



William Blake in 1825

THE POEMS OF
**WILLIAM
BLAKE**

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1971

V THE GARDEN OF LOVE

- I went to the garden of love,
 And saw what I never had seen:
 A chapel was built in the midst,
 Where I used to play on the green.
- 5 And the gates of this chapel were shut,
 And *Thou shalt not* writ over the door;
 So I turned to the garden of love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore,
- And I saw it was filled with graves,
 10 And tomb-stones where flowers should be—
 And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
 And binding with briars my joys and desires.

VI A POISON TREE

- I was angry with my friend;
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
 I was angry with my foe;
 I told it not, my wrath did grow.
- 5 And I watered it in fears,
 Night and morning with my tears;
 And I sunned it with smiles,
 And with soft deceitful wiles.
- And it grew both day and night
 10 Till it bore an apple bright—

v. See draft, p. 146, and the 'Chapel of Gold' poem which follows it in the NB. The chapel is built by the priests, who wish to contain the true joys of life, and to keep the key in their own power. Above the text, a priest in monk's robes, with shaven head, kneels with his prayer-book, and young people kneel behind him.

v 6. Cp. *Europe* 134. The reference is to *Deuteronomy* vi 8-9: 'And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. . . . And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates'.

v 11. *gowns*] Pronounced *gownds* in 18th-century Cockney (see p. 146).

v 12. *binding*] As gardeners bind plants to sticks to make them upright.

vi. *Design*: Beneath the text, an outstretched, supine figure under a bare, rugged tree. Apart from its stark force, this poem is interesting in the light it throws on B.'s feelings of horror about trees, especially—as the designs suggest—leafless trees. He probably felt a sentient power and latent life in what is to most people an almost inanimate object. In the NB draft (p. 149), the poem is entitled 'Christian Forbearance'.

vi 9. *And it grew*] Cp. *Ahania* 102, 109: *Four Zoas* viia 31ff: *Jerusalem* pl.28.14.

- 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.
 15 In the morning glad I see
 My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

VII INFANT SORROW

- My mother groaned, my father wept—
 Into the dangerous world I leapt,
 Helpless, naked, piping loud,
 Like a fiend hid in a cloud.
- 5 Struggling in my father's hands,
 Striving against my swaddling bands,
 Bound and weary, I thought best
 To sulk upon my mother's breast.

VIII LONDON

- I wander through each chartered street
 Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
 And mark in every face I meet
 Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
- 5 In every cry of every man,
 In every infant's cry of fear,

vii. The contrary poem to 'Infant Joy', in *Innocence* (p. 55); see draft on p. 150.

vii. *Design*: Beneath the text, a mother leans forward to take hold of her child who is reaching upwards and away from her out of his cradle.

vii 7. The child prefers his mother's soft rule to his father's sternness—and so the woman's power is greater.

viii. See draft on p. 154.

viii. *Designs*: Above the poem, a child leads an old blind man, who leans on sticks, along a drab street. Beside sts 2 and 3, a child warms himself by a wood fire.

viii 1. *chartered*] Like all ancient cities, London is proud of its charters, through which it holds certain liberties and privileges—and which once represented its source of freedom. But these charters have not granted liberty or privilege to most of the city's people. There may also be a hint of the meaning of *charter* as a form of *hire* (recorded by the OED only from 1806, but likely to have been in use earlier).