

jelige: wbfilm

The Good, the Bad and the Only

*An overdue hunt for the one William Blake
in the films 'Dead Man' and 'Last Days'*

TDK

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I. Introduction

Walking down the aisles of a bookstore I stumbled upon a book, the 2010 Hungarian edition of Paul Johnson's *Intellectuals*. The cover of the mentioned book¹ was a simple, white composition with a centrally positioned painting on it and with the book's title below, "*Értelmiségiek*". Although the title itself is very attractive with its risky simplicity; still it was not the reason why I stopped at that point of the bookshelf. Instead, it was the painting in the middle of the front cover. Familiar to the mind, still ever-novel to the senses, it was William Blake's *The Ancient of Days*.²

Having not known the book before, I immediately started to look through the pages, looking for further images and works by Blake, but much to my despair, there was nothing evidently Blakean in there, not even a reference for his *name* according to the register. However, the discovery of Blake's image on the cover simply did not leave me get back to a neutral position. I wanted to justify its use; moreover, I was inclined to defend the grand William Blake against a potentially inappropriate application of his work. After a while my attempts to define Blake and his "correct functions" proved to be groundless and I started to feel uncomfortable about my earlier conviction of how I was able to judge the "appropriateness" of the book's cover.

Actually it was not the first time when I have lost track on William Blake. Knowing him as the sane madman, as the introspective observer of the world, as the meticulous designer of the chaotic; seemingly one is doomed to be confused about the poet-painter. In relation with him the audience arrives at milestone zero, where the only appropriate label becomes *indeterminability* itself. Although it sounds as a paradox, which pilots us to nowhere, the lack of definability, to all intents and purposes, is a substantial consideration of the contemporary studies. Blundering against the question of the name, the problem of authorship or the dilemma of the subject, we cannot sweep round the potential of a discrepancy in the presumed unity and stability.

These issues become particularly significant in Blake-studies, where a peculiarly extended system of contradictions has been built under a single signifier. However, the situation grows even more complex if one encounters that name affixed to characters who show no apparent resemblance of the earlier kept conceptions about the poet-painter. At this

¹ Paul Johnson, *Értelmiségiek*. (Európa Könyvkiadó, 2010)

² William Blake's (1757-1827) frontispiece for his work, *Europe a Prophecy*, 1794.

point, the introduction of two contemporary films; *Dead Man* by Jim Jarmusch³ and Gus Van Sant's *Last Days*⁴ is self-evident. The first is set in the 19th century American West and follows the story of a young accountant named *William Blake* and his Native American companion, *Nobody* as they are travelling the West, while being chased by manhunters. At the same time, the second is a fictitious depiction of the last few days of a deviant young musician, who is also named *Blake* (although he is evidently reminiscent of the late Kurt Cobain⁵ in his looks).

Beyond question, the two movies have hardly anything significant to share at first sight; except the name of their main characters, *Blake*.⁶ However, after a thorough analysis one can establish a multi-leveled system of relations between them and the poet-painter, and the following essay is called to discover and demonstrate some of these interactions. Although these relations are impossible to systemize exclusively and accurately, a three-partite framework will be introduced for the analysis.

On the first level the films' most evident allusions to William Blake will be discussed, including the emphasized identity of the names, quotations from his texts, or other cursory references to his person and his oeuvre. To prove the necessity of these seemingly "mere" allusions in relation to the analysis, such ideas will be invoked as Louis Althusser's views on the presumed truth(s)⁷ or Michel Foucault's notion of the author's name and - function.⁸

The next stage of the analysis will be concerned with the motion pictures' tendency to represent the contradictory labels which are traditionally assigned to Blake. Instead of defining their main characters with these vignettes, they tend to emphasize how inappropriate they are in the determination of the *Blakes*. With this stance, echoing the failed attempts to classify Blake, it will be declared that the only recurring pattern regarding the *Blakes* is their indeterminability; consequently the idea of the one, determinable *Blake* must be revised.

This revision is in the centre of the third and the most complex level of the analysis. This part will focus on how the question of the divisible subject is accentuated by the *Blakes*, by exposing them and their interaction in the light of such approaches as Kristeva's notion of

³ Jim Jarmusch dir., *Dead Man*, written by Jim Jarmusch, Miramax Films, 1995. 121 minutes

⁴ Gus Van Sant dir., *Last Days*, written by Gus Van Sant, Picturehouse, 2005. 97 minutes

⁵ Kurt Cobain, American rock musician (1967-1994)

⁶ At this point it is crucial to point out that the essay's topic is peculiarly capable of causing misunderstandings because of the use of the three identical names. Although the essay tries to stress exactly the inextricability of these names; a kind of distribution is necessary in signifying them in the paper. From now on, *Blake* will be put in italics whenever it signifies the cinematic characters or the collective concept of *Blake* or the three *Blakes*.

⁷ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in "*Lenin and Philosophy*" and *Other Essays*. (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 2002), 127-193.

⁸ Michel Foucault, "What is An Author?" in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader*. (Vintage Books, 1984), 101-120. (Op. cit. for Foucault refer to this text.)

the speaking subject,⁹ Derrida's *différance*¹⁰ or Lacan's ideas on the self-identification.^{11 12} Eventually it will be concluded that meanwhile the circulation between the idea of the one *Blake* and that of the *Blakes*, a *Blake* becomes immortal, who is neither singular, nor plural, neither a poet, nor a painter, neither an accountant, nor a musician, but who is It that would be unable to exist without these labels' perpetual interaction.

Here I declare that the purpose of the essay is under no circumstances an attempt to destroy the myth built around William Blake, but the goal is to extend the dimensions of the myth by bringing the idea of an ever-changing Blake into existence. Until the point when a book with *The Ancient of Days* on its cover will not result in the reduction of interpretational possibilities, but rather in the proliferation of them.

⁹ Julia Kristeva, "The System and the Speaking Subject," in Toril Moi ed., *The Kristeva Reader*. (Columbia University Press, 1986), 24-33.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3-27.

¹¹ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I/as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Écrits: A selection*. (Routledge, 2004), 1-8.

¹² Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, "A Lacanian Theory of Cognition" in *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. (University of Illinois Press, 1986) 130-195.

II. *Mere references and references to the Mere*

The concept(s) of the name Blake(s)

There are decisive moments and first encounters which are burnt into one's memory so intensely that one can recall the events with a photographic accuracy even years later. Many times, these are moments shared by whole generations, or communities. In the movie, *Dead Man*, the ever-companion of the main character, a Native American man named *Nobody*, describes one of these memories of his;

Eventually, I was taken on a ship... across the great sea... over to England, and I was paraded before them... like a captured animal, an exhibit. And so I mimicked them, imitating their ways, hoping that they might lose interest in this young savage, but their interest only grew. So they placed me into the *white man's schools*. It was there that I discovered... in a book... the words that you, William Blake, had written.¹³ [*During this recollection we see the depiction of a child looking through a book with poems, with the portrait of William Blake on the cover.*]

The experience can be familiar to most of us regarding the first encounter with Blake. In our *white man's schools* we are exposed to our first collection of facts about the poet-painter. We learn which titles have to be linked to this name, which portraits, which dates, which professions are to be assigned to the five letters to be able to fit ourselves into the literary discourses of the Western culture.

As Althusser claims about the relation of the "good subjects" and the Ideological State Apparatuses, we "are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs."¹⁴ One fragmentary instance of these rituals is our introduction to William Blake by our primary ISA, the *white man's school*. We are educated into the habit that if we hear *Blake* than we immediately position ourselves into a net of catchwords regarding it, such like poet, prophet, painter, Romanticism, Enlightenment etc. The problem arises when we get also educated into the habit of treating many of these labels as incompatible within the same net, i.e. when we face "the transgression of frontier" which was "created by the act of naming."¹⁵

So trivial in our everyday, still so labyrinthine when inquired on a deeper level, is the name. Where does it come from, what it refers to, how it gains meaning(s) if it does at all; a series of dilemmas which kept so many great minds engaged, from Saussure through

¹³ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 49.

¹⁴ Althusser, op. cit., 303.

¹⁵ Kristeva, op. cit., 29.

Wittgenstein to Kripke. The problem of the act of naming then immediately brings up the questions of the “signifying process”¹⁶, while with a collective force they pilot us to the insecure concepts of subject or authorship. These are exactly the notions which are dealt with in such writings as Michel Foucault’s *What Is an Author?* or Julia Kristeva’s *The System and the Speaking Subject*.

Although Foucault points out that he particularly focuses on the relation between the author’s name and the texts, the “certain status”¹⁷ what he claims to the name of the author can be detected in any discourse where the actual name occurs. The “division and this distance”¹⁸ of the selves within the text (where he positions the author function) get even more complicated when we are dealing with movies headed by characters named *Blake*. It is not the author’s name primarily what is significant in relation to the movies, but rather the author function generated by that name. Furthermore, since Foucault emphasizes the “plurality of self”¹⁹ in his notion, the movies conjure up the concept of the plural self as well, on every occasion they accentuate on the name. Although the two films are quite economical with verbal actions, they are bountiful when it comes to mentioning *Blake*.

In *Last Days*, the name *Blake* is continuously repeated by inaugurating the speech acts of personal introductions, phone calls, and by the constant occurrence of visitors inquiring about the whereabouts of the main character. According to the dry numeral data, the name *Blake* is mentioned in every third or fourth minutes of the movie on the average; actually there is a persistent call for *Blake* in the film. Taking into consideration that our *white man’s schools* educated us to connect this combination of the five letters to the poet-painter, one can interpret the frequent occurrence of the name as a constant conjuration of the poet, even if we see a doppelgänger of Kurt Cobain bearing it.

In *Dead Man*, this accentuation through the name is even more remarkable. Throughout the 121 minutes of the movie, the name *William Blake* is mentioned almost 40 times. Here the frequent use of the speech act of personal introduction is even more stressed by further tricks, e.g. once the name is mistaken for Black, therefore *Blake* is repeated as a correction several times. *Blake*’s faithful companion, *Nobody* habitually adds the whole name to the end of the utterances addressed to his friend. Moreover, there are occasions when the character *Blake* himself refers to his own actions in third person singular by using his own

¹⁶ Kristeva, op. cit., 28.

¹⁷ Foucault, op. cit., 106.

¹⁸ Foucault, op. cit., 112.

¹⁹ Foucault, op. cit., 112.

name. However, the name is not only audible throughout the movie, but the audience encounters its written form on the continuously recurring warrants of arrest.

Out of the many occurrences of the name, *William Blake*, one dialogue is prominent and can be regarded as being of key importance. It is the scene covering the act of the introduction between the accountant and *Nobody*. Although for the most parts of the movie, the illustrious trait of the main character's name is unrecognized by the other characters, it is a turning point in the film when he is mistaken for the poet-painter by his novel companion, on the basis of his name.

[NOBODY] What name were you given at birth, stupid white man?

[BLAKE] Blake. William Blake.

[NOBODY] (*jumping up, backing*) Is this a lie or a white man's trick?

[BLAKE] No, I'm William Blake.

[NOBODY] Then you're a dead man. (...) I understand William Blake. You were a poet and a painter.²⁰

Actually the main character's name becomes impossible to separate from the author function. All what accompany the name, according to *Nobody's white man's school education*, come into play, and the author function is inserted even without the theoretical or practical presence of the author or his texts.

However, the dialogue touches upon the questions of the signifying practice on multiple levels. It emphasizes how a shared signifier (the name *William Blake*) can cause a failure in the process, while also pointing out the arbitrary nature of that signifier, by stressing that the name was *given* at birth.

From this conversation on, one can detect a range of primary allusions to William Blake, the poet-painter, including references to his profession(s), e.g. when *Nobody* repetitively misapprehends his identity - "It's so strange that you don't remember any of your poetry,"²¹ or when the woman, *Thel* becomes ironic about *Blake* who is gazing at her fall unabashedly: "Why don't you just paint my portrait?"²² *Thel*, the name itself is an evident reference to the illustrated poem of Blake, *The Book of Thel*.²³ Furthermore there are several word-to-word quotations from Blake's poetry (some of them will be introduced later on in the essay).

²⁰ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 36.

²¹ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 70.

²² Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 20.

²³ William Blake, *The Book of Thel*, 1789.

Comparing *Dead Man* to *Last Days*, the earlier provides much more tangible allusions to William Blake, while the references of the same kind are dropped behind in number in the latter. However it is crucial to stress that these basic allusions were collected in order to serve as triggers, not only on their own but by cooperating with each other, as well, in the further analysis. This part of the essay was called to draw the attention to the contradictions and concerns which can emerge in connection with such an everyday phenomenon as the name. As our *white man's schools* educate us to “the it is so and not otherwise”²⁴ truth(s) of the name *Blake*, so do they educate us to the similar truths of the concept of the name. However, as those truths of the name of *Blake* cause a chaos in the movie *Dead Man*, so can we arrive at further confusions caused by the truths of any other seemingly trivial concepts, be it a general label attached to the name *Blake*, or the notion of the homogeneous subject.

The abstract of Thomas Troy's recent essay on the relationship between *Dead Man* and the poet-painter begins with claiming that

Dead Man goes beyond merely quoting some lines from the poet (...). The film (...) richly represents Blake's ideas; indeed, the film can only truly be understood if its complex relationship to Blake's works is fully appreciated.²⁵

Although the essay is called to represent a seemingly similar approach, there is a core difference. In this first part I intended to point out that in fact *Dead Man* (and *Last Days*, as well) does not go beyond merely quoting some lines from the poet, but instead, it emphasizes the impossibility of the concept of “mere” quotations. In each of their seemingly trivial references (be it for example the identical name), the films formulate the idea of the impossibility of mere-ness. So the question is not whether the films go beyond the mere quotations of Blake, but whether the films go beyond simply quoting the idea of the mere Blake. With this stance, eventually, we arrived at the second phase of the analysis.

²⁴ Althusser, op. cit., 303.

²⁵ Thomas Troy, “William Blake and *Dead Man* – Abstract,” *Oxford Journals – Adaptation*, Vol. 5, Issue 1. (March 2012), available: <http://adaptation.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/03/24/adaptation.apr004.abstract>, access: 24 March 2012

II. *The discrepancy of the Blake-cliché*

A failed attempt to determine the cinematic Blakes in Blakean terms

A peculiarly well-dressed man is travelling on a train towards the town named *Machine*, while a(n in)famously shabbily dressed rock musician is sauntering in the fringe of a forest, watching a train passing by. Situating next to each other the opening scenes of *Dead Man* and *Last Days*, one encounters a series of contrasts; black and white versus delicacy in colours, machine versus nature, introspection versus observation, just to name a few.

These opposing entries show a startling resemblance of the commonplace ideas about 18th century England. The two introductory scenes are like polarized, allegorical representations of what we flatter ourselves to know about the Age of Enlightenment and Romanticism.

Taking into consideration that the main character is called *Blake* in both movies, one can immediately come up with a potential interpretation of the contrasts. There has been an inclination to blazon the 18th century poet-painter, William Blake with a series of seemingly irreconcilable classifying labels. Competing his Romantic introspection with his enlightened ideas, the mad grandeur of his prophecies with his meticulous designs, his poetry with his paintings are just a few examples from the chaos of contradictions reposed under the name *Blake*. According to Tilottama Rajan's writing, this turbulence of labeling Blake in the last few decades (caused either by hopelessly trying to "reconcile" the contradictions or by applying "the logic of absolute difference") is an answer to the previously more homogeneous approaches to the poet.²⁶ However, these attempts were proved to bring only temporary relief, and did not succeed in the long run. Indeed, they seem to be the latest couple of bewildering additions in relation to Blake.

Still, the two movies are over-equipped with these contradictory labels, either on the surface or laid under (figure 17-18). However, these vignettes are not forced on their *Blakes*, instead the films emphasize how the labels fail in defining the main characters. In *Dead Man* and in *Last Days* no side is taken in the Blake-debates, but the insolvability of these disputes is reflected. Furthermore, the *Blakes* are not positioned for good and all, but kept open and changing. With this persistent stress on the indeterminability of their main characters, the two films remain peculiarly faithful to the poet-painter, whose only stable characteristic seems to be exactly his indeterminability.

²⁶ Tilottama Rajan, "(Dis)figuring the System: Vision, History, and Trauma in Blake's Lambeth," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3/4, William Blake: Images and Texts (1995), 383.

One can describe the movie, *Last Days* as a depiction of binaries such nature and machine, madness and sanity or introspection and observation, still, all these catchwords (which have been haunting Blake-studies) are not enough to determine the *Blake* of the film. One cannot decide whether he is sane or mad.; a man who mumbles to himself, then dresses up in lingerie (here the reference to inconsistency by mixing gender-labels echoes the notion of Blake's "androgynous ego-ideal"),²⁷ then points his rifle at his sleeping friends, embraces kittens in his garden, or sits down with a Yellow Pages agent to talk about business. There is no followable pattern in his constant, from-minute-to-minute wandering on the scale of *sanity* (a similar wandering of William Blake is discussed in Andrew M. Cooper's article, *Blake and Madness: The World Turned Inside Out*);²⁸ the only thing that we get to know about him for sure is his unpredictability.

Blake is also obsessively moving between his garden and his house. What we see throughout the whole movie is a flustered walkabout in- and outside from the cottage to the garden. *Nature* proves to be a useless tool in fixating *Blake*, since their distance is in a persistent change.

The same unpredictability is represented in relation to the *machine*. In a scene we see *Blake* as being engaged in playing music (so expressing himself) with his electronic musical instruments (= the *machine*), but in a second he starts to destroy the electric apparatus during a fit of rage. Moreover, his relation to the *machine* gets even more incomprehensible if we take it into account that the noise made by the distorted instruments can be also a way of self-expression (especially in the discourse of the 1990s, when the genre *noise rock* was still at its last gasp). Again, one is left without the possibility of using the concept of *machine* as an either-or factor in the determination of *Blake*. In relation with the poet-painter, this ambiguity towards the machine is pointed out when Morris Eaves claims that Blake (although being openly against contemporary machinery) tended to echo the reproductive characteristic of industry with his devotion to printing.²⁹

At one point, the main character is called a "Rock'n'Roll cliché"³⁰ by a friend. To understand the multi-leveled inconsistency of this expression, it has to be pointed out that *Blake's* character is intendedly reminiscent of the late rock musician, Kurt Cobain, in his looks. Cobain embodied the grunge rock sentiment of the 1990s, which celebrated

²⁷ Tom Hayes, "William Blake's Androgynous Ego-Ideal," *ELH*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), 141-165.

²⁸ Andrew M. Cooper, "Blake and Madness: The World Turned Inside Out," *ELH*. Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 1990), 585-642.

²⁹ Morris Eaves, "Blake and the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum and TechnologyAuthor(s)" *PMLA*, Vol. 92, No. 5 (Oct., 1977), 912-913.

³⁰ Gus Van Sant, op. cit., min. 51.

unpredictability.³¹ So while becoming a rock'n'roll commonplace, unpredictability becomes the predictable pattern (so the cliché). At this point we arrive at the peak of the representation of indeterminability, since the determinability of the concept of *determination* has got at stake.

The same notion is at the core of the discrepancy of clichés applied to William Blake. Cliché is by definition suggests the presence of a pattern. This is highlighted by Amossy when claiming that

...clichés are clichés by virtue of a phenomenon of repetition (...), this repetition must be perceived as something purely mechanical, as parroting. It then appears to be something that dis-originates: at one and the same time, it erases origins and strips away originality. Repetition throws the figure into limitless circulation in which it is exchanged and replicated ad infinitum.³²

However, this definition becomes problematic when in relation to the poet-painter it is exactly the stress on his “originality” (patternlessness, unpredictability) which comes into a “limitless circulation.” The only way to resolve these contradictions is to break the idea of oneness, not only that of Blake, but also that of the *cliché*, and that of the *determination*.

By now it has been shown that in *Last Days* one can discover underlying references to the traditional (un)descriptive terms of William Blake; however, in the movie, *Dead Man*, some of these labels appear literally and as a consequence, their failure in determining *Blake* become much more stressed.

In the opening scene of the film, we see *Blake* travelling towards the town of *Machine* and being told that it is “the end of the line”³³. However, when he arrives, he immediately stirs up hostility, and is forced to flee *Machine*; in this way actually *Machine* becomes the beginning of the road. Consequently, *Blake*’s stable relation to the *machine* is questioned, since the distance between him and the town is subject to a continuous alteration. A similar confusion appears in relation with *machine* when *Blake* starts to destroy the warrants of arrest with his picture on them. With this act, *Blake* simultaneously destroys the products of a machinery (the prints) and rips the “reflection” of himself. As a consequence, he disfigures the one who disfigures the products of the machine. We cannot use machine as a consistent label to describe *Blake*, but rather the persistent re-writing of both takes place during their

³¹ The varying of soft-spoken vocal and angry screams, soft harmonies and distorted guitar solos within the same songs or the change of passive presence and heavy outbursts on stage are just a few examples of the repertoire of unpredictability represented by Cobain’s band, Nirvana.

³² Ruth Amossy, “The Cliché in the Reading Process” *SubStance*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Issue 35 (1982), 34-35.

³³ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 7.

interaction. As Eaves claims in his essay on the relationship of Blake and the machine, “The only way to go from one to the other [from mechanism to organism] is by translating the principles of one into the principles of the other.”³⁴ However, they can be only translated into each other if they are based on the same system. In this way the contradictory characteristic of machine and nature is challenged.

On another occasion the following sentence is addressed to the main character: “You’ve sure interrupted a very romantic moment, William Blake.”³⁵ It is a complaint by *Nobody*, when his passionate philander is cut short by the occurrence of his friend. The sentence goes without carrying evident evaluation about the event. *Nobody* is happily embracing *Blake*, while his woman companion is frantic with anger, throwing curses on William Blake, before eventually leaving the scene. Furthermore, *Blake* is not positioned as an active agent in the process. *William Blake* is gazing at the couple from a definite distance, silently, hidden in the dark. His position is so tranquil, that seemingly it is he whose moment is interrupted by the couple’s recognition of him and by their passionate reactions. It seems that in relation with the interruption of the *romantic* moment, we do not get any straight directions, but we get a claim about *William Blake*, which then can be challenged by the very root. This contradictory nature of relating Blake, the poet to the Romantic moment, is represented in Seymour Howard’s essay, when calling him a “Romantic god-like hero” and the “embodiment of eighteenth-century traditions of enlightenment” in the same paragraph.³⁶ Stempel claims something similar when claims that

In almost all anthologies the romantic period opens with Blake, but he has become something more than the herald of a change in literary history: the quintessential romantic and, more recently, the archetypal poet-prophet of postromantic literature and critical theory. Yet, on close examination, his "rebellion" against eighteenth-century literary conventions has little or nothing in common with that of the romantics.³⁷

With the help of the examples above, we can see how a never-ending interaction is set afloat by the identical names. The name *Blake* tricks the interpreter into recognizing certain labels frequently used to attempt to define the “primary” Blake, the poet-painter. However, as these labels fail in the determination of the one Blake, so they fail in determining the cinematic

³⁴ Eaves, op. cit., 903.

³⁵ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 88.

³⁶ Seymour Howard, “William Blake: The Antique, Nudity, Nakedness: A Study in Idealism & Regression,” *Artibus and Historiae*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (1982), 137.

³⁷ Daniel Stempel, “Blake, Foucault, and the Classical Episteme,” *PMLA*. Vol. 96, No. 3 (May, 1981), 388.

ones. By recognizing this pattern of *indeterminability* in relation with the *Blakes*, one can make an attempt to liberate the name from the earlier attached labels. However, in this case, this liberation will be reflected by the filmic *Blakes* again. But by freeing them from the earlier vignettes, the basis for the pattern of *indeterminability* would be lost. In order to prevent this; instead of liberating the one Blake from the labels, Blake must be liberated from the idea of its oneness. With this stance, the essay makes an attempt to (partly) challenge Laura Quinney's claim that "the concepts can never lose their hold on the individual subject."³⁸

Now we arrived at the third level, where the notion of the *oneness* will be discussed by showing how the movies' interaction with William Blake reflect continuously on the subject's indeterminability and how this can eventually result in a kind of determination.

³⁸ Laura Quinney, *William Blake on Self and Soul*. (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2009), 3.

III. A Self, inflicted...

Ideas on the subject as represented by the Blakes

In 1992, two years before Kurt Cobain's suicide, his band, Nirvana lived its heyday with several chart-leading hit songs. One of these songs titled *In Bloom* includes the following lines: "He's the one/ Who likes all our pretty songs/ And he likes to sing along/ And he likes to shoot his gun/ But he don't (sic) know what it means."³⁹ Based on the grammatical bloomer of the last line, and bearing in mind the ill-fated events of 1994, one can set up a rather bitter interpretation of the song; where there is a reference to the lost self, who is insecure in his own actions, who is partly an insider, partly an outsider in his own existence, whose initially mentioned oneness is questioned from the root.

In more than a decade, in 2005, Gus Van Sant presented his daring movie, *Last Days*, a fictitious depiction of the final days of the late Cobain. Throughout the movie, the gun has a significant role, the main character named *Blake* keeps a rifle with him for most of the times, making verbal references to it on many occasions (e.g. a story told about a rifleman). At this point one can be reminded of *Dead Man*'s leading character, also named *Blake* and also equipped with a gun throughout the movie. So the first common thing between the main characters, after their name, is their guns. It suggests a strange ambiguity, since the name is a primary tool in unifying the subject while the rifles are primary tools in opening it up. (As Foucault claims:

One might say that it is the Name that organizes all Classical discourse; to speak or to write is not to say things or to express oneself, it is not a matter of playing with language, it is to make one's way to-ward the sovereign act of nomination, to move, through language, towards the place where things and words are conjoined in their common essence, and which makes it possible to give them a name.)⁴⁰

However, regarding the question of oneness, the Winchesters are just fragmentary pieces (though of obvious importance) in the films. The two cinematic pieces represent a complex net of the query in relation with the homogeneous subject, while advertise the idea of the borderless, ever-changing version of it persistently.

After having pointed out the most trivial references of the movies to the poet-painter and then represented how they stressed their own characters' indeterminability by indicating

³⁹ Kurt Cobain, "In Bloom." Lyrics. *Nevermind*. DGC, 1992.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*. (New York: Pantheon, 1970), 119.

the pitfalls of labeling William Blake, now we have arrived at the most complicated co-operation of the three *Blakes*.

In this part, such aspects will be examined as the joint of birth and death, body and soul, language and vision, presence and absence, self-construction and self-destruction, as represented in the circulating interaction between the two movies and William Blake. Eventually it will be proved that in order to resolve the confusion caused by the presumed, irreconcilable forms of contradictions, the notion of the plural *Blake* must be introduced, while the idea of the one *Blake* has to be brought into non-existence.

Being referred right in their titles, this non-existence is at the heart of the motion pictures. The title *Dead Man* can be interpreted as a reference to the death of the indivisible, homogeneous subject's idea, since the film is continuously making allusions to the topic.

At the beginning, the main character arrives with a letter in his hand which "confirms Blake's position here"⁴¹ (as an accountant in a factory). However, the promise of it is immediately proved to be mistaken. At this point the subject loses the acknowledgement of its own, earlier determined existence. Something similar happens, when scenes later the speaking William Blake is told that he was a "dead man". This dual existential status of his (confirmed alive by the fact that he talks, confirmed dead by the fact that he is told to be dead) is further complicated by the addition that he is confirmed dead by a man called *Nobody*. Here, the language hits with a multi-leveled twist on the logic of existence. "You're a dead man"⁴², the subject is addressed with an utterance which confirms him to be unaddressable. "The speaking subject"⁴³ (as at Kristeva) or the subject who fulfills his subjectivity by entering the Symbolic order (as at Lacan)⁴⁴ seems to be excluded from that order from within that order. The same happens at the beginning, when *Blake* has to enter the place of his presumed position (his boss' office.) to be excluded from that position.

A discrepancy in the system happens (or "transgression"⁴⁵ appears, as Kristeva calls it). However, within the system, the occurrence of discrepancy sets afloat a new order. The subject at this time gets informed of his "capacity for renewing the order in which he is inescapably caught up."⁴⁶ So the inconsistency can be resolved only by multiplying *Blake*, i.e. bringing it in a perpetual motion by introducing the idea of the one *Blake* (a *Blake* who is passive within the system) and that of the plural *Blake* (a *Blake* who is active within the

⁴¹ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 14.

⁴² Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 37.

⁴³ Kristeva, op. cit., 28.

⁴⁴ Ragland-Sullivan, op. cit., 162-182.

⁴⁵ Kristeva, op. cit., 29.

⁴⁶ Kristeva, op. cit., 29.

system). The idea of the one is confirmed dead, and at the very moment of that confirmation, the plural *Blake* is born. This way, *Blake* can be kept alive, even after confirming *Blake* dead, since the perpetual motion (i.e. being alive) is not to be found within the heterogeneous subject, but in-between the idea of homogeneity and heterogeneity. *Blake* is kept alive by the turbulence caused by the ever-circulating interactions between his death and his birth.

This topic is further stressed by the question which is posed at one point to the main character “Did you kill the white man who killed you?”⁴⁷ The question only gains sense if the idea of the plural (or divisible) subject is introduced, since if the subject is treated as inherently indivisible then we fall immediately into the pitfalls of logic. Killing the one who kills one is self-destruction. However, in this compound, the “self” is subject to ambiguity. In one way, it is depicted as the agent of destruction (active), in another, as the patient of it (passive). However, the two can be reconciled again by claiming that the birth of the idea of the plural *Blake* destructs the idea of the one *Blake*. In this sense self-destruction can be defined *not as the one who destructs himself (his self)* but as *the self who destructs his oneness*. The main character confesses later that “William Blake killed the white man,”⁴⁸ where “white man” can stand for the notion of the Cartesian closedness, since in *Dead Man*, it is exactly the name “William Blake” which necessitates the demolition of the idea of the Cartesian cogito.

At the end of the film, when the Dead Man is actually dying, it is claimed that “William Blake is a legend now.”⁴⁹ The word “legend” alludes to the mythical characteristic of the Cartesian ego, which actually never existed, however the idea of it has to be confirmed to be dead to make room for to the idea of the heterogeneous subject. As soon as one enters the discourse of the *Blakes*, the notion of the one *Blake* must die. With this approach Heidegger’s longing for the discovery of the undiscoverable Being⁵⁰ is echoed, since it presumes an incomprehensible *Blake* over the idea of the one- and the idea of the plural *Blake*. Derrida also deals with the topic, by challenging the concept of the name in *Différance*.⁵¹ He concludes with the introduction of the “unique word” (so “the name of the

⁴⁷ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 36.

⁴⁸ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 92.

⁴⁹ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 102.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1962)

⁵¹ Derrida, op. cit., 3-27.

name”),⁵² which again recalls the main dilemma of this essay, i.e. whether the name *Blake* can be traced⁵³ back to its origin or not.

The movie *Last Days* is similarly perfused with allusions to the problems of concept of divisibility. One of them is the contradiction between the main character’s actual presence and the habitual confirmation of his absence throughout the movie. “Blake is not here”, “No, I haven’t seen him.”⁵⁴ – We hear, while seeing his body being present on the screen. The duality of presence and absence is the heart of the matter of self-identification. As Derrida writes “When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when the present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign.”⁵⁵ *Blake*’s presence is persistently denied throughout the movie, and so is his absence. While the first happens with the help of the language, the second is called forth visually, by showing his body. (Consequently, the problems of the presence/absence split are tightly bound together with the split of verbal/pictorial representations.) Using Derrida’s idea on the inextricability of presence and absence, however, *Blake*’s existence is elevated to an even more unintelligible level. His bodily presence, according to the Derridean idea, carries the notion of the absence of the thing. (Erin M. Goss in her article provides a profound analysis of the bodily presence as represented in the works of Blake.)⁵⁶ However, in the film, absence is not hidden, but it is practically brought to the surface, by the constant references made to it. Blake’s absence does not only occur as a connotation of his (bodily) re-presentation, but his absence occurs as a re-presentation itself. In this way the presence-absence problem gets even more complicated, since *absence* as a re-presentation has to have a connotational absence, as well, but this way presence gets at stake on several levels.

However, this confusion can be mitigated again by claiming that whenever a reference is made to Blake’s absence in the movie, it is an allusion to the absence of the idea of the one Blake. What is present at the same time is the notion of the *Blakes*. In this way a simultaneous absence and presence becomes possible, without deleting the name *Blake*. Eventually we arrived back at Derrida’s basic thought on presence and absence (the paragraph’s starting point), however, in the meanwhile the reason of the accentuated presence and absence in the movie get justified.

⁵² Derrida, op. cit., 27.

⁵³ Although general in its use, it has to be mentioned that *trace* occurs as one of the keywords in Derrida’s writing, *Différance*.

⁵⁴ Van Sant, op. cit., min. 26.

⁵⁵ Derrida, op. cit., 8.

⁵⁶ Erin M. Goss, “What is Called Corporeal: William Blake and the Question of the Body,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 51.4 (Winter 2010), 413-430.

At this point it is worth to mention that these splits between the body and the soul, the verbal and the pictorial, the presence and the absence play a very important role in the oeuvre of William Blake. He frequently brought together verbal and pictorial representations in his illuminated poetry, but his longing for the reconciliation of the presumed dichotomies is not only represented by his mixed media, but also in the contents of his works. As it is written in the *Gnomic Verses*, “Do what you will, this life’s a fiction/ And made up of contradiction.”⁵⁷ These contradictions are at the heart of his poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where the passage appears:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion,
Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.
From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil.
Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing
from Energy. Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.⁵⁸

Bearing in mind Blake’s ideas on multiple vision (of which more anon), it is necessary to point out that with his affection of depicting binaries, Blake does not popularize actual forms of discrimination (out of the simple reason that according to his system of thoughts, as many of these forms exist as many people are in the world). Instead, he emphasizes the inevitable necessity of the idea of contradiction. When claiming that “Opposition is true friendship,”⁵⁹ he resonates the Derridean idea⁶⁰, by suggesting that at every turn of perception, what is present is not the thing itself, but the idea of opposition (presence-absence), which compensates for the incomprehensibility of the thing. In *Dead Man*, the opening lines of his verse, *The Everlasting Gospel*, is quoted by the Native American character when encountering a hostile missionary: “The vision of Christ that thou dost see/ Is my vision’s greatest enemy.”⁶¹ Later on, the verse says “Both read the Bible day and night, But thou read’st black where I read white.”⁶² ⁶³ With these lines, again, it is emphasized that there are no real opposition(s), but opposition is an idea invoked to bring the incompatible visions together in the same discourse.

⁵⁷ William Blake, *Gnomic Verses*, xxiii available: <http://www.britannica.com/bps/additionalcontent/17/14409/Gnomic-Verses>, access: 25 March 2012

⁵⁸ William Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790, available: <http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=mhh&java=yes>, access: 26 March 2012

⁵⁹ William Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790, available: <http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=mhh&java=yes> access: 26 March 2012

⁶⁰ Derrida, op. cit. 3-27.

⁶¹ William Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel* available: <http://www.bartleby.com/236/58.html> access: 26 March 2012

⁶² William Blake, *The Everlasting Gospel* available: <http://www.bartleby.com/236/58.html> access: 26 March 2012

⁶³ Here the movie’s underlying racial issue could be mentioned as well.

Nor Gus Van Sant's fiction is economical with these invoked oppositions. There is the recurring scene in *Last Days* when *Blake* becomes motionless, ending up in catatonia for minutes, giving no signs of being alive. After the black-outs he continues his usual activities like nothing happened. This frequent fluctuation between motionlessness and the frantic walkabouts washes away the sharp contrast between the two, they become inextricable, each of the black-outs promises the regaining of the consciousness, while each of the conscious moments predicts a next black-out. The subject is present and absent at the same time, motionless and hyperactive, dead and alive simultaneously. However, these contradictions confuse the main character in his presumed oneness, and he becomes insecure, saying "I don't know what I'm... God ...it's just ...I don't know"⁶⁴ At this point, we arrive at the necessity of death again. In order to liberate himself from the urge to get to know (the one) himself, Blake has to kill the idea that the subject is able to grasp itself as indivisible. The beneficiary of this death is again the idea of the heterogeneous *Blake*. As he says: "For every thought of good... for every thought of good that my death... will benefit."⁶⁵ Eventually he takes his own life supposedly by means of the rifle, in this way opening up the closed subject symbolically and literally at the same time.

Taking into consideration the Lacanian ideas, mirror and the eyes are key words in the concept of the subject and self-identification. Both of the movies stress these "apparatuses", by pointing out their significance in various ways. In *Last Days*, the main character, *Blake*'s face is hardly shown in full throughout the entire movie; his eyes are frequently hidden by his hair, by sunglasses or by hoods (figure 6, 12, 15, 16). With his eyes rarely shown, Blake is symbolically dispossessed of his vision, consequently he is paralyzed in the process of self-identification, i.e. the "Ideal-I"⁶⁶, as Lacan calls the imaginary total towards one can direct himself, disappears, leaving him without directions. There is also a scene when *Blake* is sitting in front of a mirror, however, we cannot see his reflection, since the angle of the camera positions *Blake* and the mirror in a way that one can see only the back of his head, and an almost reflectionless mirror. But without the reflection, the mirror lost its function, and as a consequence, leaves *Blake* without the possibility of self-transformation. Moreover, Gus Van Sant's recurring technique of depicting his characters from behind (figure 8, 10, 12) (which technique is also a recurring technique in *Dead Man* (figure 11, 13) and on William Blake's illustrations (figure 7, 9) is frequently applied during this movie as well. These techniques of

⁶⁴ Van Sant, op. cit., min. 7.

⁶⁵ Van Sant, op. cit., min. 40.

⁶⁶ Lacan, op.cit., 2.

hiding the points (or stages) of identification are even more stressed on the two official posters of the movie. On one of them (figure 16), Blake is watching the sky, all what we see is his chin turned up, in this way his head assumes the position of a dead man's head, while we again cannot see his eyes in full. On the other poster (figure 15), his sunglasses hide his eyes, while he puts his hand in front of his mouth. By hiding the mouth and the tongue, he gets again symbolically dispossessed of a crucial tool of identification, i.e. of language. Indeed, this challenge of the entering the symbolic is also underpinned by the movie's tendency to use relatively few verbal actions, while simultaneously applying incomprehensible, patternless, distorted effects of sounds. As a consequence, Blake is seen as being incapacitated on at least two levels out of Lacan's "Three Orders", i.e. "the Imaginary- and the Symbolic Order."⁶⁷

The significance of the reflection in the concept of the subject is also emphasized in *Dead Man* on several occasions. At one point Blake complains to *Nobody*: "I seem to have misplaced my eyeglasses. I can't see clearly."⁶⁸ *Nobody* responses, while having Blake's glasses on: "Perhaps you will see more clearly without them."⁶⁹ It is a reference to the distorting nature of glasses and mirrors. In this sense it is quite telling that the recurring Blakean lines in the film are the "Every night and every morn/ Some to misery are born./ Every morn and every night/ Some are born to sweet delight./ Some are born to sweet delight,/ Some are born to endless night,"⁷⁰ since these are exactly the lines which are then followed this way in the poem (although not included in the cinematic script): "We are led to believe a lie/ When we see not through the eye."⁷¹ Here Blake distinguishes a pure vision and the vision distorted by reflection. So by being dispossessed of his glasses, *Blake* got simultaneously rid of the "lie" which was caused by the reflection of the glasses. This idea is represented at Lacan, when calling the reflection-triggered phase of identification the "*Imaginary Order*" while sharply differentiating it from "the Real."⁷² However, this is not the only reference to the eye in the oeuvre of William Blake; he deals frequently with its cognitive role. At one point he wrote

(...) I know that This World Is a World of IMAGINATION & Vision. I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike. (...) The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands

⁶⁷ Sullivan, op. cit., 130-195.

⁶⁸ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 71.

⁶⁹ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 71.

⁷⁰ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 38.

⁷¹ William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence* available: <http://www.bartleby.com/41/356.html>, access: 26 March 2012

⁷² Ragland-Sullivan, op. cit., 138-159.

in the way. ... To the eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself.
As a man is, So he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers.⁷³

By pointing out that the eye is “formed”, we can feel the quotation’s resonance with the Lacanian idea of self-formation. The ambiguity of the utterance “As a man is, So he Sees” is unignorable. In a sense, it means that *as the ‘I’ is formulated, so does seeing gain significance*, on the other hand it means that there *are as many ways of seeing as many formulated Is*. In this way it is stressed that the *I* is formulated with the help of vision (the Mirror Stage),⁷⁴ though this vision does not show a universal pattern, so the formulated *Is* can only relate themselves to their own visions, consequently it results an “imaginary order”⁷⁵ (as at Lacan, again.)

Continuing with the notion of reflection, in *Dead Man*, unlike in *Last Days*, there are several verbal references to the mirrors instead of pictorial representations. At the end of the movie, when the Dead Man is dying, his friend, *Nobody* claims:

I will take you to the bridge made of waters. The *mirror*. Then you will be taken up to next level of the world. The Place where William Blake is from. Where his spirit belongs. I must make sure that you pass back through *mirror* at that place... where the sea meets sky.⁷⁶

Following again the Lacanian requirements of the subject’s self-construction, one can claim that *Blake* will be provided with the necessary tool, the mirror and so he can enter the Imaginary (here – “the next level of the world.”)⁷⁷ However, one mustn’t forget about that Blake is the Dead Man. In this respect, it becomes like a life-story turned backwards, where being dead becomes the first requirement of being born.

This turn is also represented in *Last Days*, when the main character starts to sing a song (titled *Death to Birth*). The lyrics goes at one point “Should I lie under/ Still in the *door*/ Or walk around again? (...) I know I’ll never know/ Until I come face to face/ With my own... cold... dead face.”⁷⁸ This echoes what was claimed earlier about how the one *Blake* must die to make room for the existence of the *Blakes*. Interestingly, right before the beginning of the

⁷³ William Blake, in his letter to the Reverend Dr. Trusler, in 1799. available: <http://www.english.uga.edu/nhilton/Blake/blaketxt1/Letters/5.html>, access: 26 March 2012

⁷⁴ Lacan, op. cit.

⁷⁵ Lacan, op. cit.

⁷⁶ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 90.

⁷⁷ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 90.

⁷⁸ Michael Pitt, “Death to Birth.” Lyrics. *Pagoda*. Ecstatic Peace!, 2007.

song, we can hear an extended sound-effect of a creaking door. Adding it to the lyrics (“Still in the door”), this part of the movie carries a peculiarly Blakean taste in it.

Besides that it frequently appears on Blake’s illustrations (figure 1-3), the *door* in the Blakean stream of ideas is definitely one of the closest relatives of the thoughts mentioned above in connection with the mirror. In the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, it is written that “If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite./ For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.”⁷⁹ While according to *Nobody*’s idea it is the mirror that separates the different levels of the world, in the Blakean idea it is the door, while the narrow chinks can be a metaphor of the eyes, the cavern the metaphor of the body. The self-closed man is the subject which is nestling himself into the imagination of being self-identical by providing himself a delimited body, i.e. the cavern. Without the doors, the presumed oneness would be at stake.

This thought is emphasized throughout the movie, *Last Days*. What we see through the 90-some minutes is a continuous operation with the doors. Blake is in a persistent interaction with them (figure 4-6), doors are shown, are opened, are closed, are slammed, Blake leans against the doors during his black-outs, or, definitely the most interesting positioning of him, when he stands on the doorstep (in-between). *Blake* does not seem to insist on closing those doors (or himself up) anymore, according to the Blakean idea, in this way, the oneness of the subject becomes impossible, the subject enters the infinite. There is also a significant 5 minutes long scene in the movie when the main character is shown through the *chinks* of a giant window (almost door-like). During the scene we gradually get farther from the window, losing sight of the main character for seconds.

At the peak of the movie (if we can speak about a peak in relation with *Last Days*), the same happens. We see *Blake*’s corpse through the glass-walls and *doors* of a wintergarden (the act of suicide is not shown, however, we can conclude to it, on the basis of later dialogues in the film, and the real-life events regarding Cobain.) Suddenly, on the surface of the glass-doors we can see a nude man’s reflection, which is eventually resulted in the vision of the reflected man climbing out of the dead body and walking towards the sky. A haunting, still beautifully refined picture, which elevates the question of the fragile subject on an even higher level, where the real and the imaginary, the self and the other, the body and the soul become pleasingly reconciled and immensely merged into each other.

⁷⁹ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, available:
<http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=mhh&java=yes> access: 26 March 2012

Going further with the doors, there is also a “silent”, still primary audible reference to them in the movie. The soundtrack played during the opening scene is a composition by Hildegard Westerkamp, titled after the Blakean phrase mentioned above, *Doors of Perception*.

However, we can also recognize some allusions to the doors in *Dead Man*. When the offered job is denied to Blake, he insists on speaking with the boss (so on going through the door to him). Upon his insistence, all men present start laughing as if what they hear were impossible. Eventually one of them shows him the way saying: “There’s the door.”⁸⁰ However, when he enters, the reception is peculiarly hostile, the boss points his gun at him and saying “What the hell are you doin’ in my office? (...) The only job you’re gonna get in here is pushin up daisies from a pine box.”⁸¹ Beyond the door, again, infinity (accessed through death) is the only option.

Now one can see that the two movies and William Blake share many views on the issue of the subject. They are constantly reflecting on such key notions of the topic as birth and death, construction and destruction, presence and absence, real and imaginary, verbal and pictorial. Both the films and the poet-painter build on these oppositions, and one can say ironically, that by now the essay has returned to its starting point, where the attempts to classify Blake with contradictions were criticized. However, there is a major difference between the criticized polarization of Blake and the Blakes’ treatment of opposition. While the earlier is a failed attempt to reduce Blake to one, indivisible entity by using actual contradictions, the latter is an induction of an ever-circulation with the help of the idea of opposition.

⁸⁰ Jarmusch, op. cit., min.15.

⁸¹ Jarmusch, op. cit., min. 16.

IV. Conclusion

Being stuck between the seemingly irreconcilable labels attached to William Blake, the essay started out from the experience of incapacity in defining him. However, encountering the two contemporary motion pictures headed by main characters named *Blake*, the dilemma appeared even more vigorously: what does the name *Blake* stand for, at all?

Beginning with the basics, the identical name was examined as the primary reference to the poet in the films. After invoking Foucault's concepts of the *name of the author* and *author function*, it was pointed out that conjuring up the poet in relation to the movies, which persistently emphasized the use of the name *Blake*, was inevitable. After collecting further evident references to the poet, it was suggested that a more thorough analysis was necessary.

As a consequence, it was examined how the two movies resonated the traditional labels used to describe the poet-painter. By reflecting on such presumedly oppositional notions as the machine and nature or the madness and sanity, the films were provided a peculiarly faithful picture about the indeterminable character of William Blake, since contrary to the use of all these defining labels, their own characters remained inconsistent and open.

Taking into consideration that the only pattern that was shown by the three *Blakes* was exactly their indeterminability, the essay switched to examine how the idea of the subject's determination was formulated in the two movies and in the works of William Blake in every of their details. By invoking Lacan's, Kristeva's, or Derrida's concepts in connection with the topic, the two movies were proved to share a whole range of views with the Blakean works.

Still, *Dead Man* and *Last Days* cannot be stamped as mere followers of William Blake, since as soon as we enter the discourse of the three *Blakes*, the disappearance of the one, definable Blake becomes a necessity. As a consequence, one can only define *Blake* by claiming him indefinite. To resolve this contradiction, a circulation between the idea of the one *Blake* and the idea of the plural *Blake* has to be induced. By keeping the two in a perpetual interaction of being sacrificed on each other's altar; *a Blake* can be immortalized; *a Blake* who is free from the restricting labels and who, instead of being defined by oppositions, is kept alive by the infinite ruckus caused by the idea of those contradictions.

In this respect, it is proven that the two movies, *Dead Man* and *Last Days* are not more originated in William Blake's works than William Blake's works are originated in them. In this way, neither in *Dead Man*, nor in *Last Days* or in the works of the poet-painter, but in their perpetual circulation, a time- and limitless Blake is being born.

V. Illustrations

The depiction of the door in William Blake's illustration and in the movie *Last Days*

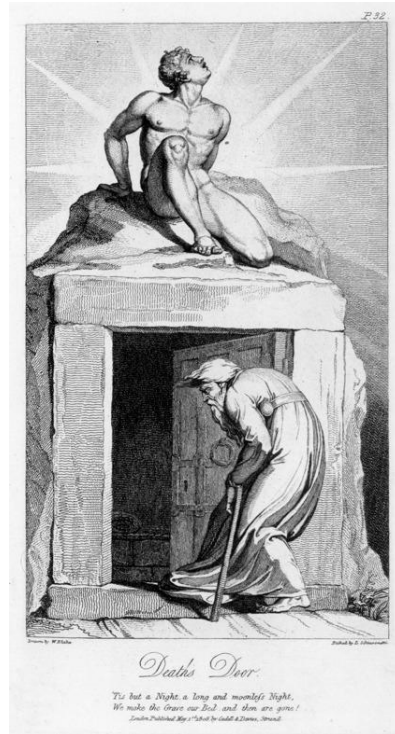


figure 1



figure 2



figure 3



figure 4



figure 5



figure 6

Depicting the characters from behind in William Blake's illustrations and in the films *Last Days* and *Dead Man*



figure 7



figure 8

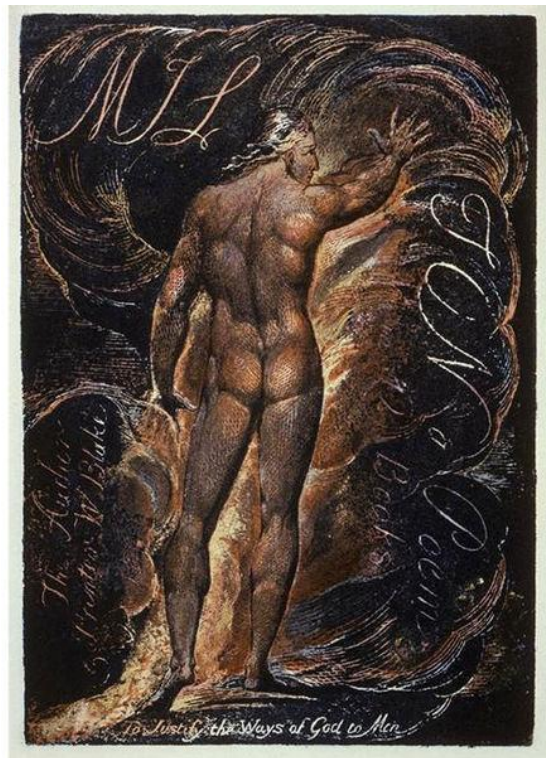


figure 9



figure 10



figure 11

Visual references to the issue of “reflection” in the movies *Last Days* and *Dead Man*



figure 12



figure 13



figure 14

Hiding the points of identification in the movie *Last Days*

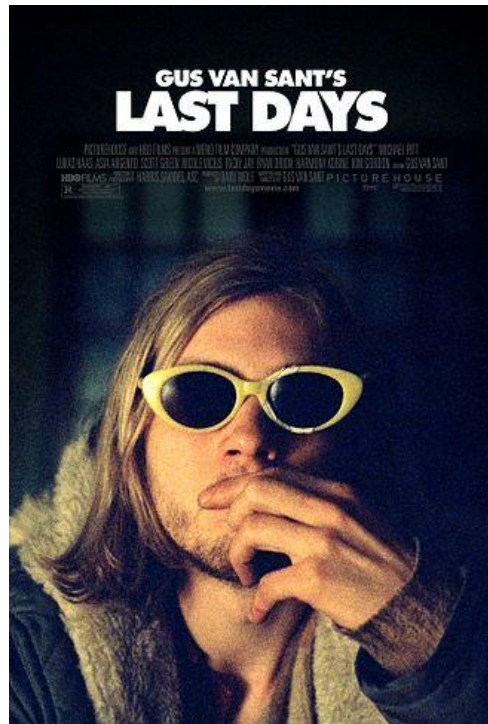


figure 15

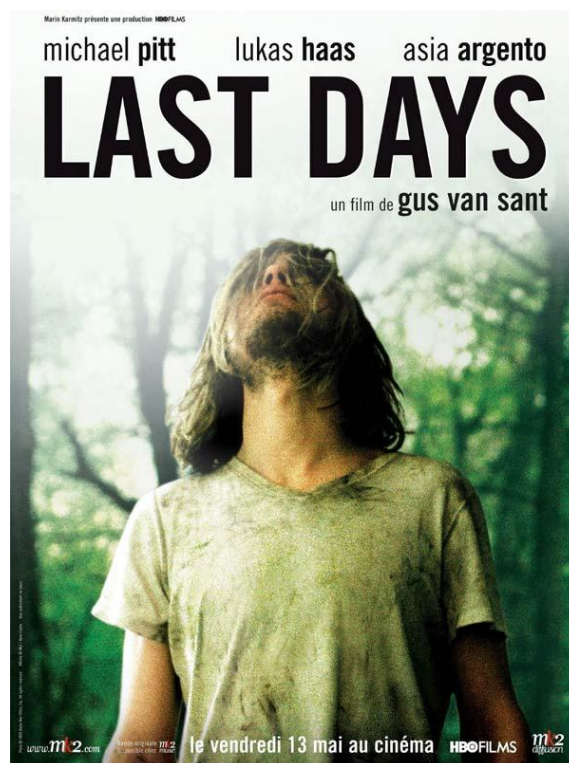


figure 16

The Blakes surrounded by machine and nature (in the movies *Last Days* and *Dead Man*)



figure 17



figure 18

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VII. *List of Illustrations*

Figure 1, William Blake, *Death's Door*, 1805

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