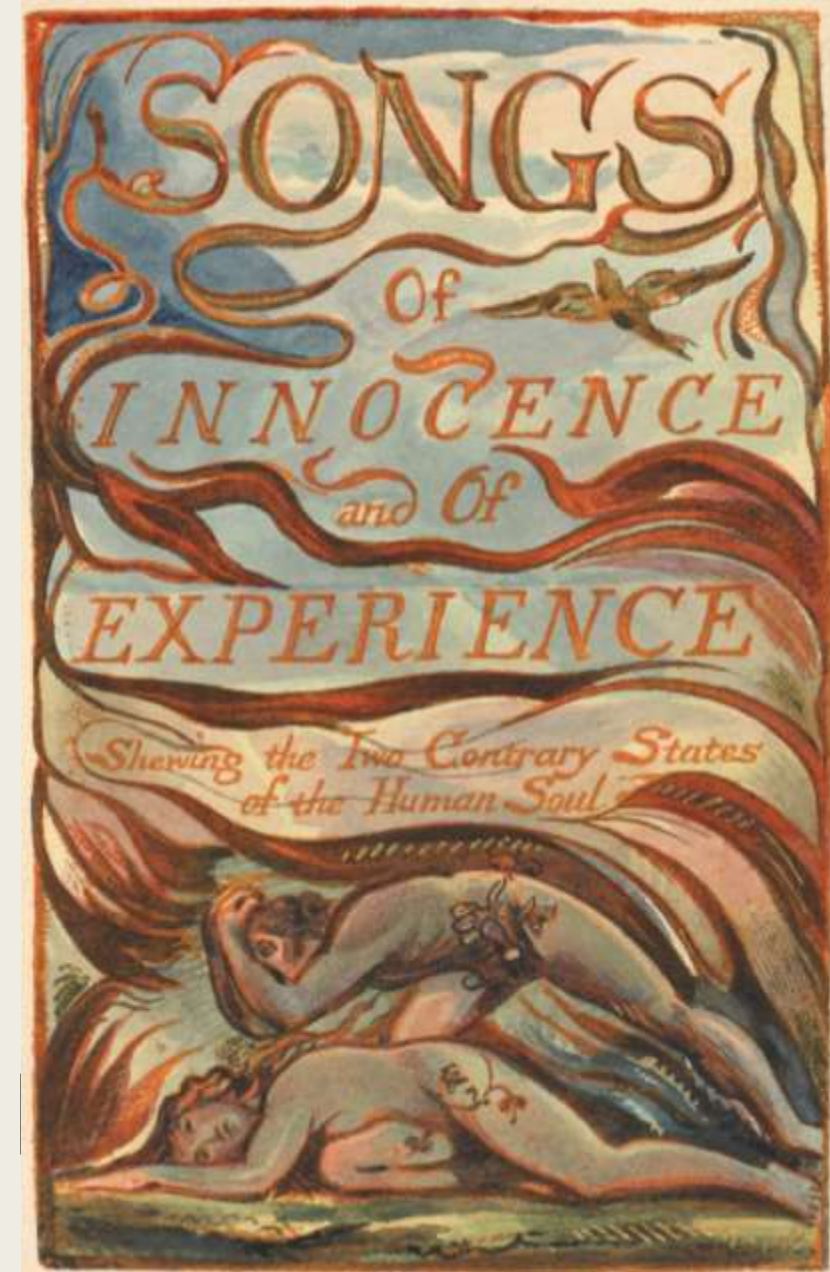


LONDON'S HISTORY THROUGH LITERATURE

Week 4. Romantics and
Revolutionaries





LONDON

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

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

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

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



‘On Strangers of all ages, the quick dance
Of colours, lights and forms; the Babel din;
The endless stream of men and moving things’
- William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book 7.



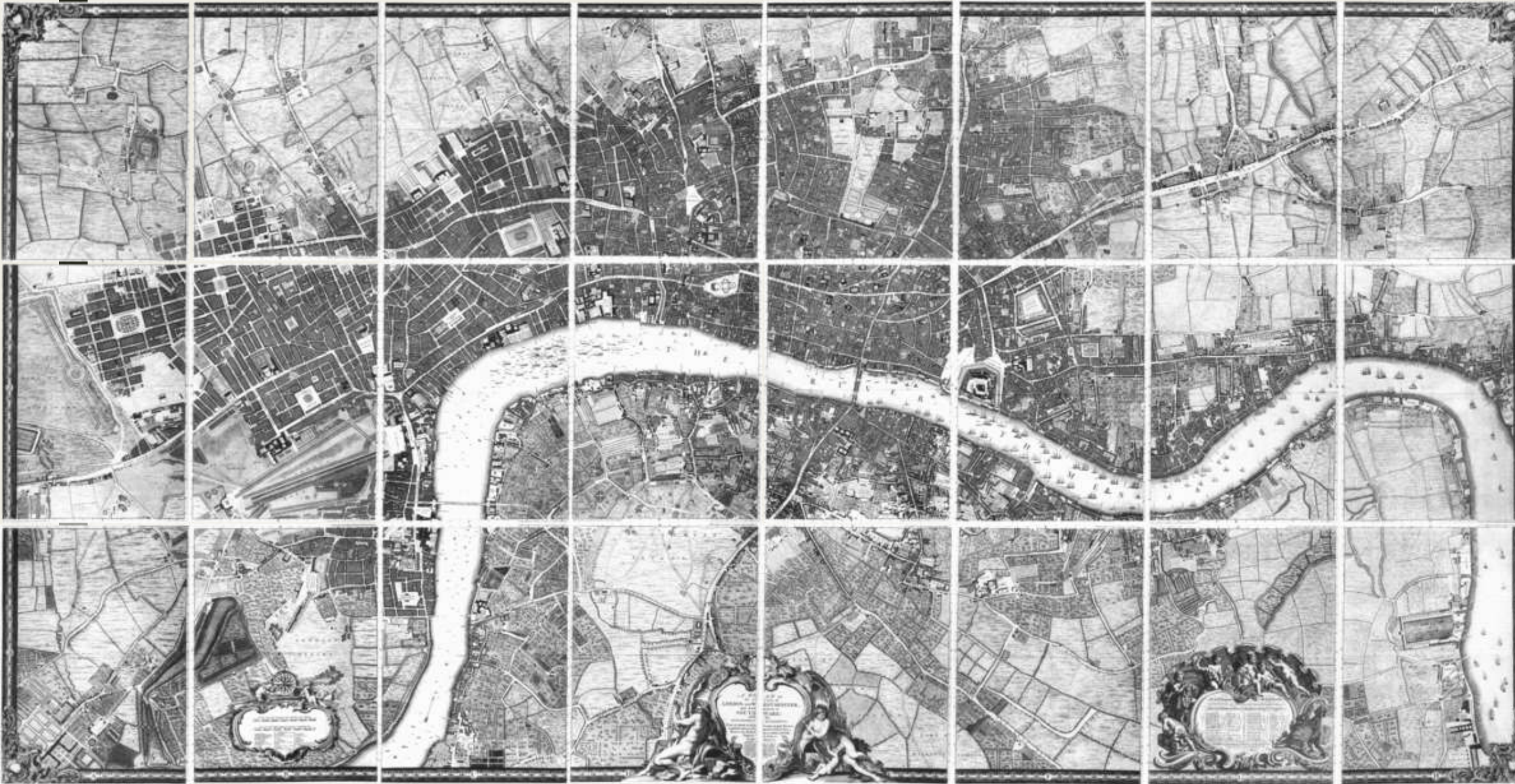
‘I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's;
I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.’
- William Blake, *Jerusalem*

Romantic London: key questions

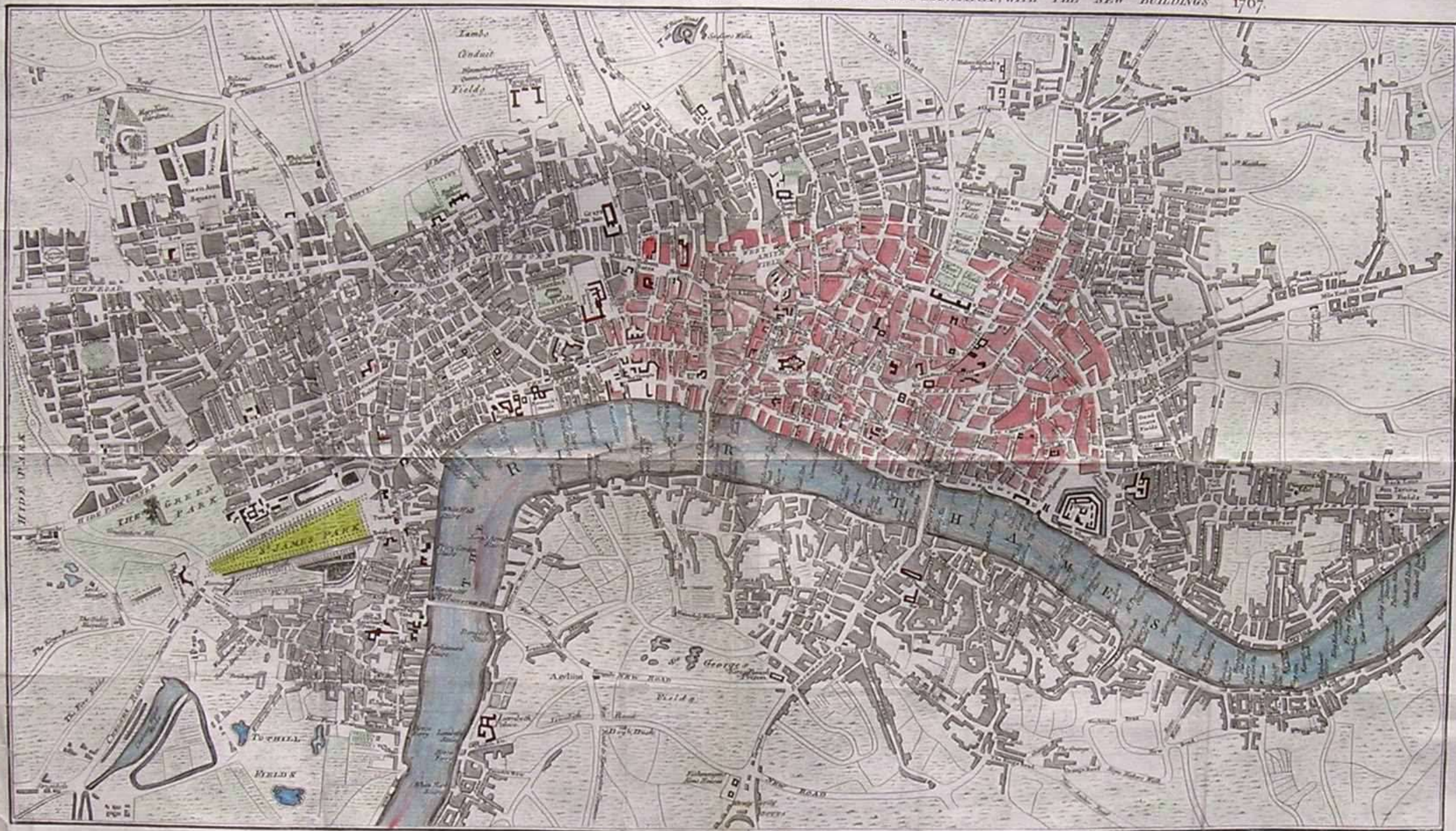
1. How did writers and poets respond to the social and economic expansion of 18th century London?
2. How was London imagined and represented as a place of possibility or inequality, a Jerusalem or Babylon?
3. How can we use imaginative literary representations of London by poets like William Blake and William Wordsworth to explore social inequality and unrest?

Late Georgian/Regency London – key dates

- 1728: *The Beggar's Opera* first performed (29 January)
- 1757: William Blake born in Soho, London (28 November)
- 1760: Ascension of George III (25 October)
- 1768: Massacre of St George's Fields (10 May)
- 1780: Gordon Riots (2-7 June)
- 1789: The French Revolution begins (Storming of Bastille, 14 July)
- 1791: Wordsworth arrives in London for first of two stays (other 1795)
- 1794: *Songs of Innocence and Experience* self-published by William Blake
- 1798: *Lyrical Ballads* published anonymously, by Wordsworth and Coleridge
- 1811: George, Prince of Wales, becomes Prince Regent (Regency Era to 1837)



John Rocque, Map of London (1746, 24 sheets)





London's expansion

- **Doubles** from 500k in 1750 to 1 million in 1801
- 1 in 10 of all English and Welsh people live in London (Paris is 1 in 40)
- **Very high rate of mortality.** In 1757, Lord Burlington writes 'Not above one in twenty of shop and alehouse keepers, journeymen and labourers ... were either born or served their apprenticeships in town. ... It is very probable that two-thirds of the grown persons at any time in London come from distant parts'
- Wages were often 50% higher than in provincial cities
- Migrant communities settle in Moorfields, 'little Dublin' in St Giles, and another in the East End; London Welsh engaged in dairy and livestock; Sephardic Jews also in the East End, around 20,000 in total, which increases with Ashkenazi Jews from 1700; Huguenots in the East End, and freed and current slaves from Africa.



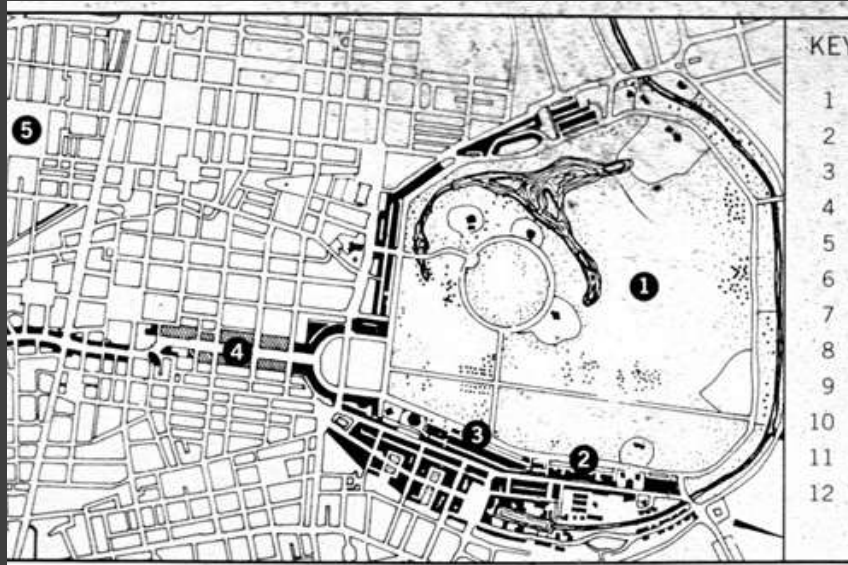
ROYAL PALACE OF KENSINGTON (seen) is high Park, and was purchased from the Earl of Nottingham by King William, who made several additions to it which caused the Building to be somewhat irregular. The gardens of this Palace are very fine and well disposed, containing a variety of original plantings. The gardens of this Palace are very fine and charmingly kept, and the Front of the Palace on this side is very



Expansion, beauty

- The Earl of Southampton first builds Bloomsbury Square in 1661...
- Over the next century, Holborn, Westminster, Soho and the West End turn into the residential areas (around squares) we know today
- Paved streets (1762), improved standards in building (1774), and street lighting from the 1680s. From 1736 London's street lights are on throughout the night...
- Hugh Myddelton's Amwell water company (1609), then the Chelsea Waterworks in 1723
- London Bridge repaired in 1757-9, decaying buildings removed
- The old city gates are pulled down...





John Nash – architect of Georgian London

- Regent Street built between 1817-23, with the Prince Regent as patron
- Envisioned as a straight road lined with monuments, with a grand central square, linking the new Regent's Park with his residence in St James Park
- Creates a border between the poorer east (Soho) and Mayfair west
- Regent's Park zoological gardens opened in 1828 – *rus in urbe*, with sheep imported to Cavendish Square
- Lays out Trafalgar Square, rebuilds Buckingham House as a royal residence, and proposed a Waterloo memorial that was never complete
- Nelson's Column is complete in 1805, but Trafalgar Square only fully opened in 1844





- 'the clouds of Stinking Breathes and Perspirations, not to mention the ordure of so many diseas'd, both intelligent and unintelligent animals ... [and much else are] more than sufficient to putrefy, poison and infect the Air for Twenty Miles around it' - George Cheyne, *The English Malady* (1733)
- Defoe: 'monstrous' city
- 'The Great Wen' (William Cobbett)
- Wordsworth, *Prelude*: 'how men lived / Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still / Strangers, nor knowing each the other's name'.
- Tobias Smollett's *Matt Bramble*: 'The foot-passengers run along as if they were pursued by bailiffs', as if 'the whole nations seems to be running out of their wits'.
- Thomas Carlyle, 1824: 'Of this enormous Babel of a place I can give you no account in writing'.
- 'Marks of suffering, marks of woe...'



William Blake (1757-1827)

- Third of seven children, family of English Dissenters, Soho
- Leaves school at age of ten then home-educated by his mother
- Bible, Ben Jonson and Edmund Spenser
- Apprenticed to engraver James Basire in 1772 for seven years
- Royal Academy under Joshua Reynolds from 1779, but rejects fashions and prefers Classical styles of Michelangelo and Raphael
- Swedenborg Society from 1780
- Marries Catherine Boucher in 1782, and opens up a print shop in 1784



William Blake

- Poet or artist? Relief-etching and printmaking by trade
- Poems written by hand on an engraving plate, using hand-coloured illustrations over type – new technique
- Books made in small quantities and sold to friends
- Key works: *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794), *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793), *Continental Prophecies* (mostly 1793-5), *Jerusalem* (1804-20), and more
- Bitter at regular commercial failure and obscurity; reception from late 19th century via W.B. Yeats and others





*The Devastations occasioned by the RIOTERS of LONDON Firing the New Goal of NEWGATE
and burning M^r. Akerman's Furniture, &c. June 6. 1780*

Gordon Riots (1780)

- Blake walking at night on 2 June near Great Queen Street...
- 60,000 gathered at St George's Fields to present a petition to Parliament, led by Lord George Gordon of the Protestant Association
- Parliament had planned to relax penal laws against Catholics
- Britain's war against the American Colonies was failing, and the French and Spanish were vilified for supporting the rebels
- Crowd attacks embassy chapels e.g. Bavarian, Sardinian, Mass Houses Moorfields
- Newgate set on fire with prisoners released, alongside Fleet, King's Bench, New Gaol, Marshalsea and the Surrey House of Correction, and Blackfriars Toll-gates.



Gordon Riots

- Disaffected soldiers, sailors and slaves e.g. Ottobah Cugoano, 'the voice of our complaint implies a vengeance'.
- Unpopular Lord Chief Justice Mansfield's house in Bloomsbury Square...
- Relaxing laws against Catholics, but mainly vast increase in capital offences against property. Many hung or transported during his rare appearances
- Gin distillery of a Catholic in Holborn with 120,000 gallons of gin set alight
- Fight back: armed clerks and volunteers of the London Military Association at the Bank of England.
- 10,000 soldiers were brought in, with nearly 300 eventually killed, 450 prisoners, 160 taken to trial, 25 hung and 12 imprisoned.
- 'For Hell is open'd to Heaven; thine eyes beheld / The dungeons burst & the Prisoners set free' (Blake, *Jerusalem*)



Revolutions in America and France

- American colonies revolt from 1763, independence by 1783
- Friend of Tom Paine, who railed against monarchy, aristocracy and inequality
- Paine attacked 'Charters and Corporations' in *The Rights of Man* (1791), arguing in favour of democratic, communal access and ownership
- Echoed in London later with its attack on the 'charter'd' streets and Thames – the former claimed by wealthy individuals and companies, the latter by the Port of London Authority and East India Company
- *London* also echoes protest against (often German) soldiers in London
- The soldier's utterance that puts blood on palace walls in Blake's *London* is parallel to the harlot's curse that blasts and blights, and curses were often chalked or painted on the royal walls
- In October 1792 Lady Malmesbury's Louisa saw "written upon the Privy Garden-wall, 'No coach-tax; d— — — Pitt! d— — — n the Duke of Richmond! no King!'"



*Look what a fine morning it is... Insects,
Birds, & Animals, are all enjoying existence.*
Published by J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

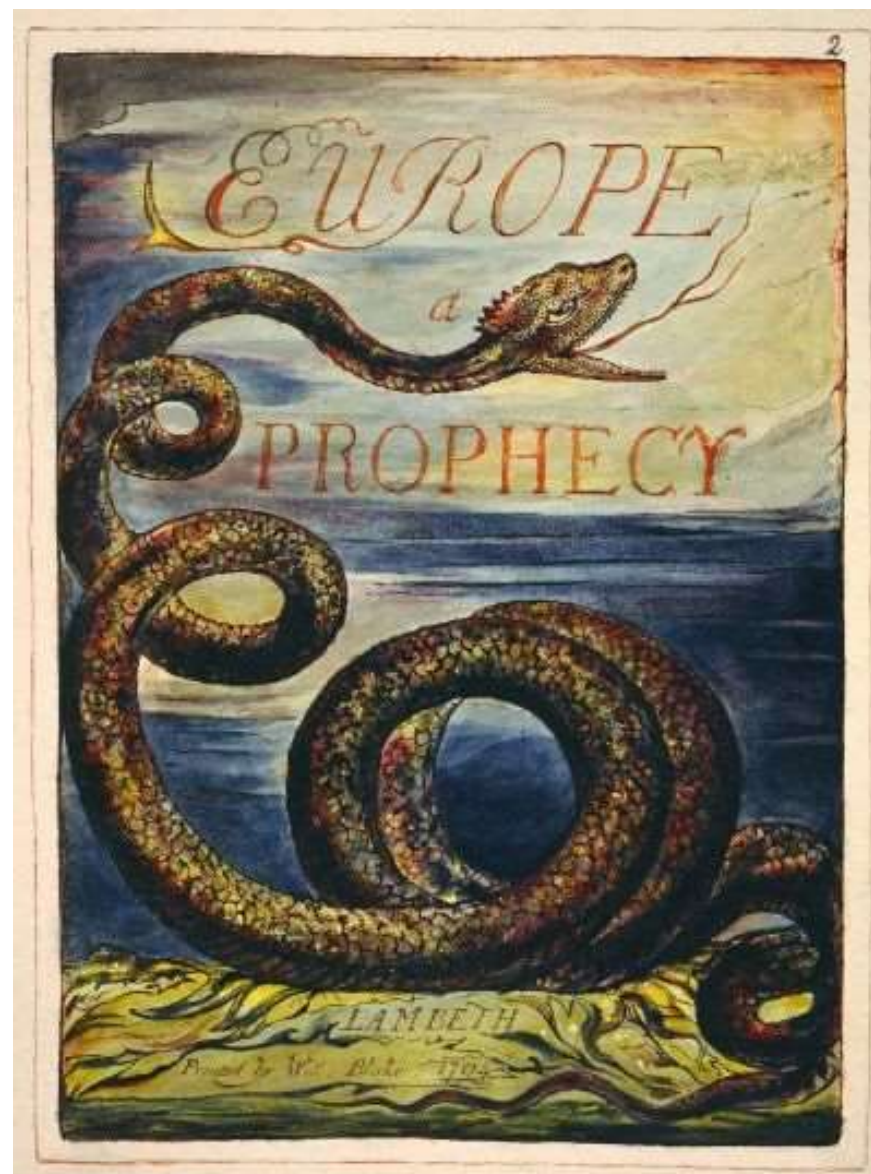
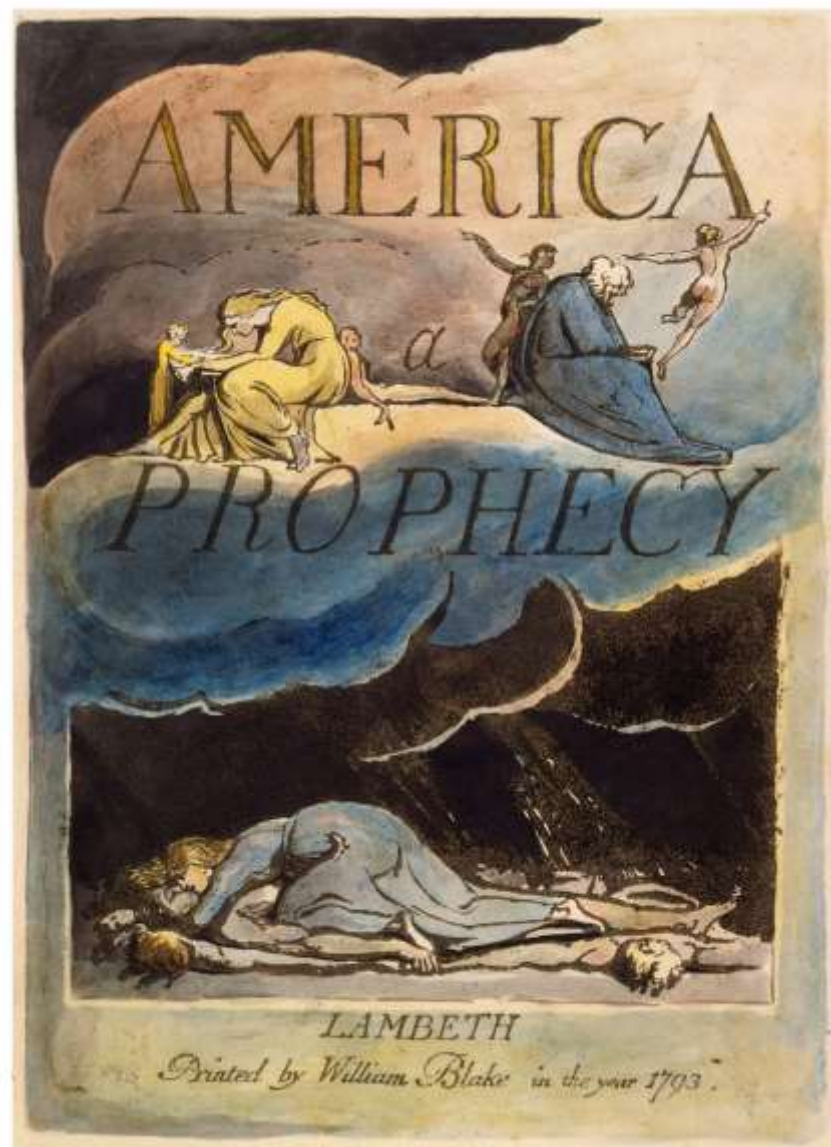
ORIGINAL STORIES
FROM
REAL LIFE,
WITH
CONVERSATIONS,
CALCULATED TO
REGULATE THE AFFECTIONS,
AND
FORM THE MIND
TO
TRUTH AND GOODNESS.
BY MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

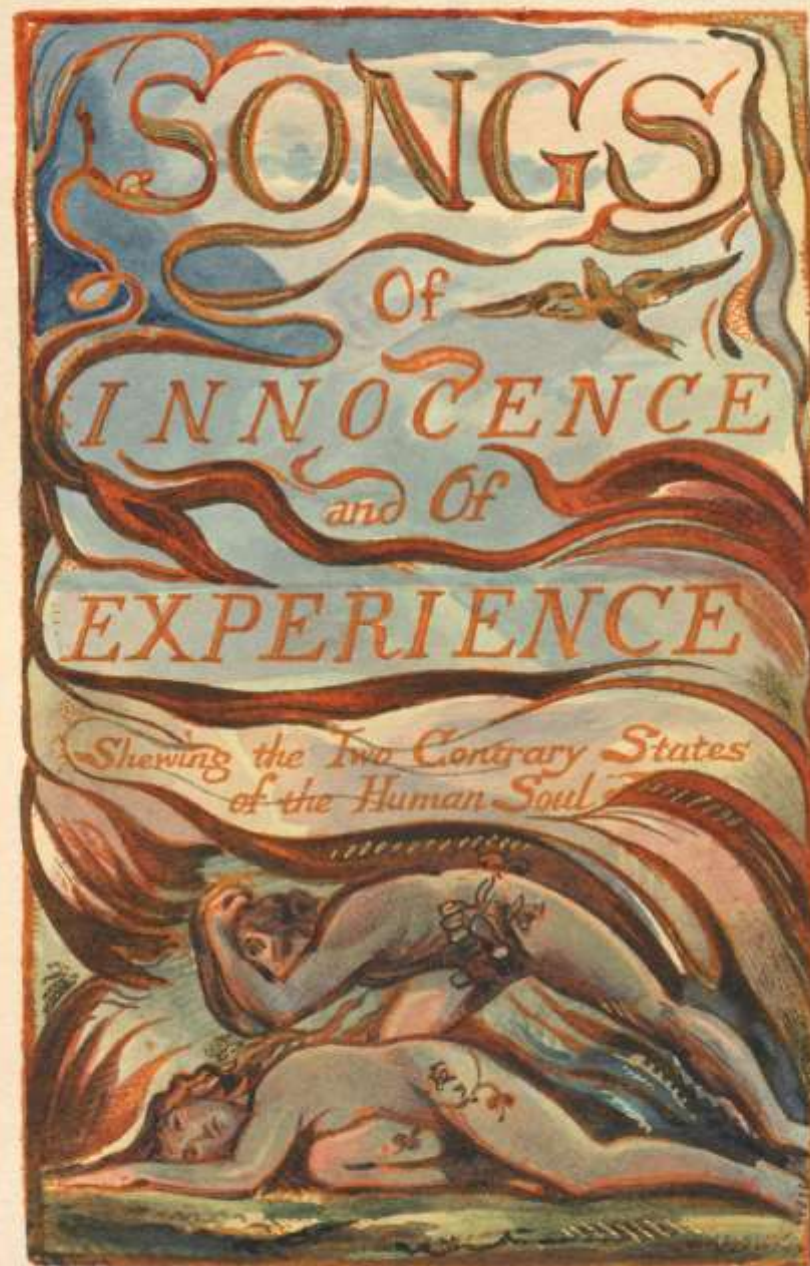
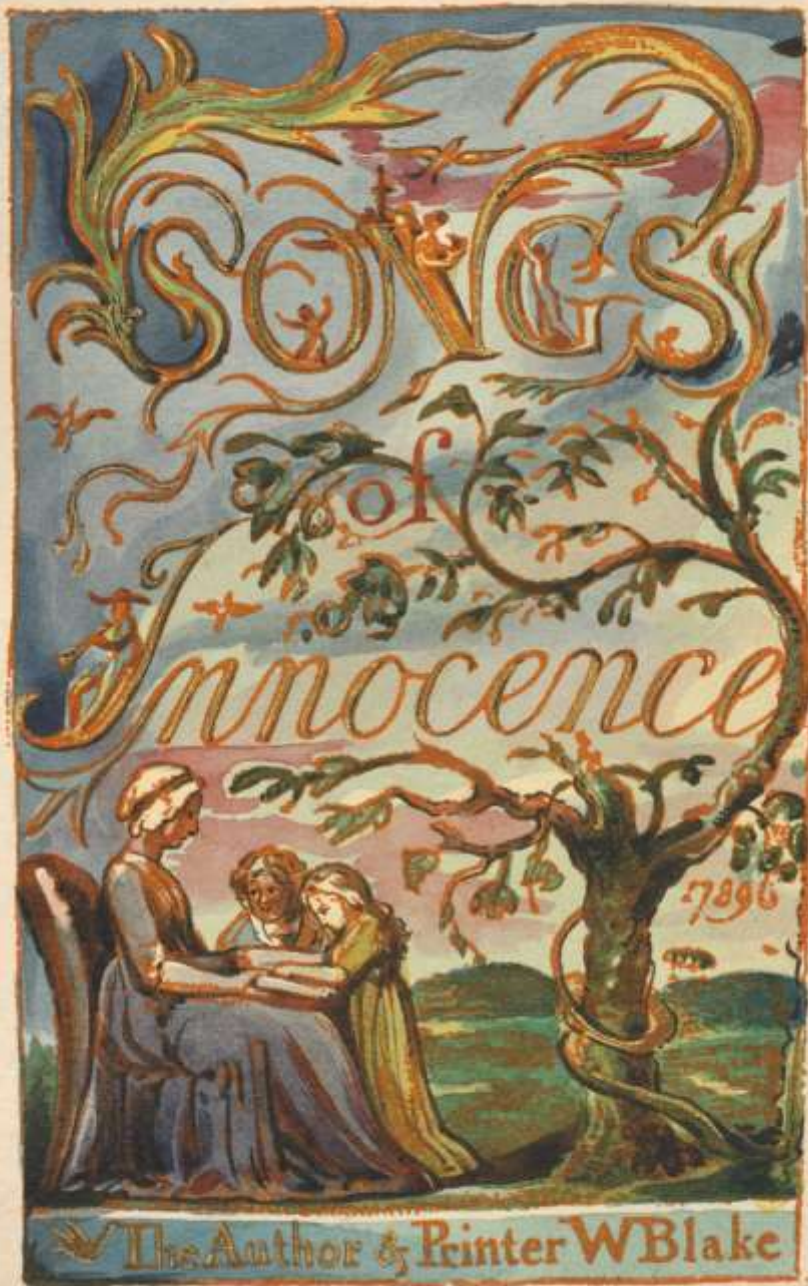
LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72, ST.
PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1792.







Songs of Innocence and Experience: 1794

- Two halves of the human soul:
- *Innocence*, a child-like state of joy, love and hope vs ...
- *Experience*, of fear, corruption, exploitation, and the oppression of Church, government, and poverty
- Childhood: nature, natural innocence, harmony and purity
- Favours: personal and sexual freedom, sincerity, emotional expression and the primacy of the imagination
- ... Against a cold, mechanistic Reason, the hypocrisy and repression of the Church, and the ruling classes

The Chimney Sweeper

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

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winters snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

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



The Chimney Sweeper

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

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

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,

That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe, Ned & Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black,

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free.

Then down a green plain leaping laughing they 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.



Songs of Innocence and Experience: themes

- Songs – simple rhythms, draws on 18th century music and children's poetry
- Miltonic Paradise vs Fall in Blake's work, later presented as between Jerusalem and Babylon
- Common concern with the welfare of child labourers (*Chimney Sweeper*), racial inequality (*The Little Black Boy*), poverty and inequality (*London* and *The Human Abstract*)
- ... as well as religious persecution (*Little Boy Lost*), sexual freedom (*Garden of Love* and *A Little Girl Lost*)



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.
 And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
 And Thou shalt not, writ over the door;
 So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore.
 And I saw it was filled with graves,
 And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
 And Priests in black gowns, were walking their
 rounds,
 And binding with briars, my joys & desires.



The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
 And I am black, but O! my soul is white.
 White as an angel is the English child:
 But I am black as if bereav'd of light.
 My mother taught me underneath a tree
 And sitting down before the heat of day,
 She took me on her lap and kiss'd me,
 And pointing to the east began to say,
 Look on the rising sun there God does live
 And gives his light and gives his heat away,
 And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
 Comfort in morning joy in the noon day,
 And we are put on earth a little space
 That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
 And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
 Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For

The Tyger

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

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

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

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

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

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



LONDON

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

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice; in every ban,
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Blake's *London*

- The *Human Abstract* refers to an evil 'tree' planted in the human brain, the source of the internalised rule of authority by fear
- David Erdman links the *Songs* to a political reaction against the Regency and Counter-Revolution
- Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers established in 1792 to persuade 'the minds of ignorant men', often using pamphlets which used the Bible and a pessimistic view of human nature to justify the naturalness of inequality, monarchy and poverty
- England a 'thanatocracy' (Linebaugh), in which 1200 hung for crimes against property over the 18th century, and 95% of offences over this period trialled at the Old Bailey involving property
- Tyburn becomes a symbol in *Jerusalem* of England's oppressive ruling elite and the moral hypocrisy of its laws, strangling the life of the English people

The IDLE PRENTICE Executed at Tyburn.



Proverbs Chap. I. Ver. 27, 28.
If thou rejectest my counsel, and despisest my voice, when I shall speak, thou shalt say, I will not hear: when I shall call, thou shalt not answer.

Blake's *London*

- 'I behold Babylon in the opening Streets of London. I behold / Jerusalem in ruins wandering about from house to house' (*Jerusalem*).

Later 'I see London, blind & age-bent, begging thro' the streets /
Of Babylon, led by a child; his tears run down his beard'.

- Spiritual and physical city: London is biblically inflected, a city of either dark fallen Babylons or shining, heavenly new Jerusalems.
- Social and sexual motifs – street observation, city and river constrained by political force (charter'd), anguished citizens 'mind forg'd manacles' of church, government and family.
- In the stanzas he also shifts from seeing (first stanza) to hearing in the last three. The human voice blights and condemns





Blake's dramatis personae

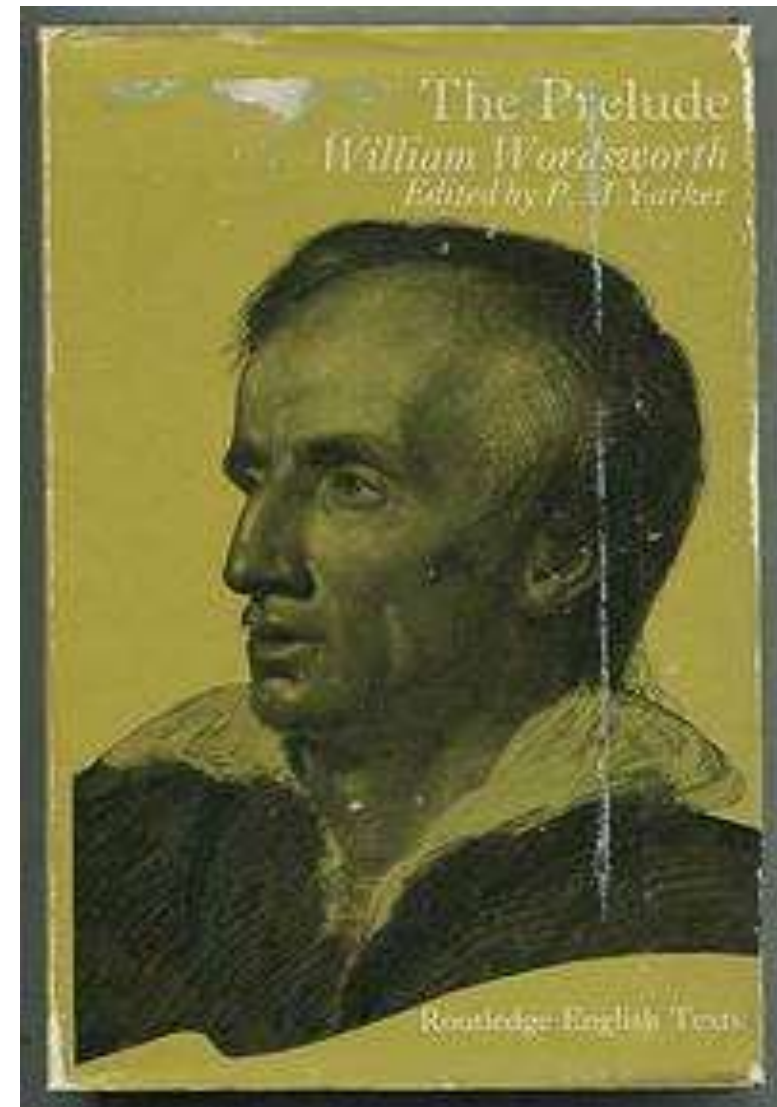
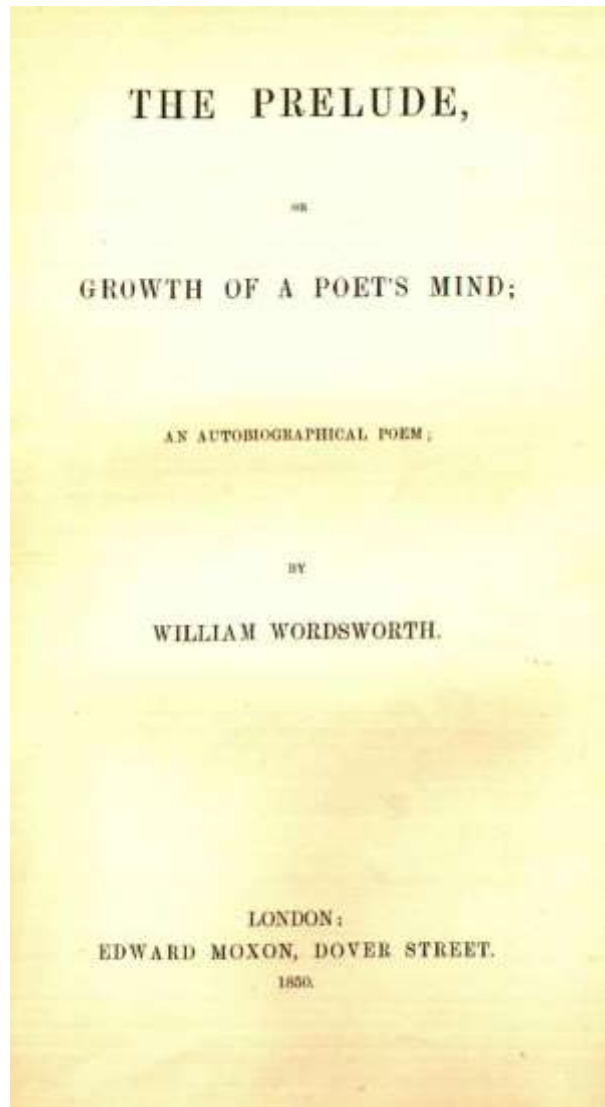
- Albion – the first man, also the mythic founder of Britain
- Urizen – representing reason tradition, law. An old bearded man with tools, he imposes abstractions, conventions and moral laws on humanity.
- Los – embodying the imagination, what is divine in humankind. Blacksmith who creates life, reproduction, sexual difference and human consciousness
- Orc – Los's son with Enitharmon, embodies rebellion, passion and individual freedom – American and French Revolutions. Wars with Urizen





William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

- Upper middle-class family in Cockermouth, Lake District
- Stays in London in 1791 and 1795, and later composes the *Prelude* from 1805, continues to revise until his death
- In France during the Revolution (1789-92), pressed into leaving behind Annette Vallon and his daughter Caroline
- Romanticism...
- A simple, lyrical, image-rich poetry which stressed personal experience, nature and everyday diction and allusion, over restrictive classical forms or the mechanistic Reason of the Enlightenment, associated with Newton and Locke
- *Lyrical Ballads*, anonymously published with Samuel Coleridge Taylor in 1798



Wordsworth's London

- Difference, spectacle: 'The face of every one / That passes me by is a mystery!'
- Book 7: London's parks, museums and galleries, and then, fleeing the 'ant-hill' the peep shows and ballads of the back-streets
- Theatre, trial courts and the House of Commons
- Tension: subjective exploration of the rich inner life of the educated man...
- ... vs sneering disregard for the 'little' man, the conformity of the crowds, lacking depth, like shells on a beach

‘... lost

Amid the moving pageant, ‘twas my chance
Abruptly to be smitten with the view
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain
The story of the man, and who he was.

My mind did at this spectacle turn round
As with the might of waters, and it seemed
To me that in this label was a type,
Or emblem, of the utmost that we know,
Both of ourselves, and of the universe;
And, on the shape of the unmoving man,
His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,
As if admonished from another world.’ (609-23)



Bartholomew Fair

- Din, salutation of 'some unhappy woman', some 'showman's platform' to carry the poet 'Above the press and danger of the crowd'.
- But danger! 'What a hell / For eyes and ears! What anarchy and din / Barbarian and infernal' (658-60).
- A sight 'that lays / If any spectacle on earth can do, /The whole creative powers of man asleep!' (652-4).
- But where Blake sees spiritual structure, Wordsworth finds Babel-din...
- London is merely a 'blank confusion', where inhabitants are merely slaves to 'the same perpetual flow / Of trivial objects, melted and reduced / To one identity, by differences / That have no law, no meaning, and no end' (701-4).
- He reverts to the 'Spirit of Nature' and 'Composure and ennobling Harmony', in response to transient London.



Vue du Pont de Westminster du Côté du Nord de Londres.

Se vend à Amsterdam au Bureau de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, des Arts, des Lettres, et de Commerce, et chez l'Auteur, au Salon de la Cour de la Ville de Paris.

Composed upon Westminster Bridge

- 'For Wordsworth', writes James Heffernan, in 'city life ... the monotony of their jobs makes men incapable of savouring anything but the crudest forms of excitement'
- 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802' offers a more optimistic stance, written earlier. It portrays London as tranquil, unified, sublime and serene.
- It begins with a conviction of London's greatness 'Earth hath not anything to show more fair', and it portrays London as a place of joy:

'This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare
... 'Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!'



Monet, "Houses of Parliament" (1904)

R: Whistler, "Nocturne, Old Battersea Bridge" (1871)



Unrepresentable or unrepresented?

- Wordsworth imagines it as a 'mighty heart' in Westminster Bridge, Blake imagines its 'midnight streets'. What do both see?
- Motion (Sharpe): 'Amid its excess of signs, London functioned as a sign of excess, never securely captured, ever evading closure.'
- Byron's Don Juan: 'even / Change grows too changeable'
- Crowds, surging life, continual change. For Sharpe, it is Whistler's Nocturnes that allow London to become representable.
- Blake brings the invisible into view....
- Jerusalem as an outcast, a harlot; London is a beggar: 'I am left to the trampling foot & the spurring heel / A Harlot I am call'd. I am sold from street to street'
- 'As the theme of incarceration was played out in workhouse, factory, hospital, school and ship ... so the counterpoint of exarceration was played out in escapes, flights, desertions, migrations and refusals' (Linebaugh)



But Los

Searched in vain: closd from the minutia he walkd, difficult.
He came down from Highgate thro Hackney & Holloway towards
London

Till he came to old Stratford & thence to Stepney & the Isle
Of Leuthas Dogs, thence thro the narrows of the Rivers side
And saw every minute particular, the jewels of Albion, running down
The kennels of the streets & lanes as if they w ere abhorrd.
Every Universal Form, was become barren mountains of Moral
Virtue: and every Minute Particular hardened into grains of sand:
And all the tenderness of the soul cast forth as filth & mire,
Among the winding places of deep contemplation intricate
To where the Tower of London frownd dreadful over Jerusalem

Blake exhibition trip: first seminar group, let's meet outside RHB at 12 and set off, or meet by the Tate Britain entrance at 12.50.

Second group, meet me by the Tate Britain staircase entrance at 2. Any problems – email me

