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**BLAKE**

D I S C U S S I O N

Folcroft Facsimile of the Songs

Mary Ellen Reisner

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# DISCUSSION

WITH INTELLECTUAL SPEARS & LONG WINGED  
ARROWS OF THOUGHT

## FOLCROFT FACSIMILE OF THE *Songs*

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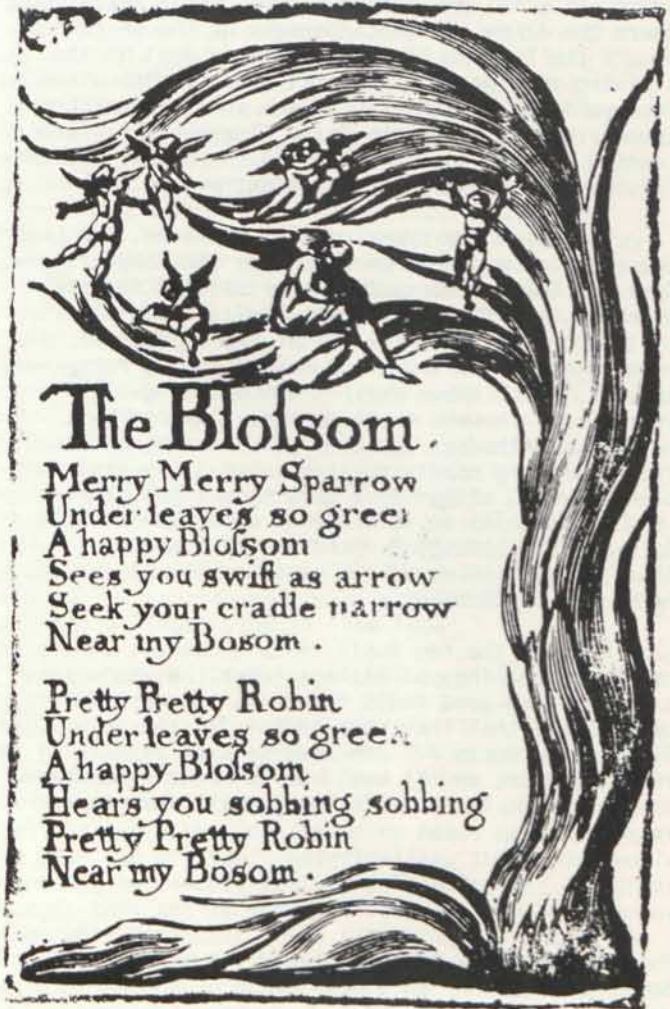
Mary Lynn Johnson's article "Choosing Textbooks for Blake Courses: A Survey & Checklist," in *Blake Newsletter* 37 will have been read with attention and her annotations to listed volumes, "negative entries as well as positive ones," studied with interest. Such a survey supplies a clear need among teachers of Blake. One positive listing, however, should have contained a cautionary comment and should, I think, be put right. Under Section VI, "Facsimiles & Reproductions Inexpensive Enough for Classroom Use," Johnson lists the Folcroft facsimile of the *Songs* as "Well-printed from the uncolored posthumous copy (b) in the Houghton Library." The facsimile is, in fact, anything but reliable, its worst error being the unwarranted alteration of Blake's text of "The Blossom" so that the line "Near my Bosom" is made to read "Near thy Bosom." On comparing the Folcroft page with its original in the Houghton Library I found that, although broken, the letter *m* was printed clearly and that the punch on the verso followed the contours of the upper edges of the *m*, precluding the existence of any uninked, unprinting portion above. Morton Paley kindly checked other posthumous copies in the British Library and in Sir Geoffrey Keynes' collection; the reading "thy" was not supported. Thus the Folcroft facsimile must have been retouched to produce this unauthorized variant in Blake's text. In her annotations Johnson comments on retouching, trueness of color, softening of lines and quality of background paper tone; thus the reader is all the more likely to have faith in a facsimile described as "well-printed." This small correction to "A Survey & Checklist" will, it is hoped, save anyone using the Folcroft facsimile, especially "The Blossom" page, a considerable amount of confusion.

## BLAKE AND HAYLEY IN WITTREICH'S

*Angel of Apocalypse*

TOM DARGAN

Richly illustrated and densely documented, this book on "Blake's idea of Milton" by a Milton scholar has the appearance of an admirable and exciting performance. So it was reviewed by Purvis E. Boyette (*Blake Newsletter* 39), and so it first appeared to me. In fact, I took it for a guide to new territory, and navigating by its footnotes and bibliography I steered back through Wittreich's previous books and articles to the obscure and sometimes rare works of William Hayley (1745-1820), the sometimes Miltonist and sometimes patron of William Blake. And my wages were exasperation.



1 "The Blossom," posthumous copy b. By permission of the Harvard College Library.

A close reading of *Angel of Apocalypse* reveals double disaster: the evidence is not evidence, and the arguments won't stand to a position. The two faults feed each other, at the expense of the reader, so when he leaves the text to trace a reference he finds only a tenuous or illusory connection where he expected solid evidence, and when he returns to the text he soon finds himself robbed of his scrupulousness--for the emphatic position of page 248 becomes abandoned territory by page 251. This book is a shell game.

The trick of the shell game is to make a move before the observer starts counting, so you are always a jump ahead of him. Wittreich gets the jump on his reader with the fallacy of the dubious assumption. A central point--persistently referred to, repeatedly elaborated--is never argued in its own right, but instead is passed off in the footnotes as if it were an established fact. An instance is the idea that Hayley was an important influence on Blake. Wittreich cites Frederick Pierce as evidence, in a