



### William Blake as Natural Philosopher, 1788-1795

*By Joseph Fletcher*

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**Reads William Blake as a natural philosopher and reveals the way that poetry and visual art were for Blake an imaginative way of philosophizing**

*William Blake as Natural Philosopher, 1788-1795* takes seriously William Blake's wish to be read as a natural philosopher, particularly in his early illuminated works, and reveals the way that poetry and visual art were for Blake an imaginative way of philosophizing.

#### Key selling points

- Foregrounds Blake's evolving philosophical positions as foundational to his early work
- Argues that by philosophizing via poetry *and* image, Blake occupies a unique position in a long tradition of philosopher-poets
- Presents an intellectual history that connects the pantheistic and other vitalist ideas referenced in the work of Blake and his contemporaries to Early Modern, Classical, and Neoplatonic sources
- Considers Blake's deep engagement with multiple long-eighteenth-century natural-philosophic discourses from the perspective of contemporary ecocritical frameworks, such as Green Romanticism, which considers how Romantic poets explored the relationship between humans and nonhumans

#### Contents

List of Figures; Acknowledgments; Introduction: "We Who Are Philosophers": Blake's Early Metaphysics; Chapter One A Sense of the Infinite: Leibniz, Hume and Panpsychism in the Early Tractates; Chapter Two Soul Matter: The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and Monist Pantheism; Chapter Three Breathing Dust: Erasmus Darwin and Blake's Regenerative Materialism; Chapter Four "Horrible Forms of Deformity": The Urizen Cycle and Vitalist Materialism; Coda: The Ghost of Pantheism; Bibliography; Index.

#### About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

**Joseph Fletcher** is Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he also serves as Managing Editor of the William Blake Archive.

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