

April 22, 1987

Levin, Peter:

This is what I wanted projected to Jim  
Portable Blake: Viking Press, 1946, edited with an introduction by  
Alfred Kazin.

In Blake's poems, could at first find no publisher, especially the  
one in celebration of the "New World" after 1789, called "The French  
Revolution". Which was "printed by a bookseller, Joseph Johnson who  
was the center of a radical circle, that included Blake, William  
Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine."

The exciting part of having the greatest poet, and the first ever  
revolutionary feminist as well as the intellectual socialist, not  
to mention Thomas Paine gets even more exciting when you realize  
that the one who convinced Thomas Paine to leave England and  
come to America was Benjamin Franklin who told them that there  
was more freedom in <sup>near</sup> colonial U.S. than in advanced England and  
we really needed that Voices of Reason which is exactly what  
Paine wrote for the U.S. and became an American. Ka

Alfred Kazin's first paragraph in the introduction really projects  
the whole spirit of what was Europe in the period of the French  
Revolution. That paragraph reads:

"In 1827 there died, undoubtedly unknown to each other, two plebeian  
Europeans of supreme originality; Ludwig van Beethoven and William  
Blake. Had they known of each other, they could still not have known  
how much of the future they contained and how alike they were in the  
quality of their personal force, their defiance of the age, and the  
fierce demands each other had made on the human imagination."

11211

One more point could be made to the youth at N.I.U. since I fear that they may not want to struggle through the 55 pages of introduction and some 650 pages of text of Blake. And that is the little quotation from Blake (April 12, 1827) which serves as the frontice paece for this magnificent volume;

"A LINE is a line in its minutest subdivisions, straight or crooked. It is itself, not intermeasurable by anything else. Such is Job. But since the French Revolution Englishmen are all intermeasurable by another; certainly a happy state of agreement, in which I for one do not agree. God keep you and me from the divinity of yes and no too--the yea, nay, creeping Jesus-- from supposing up and down to be the same thing, as all experimentalists must suppose."

Raya

11212