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M I N U T E
P A R T I C U L A R

Errors in the Signet Edition of The Selected Poetry
of Blake

David V. Erdman

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Little Girl Lost" is remarkably similar in composition to the ballad illustrations. Blake's Lyca and her companion embrace beneath a tree that grows out of the picture's left-hand side. Above them flies a bird corresponding to the robin in the Banbury chapbook illustration. In fact, Lyca appears to be pointing to the bird directly overhead.

The similarity between the ballad and Blake's songs extends further. Lyca, lost in a forest, sleeps in a protracted manner that suggests death. Moreover, lions befriend her, and in "Night" lions are shown to be amiable only after death. (The Lyca songs were originally grouped along with "Night" in the *Songs of Innocence*.) Her transfer to a cave by beasts seems a sort of funeral and recalls the kindness of the ballad's robin. The children in the ballad die of starvation. In "The Little Girl Found," Lyca's searching parents dream she has starved. In the ballad, seven years elapse before their bodies are discovered by humans. This period may have a numerical echo in the seven days that pass before Lyca is found. The seven years of the ballad may also be reflected in the age given to Lyca who, though she is obviously post-pubescent in the illustrations to the songs, is said to be "Seven summers old."

The focus of the relationship between the ballad and Blake's songs is death's double meaning. Blake's illustrations indicate that nubile Lyca's dying is sexual and takes place in her lover's arms. If Blake did have the ballad in mind as he wrote his two songs about Lyca, his sexual theme may have been suggested to him by two lines already quoted from Percy that seem especially charged with sexual connotations: "In one another's arms they dyed, / As wanting due relief."

¹ The ballad is suggested as "source of analogy" for Blake's lyrics by Irene H. Chayes in "Blake and Tradition: 'The Little Girl Lost' and 'The Little Girl Found,'" *Blake Newsletter* 13 (August 1970), p. 25.

² The reproductions of the chapbook illustrations appear by courtesy of The Osborne Collection of English Children's Books, Toronto Public Library.

Errors in the Signet Classic Edition of

The Selected Poetry of Blake

by David V. Erdman

In the "Selected Bibliography" on page xvii the Keynes edition of *Complete Writings* should be said to contain "Modernized punctuation" but *not* spelling. The Erdman-Stevenson edition of 1971 should be described as containing "Modernized spelling and punctuation."

Page 133, note 16:14 should read: ". . . the year of this Prophecy (1793) . . ."

Page 199, note 11:32 should read: "Sin, daughter of Satan and mother of Death."

I deny any responsibility for--or any awareness of, before they were *faits accomplis*--the weird montage on the front cover and the deathly prose on the back ("richly representative . . . extraordinary blending . . . vividly immediate and tantalizingly ambiguous" and so on).

George Frederick Cooke:

Another Grave Subscriber Heard From

By Dennis Read

In *Memoirs of George Frederick Cooke*, 2 vols., ed. William Dunlap (London: Henry Colburn, 1813), is a reference to Blake which has not been previously noted. Cooke (1756-1811), a well-known actor, was a subscriber to *The Grave*, and among his diary entries (recorded in his *Memoirs*, II, 65-70) are several dealing with the arrival of his copy:

Thursday, Jan. 5th [1809]

Received a note from a Mr. Cromek, informing me that a work I subscribed two guineas for, at Liverpool, above two years ago,¹ and which I had entirely forgotten, is published, and requesting my address, that my copy might be sent.²

Friday, Jan. 6th

Wrote an answer to Mr. Cromek's note, . . .

Thursday, Jan. 12th.

Received and looked over "Blake's Illustrations of Blair's Poem of The Grave."³ The etchings seem finely executed, and the printing, the letter press I mean, done in the fine style.⁴

Cooke's diary shows that Cromek was in Liverpool for at least part of the time that Cooke was there during the latter part of August and first weeks of September, 1806. Cromek's stay was apparently worthwhile, for the "List of Subscribers" in *The Grave* includes fifty-one Liverpool residents. Cromek probably had come to Liverpool from Birmingham, where he ran nearly identical advertisements for *The Grave* in the 28 July 1806 *Birmingham Gazette* and *Commercial Herald*;⁵ he then left Liverpool probably for his native Yorkshire, where he gathered *Grave* subscriptions in Halifax, Pontefract, Leeds, and, finally, Wakefield, where he married Mrs. Elizabeth Charge in the parish church on 24 October 1806.

Cooke clearly is no intimate of either Cromek or Blake, and while he does not seem to regard his two guineas as ill-spent, his interest in his new acquisition is less than consuming. One wonders, in fact, if he ever opened his copy of *The Grave* again.

¹ Advertisements in the *Liverpool Chronicle and Commercial Advertiser* show that Cook performed at the Theatre-Royal between 19 August and 11 September 1806. A short letter of introduction written for Cromek by Henry Fuseli to his patron, the Liverpool benefactor William Roscoe, is dated 16 July 1806. See G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 179.