

## **The Social Hell of William Blake: the Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Blake's Illustrations of Dante's *Inferno***

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### **Abstract**

In 1824 CE, William Blake was commissioned to illustrate the *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri. Amongst 102 illustrations of this epic poem, Blake devoted two thirds specifically to the *Inferno*. Within the scholarship on Blake, the prevailing analysis of his illustrations shows his meticulousness in treating religious imagery and his devotion toward Dante. Such treatments do not emphasize how Blake's illustrations reflect the social changes in nineteenth century London. In this paper, Blake's paintings of the *Inferno* are examined to understand how they convey ideas not present in the original text. This research revolves around allegory in Dante's epic and how Blake would have interpreted the work in his day. When Blake started painting the *Inferno*, the Industrial Revolution had already begun. As London became highly urbanized, factories were built with the promise of better commodities for its citizens. Concurrently, transportation, communication, and access to mechanized goods improved. Amidst advances in science and industry, London became a crowded, unsanitary place covered in smoke, where workers suffered from diseases and low wages due to coal burning and laissez-faire capitalism. Dante wrote his epic during exile from Florence in 1308 CE, inspired by life events of his time. Because over five hundred years separated Dante from Blake, this paper asks questions on how the era of the latter artist informed his thinking about the great poet. What was Blake's perspective on daily life in London? What type of imagery in Blake's drawings deviated from the descriptions in the text? Most broadly, how did Blake approach the *Inferno* in the nineteenth century? To answer these questions, this paper examines William Blake's illustrations to reimagine Dante's Hell to argue that his illustrations of the *Inferno* are his social commentary on the status quo of London during the Industrial Revolution.

**Keywords: William Blake, Divine Comedy, Industrial Revolution London**

### **1. Introduction**

In 1824, British landscape painter John Linell commissioned the poet and artist William Blake to illustrate the *Divine Comedy*, a fourteenth-century epic poem by Dante Alighieri. Though they were painted five centuries after the poem was written, Blake's one hundred and two water color illustrations resonated well with Dante's secular and spiritual ideas of a subsiding society and a soul's journey through hell. This is because the civic anxieties of Dante's late medieval period had an affinity with the social, economic, and political changes of nineteenth century London, which especially impacted working class families. Blake retold the *Divine Comedy*—specifically the *Inferno*—in a way that was inspired by the Industrial Revolution—the great sociopolitical turning point during this time. In this essay, the imagery and symbols in Blake's art will be analyzed by exploring the history of the Industrial Revolution, juxtaposed with Dante's *Inferno*, to argue that William Blake identified nineteenth-century London with traditional ideas of hell in his illustrations.

Born in 1757 to a prosperous hosier in London, William Blake was brought up in a conventional atmosphere of a small English middle class family. Growing up misperceived as a lunatic, Blake distrusted systems and considered himself a prophet. He was a mystic who believed he had encountered the divine<sup>1</sup>. Although Blake's immersion in his imaginary existence caused many to question his sanity, mysticism was common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century London. Indeed, this was a time of London's growing reputation as a center of the world, producing great artists, authors, scientists, and thinkers, which encouraged men of strong, individualistic character to stand out amongst all<sup>2</sup>. This was a time when the people of London were drawn both to mysticism and Swedenborg's divine revelations<sup>3</sup>. Blake came of age in this countercultural environment, composed mainly of Swedenborgian ideas which suggest the existence of the correspondence between the natural and the spiritual worlds. And thus, his philosophy was incorporated into his practical experience as an engraver at local print-shops and later into his own works.

Blake's career as an engraver of fine art prints began in the 1770s when he received instruction in life drawing at the then-recently-established Royal Academy of Arts in London. However, Blake remained an outcast at the Academy, disapproving of its pedagogical restrictions and exhibition policies<sup>4</sup>. He later became an apprentice to engraver James Basire in 1772 and produced drawings of tombs at the Westminster Abbey. Through this experience and his interest in mysticism, Blake came to believe that secular and spiritual imagery was inseparable. Breaking away from the confinements of traditional drawings from life, Blake invented his own artistic style, rejecting the traditional norms of romantic picturesque art, to which he was frequently exposed, and drew figures that were inspired from his mystical visions<sup>5</sup>. It was during the 1790s that he developed his unique approach to relief etching, embellishing printed works of literature with decorative, emblematic, and narrative motifs.

As a poet and an artist, Blake brought words to life using his artistic imagination and careful engagement between image and text<sup>6</sup>. His art, far from simply illustrating the literature, amplified and often contradicted the content of the text; the dynamic relationship between word and image that he created would often undermine the viewers' epistemological assumptions about the process of reading, seeing, and interpreting. Although Blake usually drew a clean line between text and imagery for his ideas to stand out, he approached Dante's *Inferno* differently, using parallels between Dante's story and his experience living in London, which stood out from his illustrations on both visual and psychological levels. There are striking similarities between the ideas of William Blake and those of Dante, especially their unfavorable views towards their respective governing bodies. Dante's *Inferno* manifested from the poet's frustration and resentment towards the political system of Florence in the early fourteenth century. Similarly, Blake's feelings against British imperialism, taxation, and industrialization are reflected in his illustrations of Dante's poem.

Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* while in exile from Florence in the early 1300s. Since 1215, there had been conflicts between two political factions in Florence—the Guelfs, who were the followers of the popes, and the Ghibellines, who followed the Holy Roman emperors. The Guelfs were subdivided into Black and White—groups that favored the nobles and the merchant class who had a hostile relationship with each other. In 1301, Pope Boniface VIII connived with the Black Guelfs, who thus executed the Whites and confiscated their property. As a member of the White Guelfs, Dante was accused of opposing the Pope, stripped of his property, and condemned to be burnt at the stake if captured<sup>7</sup>. It is in this underlying political context that the *Divine Comedy* was written, describing three different realms of the deceased—Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Heaven (*Paradiso*). The poems recount the story of Dante himself passing through the depths of hell, guided by the first-century Roman poet Virgil. In the text, Dante's goal is to reach heaven to reunite with the love of his life, Beatrice. The poet travels through hell—a despot place composed of nine circles—where he encounters the sinners especially those notorious for their bad moral character. Once he successfully departs from hell, Dante comes upon the Mountain of Purgatory with terraces that represent seven deadly sins. Finally, in *Paradiso*, he explores the nine celestial spheres of heaven and the poem ends with Dante's meeting the Triune God. Each canto usually identifies at least one figure from history, literature, or mythology, subject to punishment due to their wrongful actions relevant to the misgivings of Dante's contemporary Florence. On its surface, the *Divine Comedy* concerns with the ultimate salvation of a human soul, but for Dante, it was clearly a critical commentary on the sociopolitical problem of his time.

For William Blake, receiving the commission to illustrate the *Divine Comedy* in the early 1800s was convenient as it allowed him to demonstrate his disapproval for the Industrial Revolution<sup>8</sup>. Vast industrialization had already begun in London in 1760, causing massive changes in England's social and economic structure. Work evolved with expanded coal mining and transition from manual labor to the use of automated machines. Transportation and communication also became easier as railroads were built. Despite improvements in people's way of living, industrialization brought with it major problems such as hunger, overpopulation, and child labor. London became more urbanized and many citizens were employed in new factories and the mines. As a result, the city became enshrouded in smoke and people hardly ever saw daylight. Strong religious faith declined, and consequently, the majority of people were detached from

God and prayers. The Industrial Revolution was thus a major turning point in history that stimulated the minds of artists, writers, and poets including William Blake to demonstrate a different outlook on life.

Before the Industrial Revolution, artists and men of letters were interested in Neoclassicism, glorifying idealistic myths and the beauty of ancient Greece and Rome as many desired to escape their monotonous daily lives. This philosophy emerged alongside the rediscovery of Greek and Roman artifacts in the Mediterranean region. Supporters of classical antiquity toured archaeological sites; artists painted ancient monuments and subjects on the Greco-Roman mythology and history; and the interested majority studied the antiquity through artistic and literary sources. But as the Industrial Revolution reached its peak at the turn of the nineteenth century, such themes transitioned into a more robust celebration of contemporary life.

As a writer, Blake engaged with the Industrial Revolution through his poetry. He criticized the living and working conditions of young children in *The Chimney Sweeper*, “[You] could scarcely cry ‘weep ‘weep ‘weep! So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot, I sleep.”<sup>9</sup> In his poem *London*, he describes the city as chartered by commercial interests with its citizens wearing faces of woe as he mentioned, “every cry of every man” and “every infant’s cry of fear.”<sup>10</sup> Especially in his poem *And did those feet in ancient time*,<sup>11</sup> Blake mentioned “dark Satanic mills,”<sup>12</sup> inspired from the burned building of Albion Flour Mills which contained steam-powered machinery and water-powered mills before it caught fire. Living amidst such negativity, Blake saw the natural world of God’s creation being consumed on a daily basis; his resentment towards this situation was repeatedly portrayed in his illustrations of the *Inferno*. By deconstructing Blake’s illustrations of the *Inferno*, Blake’s recurring references to the Industrial Revolution in his imagery are exhibited under four different categories: smokestacks as clouds, work versus religion, the separation of the created world and the divine world, and the city of London as hell.

Blake chose to illustrate scenes from the *Inferno* in a manner that was not usually employed by other artists during and before his time. For instance, when illustrating the mission of Virgil in Canto II, Blake deviated from the text that describes Virgil’s encounter with Beatrice. In the text, Virgil claims to have met Beatrice while he was in limbo and continues to praise the lady’s beauty and grace. Throughout this canto, Beatrice is portrayed as an authority figure, who commanded Virgil to guide Dante through his journey<sup>13</sup>. However, Blake’s illustration of the canto put emphasis on God and the crowned Peter on the top half of Blake’s image serve as a focal point while two large human figures on fire were placed on each side at the bottom. Beatrice was only given a small space on the left of the picture plane, seated passively before a mirror (Fig.1). This composition diminished the main idea of this canto—Dante’s acknowledgement of and overcoming his cowardice. Blake illustrated human figures by synchronizing them with the surrounding environment and thus he created an image influx— one which was in a perpetual state of transmutation. Because the images of people and landscape occupy the same space, the generative nature of Blake’s symbolism is even more pronounced than the content of the text. The illustrations were dictated by Dante’s narrative, but Blake superimposed one set of imagery over another and as a result, foreshadows his own ideas about hell.

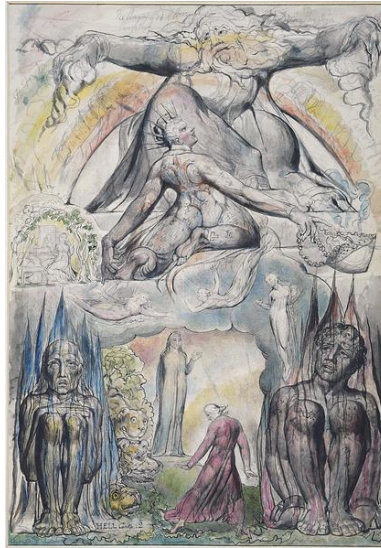


Fig. 1. William Blake, *The Mission of Virgil*, 1824-27,  
© Birmingham Museums Trust

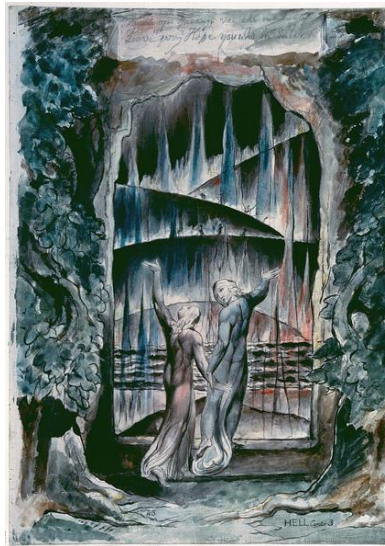


Fig. 2. William Blake, *The Inscription Over Hell Gate* Tate Britain, Reference No. N03352  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-the-inscription-over-the-gate-n03352>

In Blake's art, hell existed as an enclosed world, which was not part of a larger religious structure. He saw London as the source of suffering in a world without divine providence to offer any alternative to its communal existence. Thus, hell being presented in the *Inferno* as a place of eternal punishment was what drew William Blake to portray damnation as an authentically urban experience. In the poem, Dante's experience in hell is described in a similar fashion to a person's interaction with the people residing in a city and its environment by identifying the lower levels of hell—from Circles VI to IX—as *la citta ch'ha nome Dite* (the city whose name is Dis) and describing its architectural features, such as towers, gates, and walls and a vast crowd of grave citizens<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, the rings that constitute this realm function as walls or structures that subdivide the place. Even the Malebolge—the eighth circle and the place for fraudulent sinners—is divided into ten concentric ditches, which is subjected to the perversity of hell as an actual city. Therefore, Dante's *Inferno* is, in a way, structured like a medieval city, which he experienced every day, with walls, streets, and landmarks, continuously expanding due to overpopulation<sup>15</sup>.

Dante's statement that hell was a city and vice versa was most prominent in Canto III of the *Inferno*, in which the entrance to hell contains an inscription above it that reads, "Through me the way into the grieving city: Through me the way into eternal sorrow: Through me the way among the lost people (Fig. 2)<sup>16</sup>." This concept of the grieving city was derived from the biblical personification of Jerusalem, mourning its destruction in 586 BCE<sup>17</sup>. Dante used to refer to this event in his writings, such as *La Vita Nuova*, especially when describing the earthy and heavenly cities. The distinction between a city of saved souls and one of the damned can be traced back to St. Augustine's *City of God*<sup>18</sup>. In this text, Augustine's theory of heaven and hell describes the two entities as empty, abstract categories, almost impossible to visualize<sup>19</sup>. While Dante followed Augustine's belief that evil is not itself a separate entity, his imagery in the *Inferno* presents damnation in visceral and concrete terms since, in many ways, the damned souls act alive as they interact with Dante throughout his journey<sup>20</sup>. Modelling London based on Dante's vision of hell allowed Blake to put the city in a new context, depicting it as a metaphorical hell. In other words, Blake's hell is a modern city above Dante's subterranean underworld, implying that the people in London's moral position was falling while they were still alive above the ground. Dante's journey through hell is an extremely painful, yet necessary act to reach the salvation of human soul. Dante especially describes this idea through the Malebolge, the heart of hell, a field of pain and ugly anguish, a damned-growing countryside, or an evil farm<sup>21</sup>. The device which regulates the structure of the Malebolge is conceived as a measure of urban intervention with each pit designed like an enclosed fortified unit<sup>22</sup>. Thus, Dante's hell is a doleful and painful medieval city that is rigorously geometric and minutely controlled in every detail, whereas Blake's hell is a modern, industrialized, polluted, toxic, and chaotic contemporary London.

Blake expressed his resentment towards London's massive industrialization more evidently through visual comparisons between the content of the text and the city's everyday scenery. In Canto IV of the *Inferno*, Blake depicts Dante and Virgil standing at the edge of a cliff and looking down into the woods where ancient poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan remain in limbo (Fig. 3)<sup>23</sup>. In the text, these four ancient writers approach Dante as he stands in awe. Dante then places himself among these writers and later approaches the light to a castle and a beautiful meadow beyond it<sup>24</sup>. In contrast, Blake's illustration of this scene emphasized on the structure of Limbo instead of on the interaction between Dante and the deceased, which was the primary focus of the text. The environment is covered in dark clouds and trees, which resemble unpleasant smoke and chimneys in contemporary London. Blake's placement of the characters on opposite ends of the picture plane suggests his physical seclusion from the chaos, thus making him an observer—the one who felt bitter about the situation, but did not place himself on the same level as the others. This idea further claims that the souls residing beneath the clouds also represent the civilization suffering from population expansion and physical depression under the abyss of industrialization. Blake indicates the separation of life from death through heavy clouds that float in the valley diagonally, going westward above vertical trees. As seen in the image, these clouds among the trees have a visual affinity to smoke from the columnar chimneys of factories in London, which further attests that Blake was depicting his physical environment.



Fig. 3. William Blake, *Homer and the Ancient Poets*, 1824-27  
Tate Britain, Reference No. N03353  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-homer-and-the-ancient-poets-n03353>

Beyond visual similarities to industrial smoke, the placement of Blake's clouds generates the division between the created and the spiritual worlds. Such division also applies to the separation between materiality of the industries and Blake's tendency to live a spiritual life without widespread mechanization. Blake illustrated this idealized life in Canto VII, envisioning a sequestered place among the chaos. The context of the poem was followed quite literally in this

depiction as Dante and Virgil approached the City of the Devil. The two characters were seen standing under the tower on the edge of the Stygian Lake. However, the massive space, the mysterious darkness of the city, and the remoteness of the mountains in the background competed with the light from the tower; the void precedes the portrayal of the two poets (Fig. 4). A similar theme is portrayed in Canto XII, in which Dante and Virgil meet the Minotaur. The clouds across the image separate the Minotaur and the two characters, which suggests the division between the industrialized world—represented by the burning city in the background—and God’s eternal world in which Blake desired to live. This separation embodies the clash between the hostility of the created world and the power of spiritual faith<sup>25</sup>. The clouds that divide the two characters and the Minotaur reflect Blake’s desire to escape from the monstrosity of the industrialized city on fire (Fig. 5).



Figure 4. William Blake, Dante and Virgil about to pass the Stygian Lake, 1824-27.  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop



Figure 5. William Blake, *The Minotaur*, 1834-27.  
Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop.

Both in literature and in art throughout history, fire is a common theme in various depictions of hell. Since flames of hell are associated with torments and desires, which beset those without spiritual faith, fires burning *Inferno*’s City of Dis were integral in Blake’s illustrations<sup>26</sup>. For example, Dante depicts Farinata Degli Uberti, a Ghibelline leader, rising from his tomb in Canto X (Fig. 6). Since Farinata was responsible for slaughtering the Florentines in his coalition against the city in 1260, he was posthumously condemned for his bad deeds. Thus, his rising from his grave in Canto X and raising his hand to reach Dante signify men’s chance at escaping from the torments of mortal life<sup>27</sup>. This scene was often illustrated by artists such as Gustav Doré with Farinata’s rising as a central focus, but Blake’s illustration accentuates the burning city in the background. The entire picture plane is covered in raging fire, which connotes to the idea of the nineteenth-century industries using coal fire to run factories. In lines 97-108, Farinata tells Dante that he “can see the future, but not the present,”<sup>28</sup> which have captured Blake’s attention in comparing this scene to the



nineteenth-century London, in which—as seen in his literature—Blake only saw industrial flames consuming the natural world; he could only imagine a better future but had little to no hope for the present.



Fig. 6. William Blake, *Dante conversing with Farinata degli Uberti* 1824-27.  
Courtesy of the British Museum Free Image Service



Figure 7. William Blake, *Capaneus the Blasphemer*, 1824-27. Illustration for *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (*Inferno* XIV, 46-72), pen and ink And watercolor over pencil and black chalk, with Sponging and scratching out, 37.4x52.7 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Felton Bequest, 1920 (997-3)

During the Industrial Revolution, families grew, and work became crucial in everyday life. Consequently, religiousness had lessened, churches were abandoned, and people became secularized. This idea was echoed in Canto VII when Blake depicted a large figure of Capaneus the Blasphemer, one of the seven kings who besieged Thebes and opposed Zeus, the king of the gods in Greek mythology. Dante depicted him as “condemned to lie supine on sand while fire rains down on him.”<sup>29</sup> However, in Blake’s version, he is covered in fire and is struck repeatedly by thunder<sup>30</sup> as Dante and Virgil stand and observe (Fig. 7). Blake specifically chose to portray Capaneus this way other than his interaction with Dante for several reasons because despite his suffering, Capaneus is persistent in defying God. As described in the text, Capaneus remains oblivious to the torments and stares steadily into the distance. This presentation perfectly echoes the lives of those living and working in London during the Industrial Revolution as they detached themselves from religious rituals. Blake assumed that, as work became their priority, people were negligent of the existence and the power of the divine being. Capaneus’s physique could also be compared to Blake’s belief about Satan, whom he believed possesses a powerful, muscular torso. Blake also depicted a similar figure in his illustration for Robert Blair’s poem *The Grave* in which the soul departed the dead body in flames<sup>31</sup>. Blake’s illustration of Capaneus does more than just addressing the secularization in contemporary London; it also serves as

his message to the public that each one of them would be in Capaneus's position after their death should they supplant God's nature with manmade machines.

Most of Blake's illustrations of the *Inferno* required viewers to look through one image after another as he engaged his illustrations with the concept of death and afterlife. His pictorial pellucidity visualized a world beyond human life, amplifying his own conviction that death was not a barrier but a door through which one moved from one room to the other. The spiritualism that he claimed to have experienced exceeded biblical descriptions and it was not a coincidence in his system of thought, but the ultimate objective of his deconstruction of aesthetic binaries of the natural and the conventional, the general and the particular, and the literal and the figurative. In some ways, Blake's perverse and powerful interpretation of hell arose from his own philosophy<sup>32</sup>. Unlike Dante—or even Milton, whose poem the *Paradise Lost*<sup>33</sup> that Blake illustrated in 1807—Blake's hell is a source of uncontrolled, Dionysian energy, opposed to the authoritarian and regulated perception of heaven. Blake adapted Dante's medieval ideas of damnation to his vision of London in an unrepressed state during the time of despair. Blake's adaptations to the *Inferno* illustrate his evident integration of his own imagery to represent the effects of the Industrial Revolution. For instance, in Blake's design for Canto I, the roots and trees symbolized the error of the world; they blindly concealed everything as they grew and resisted all attempts to be eradicated<sup>34</sup>. The brambles near Dante's feet as he ran from the beasts demonstrate Blake's life, which bound him down to the material world and prevented him from gaining the spiritual freedom for which his soul desired (Fig. 8)<sup>35</sup>.



Fig. 8. William Blake, *Dante Running from the Three Beasts*, 1824-27. Illustration for *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (*Inferno* I, 1-90), pen and ink and watercolor over pencil and black chalk, with sponging and scratching out, 37.4x52.7 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest, 1920 (997-3)

Blake's art cannot be categorized as purely religious, philosophical, or political since Blake believed that a deep and immediate consciousness of the spirit was inevitable, and a logical outcome of such consciousness was to look at the world as a whole<sup>39</sup>. Since Blake's concept of God did not possess a physical form, he believed that human beings were God's absolute outline<sup>40</sup>. Therefore, by comparing non-practicing Christians to the sinners being punished in hell, Blake presented his belief that humans would suffer from the consequences of the "adversity" that they had created among themselves. Blake's preoccupation with the conflicting powers of revolution and oppression was inseparable from his views on Christian religious mysticism, and thus he had constant recourse to the otherworldly in his struggles against the prevailing structures of society and art. His nonconformist religious and mystical interpretations of great literary works, such as Dante's *Inferno*, make him all the more fascinating and compelling to some, while others see him as irrelevant and senseless.

The impact of the Industrial Revolution on William Blake was immense, but it also had a similar effect on various artists who received and responded to the upheaval in myriad ways; some even shared Blake's attitude towards the industrialized cities. One example is John Martin (1789-1854), an English artist who regarded this era as an apocalypse and created images of disasters in history which implied a living hell (Fig. 9). Circuitously reiterating Blake's idea, Martin identified the powers of industry with Lucifer and portrayed his attitudes towards the movement. Coal Mines were also depicted in his art as similar to the deep and dark pits of hell, inspired by the descriptions in the Old Testament<sup>36</sup>. Martin's violent landscapes reflected his doubt in progress and his terror over the chaos surrounding him. Contemporaries of Martin also regarded the effects of industrialization as hell on earth. Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812) painted *Coalbrookdale by Night* in which industrial flames from a factory overpower a small rural town (Fig. 10). Later in the nineteenth century, artists such as Edwin Butler Bayliss and Constantin Emile Meunier painted



the landscape of the Black Country, the Midwestern region in England named after dark smoke produced from factories<sup>37</sup>. However, these artists portrayed industrialization, a common theme in their works was that the city of London was in a deep dark pit of despair.



Fig. 9. John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, 1851-53 Tate Britain, Reference No. N05613  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/martin-the-great-day-of-his-wrath-n05613>



Fig.10. Philip James Louthborough, *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801. Science and Society Picture Library  
Image No. 10307414, Science Museum, London <http://www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/results.asp?image=10307414>

William Blake is not an artist an observer might admire at first glance, but his imagery and dedication towards revolutionary art cannot be neglected. Despite his desire to be isolated in his own visionary existence, Blake immersed himself in the teeming metropolis of London at a time of great social and political change, which profoundly influenced his art. Blake did not finish his illustrations of the *Divine Comedy*, yet his visions that articulated the parallels between religious and social imagery would immediately speak to a viewer today. In addition to keeping Dante's original concept of hell, the illustrations of Blake's social hell reflected his personality, his recalcitrance, and his resentment towards the excessive industrialization over time. Thus, through Dante's *Inferno*, Blake executed his interpretation of the Industrial Revolution and expressed his feelings towards it, allowing the viewers to look through his method of pictorial transparency to a world beyond imagination.

## 2. Acknowledgement

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3. Clarke Garrett, "Swedenborg and Mystical Enlightenment in England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no. 1 (1984): 67-81. Emanuel Swedenborg, born in Sweden in 1688, was a trained mathematician and engineer. He was also a philosopher and theologian who combined a diverse body of familiar concepts by claiming to have received spiritual knowledge directly from God. Many Methodists in England were drawn to mysticism.
4. Kathleen Raine, *William Blake* (New York: Longmans, 1951).
5. His stylistic development during the time was rather ironic since Basire's apprentices were not encouraged to create their own aesthetic identity.
6. Milton Klonsky, *Blake's Dante: the Complete Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (New York: Harmony Books, 1980).
7. Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 6-9.
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9. William Blake, *The Selected Poems of William Blake* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2000).
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. The phrase "Satanic mills" is thus often interpreted as the poet's reaction to the Industrial Revolution and its destruction of nature and relationships.
13. Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). 43.
14. Ibid., 8.
15. Isabel Moreira and Margaret Merrill Toscano. *Hell and its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010). Dante was very much involved in the architecture and urban planning of Florence, which have influenced his anatomy of Hell.
16. Ibid., 3.1-3
17. Ibid., 62.
18. St. Augustine of Hippo was a bishop who wrote Christian doctrines, including the *City of God* in the fifth century. His written work addresses profound questions of theology, especially the existence of evil and the concept of the original sin.
19. Isabel Moreira and Margaret Merrill Toscano. *Hell and its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).
20. Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 55. The canto opens with the words on the hell gate, which puts an emphasis on Dante's opinion about hell as a city.
21. Ibid., 8.4
22. Ibid.
23. Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 4.64-105
24. Ibid.
25. Alfred S. Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 77.
26. Ibid., 81. Roe refers this idea to Blake's strong belief in Urizen, who finds himself in a world of flames.
27. Ibid., 77.

28. Robert M. Durling, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 10.
29. Ibid.
30. Capaneus was a strong and arrogant warrior; he was struck by Zeus's thunderbolt because he attempted to invade Thebes without the god's will.
31. Alfred S. Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 82
32. Jean H. Hagrstrum. *William Blake, Poet and Painter: an Introduction to the Illuminated Verse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 92
33. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is about the fall of Lucifer from heaven.
34. Alfred S. Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 48.
35. Jerusalem 14.8-9
36. Francis Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1968).
37. As a result of iron and coal mines, factories, and expanded railways during the Industrial Revolution, the Black Country became one of the most polluted regions in England.
38. Martin Butlin, *William Blake, 1757-1827: a Catalogue of the Works of William Blake in the Tate Gallery* (London: Distributed by W. Heinemann, 1957), 7.
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40. Ibid., 31.

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