passage of time - and in my well-worn experience, this could be days, years, decades or even generations - the fruit of repression, finally blooms. It has become something strangely vivid and alluring with a life of its own. The resulting ‘apple bright’ can no longer be contained or hidden by the bearer. Like the apple in the Garden of Eden, it is now an inevitable temptation, a trap,  
‘And my foe beheld it shine, and he knew that it was mine. And into my garden stole. When the night had veiled the pole’ Despite our smiles, our deceptions, our now utterly false face, our true feelings have somehow become manifest in this strange, unexpected and uncontrollable fruit. In catching sight of it, our friend-foe is about to invade the private garden of our consciousness and our secret night of sorrow and anxiety, to pluck it from us. And it is at this point that disaster and dysfunction truly strike. The apple is neither fresh nor nutritious. It contains the poison of repression. Once consumed, the apple strikes the friend-foe dead, our fears have finally been realised. Yet in the most chilling line of all, this fact causes us final and dysfunctional pleasure: ‘In the morning, glad I see. My foe outstretched beneath the tree.’

It’s a small poem, but a huge subject. It is a poem of psychological insight that was way ahead of its time, long before Freud or Jung. And while it confines itself to the subject of personal relationships, in true Blakean style, it contains a lesson that can be extended to wider human social settings of group dynamics and societal



systems. Repression as a tool of social control rarely works for long and ultimately causing the division and disunity of riot, rebellion, revolution and civil war.

Integrity - personal, social, religious or political - are all connected and all require us to continually embrace and explore oppositions to our core beliefs and deepest feelings. In order for our whole selves to grow - rather than nurturing just our deep but petty complaints - is a very tall order. This requires us to face our most cherished thoughts and feelings, reflect and learn to evolve and express without being hamstrung by fear. If we can't do that within ourselves or in our personal relationships then our social, religious or political visions, of whatever hue, really stand no chance of meaningful and long-lasting evolution. Most of us still lack the self-understanding that Blake is exploring here. We may, meantime, be very much aware of, and depressed by, the destruction and iniquity that surrounds our daily lives on this earth. But as Blake shows us in so much of his Art and Poetry, until we can make the connection between our inner and outer experience, do we stand a chance of building the various brave new worlds that as human beings, all of us, in some way, dream of creating.

Sarah Wheeler 2012



Sarah Wheeler, aka Thomas Tobias, is Founder and Creative Director of Mental Fight Club. Sarah has endured a severe and recurring mental illness since a child, with no apparent circumstantial factors to explain it. Mental Fight Club is a South-wark-based creative group whose mission is 'to connect our inner and our outer worlds and ourselves to one another, whoever we may be'. Founded in 2003, Mental Fight Club initially arose from Sarah's experience of mental illness and the long march through recovery with others. In 2012/13 Mental Fight Club is launching a new creative endeavour, the Dragon Café, a café and creative space in the crypt of St George the Martyr Church on Borough High St, London SE1 1AI. See [www.mentalfightclub.com](http://www.mentalfightclub.com) and [www.dragoncafe.co.uk](http://www.dragoncafe.co.uk)





Dear William Blake,

I gather your trust in love & light & your sweet  
pain/pleasure from your drawings & the letters of your  
words I have read. It is your vision and heart  
expressed and moves me.

Maybe the unrest in my heart will make sense as I - I will  
find greater spiritual correlates for all the petty things that  
cross my mind.

Your presence is a comfort to me - your heart... even if  
somewhere underground, being cycled. Billions of 21 century  
toddlers thumping over your bones with their fancy shoes...  
your voice reverberates through time... I love you & I  
have never met you.

What you see fills my heart with hope and joy and wonder, daily  
incredibly. Now the sun has broken the rainy clouds &  
I can feel your laughter, even if it is my own, the  
human aspirations towards greater equality, understanding...  
the power of joy.

With great desire and foolish youthful imagination

Jessica Gendle Hygnell





On Peckham Rye I walked with Blake

I asked if we could see

Where he once saw the Angels

Resplending a tree

But Blake he smiled, then on we strode

And never saw the tree

Conversing with the Angels

In Eternity





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The Kray Brothers by Micallef 2012  
Luvah does NOT tick Boxes by Micallef 2012  
The eternal fate of Angels and other apes by Matthew Hyland 2010  
Pill Time by David Beales  
William Blake finds himself at the Head of King Mob by Matthew Couper 2012  
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## The East

The East is the 20a of Luvu  
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Fall towards the East