

Ah Sun-Flower

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
 Who countest the steps of the Sun,
 Seeking after that sweet golden clime
 Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
 And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow,
 Arise from their graves and aspire,
 Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

1794

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.

1794

London

I wander thro' each charter'd⁸ 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,⁹
 The mind-forg'd manacles I hear:

8. "Given liberty," but also, ironically, "pre-empted as private property, and rented out."

9. The various meanings of "ban" are relevant

(political and legal prohibition, curse, public condemnation) as well as "banns" (marriage proclamation).

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

10

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear,¹
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.²

15

1794

The Human Abstract³

Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase;
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

10

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpillar and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.

15

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;
And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

20

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree,

1. Most critics read this line as implying prenatal blindness, resulting from a parent's venereal disease (the "plagues" of line 16) by earlier infection from the harlot.

2. In the older sense of "hearse": converts the marriage bed into a bier. Or possibly, since the current sense of the word had also come into use in Blake's day, "converts the marriage coach into

a funeral hearse."

3. The matched contrary to *The Divine Image* in *Songs of Innocence*. The virtues of the earlier poem, "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love," are now seen as exploitation, cruelty, conflict, and hypocritical humility—the seed in the human brain of the Tree of Mystery, which darkens both the moral and natural world.