

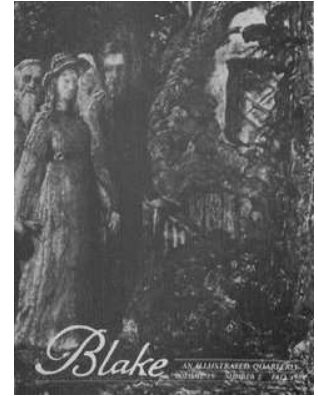
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

R E V I E W

William Blake, *America: A Prophecy* and *Europe: A Prophecy* [Dover Publications]; William Blake, *Songs of Experience* [Dover Publications]

Jenijoy La Belle

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<sup>10</sup> 1811. Fitzwilliam Museum.

<sup>11</sup> c. 1819. Private collection, England.

<sup>12</sup> 1833. Fitzwilliam Museum.

<sup>13</sup> Arnold Fawcus, Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Raymond Lister and Graham Reynolds, *Samuel Palmer: A Vision Recaptured* (London, 1978); Helen Irwin, "Samuel Palmer, Poet of Light and Shade," *Apollo* (August 1981), pp. 109–13.

<sup>14</sup> Reproduced in Michael Kitson, *Claude Lorrain: Liber Veritatis* (London, 1978), plate 67.

<sup>15</sup> "An Acre of Grass" from *Last Poems* (1936–39).

<sup>16</sup> Raymond Lister, *George Richmond* (London, 1981), p. 176, pl. XXIX.

<sup>17</sup> Increasing the strength of the lines by dropping a piece of muslin on to the plate to drag up the ink in them before a print is taken.

**William Blake. *America: A Prophecy and Europe: A Prophecy*. Facsimile Reproductions of Two Illuminated Books with 35 Plates in Full Color. New York: Dover Publications, 1983. \$5.95**

**William Blake. *Songs of Experience*. Facsimile Reproduction with 26 Plates in Full Color. New York: Dover Publications, 1984. \$3.00**

**Reviewed by Jenijoy La Belle**

Dover Publications has made a fine reputation for itself by publishing well-made paperbacks useful to students and scholars. Among its Blake titles are *Drawings of William Blake* (1970) and a reduced facsimile reproduction of Richard Edwards' 1797 edition of Young's *Night Thoughts* (1975). In 1971 Dover embarked upon the production of color facsimiles with an original-size reproduction of copy B of *Songs of Innocence*. Some of the plates are fuzzy and the backgrounds are a little too dark, but for only two dollars (later raised to three), the volume is valuable for handy reference and classroom use. Dover has recently issued two further volumes containing color reproductions of three illuminated books.

*America* and *Europe* are reproduced original size in a single pamphlet-style paperback. The brief "Publisher's Note" includes the following information: "The present volume reproduces the complete copy M of *America* (printed on paper made in 1799), whereas the complete *Europe* reproduced here includes colored plates from copies B and G of that book and the black-and-white plate

from copy K (all these copies are privately owned). Note that *Europe* contains two plates numbered 9—referred to in the present edition as 9(a) and 9(b)—and has no plate numbered 11." Some of this information is wrong, and the whole statement is misleading. Copy M of *America* and B of *Europe* are indeed in private collections, but copy G of *Europe* is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library and copy K has been in the Fitzwilliam Museum since 1950. The comment about two plates numbered 9 implies that this repetition appears in original copies of *Europe* and that none contains a plate numbered 11. This is not the case at all. Both copies B and G are numbered consecutively, and the presence of two plates numbered 9 in the facsimile results from its composite nature. In copy G, plate 12 (following the plate numbers in Bentley, *Blake Books*) is numbered 9, while the same number is given to plate 13 in copy B.

The Publisher's Note implies that the Dover reproductions were made directly from the original copies cited. I am highly suspicious of this—partly because none of the owners of the originals is named and also because there is no statement of permission to reproduce. Further, the mixture of three copies of *Europe* is exactly the same as that appearing in the Blake Trust/Trianon Press facsimile of 1969. The copy of *America* reproduced by Dover is the same as the one used by the Blake Trust for its 1963 facsimile. The Dover reproductions of both illuminated books show distinct boundary lines between contiguous colors, and this feature is typical of the Blake Trust method of stencil coloring, rather than of Blake's own method with its gentle gradations of tones. Thus it would appear that the Dover volume is based on two Blake Trust facsimiles and that these are the books "privately owned" (perhaps by Mr. Hayward Cirker, founder and owner of Dover?). Since the volume lacks any reference to the Blake Trust, I assume that no permission was necessary.

Using the Blake Trust facsimile of *America* copy M as a standard, I find that most of the plates in the Dover reproduction have acceptable color fidelity. The only major problem would seem to be a dulling of the blue tones, particularly on plates 3 and 5 (as numbered in copy M). The sunburst on plate 7 has lost some of its brilliance, and the outlining of the ram and the two figures has become a little unfocused. Several other plates suffer from indistinct outline in design areas, but the only really bad reproductions are plates 8 and 9. Both have a brown tint to the white paper in text areas, and this browning has seriously affected the blues on plate 8 and the greens on plate 9. Clearly, the Dover reproductions are not suitable for the detailed analysis of Blake's hand coloring. No one, however, should expect an inexpensive reproduction to provide the basis for such analyses. The Dover reproductions are certainly adequate for many other types of studies.

The color work in the *Europe* facsimile is also generally satisfactory. Three plates, however, have a distinct color shift not found in their Blake Trust archetypes: plate 9 (inscribed "6" in the reproduction) has been given a rather ghoulish green tint; plate 11 (inscribed "8") has the same brown shift found in some of the *America* plates; and the final plate is a little too yellow. I would not be surprised to find variations among copies of the Dover volume—particularly if they continue to print from the same transparencies. The later printings of the Dover *Songs of Innocence* show just this sort of decay of both color and sharpness of outline.


In addition to the reproductions, the volume includes exceedingly brief summaries of the poems and descriptions of the designs. The latter seem to be summary paraphrases of Sir Geoffrey Keynes's notes on the designs in the Blake Trust facsimiles. The Dover volume concludes with a transcription of the texts. Lacking any indication to the contrary, the typographic texts appear to be new transcriptions rather than reprints of a previously published edition. The details of punctuation do not follow Keynes, Erdman, Stevenson, or Bentley.

Dover's new facsimile of *Songs of Experience* has the same format as its 1971 *Innocence* facsimile. The two volumes are clearly meant to be companions. In this later volume, the publisher's only reference to the copy reproduced is a statement on the verso of the typographic title-page that the facsimile is based on "a copy printed ca. 1826." On the back cover, this same date is given rather misleadingly as the date of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. The appearance of the Dover plates makes it clear that the work reproduced is the *Experience* section from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, copy Z, with Blake's inscribed plate numbers, but not his hand-drawn framing lines, eliminated. For unexplained reasons, the frontispiece to *Experience* is also omitted. Copy Z is well known from the fine Blake Trust facsimile of 1955. The appearance of fairly definite boundary lines between colors in the Dover reproduction makes me suspect that, once again, Dover is silently reproducing the work of the Trust. It is even possible that the plates are based on the 1967 Orion Press/Rupert Hart-Davis reproductions of Z, reissued in 1970 by Oxford University Press. These complete reproductions of copy Z are themselves based on the Blake Trust facsimile, and thus the Dover volume could be a reproduction of a reproduction of a reproduction. (I doubt that this is what Blake meant by "Fourfold Vision.") In comparison to all of these possible forebears, Dover's plates show a strong and most unfortunate shift towards a magenta tint. This feature, plus the fact that about half the plates seem a little out of focus, make the volume less handsome and less useful than the *America/Europe* facsimile. The *Experience* volume concludes with a transcription of the text.

Although I've been rather grumpy about the prob-

lems, these are nice volumes (particularly for the classroom) and well worth having—as long as they are not treated with the same sort of trust we give to the real Trust facsimiles. Dover is to be congratulated for producing these books and for offering them for a song.

Selections from  
**William Blake's**  
*Songs of Innocence & of Experience*



given new musical settings by  
**Gregory Forbes**

***Selections from William Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience; Musical Settings by Gregory Forbes, Ecchoing Green Records, 1983. A Companion to the New Musical Settings by Gregory Forbes. Gregory Forbes. Kingston, Ontario: Quarry Press, 1983. 48 pages. Together \$27.70; with a set of 20 slides, \$35.70. Slide set only, \$11.20. Prices include shipping.***

**Reviewed by Joseph Viscomi with Margaret LaFrance**

As Ruthven Todd points out, "no one can fully understand the *Songs* divorced of their setting."<sup>1</sup> Some fine, hand-colored facsimiles have made it possible to read Blake's illuminated poetry as graphic art consisting of text and illustration in complex relations. In short, to read it as originally presented. Or have they? Poetry and painting were only two of the "three Powers in Man of