

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.

- 5 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,
10 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'd' street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

- 5 In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,²
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear:

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

- But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
15 Blasts the new-born Infants tear,³
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.⁴

1794

1. "Given liberty," but also, ironically, "preempted as private property, and rented out."

2. The various meanings of *ban* are relevant (political and legal prohibition, curse, public condemnation) as well as "banns" (marriage proclamation).

3. Most critics read this line as implying prenatal blindness, resulting from a parent's venereal dis-

ease (the "plagues" of line 16) by earlier infection from the harlot.

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

