

## Beauty

(from *Cantares Mexicanos*, recorded from Aztec sources by Fr. Sahagun in the 16th century)

Beauty-painted<sup>1</sup> viper, stay, be still  
while I dream-imprint your subtle pattern.  
I shall weave your venom in a gift-cloth<sup>2</sup>  
To entice a lover-muse...

Her beauty shall exalt  
alone, of all The Shining,  
Thou: ever-present<sup>3</sup> serpent<sup>4</sup>.



Gaboon Viper



The Brazen Serpent, William Blake

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<sup>1</sup> Double-word compounds are a stylistic feature of the flowery Nahuatl of *Cantares Mexicanos*.

<sup>2</sup> “Gift” means “Poison” in German; hence, the viper’s venom, which in printed form subjugates the separate ego, as does love.

<sup>3</sup> “Ever-Present,” a common epithet in Nahuatl poetry, is here evoked as a double anagram: “Ever”=Reve (“Dream” in French); “Present”=Serpent.

<sup>4</sup> Quetzalcoatl: The Feathered Serpent, semi-divine being of ancient Mexico. Human/Animal, Art/War