While the Romantics looked to nature's mountains in the form of Mont Blanc, the Jungfrau, or Skiddaw to find a visible externalization of their psychology, Blake's mountains reflect an interior vision of the mountains of mythology and those, not far distant, of the Bible. These befit a poet who saw his visions in the worlds of thought and, from all accounts, never saw a genuine mountain (much less a Welsh one) in his life. Mircea Eliade summarizes the mythological dimension:

Mountains are the nearest thing to the sky, and are thence endowed with a twofold holiness: on the one hand they share in the spatial symbolism of transcendence—they are 'high,' 'vertical,' 'supreme,' and so on—and on the other, they are the especial domain of all hierophanies of atmosphere, and therefore, the dwelling of the gods. Their symbolic and religious significance, he continues, "is endless." One can see the sacred quality stemming from the fact that mountains penetrate the upper, pure regions of the atmosphere (aether) carried on in seventeenth-century poetic diction, where standard non-negative epithets are "cloud-touching, star-brushing." For the ancient Greeks the upper air, source of meteors and other meteorological events, was integrally related to mountains and "high ground"—ta meteora; their conjunction offers "a spot where one can pass from one cosmic zone to another" (Eliade, p. 100). Blake writes of the "Atlantean hills" that "from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world" (Am 10.6, 7). The dwelling of Zeus--Dios, God of the Bright Sky—was Mount Olympus, but "olympus" was to be found all over mountainous Greece; the word itself is the pre-Greek term for "mountain."

The Romans, though lacking mountains, nonetheless dignified "their own poor little Capitol . . . with the title of 'Mons'" and the cosmological zone of the female body receives the same dignity.

In Mesopotamia, "temples were called the 'mountain house,' the 'house of the mountain of all lands,' the 'mountain of storms,' the 'bound between sky and earth,' and so on." The association of meteor, high things, and centering, is again expressed in the widespread belief of various cultures that their mountain lies directly under the pole star, and so presents the Axis Mundi. In the Old Testament one of the names of God, El-Shaddai, can be translated as "the God of the Mountain, the God of the 'Height' or (as the highest) an astral god," and in the historical period of Israel, "mountain house" became a common name for "temple."

The closeness of God and the mountain is typified by the theophanies at Sinai. As houses of God, they are also places of sacrifice, high—Latin alta—altars; in Genesis 22:2 God tells Abraham to offer his son "for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." So Los takes Orc "to the top of a mountain" (BV 20.21) to chain him down. The New Testament made great use of the Old Testament symbolism, and its repeated description of Jesus' going "to or on, "up the mountain" or "into the mountains," assumes a formulaic dimension. Little wonder that Blake should characterize the two Testaments by their respective dominant mountains:

Such is the Divine Written Law of Horeb & Sinai: And such the Holy Gospel of Mount Olivet & Calvary
One mountain, however, serves to sit and anchor both Testaments: Mount Zion, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth" (Ps. 48:2), "the holy Mountain" (Zech. 8:3) of the Lord and synonymous with its city, Jerusalem. So Paul reminds the Hebrews, "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). Tiny Mount Zion is to "tower over the other mountains" (Clifford, p. 157; cf. Is. 2:4, Mic. 4:1).

As Jerusalem is to Mount Zion, so she was and will be to Albion; which is to say that Albion is--or rather, was and will be--a holy mountain. Holinshead, who begins his Chronicles discussing the legend of the ancient denomination of England, refers to speculation "whether Britaine was called Albion of the word Alb, white, or Alp an hill." The name in fact is connected with the root of Latin Alpia, Gaelic alt, and Irish alt, meaning mountain. Blake plays on this assonance and etymological connection, imagining that Los's "voice is heard from Albion: the Alps & Appenines / Listen" (J 85.16–17). As only traditional association of Albion with high mountains tend to be white (with snow), the Atlantic, "The Mountain of Giants ... " (J 49.6–7).

Mountains are necessarily related to the image of the ocean deluge. Thomas Burnet's mytho-poetic Sacred Theory of the Earth (1681) argued that the weight of the floodwaters broke the crust of the paradisal "mundane egg" into mountains. In a somewhat similar manner, when Eternity rolls apart in The Book of Urizen what is left is "mountainous all around," dominated by "ruinous fragments of life / Hanging frowning cliffs & all between / An ocean of voidness unfathomable" (J 5.7, 9–11). Earlier cosmologies also focused on the creation of "land" out of Chaos (if not Eternity)--the deep, the Semitic Tahom. These traditions imagined that the mountains were placed in Tahom to serve as foundations of the world--they were the first dry land, like Mount Ararat after the later flood. According to some rabbinical similes, "God's mountains reach down to the great Tahom and these mountains dominate Tahom, lest it should rise and inundate the earth." As foundations, the mountains are seen as the "pillars of heaven" (Job 26:11, cf. 9:6). So in Albion/ Jerusalem,

Pancress & Kentish-town repose Among her golden pillars high: Among her golden arches which Shine upon the starry sky. (J 27.9–12)

The cosmological scope of this reference is clear remembering that the "pillard hall & arched roof of Albions skies" receive "the eternal wandering stars" (FZ, II, 25.16, 32.9; E 310, 315). Since the flood represented the victory of Chaos, of Leviathan, some rabbinical commentators held that the land of Israel was not submerged by the Deluge, a belief which is paralleled in Islam. A. J. Wensinck comments:

Why the Sanctuary is not attained by the waters of the Deluge is clear: 'The reign of Tehom, of old a demonic power, familiar from the creation stories. The Sanctuary is the type and representation of Kosmos and of Paradise and as such a power diametrically opposed to Chaos; when the Semites maintain that the Sanctuary was not reached by the Deluge, this is not only due to the opinion that the Sanctuary is the highest place in the world, but also to the conviction that Chaos cannot gain a complete victory over Kosmos, for behind the latter is the creative power of the supreme being. (pp. 15–16)

This conception offers several analogies to Blake's images, from that of the one sense through which man may "himself pass out" (Jzu iii.5) which remained after the other senses "wield'd in deluge" (Jzu 10.10–11) over him, to the picture of Albion as the mountain remaining when "the Atlantic Continent sunk round Albions Cliffsy shore / And the Sea pourd in amain" (J 32[36],40–41). The "sea of Time & Space" is the principal deluge. This may account for the frequent graphic depiction of an action taking place on a location surrounded by water; it is an image of England, but it signifies also imaginative vision, not yet drowned in Time and Space (or Realism or Naturalism). So when Reuben sleeps "like one dead in the valley"--the vale, or low-lying, submersible land--the notable thing is that he is thus "Cut off from Albions mountains & from all the Earths summits" (J 30[34],43,44). "Wild seas & Rocks" are to "close up Jerusalem away from / The Atlantic Moutains" (J 49.77–50.1). America tells that

On those vast shadik hill between America & Albions shore; Now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea: call'd Atlantean hills Because from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world An ancient palace, archetype of mighty Emperies, Rears its immortal pinnacles. . . . (10.5–9)

One critic has called this passage "iconic" and remarked its "tantalizing quality of meanings nearly communicated yet withheld."15 Without entering the context of America or the "suitability of invoking the myth of a lost, paradisal Atlantis as a symbol of transcendental unity,"16 I would simply emphasize that the mythic structure of the mountain sanctuary, temple, palace is itself a "meaning communicated." The reader is told something about the situation, appearance, and function of the summit-structure and it takes its place among Blake's visionary locales--the description engages our attention by calling up latent (and several times removed) mythological associations. The Atlantic, one should remember, is named not for Atlantis, but for the Titan Atlas, seen in classical times as Mount Atlas, the pillar of heaven. Atlas, Blake believed, was the Greek name for Albion, "Patriarch of the Atlantic" (DC, E 534; italics added). Blake viewed
his Hesperian situation quite personally, as evident in the dedicatory poem to *The Grave*, which says that his "designs unchange remain":

For above Times troubled Fountains
On the Great Atlantic Mountains
In my Golden House on high
There they Shine Eternally

("The Caverns of the Grave," 17-20)

These mountains rise out of the sea of time becoming the "infinite" and "eternal" mountains, the site of paradise: "the Garden of Eden... the golden mountains" (*J* 28:2), "the mountain palaces of Eden" (*J* 41:46:3-4).

The setting of Abraham's sacrifice and Jesus' crucifixion leads to the very different image of Albion "slain upon his Mountains / And in his Tent."

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1) Lucas van Leyden, "Calvary" (1517; 11 1/8 X 16 1/4 in.) Courtesy of the British Museum.


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But from all indications, something happened earlier, something which "separated the stars from the mountains: the mountains from Man" (*J* 17:31). Somewhere in the Druid past, Albion changed "from willing sacrifice of self, to sacrifice of (miscall'd) Enemies / For Atonement," an action, like Abraham's, located on the mountains. Albion concludes his opening speech in *Jerusalem* saying:

By demonstration man alone can live, and not by faith.
My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself:
The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds Plinlimmon & Snowdon
Are mine, here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue!

Humanity shall be no more: but war & pricedom & victory!

(§ 4.28-32, my italics)

In less than ten lines, "Albions mountains run with blood, the cries of war & of tumult" (§ 5.6). These sacrifices in turn react on their sites as

... all the mountains and hills shrink up like a withering gourd
As the Senses of Men shrink together under the
Knife of flint
In the hands of Albions Daughters, among the
Druid Temples

(§ 66.82-84)

Other of Albion's fallen mountains are listed in another catalogue: "... the Peak, Malvern & Cheviot Reason in Cruelty / Penmaenmawr & Dhinas-bran Demonstrate in Unbelief" (§ 21.34-35). The single appearance of "Dhinas-bran" may refer to "Din Bréon, the Hill of Legislature," which "was the sacred mount, where ... the ancient judges of the land, assembled, to decide causes."18

Blake was evidently impressed by the description in Ezekiel of the sacrificial feast the Lord is to make of his enemies; all the beasts are invited to the "great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood;" there "ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken" (29:17, 19). In "The Song" sung at "The Feast of Los and Enitharmon" Blake transfers the action to the mountains themselves—which begin to emerge as solidified giant forms with Biblical histories:

[The Mountain del.] Ephraim call'd out to [The Mountain del.] Zion: Awake O Brother Mountain
Let us refuse the Plow & Spade, the heavy Roller & spiked
Harrow, burn all these Corn fields. throw down all these fences
Fattend on Human blood and drunk with wine of life is better far

(FZ, I, 14.7-10, E 304, 746)

Clifford notes the suggestion that "the feast on the mountain of the bodies of the enemy is a transformation of the exchatological picture of the 'joyous feast' as in Isaiah 25:6-8. "Possibly," he concludes, "the banquet for the victorious on the mountain and the slaughter-sacrifice of the enemies are one and the same" (pp. 176-77). This duality seems applicable to the Wedding Feast of Los and Enitharmon, since they begin, with Urizen, "Rejoicing
in the Victory" (12.35, E 303, cf. J 4.32 above). Blake's intertwining vision of the Fall on the mountains of Israel and England follows from his conception of Druid practices and from hints in the Old Testament--unified in an image of "moral" sacrifice on mountains (classical mountains, ora, become moral emblems). His first use of the negative power of Old Testament mountains is the figure and setting of "har," the Hebrew for "mountain," in particular, "the mountain" (Ha-har) where Moses received the Law (cf. Clifford, p. 107ff.); as Blake would have read in Bryant: "Har and Hor signify a mountain; öpos [oros] of the Greeks." So Tiriell first enters "the pleasant gardens of Har" (Tir 2.10)--reminiscent of "Eden the garden of God" located on "the holy mountain of God" (Ez. 28:13-14)--and on his return, "the mountains of Har" (7.19). The French Revolution imagines "the old mountains . . . like aged men, fading away" (9) which aptly suits "aged Har" (Tir 8.6).

The Book of Joshua offers the Druid-like image of the Israelites setting up a "great stone under an oak . . . by the sanctuary of the LORD" (25.26) at Shechem, which lies between Mount Gerizim, appointed by the Lord for a blessing, and Mount Ebal, appointed for a curse. Here, in the natural amphitheater of the two mountainsides, Joshua divided the tribes of Israel according to the words of Moses, and while one hears little of blessing, twelve shouted verses beginning "Curse'd be . . . " (Jos. 27.11ff.) further illustrate the nature of "barren mountains of Moral Virtue" (J 45[31].19-20; cf. 4.31, above). Jerusalem laments: "The mountain of blessing is itself a curse & an astonishment: / The hills of Judea are fallen with me into the deepest hell" (J 79.7-8). A passage repeated in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem shows Tirzah binding down the Human Form crying:

Bind him down Sisters bind him down on Ebal.
Mount of cursing:
Malah come forth from Lebanon: & Hoglah from Mount Sinai . . .

Weep not so Sisters! weep not sol our life depends on this
Or mercy & truth are fled away from Shechem & Mount Gilead

Unless my beloved is bound upon the Stems of Vegetation
(J 68.3-4, 7-9; PZ, VIII, 105.47-48, 51-53, E 364)

The "Stems of Vegetation," a revision of The Four Zoas' introduction to this passage reveals, are the "stones" of the mountain altar: "binding on the Stones [stems dol.] / Their victims & with knives tormenting them" (105.28-29 and E 759). "Druid" monuments tend to be associated with Salisbury Plain, but describing his picture "The Ancient Britons," Blake wrote, "Distant among the mountains, are Druid Temples, similar to Stone Henge" (DC, E 536). Blake was following good authority. Borlase's Antiquities . . . of Cornwall, for example, observed of the Druids that, "It was a general custom to chuse for their places of worshipping which stood on the tops of hills, and mountains, as more becoming the dignity and sublime offices of their devotions, and of nearer neighbourhood (as they imagined) to the habitations of their Gods." Borlase remarks the Old Testament parallels and describes "Karnbre-hill, which has all the evidences that can be desired of having been appropriated to the use of the British Religion;" these are "rock-basons, circles, stones erect, remains of Cromle'h's, Karns, a grove of Oaks, a cave, and an enclosure" (pp. 116, 120). Thomas Pennant, in his Journey to Snowdon (London, 1781), writes that his fellow-traveller climbed a local hill "on whose summit was a circular coronet of rude pepple stones . . . with an entrance to the east, or rising sun" (p. 63).

Jerusalem shows "the Divine Vision like a Silent Sun"

. . . setting behind the Gardens of Kensington
On Tylburn's River, in clouds of blood, where was mild Zion Hills
Most ancient promontory, and in the Sun, a
Human Form appeared

"Zion Hills most ancient promontory" is a formula which appears twice elsewhere in Jerusalem. Plate 12 asks after the burying-place of Ephinthus and suggests in further questions,

. . . near Tylburn's fatal Tree? is that
Mild Zion hills most ancient promontory; near mournful
Ever weeping Paddington? is that Calvary and Golgotha?

(12.26-28)

This is glossed by 27.25ff where "ever-weeping Paddington" is identified as "that mighty Ruin / Where Satan the first victory won" (my italics), where also "the Druids" made "Offerings of Human Life." The general reference is to Tyburn, London's place of public hangings from as early as 1196 until 1783. By the time they were discontinued, Blake was twenty-six and undoubtedly all too aware of the eager crowds that appeared for each of the eight public hanging-days--indeed, tradition made these public holidays for all journeymen. A "Paddington Fair" was a public execution, so called because Tyburn was less than a mile from the village of Paddington, in whose parish it was eventually included. There is a visionary continuity joining the Druid monuments, Calvary, and Tyburn: Druid human sacrifices "generally consisted of such criminals as were convicted of theft, or any capital crime" (Borlase, p. 121) and Calvary--as the crucifixion of two thieves with Jesus suggests--was, like Tyburn, a site for the execution of common criminals.

I am suggesting that the passage from plate 12 of Jerusalem quoted above answers itself: Mild Zion hills most ancient promontory at Tyburn's fatal Tree ("that" of 1.26). Not because it had particular elevation (it is a mountain of the mind, a mounting of the scaffold), but because it possessed all the attributes of Calvary, succinctly re-summarized by Richard Cumberland in his long poem, Calvary; or the Death of Christ (London, 1792): "Without the city wall there was a mount / Call'd
CALVARY: The common grave it was / Of malefactors (VI. 440-42). According to one authority the Tyburn gallows was in fact situated "on a small eminence at the corner of Edgeware-Road," which road, together with Park Lane was as late as 1806 the western limit of London's urbanization and the location of one of its "gates," the Tyburn Turnpike. Lucas van Leyden's engraving of Calvary shows just how small an eminence can make a mount, or promontory (illus. 1), and Sterne probably reflects the general conception when he has Tristram remark that a temple over sixty feet high would have "been as high as mount Calvary itself" (Tristram Shandy, VII, 5). Blake described his residence at South Molton Street--just blocks down Oxford Street from the old gallows--as located on "Calvays foot / Where the Victims were for Sacrifice" (p. 4.21-22). Significant also was the very instrument of execution. Tyburn Tree was not a gibbet; rather, "The scaffold consisted of three posts, ten or twelve feet high, held apart by three connecting cross-bars at the top." It was, in effect, a ruined version of a Druidic temple made of trilithons--one of the far-fetched hypotheses about Stonehenge was that it had served as a monumental gallows. In Jerusalem, plate 80, Vala attempts to "weave Jerusalem a body" or "A Dragon form on Zion Hills most ancient promontory": the "form" is that of the Druidic "Dragon Temples" (p 25.4, 47.6).

These motifs are illustrated at the bottom of Milton, plate 4 (illus. 3); there a rock-skull emerges from the ground, overshadowed by three trilithons on a mount, reminiscent of the three crosses on Calvary (note Blake's reference to Calvary on the same plate, quoted above), while on the right the three seem to have joined into a threefold trilithon which suggests a Druidic form of the Tyburn gallows. One might note also how directly above this structure a spindle or body hangs on high from the end of the line held by one of Blake's spinner-Goddesses. The rock-skull identifies this scene as Calvary or Golgotha, "which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull" (Mk. 15:22, Inter al.). This theme is further developed in Jerusalem, plate 28, where Albion "sat by Tyburns brook, and underneath with his head shot up! / A deadly Tree, he nam'd it Moral Virtue" (14-15)--the "Tree" here joins the cross, Tyburn Tree (cf. OED, s.v. "tree," B.4a,b), and the Tree of Good and Evil, complete with a Serpentine form at its base.

Tyburn, then, is Zion Hills promontory, "most ancient" because all things begin in Albion and this is "the most ancient promontory of sacrifice" (Erdman, Prophet, p. 475), "the summit of the cosmic mountain and at the same time the place where Adam had been created and buried. Thus the blood of the Saviour falls upon Adam's skull, buried precisely at the foot of the Cross, and redeems him" (32). The use of the word "promontory," as Tolley notes, is singular--it serves perhaps to bring in several associations. The promontory is a visionary scene (like the Atlantic mountains of America), a "headland" offering a vista on the Sea of Time and Space (cf. 3 Henry VI, III.i.134-36); it is the sterile earth to which Hamlet equates it (II.i.311); and finally, it is the covering of the fallen mind: in Paradise Lost the angelic host defeats the rebels and "on this heads / Marvelous Promontories flung" (5.653-54; cf. J. 71.55 cited below). Ultimately the most ancient promontory is the reader's skull (Golgotha/ Golgonooza), "Once open to the heavens and elevated on the human neck" (Bar 10.28), but now imagining and enclosing all these mountains of and in the mind.

Los, who is himself an ancient Briton, reaches back to the unfallen state of the mountain imagery, praying "O Divine Saviour arise / Upon the Mountains of Albion as in ancient time (44[30].21-22). This image, together with the evocation of "those feet in ancient time / ... upon Englands mountains green" (M 1), recalls the twice-repeated Biblical praise, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Is. 52:7, Nah. 1:15). Considering the plate geology of relief etching, one could say that Blake's message also is published on the mountains. The finale of Jerusalem presents a vision of "the Sun in heavy clouds / Struggling to rise above the Mountains" (95.11-12): a struggle, perhaps, because mountains are the "risings" of the earth, the objects of increasing Romantic adoration.

That Sun will rise over different mountains, the natural ones being removed and cast into the sea by faith and "firm persuasion" in imagination (Mk 12: cf. Mt. 21:21). Once

Jerusalem covered the Atlantic Mountains & the Erythrean,
From bright Japan & China to Hesperia France & England.
Mount Zion lifted his head in every Nation under heaven:
And the Mount of Olives was beheld over the whole Earth

That Sun will rise over different mountains, the natural ones being removed and cast into the sea by faith and "firm persuasion" in imagination (Mk 12: cf. Mt. 21:21). Once

Jerusalem covered the Atlantic Mountains & the Erythrean,
From bright Japan & China to Hesperia France & England.
Mount Zion lifted his head in every Nation under heaven:
And the Mount of Olives was beheld over the whole Earth

and though at present "Jerusalem lies in ruins: / Above the Mountains of Albion, above the head of Los" (J 71.54-55), in the words of Isaiah, "it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." (2:2)

1 On the development of this trend, see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite, The Norton Library (1959, rprt.; New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963). We may note here that "mountains" do, in fact, appear more frequently in Blake's imagery (161 times in the poetry) than in Wordsworth's or Shelley's. This is, to be sure, hardly true of mountain/mountain imagery at large; one finds at once that Blake uses no adjectival combinations such as "mountain gloom" or "glory." But the "mountains" themselves are more numerous, and more strange.


3 Joshua Poole, English Parmenides; or, A Help to English Poesie, cited in Nicolson, p. 35. Such epithets show how mountains become quintessentially "sublime" or "sublimes," just "below the threshold" (of heaven).


6 Cf. Shakespeare, Love's Labour's Lost, V.1.75-77; Anura urges Urien in a Blakean double-entendre "To arise to the mountain sport, / To the bliss of eternal valleys" (ibid. 5.7-8). Mountains also represent the woman's bosom; see in particular Blake's illustration no. 4 to Milton's L'Allegro, "The Sunshine Holiday."


10 Cf. Mt. 5:1, 14:23, 15:29; Mk. 3:13, 6:46; Lk. 6:12, 9:28; Jn. 6:3; 6:15. Thomas Fawcett nicely summarizes this important theme:

In addition to being antitypical, many events in Christ's life are associated with the cosmic mountain. The one in fact inevitably brought in the other by association. When Jesus is made in Matthew's gospel to give his new law from the mount, there is both a fulfillment of the Sinai revelation in view, and underlying this, the symbolism of the mountain as the place of God's disclosure to men. The motif appears on several occasions. The narrative opens with a story of temptation in which Christ formulates his message in confrontation with the Devil and in reliance on the word of God, appropriately located on a mountain. The moment of disclosure to the disciples of Jesus' nature and mission takes place on the mount of Transfiguration. At the summit of the mountain they see him converse with the saints of the past. His crucifixion was later held to have taken place upon a hill, and Calvary became the focal mountain for much Christian theology, because at this moment above all it came to be held that God had revealed himself to man. Finally the ascension is said to have taken place on the mount of Olives in such a way that the symbolism of the summit as the point of meeting between man and God is clearly shown. His ascension from this point implies a summit in which the two worlds of mythology are joined. (Symbolic Language, p. 227)
Hyle are "Building Castles in desolated places, and strong Fortifications". One argument against "Dinas-Bran" as a "camp" is that all the others are specific mountains or mountain ranges; but this remains unsatisfying at best.

20 Jacob Bryant, A New System or, An Analysis of Ancient Mythology, etc., vol. I (London, 1774), p. 94. The Greek root appears in the word "orology," which the OED cites from 1781 as "the science of mountains."

21 Harold Bloom remarks, "As Har means 'mountain' in Hebrew, the very phrase 'vales of Har' is an irony" [?] (E 663); Damon interprets the name and situation of Har as, "He who was a mountain now lives in a vale, cut off from mankind" (Blake Dictionary, p. 174).

22 William Borlase, Antiquities, Historical and Monumental, of the County of Cornwall. Consisting of Several Essays on the First Inhabitants, Druid-Superstition, Customs, and Remains of the most Remote Antiquity etc., 2nd ed. (London, 1769), p. 116. The practice was not confined to England; John Toland believed that "Abundance of such heaps remain still on the mountains in France, and on the Alps," A Critical History of the Celtic Religion etc. (London, n.d. [1740]), p. 102. The cross-cultural associations can extend even further. In his Ode to Superstition (1786), Samuel Rogers writes:

On yon hoar summit, mildly bright
With purple ether's liquid light
High o'er the world, the white-ro'd Magi gaze
On dazzling bursts of heav'ny fire... (II.3)

A note adds: "The Persians, says Herodotus, 'reject the use of temples, altars, and statues. The tops of the highest mountains are the places chosen for sacrifices'" (The Pleasures of Memory with other Poems, new & enlarged ed. [London, 1799], p. 118).

23 The imaginative power which increasingly associated mountain-tops and Druids is exemplified by a mid-nineteenth-century climber's description of the top of "Glyder Fach": "The scene before us, in fact, resembled the ruins of some vast Druidical temple—a mountain Stonehenge—which has been overthrown ages ago by some awful convulsion of nature. Indeed, so strong was our impression that we were in the midst of venerable Druidical remains, that it was some time ere we could convince ourselves that what we saw was in reality a chaotic mass of stones thrown into inconceivable convulsion" (John H. Ciffe, quoted in Edward C. Pyatt, Mountains of Britain [London: B. T. Batsford, 1966], p. 67).


28 See, for example, the map accompanying B. Lambert, The History and Survey of London and Its Environs (London, 1806), vol. IV.


31 Erdman astutely observes that "To correspond to the serpent in the Garden of Eden the typography of Hyde Park supplies the Serpentine River, which Blake in his devouersness never refers to by its own name..." (Blake: Prophet Against Empire, rev. ed. [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969], p. 465); one antiquary notes that the fatal tree was "opposite the head of the Serpentine... itself being formed in the bed of the ancient stream, first called Tyburn..." (Timbs, p. 809).