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**BLAKE**

R E V I E W

Poetry of William Blake

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<sup>11</sup> See David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (London 1975), pp. 25 (*Religion* 8), 29 (*Religion* a7, a9), 29 (*Religion* b9), 55 (*Songs* 14). It should be noted that this tilting only occurs in Blake's earliest attempts at illuminated printing, and that it could have been produced by a number of different accidents.

<sup>12</sup> *Note-Book*, p. 10, K 440.

<sup>13</sup> K 790. It is odd that Blake did not know that virgin's wax is produced by the honey bee. It was originally made from honeycombs unused by the bees, and therefore unsoiled and almost white. Since this grade is very expensive, it is common practice to let the bees use the combs, and afterwards wash the wax by boiling it in water with alum, and eventually bleach it in the sun. This purified bee's wax is commonly, though improperly, sold under the name virgin's wax.

<sup>14</sup> Repr. Keynes, *Blake Studies* (1971), p1. 29.

<sup>15</sup> *Note-Book*, p. 10, K 440.

<sup>16</sup> See the description of Blake's working room at Fountain Court in H. H. Gilchrist (ed.), *Anne Gilchrist Her Life and Writings* (London 1887), pp. 261 f. (Bentley, *Blake Records*, p. 566).

<sup>17</sup> K 154, 207.

<sup>18</sup> Blake wrote in 1822 that his "Original Stereotype was 1788" (K 781). According to J. T. Smith the recipe was revealed to Blake by the spirit of his brother Robert, who died in 1787 (*Blake Records*, p. 460). The first dated works in illuminated printing are the *Songs of Innocence* and *Thel*, both 1789. The tractates on religion, without date, are stylistically earlier than these, and generally assigned to the year 1788. Thus all evidence supports the year 1788, and nothing but confusion could arise if we suppose that Blake could have invented the method earlier. It is true that part of a recipe for illuminated printing has survived in *An Island in the Moon*, almost certainly written in the winter of 1784-85, but the reference is clearly to Cumberland's method, not to Blake's own.

<sup>19</sup> *Blake Records*, p. 472. Tatham supports this, *ibid.*, p. 517.

<sup>20</sup> *Blake Records*, p. 472.

<sup>21</sup> *Blake Records*, p. 33 n. 3, and p. 472.

<sup>22</sup> Giuseppe Tambroni's edition of Cennini was the first, and bears the date 1821 (reprinted 1965). The next was by Carlo and Gaetano Milanesi in 1859, reprinted 1975 *a cura di* Fernando Tempesti. The third was by Renzo Simi, 1913, reprinted without notes and introduction in 1943; and the second edition of Renzo Simi supplied the text for Franco Brunello's annotated edition of 1971. The most recent edition from the original mss. is by Daniel V. Thompson, 1932. Blake scholars should quote Tambroni. Later editions, based on manuscripts inaccessible to him (he knew of the Biblioteca Laurenziana ms., but had not seen it) are very different from Tambroni's.

<sup>23</sup> Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (ed. Milanesi) (Florence 1878-79), I, 184, II, pp. 565 f., 569.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake* (1942), p. 366; (1863), p. 376. See *Blake Records*, p. 34 n. 1.

<sup>25</sup> K 562, 563, 577.

<sup>26</sup> K 481 (*Milton* pl. 2). A similar idea was put forward by Michelangelo in his sonnet no. XV in the Guasti edition: "Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto, / Ch' un marmo solo in sè non circoscrive / Col suo soverchio; e solo a quello arriva / La man che ubbidisce all'intelletto." See Louisa Maclehorse and G. Baldwin Brown, *Vasari on Technique* (1907; rpt. New York: Dover, 1960), p. 180.

## THE LEAST BLAKE



**Poetry of William Blake.** Winterport, Maine: Borrower's Press, 1978. 34 pp., no plates.

Reviewed by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

**T**his little work seems to have been overlooked in the bibliographies of Blake in *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, the MLA annual bibliography, The Romantic Movement bibliography, and elsewhere. The reason for such oversight is plain enough, for it is only the size of a thumb-nail: 5/8" x 3/4" (1.5 x 2.0 cm.), and it is "limited to 300 numbered, signed copies," according to the colophon.

The contents are moderately straightforward; an anonymous "Introduction" (pp. 5-6) and "many" (nine) poems from the *Songs*. The "Introduction" says, on the whole truly enough, that the text "retains his archaic spelling and unconventional capitalization where possible." The second most striking feature of the tiny text, however, is the way it has been abbreviated. The title and the word "I" in l. 18 have dropped out of the "Introduction" to *Innocence*, and half of "Infant Joy," the second stanza, has disappeared.

The price of the work, at least the price paid for it to an antiquarian bookseller (£29 = about \$70), may make it the most expensive uncolored literary work by Blake per square centimeter ever sold--68¢/cm<sup>2</sup>. It is far beyond the Blake Trust facsimiles and even surpasses uncolored Blake originals; *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy h, which sold for \$15,000 in 1981, comes to only 47¢ per square centimeter.