



THE MYTH IN QUESTION  
**ALBION**  
TUESDAY 4 NOVEMBER

A place, a nation, a country, or a state of mind? Albion is the oldest known name of the island of Great Britain. The name for Scotland in the Celtic languages relates to Albion: *Alba* in Scottish Gaelic, *Albain* in Irish, *Nalbin* in Manx and *Alban* in Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Certainly the English have adopted it, indeed, seeing the myth as distinguishing them from the Britons and Celts! A legend exists in various forms that giants were either the original inhabitants, or the founders of the land named Albion. It describes an emblematic national giant 'with our native hills for his bones and our native forests for his beard...a single figure outlined against the sea and a great face staring at the sky' (Chesterton). Albion appears in Pliny, Bede, Athelstan, Wace, Layamon, Ralph Holinshed, Geoffrey of Monmouth, William Camden, in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, in Shakespeare, in John Milton, and in William Blake's extraordinary *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, a 1793 poem he produced as a book with his own illustrations; the French enjoined their countrymen 'attaqueons dans ses eaux la perfide Albion!' while in recent years Geoffrey Ashe and Peter Ackroyd each reference Albion, as Englishness abounds. Albion entices, lures, surrounds us in fogs of mystery and nostalgia for a time that never was, and gives the English an acute sense of longing and belonging.

MEET 10:30 am coffee for 11 am lecture at the Art Workers' Guild  
ENDS 3:30 pm at the Art Workers' Guild  
COST £85 members, £95 non-members, including coffee, light lunch with wine