

## Blake's Difficult Journey Through this World



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On 12 August 1827 William Blake died in London, singing “of the things he saw in Heaven”. He would then be buried in an unmarked grave.

He died as he lived: in poverty and ignored by most. Though he died singing, he had ample chance in his life to know of bitterness and despair.

Yet he wasn't one to remain in Despair for long. He claimed that Execution was ‘the chariot of genius’, and creation was always for him an unfailing agent of transformation.

***There is a Moment in each Day that Satan cannot find  
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious find  
This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found  
It Renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed***



His art left behind by gigantic leaps the stiff produce of the art establishment of his day, whose leading figure was Joshua Reynolds, and yet his genius found little recognition in his lifetime.

He earned his living as a commercial engraver of excellence, yet a great deal of his commercial endeavours brought him more loss than profit. The vastness and complexity of his work are exemplified in his illuminated poem *Jerusalem* –a titanic execution written and illustrated on 100 copper plates, of which he did not sell a single copy.

He was denied membership to the Royal Academy on the grounds of “the absurdity of his designs” and “extravagance in his art.” He was never commissioned for the great works of public art he longed to create. His only solo exhibition held in 1809 received few visitors. Not a picture was sold. He was described as “an unfortunate lunatic, whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement”; his work as “wretched pictures”, the fruit of a “distempered brain”.

Though nowadays it is to a great extent thanks to William Blake that people all over the world look at the artistic creation of Great Britain with reverence, what he received from his contemporaries in exchange for his genius was derision, humiliation and neglect.

On the year of Blake's death one of his patrons stated, “His Dante is the most wonderful emanation of imagination that I have ever heard of. His fate is a national disgrace; while his pious content is a national example.”

Through a lifetime of struggle, sustained by Imagination and dissent. Blake kept on asserting the power of art as a corner stone for human life, and for human freedom.

What Blake gave to his society in exchange for its scorn and mockery, what he gave to succeeding generations and is still giving us, is a vision of Man as inherently free, blessed, and *blessing* of the world around him through the way he looks at that world, and acts upon it: an eternally renewed Glad Day.

