



The Complete Poems

William Blake , Alicia Suskin Ostriker (Editor)

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One of the great English Romantic poets, William Blake (1757-1827) was an artist, poet, mystic and visionary. His work ranges from the deceptively simple and lyrical Songs of Innocence and their counterpoint Experience - which juxtapose poems such as 'The Lamb' and 'The Tyger', and 'The Blossom' and 'The Sick Rose' - to highly elaborate, apocalyptic works, such as The Four Zoas, Milton and Jerusalem. Throughout his life Blake drew on a rich heritage of philosophy, religion and myth, to create a poetic worlds illuminated by his spiritual and revolutionary beliefs that have fascinated, intrigued and enchanted readers for generations.

The Complete Poems Details

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From Reader Review The Complete Poems for online ebook

Steven Fretter says

I myself enjoy writing poetry, and although I have a passion for it, many poets do not appeal to me. William Blake is one of those poets that certainly does. Many poetry authors tend to make their creative writing too complex, and often so subversive that it is difficult to grasp what they are trying to say. William Blake doesn't. His poems are extremely simple to read (so simple that they could almost be recognised as nursery rhymes), easy to understand, yet at the same time have a deep meaning beneath the surface of his creative writing.

The majority of his songs of innocence and experience are fantastic, and lead a lasting impression in the readers mind. They are usually fairly short and sweet too, avoiding chunky paragraphs of prose that make the reader think 'not another full page....'. If Blake comes up in your English Literature degree, I highly recommend using his poetry over others- primarily because his songs are easy to remember.

Karolina says

How am I to write a review about one of the most talented writers this world has ever seen? Unfortunately I am not capable to comprehend all the greatness of Mr. Blake's art. No matter how many times I visit the world he created I discover new and deeper meanings. And I have a feeling those discoveries will never end. If you can read one verse, one poem, do so, for it may make you a better person.

Deborah Cater says

Bring me the laudunum....it's the only way to understand these works in the context in which they are meant to be read.

Jerusalem is a stirring hymn, Tyger Tyger makes you think of muscular cats waiting to attack, but as part of the bigger picture...well, what is the bigger picture? It's like one of the drunken ramblings I have with friends. Somewhere in there is something salient, but you've got to be quick to pick it out, are as stoned as them to find that it makes sense.

ZaRi says

Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face
Terror the Human Form Divine
And Secrecy, the Human Dress

The Human Dress, is forged Iron

The Human Form, a fiery Forge.
The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd
The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.

Jonathan Terrington says

Many people hold varying opinions on William Blake and his poetry. My opinion is that he used simple language to create romantic visions about the natural world he loved. And he created some pretty unique ideas such as Urizen.

I personally have not read all the poems in this volume (although I've read as many as I could) because there are many drafts and different versions of poems. The ones I have read I have enjoyed very much so and not simply because my favourite high school teacher thoroughly recommended them.

If you enjoy poetry Blake is a must read. He was a misunderstood visionary who has some interesting things to say whether you agree or disagree. His poems attacking the industrial movements are particularly fascinating.

Cassandra Carico says

I can't say that I was particularly impressed. Having grown up hearing people gush about this fellow's work, I finally got around to reading his poetry. His work is completely unimpressive. It was as if he was writing for a grade school - the rhyming and meter, all very elementary. Blech!

Phillip says

Have just completed "Jerusalem", "Milton", "The book of Thel" the prophetic books. I've been reading and returning to Blake since the mid-1980s and collect prints of the facsimiles when I can get them. This is my first time to get through the books mentioned above.

They remind me a lot of Tolkien's project. Blake and Tolkien both were English men who created their own mythologies about England. Both were religious. Both made paintings of their imaginative worlds.

The difference is that Tolkien was a practicing Catholic, who was not messing with the doctrines of his faith. Blake was kind of scary. He is highly critical of the deism of his time. He states that forgiveness is the primary characteristic of a person who follows Jesus. He was critical of a society that trammels over the well-being of the weak for industry and profit.

What makes him scary? It is difficult to understand what he is attempting to do with his portraits of the giants that comprise Albion (Britain). I am still not certain if his portrait of Satan is supposed to be a necessary and therefore good force that is a part of the dualism of reality, or if he actually is evil. Whatever he is saying I wouldn't want those words to have come from me.

The character of Satan is a master of extreme heat and cold, very much like Tolkien's Morgoth. They both stir things up in much the same way against the work of the rest of the gods.

Also, striking to me is that Blake uses the word Ork to describe one of his characters, the only other places I have seen this is Tolkien's Orcs and a mention in Beowulf.

I'm not suggesting an influence. I have no idea what influenced Tolkien. I am merely pointing out that these two writers (both poets) achieved bodies of writing that did many of the same things.

Tolkien was able to craft his mythology into complete story and novelistic presentations as we see in the "Silmarillion" and "The Lord of the Rings". Ultimately, the two writers developed in different ways. I, at least enjoy seeing the products of each writer to see how they use the medium of myth creation to explore the world of their times and to critic and respond to the world.

Edward says

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Notes

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Karen Hood says

Another great collection of classic poems to read and enjoy again and again. Enjoy poetry! Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Caleb says

*I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball:
It will lead you in at Heavens gate,
Built in Jerusalems wall.*

Meredith C says

Blake was absolutely mad but I enjoyed his poems

Othy says

I doubt I will ever have read Blake enough (and this nice, thick book in particular) to ever be able to say that I have fully "read" him. Blake is like nothing I have ever read, nor could I describe the experience I have reading him to that of any other poet. It seems at times I'm reading a myth instead of a Romantic poet (which, perhaps, would make him happy to hear). Fun wouldn't be the word... maybe captivated? Overtaken? Fascinated to momentary fulfillment? Well, at least as much as any poem can, I suppose. But, in the end, Blake is wonderful, and I look forward to reading him more and more.

Concerning the edition: very good, though I suppose it wouldn't be a Penguin if it didn't have lifeless black-and-white pages. It is said that one is not reading Blake without his visual artwork, but that can't really be helped in an edition made to sell somewhat cheaply. Still, the editor does a great job with endnotes to explain some of the complicated ins and outs of Blake's poetry.

Brian Hoffstein says

"I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's; I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create."

A sublime maxim, to say the least, this proclamation is pretty much the crux of William Blake. A man of mystic vision, he took great umbrage with the way institutionalized religion has manipulated the divine for

political/power purposes. Blake's work is in many ways a response to this reconstitution and distortion from the clergy, in addition to the overall schism between modern governance and true human nature. As he puts it: "Prisons are built with stones of Law, brothels with bricks of Religion."

His cosmology is a variation of panpsychism, yet much of his work relates to a dualism he describes in nature - most prominently depicted through the contraries in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." He has his own dialectical approaching, espousing the embrace of the full spectrum: good and evil are not polarities that require rules for avoiding the latter and holding onto the former, they are simply different sides of the same coin of life. Here he speaks on forgiveness of sin as a vital aspect to one's spiritual development. He is most concerned with raising the intellect and letting the spirit explore the imagination untethered and free.

A lot of his political stuff I found boring. He's best when he's just exercising his ecstatic visions. "I see the past, present, and future existing all at once before me," - that type of stuff.

Bryce Wilson says

Blake is my favorite poet, and thus picking this up for a dollar at the Friends Of The Library sale was seven kinds of sweet.

I'm not a huge Poetry person, mostly because I have much use for an art form that (in modern poetry at least) is designed to conceal it's meaning. That's why I like the Romantics, they're not afraid to say it. And what they lose in subtlety they more then make up for in sheer language.

Plus the subject matter is always much more interesting in Romantism. Man's soul suspended in a hopeless abyss devoid of form and meaning and then rendering being into existence, is good stuff.

Once the Enlightenment hit it kind of took Poetry down with it, as "I Dare say perhaps we should move the corpses AWAY from the drinking water." might be good advice, but hardly makes for stirring verse.

vi macdonald says

William Blake was many things (painter, poet, lunatic) but most of all he was brilliant.
At times his poems perfectly controlled, self-contained and beautiful.
At other times he flies off on possibly delusional, raving, prophetic flights of fancy.
He was mad, and an absolute genius too.
