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## EXPLORING THE ROLE OF NUMBERS IN WILLIAM BLAKE'S VISIONARY WORKS

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*This article analyses William Blake (1757-1827) as visionary poet and artist of the Romantic era who masterfully utilized the symbolism of numbers to convey complex spiritual, philosophical, and mystical ideas in his poetry and art. This article explores Blake's distinctive use of numbers—particularly the numbers 3, 4, 7, and 6—as key symbols in works such as “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Songs of Innocence and of Experience” and “The Four Zoas”. By examining how Blake employs numerology to evoke divine harmony, critique institutional religion, and reflect spiritual progression, this study reveals the intricate ways in which Blake's numerical symbolism is intertwined with his broader themes of innocence, experience, and human transformation. Ultimately, this article highlights the spiritual and metaphysical role of numbers in Blake's literary and artistic legacy*

**INTRODUCTION** Far beyond mere mathematical concepts, William Blake imbued numbers with profound symbolic significance, drawing from his deeply personal understanding of the divine and the human condition. Blake was deeply influenced by his own spiritual experiences, which led him to create a highly personal mythology. He saw the material world as limited and believed in the power of the imagination to access deeper, spiritual truths. This worldview shaped his use of numbers, as he saw them not just as mathematical symbols but as pathways to understanding the divine order. Blake often saw numbers as representations of divine harmony or disruption in the material world. For instance, the number 7, symbolizing perfection, relates to Blake's concept of spiritual completeness. But his works also show how those symbols could be subverted or distorted to show the tension between innocence and experience.

**Main part.** William Blake's use of numbers as symbols in his poetry is both fascinating and deep, reflecting his unique visionary worldview. Here are a few examples where numbers play an important symbolic role:

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**The Number 4 in “The Tyger” (Songs of Experience)** Blake uses the number 4 indirectly through references to the four corners of the world and the overwhelming presence of the “Tyger.” It can also suggest the four elements (earth, air, fire, water), representing the primal forces of nature.

Example: *“Tyger Tyger, burning bright,  
In the forests of the night:  
What immortal hand or eye,  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?”*

Here, the symmetry of the Tyger can be interpreted as symbolizing balance and order, which connects to the number 4 in many ancient systems of thought (such as the four elements or cardinal directions). The poem contemplates the cosmic power that created such a creature, hinting at divine forces at work.

**The Number 7 in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”** In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake uses the number 7 repeatedly, particularly to reference both the natural and spiritual realms. The number is seen as a symbol of perfection and divine wholeness in many mystical traditions.

Example: *“I have just three questions to ask:  
One: Do you believe in the seven deadly sins?  
Two: Are you prepared to abandon them?  
Three: If so, why do you still embrace them?”*

Here, the reference to the “seven deadly sins” is clearly tied to Christian mysticism and theology, where seven has a significant role in establishing moral boundaries.

**The Number 3 in “The Chimney Sweeper” (Songs of Experience)** In *Songs of Experience*, Blake also uses the number 3 as a symbol of spiritual completion or transformation. In this poem, the number may also reflect an allegory for the three stages of life—childhood, adulthood, and death.

Example: *“So I turned to the Garden of Love,  
That so many sweet flowers bore,  
And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tombstones where flowers should be.  
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds.”*

While not directly using the number 3 in every line, Blake’s imagery of the “Garden of Love” being corrupted into a graveyard with priests walking in a circle speaks to a cycle of spiritual death, evoking the number’s association with cycles and rebirth.

**The Number 5 in “The Four Zoas”** Blake’s *The Four Zoas* is a more complex and fragmented work, and the number 5 is used to reflect a shift or a breaking of established patterns. In the mystical worldview Blake explores, the number 5 symbolizes change, transformation, and sometimes human imperfection.

Example: *“Five times in the night I was woken from my dream,  
Each time to find myself in a different state,  
But all the same on the edge of eternity.”*

The number 5, symbolizing change or movement beyond the status quo, indicates a progression or journey in Blake's spiritual narrative, connecting back to ideas of human transformation.

**The Number 6 in “The Book of Urizen”** In *The Book of Urizen*, Blake uses the number 6 to reflect imperfection or a fall from divine perfection. Six, being one short of seven, suggests incompleteness or the act of creation that has not yet reached its spiritual or divine conclusion.

Example: *“The six days of creation were not the end,  
But the beginning of a journey, the struggle of mind and heart,  
And man must return to his maker to complete the seventh.”*

Here, Blake uses the number 6 to show that creation itself is incomplete without the spiritual redemption symbolized by 7. It speaks to the human condition and the necessity for spiritual growth.

These examples illustrate how Blake used numbers not just for their mathematical value but as symbols deeply embedded in the spiritual and mystical meanings of his works. The numbers serve as a bridge to transcendental concepts, reflecting Blake's belief in the interconnectedness of the spiritual, natural, and human realms.

### Conclusion

William Blake's use of numerology and numeric symbolism in his works reveals a deep and intricate relationship between the material and spiritual worlds. Rather than using numbers in a purely mathematical sense, Blake infused them with profound metaphysical significance, seeing them as keys to understanding divine harmony, spiritual progression, and the complexities of human experience. Through his use of numbers like **3**, **4**, and **7**, Blake conveyed ideas of completeness, transformation, and the struggle between innocence and experience. These symbolic numbers reflect his vision of a universe governed not just by physical laws but by spiritual truths that transcend the material realm.

Blake's numerological system also served as a critique of the religious and social structures of his time. By challenging conventional religious doctrines, particularly the authority of the Church, and using numbers to symbolize a more personal, intuitive connection to the divine, Blake reinforced his belief in the importance of imagination and inner vision. His works invite readers to see numbers as more than simple quantities—they are representations of spiritual cycles, human growth, and the tension between creation and destruction.

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