

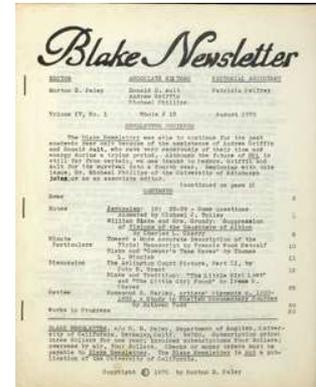
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M I N U T E  
P A R T I C U L A R

## Blake and "Cowper's Tame Hares"

Thomas L. Minnick

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is a verso instead of a recto is irrelevant. Blake's practice throughout the manuscript is to form sectional units by numbering, and by beginning each section at the top of a page. Although Professor Bentley agonizes at some length and to no conclusion over "the strange way in which the pages are filled with writing" (p. 55), the principle is clear; if a section ends part-way through a page, the rest of that page is left blank, and the next section begins atop the next page. Section 4 occupies two and nine-tenths pages; therefore, as Professor Bentley observes, there is a blank space of "a tenth of a page on [the bottom of] page 9" (p. 55). Section 5 fills one page exactly; and since this page is a verso, section 6 begins atop a recto, page 11, restoring what Professor Bentley mistakes for a pattern of foliation by rectos. Section 6 ends half-way through page 12, and after the familiar blank space, section 7 begins atop page 13. The shortest section, it fills only three-quarters of its page. Therefore, thenext section, 8, begins atop a verso, page 14. This is the very phenomenon that stymied Professor Bentley in the case of section 5; but he does not mention "8"--quite plain on the page--at all, not even as a "misnumbering."

Professor Bentley states that "the rectos are also correctly foliated in pencil 2-9 on the top right corner of pages 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15. Probably neither foliation is Blake's" (p. 52). Part of this conclusion is unjustifiable. Since one "foliation" is not a foliation but a sequence of section-numbers, and since these numbers appear (in the facsimile) to be in the same hand and ink as the rest of the manuscript, they are very likely Blake's own. After all, "the same grey-black ink is used throughout the poem" (p. 55). However, the true foliation, in pencil, may well be someone else's. Whether it is or not, it indicates that if the first page is folio no. 2, there must be a missing page 1; possibly this could be the title page. One wishes that Professor Bentley had given us a more considered account of the manuscript in this otherwise splendid edition.

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## 2. Blake and "Cowper's Tame Hares"

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In A Blake Bibliography (p. 123) Professors Bentley and Nurmi describe one plate in William Hayley's The Life...of William Cowper, Esq. (Chichester, 1803-04; 3 vols.) as follows: "(4) At Vol. II, p. 415, the bottom of the page, is an unsigned engraving, not mentioned in the directions to the binder, representing the Weather-house, 'The Peasants Nest,' and 'Cowper's Tame Hares,' 'Puss Tiney & Bess,' with a quotation from The

Task, Book I, line 200. There can be little doubt, however, that Blake engraved this plate." However, in A Bibliography of William Blake (New York, 1921; p. 250) Sir Geoffrey Keynes noted that the signature "Blake d & sc" appears, not at the bottom of the plate as in the other five plates Blake did for Hayley's Cowper, but within the design.

Like Bentley and Nurmi I have examined two copies of the first edition (those of the Oberlin College Library and of Professor A. J. Kuhn) and one (my own) of the second edition. In all three the signature appears, above a garland and directly beneath the initial letters of the lines quoted from The Task. In these copies the inscription is clearly "Blake d e sc" (for "Blake d[elineavit] e[t] sc[ulpsit]") rather than as Keynes reports. Perhaps there were two or more states of the plate, one with the signature, one without. The plate--plate-mark 23 x 17 cm., about two-thirds of the page--was moveable and independent of the type set at the top of the page, the distance between the type and the plate-mark varying from copy to copy. In one copy (Oberlin) the page is numbered ("415" but not "416" on verso) and bears the page head "APPENDIX." The other copies I have seen have neither page head or page number; the only clue to the binder is a flag ("Motto") at II.414. In my copy the plate appears at the end of the first volume--perhaps because "Cowper's Tame Hares" are described at I.89-90, or perhaps simply as an afterthought.

This plate is of some interest because it is the only one of those Blake engraved for Hayley's Cowper which he also designed. But all he has done, perhaps all he was free to do, was work into a rather conventional balance the weather man's dark, stormy side of the house with the woman's bright and pastoral half.

(When I thought that I had discovered an altogether new Blake signature, Mr. J. C. Maxwell of the Balliol College, Oxford, helped correct me. I am grateful to him for this.)

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#### DISCUSSION

"With Intellectual Spears and Long-winged Arrows of Thought"

1. Discussing the Arlington Court Picture
- Part II: Studying Blake's Iconography for Guidance in Interpreting the Picture

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When I began these remarks my intention was chiefly to