

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

Q U E R Y

Death's Door

W. H. Stevenson

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 4, Issue 2, Fall 1970, p. 49



works. In every chapter we get to know the whole Blake a little better through his rigorous explanation of the historical details. *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* makes good reading in combination with E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. In the two books the 1790's come alive in a remarkable way and Blake is seen in the midst of it all laboring by the light of his fiery forge.

Anagogical critics are still going to shake their collective heads at Rintrah as Pitt and similar identifications, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to quarrel with Erdman about any detail because he allows for other levels of interpretation while pressing his own. He, in fact, invites those other levels, perhaps more so in the revised edition than in the 1953 edition. What can one say about Erdman's book but "Read it!" It stands with Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* as one of the two great books on Blake.

QUERIES

1. W. H. STEVENSON: UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

"Death's Door"

I was in Coverdale--a long way away from Blake country, I admit--a couple of weeks ago, and I stopped to look at an old mine entrance. After I had stopped, its resemblance to Blake's "Death's Door," especially as it appears in *America* plate 12, struck me. That is, the entrance consisted of a stone doorway (though without an actual door), roofed over with a large slab. What brought the similarity to my mind was that a sizeable tree was growing above the slab, its roots twining round the entrance (which went into a sloping hillside). Is it possible that, besides the other associations of this image, Blake, having seen such mine entrances in his own area, thought of them as "entrances to death" in yet another connotation? I have not been able to check whether anyone else has thought of this, or whether Kent and Surrey yield similar doorways in fact; but someone closer to this area than I am at present may find the idea interesting.

2. RUTHVEN TODD: C'AN BIELÓ, GALILEA, MALLORCA, SPAIN

Blake's Copy of Dante

"An anonymous visitor," presumed to be William Carey, wrote an adulatory obituary of Blake in the *Literary Gazette*, 18 August 1827, in which he mentions that he saw Blake working from his copy of "Sessi Velutello's Dante." Being more optimistic than anyone of my age has any right to be, I began to wonder what had happened to this copy. Unless it had been destroyed by fire or by "enemy action," it seemed unlikely to me that a 16th-century folio should have vanished from the face of the earth between 1827 and the present day. Probably, it seemed to me, either Mrs. Blake or Frederick Tat-ham, during a lean period, turned it into cash.