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D I S C U S S I O N

On the Newly Rediscovered Blake Letter

David V. Erdman

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DISCUSSION

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"With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought"

On the Newly Rediscovered Blake Letter

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It is a piece of good fortune that the long missing letter of Blake to Hayley (16 July 1804) which found its way into the hands of Goodspeed's of Boston recently did then find its way into the generous hands of Frederick W. Hilles, who at once gave the full text to the world in the Autumn 1967 Yale Review (pages 85-89). To top that generosity, Professor Hilles sent, with offprint, a xerox copy of the letter.

Collation turns up two flaws in the transcript. In the 13th line of the letter, as printed, "from" should read "fears", thus: Mr P was at Brighton with Mr Hoare - fears that so good" etc. In the 11th line from the end the ampersand (&) should be an etcetera (&c), thus: "I will again read Clarissa &c [end of line] They must be admirable [space] I was too hasty in my perusal of them to percieve all their beauty." Professor Hilles responds: "You are so right about fears As to 'Clarissa &c!', you may be right . . . the curve above the line . . . doesn't look like a c but" With either reading, Blake's "they" could refer, as Hilles in the Yale Review suggests, to the letters in the Richardson Correspondence--or to that book's six volumes. But "Clarissa &c" must mean: The novels must be better than I supposed.

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