William Blake (1752-1827)
Excerpts from Songs of Innocence and of Experience

“The Ecchoing Green” (from Songs of Innocence)

THE Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies;
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring;
The skylard and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around
To the bells’ cheerful sound,
While our sports shall be seen
On the Ecchoing Green.

Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say:
“Such, such were the joys
When we all, girls & boys,
In our youth time were seen
On the Ecchoing Green.”

Till the little ones, weary,
No more can be merry;
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.
Round the laps of their mothers
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest,
And sport no more seen
On the darkening Green.
“The Lamb” (from Songs of Innocence)

LITTLE Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, & bid thee feed
By the stream & o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, wooly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
   Little Lamb, who made thee?
   Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb, I’ll tell thee,
   Little Lamb, I’ll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
   Little Lamb, God bless thee!
   Little Lamb, God bless thee!

“The Blossom” (from Songs of Innocence)

MERRY, Merry Sparrow!
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty, Pretty Robin!
Under leaves so green
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, Pretty Robin,
Near my Bosom.
“Holy Thursday” (from *Songs of Innocence*)

‘TWAS on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green,
Grey-headed beadles walk’d before, with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul’s they like Thames’ waters flow.

O what multitude they seem’d, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lams,
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind their raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of Heaven among.
Beneat them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

“Holy Thursday” (from *Songs of Experience*)

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc’d 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 & 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.
“The Sick Rose” (from *Songs of Experience*)

O ROSE, thou art sick!  
The invisible worm  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,  

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy,  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.

“The Tyger” (from *Songs of Experience*)

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

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread gras  
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?

“The Garden of Love” (from Songs of Experience)

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.