Cleansing the doors of perception

How an ‘impoverished, ghost-seeing eighteenth-century poet’ influenced the 1960s

**ALBERT RIVERO**

William Blake and Hal Foster

HAL FOSTER’S ‘THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL’ BY WILLIAM BLAKE

68pp. Marginalia. Paperback. £19.95. 978 1 909791 817

Stephen F. Eisenman et al

WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

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**The first volume of the Chicago Seed, 1967**

Marc Riboud’s photograph “Confrontation between a Flower and the Bayonets of Soldiers Guarding the Pentagon during the March for Peace in Washington, D. C.” (1967), that a flower, if lovingly held in a young woman’s hand, is mightier than the weapons pointed at her.

Such moments will prompt nostalgia in American visitors old enough to remember the speed with which the 1967 “summer of love”, the high point as well as the effective end of the Age of Aquarius, was followed by the horrible year of civil turmoil – the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968 and Robert Kennedy in June, and peaceful street protests that turned into violent riots at the Democratic convention in Chicago in late August. Richard J. Daley, Chicago’s mayor, unwittingly spoke truth when, in defending the actions of his police department, he said that “The policeman isn’t there to create disorder; he’s there to preserve disorder,” Things seemed to be falling apart, as the nation was not only at war in Vietnam but with itself. Richard Nixon, a self-proclaimed law-and-order president, would be elected in November 1968, though his supporters’ hopes that he would make America great again were to be sadly dashed. Experience trumped innocence yet again. Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that “Without Contraries is no Progress. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence” – to which Hal Foster gives an enthusiastic marginal “Yes!” But progression, as history teaches us, is not the same as progress. A new heaven and a new earth, no matter how we might occasionally believe we are winning near the goal, remain elusive.