

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

A R T I C L E

A Victorian Blake Facsimile

Morton D. Paley

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A VICTORIAN BLAKE FACSIMILE

MORTON D. PALEY

Works of William Blake, bearing no publisher's imprint and dated 1876 on its title page, has posed a minor conundrum in Blake scholarship. The title page announces it as "Reproduced in Facsimile From the Original Editions. One hundred copies printed for private circulation." It is a facsimile of very poor quality, yet it made available for the first time complete reproductions of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, *The Book of Thel*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America*, *Europe*, *The Book of Urizen*, and *The Song of Los*. These were not to appear in facsimile again until William Muir's considerably better productions of 1884-90.¹ Thus *Works* has some historical importance as a pioneering albeit seriously flawed project, but the circumstances of its publication have never been made clear up to now. In the Keynes *Bibliography* it is assigned to the publisher F. S. Ellis,² while the Bentley *Blake Books* gives no publisher for *Works* under the main entry and assigns the facsimiles to John Pearson in individual entries for each illuminated book.³ In "A Supplement to *Blake Books*" (*Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 11 [1977-78], 148), Professor Bentley suggests that "The sponsor, who is not identified in the book, may be Andrew Chatto." It now can be shown that the publisher was definitely Chatto and Windus, that the actual date of publication was 1878, and that *Works* was probably the abortive result of an ambitious plan for a complete Blake facsimile originally conceived by John Camden Hotten.

In 1868 John Camden Hotten published the first complete facsimile of one of Blake's illuminated books, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. As I have shown elsewhere, this was intended as the first volume in a series which Hotten announced as "facsimile copies (exact as to paper, printing--the water-colour drawings being filled in by an artist) of the ORIGINAL EDITIONS of the books written and illustrated by William Blake."⁴ This plan was evidently set back by the sudden death in 1868 of Hotten's artist, Henry John Bellars. It appears that Hotten had difficulty in finding another

facsimilist of Bellars' skill, for on 8 September 1870 Hotten wrote to the printers Banks & Co.: "I may ask if you have an artist who can successfully reduce Cruikshank's etchings & draw on stone (or engrave), the printing to be done in colours like the plates to *Tom and Jerry*."⁵ When Hotten died in 1873 at the age of forty, no further Blake facsimiles had been issued.

After Hotten's death, a chestful of drawings after Blake, some of which may have been studies by Bellars for the projected facsimile, was found in Hotten's cellar. These drawings were bought by the New York dealer J. W. Bouton and offered for sale as genuine Blakes, laying the ground for the story of the "John Camden Hotten forgeries." Meanwhile Hotten's business was acquired by his former publishing associate Andrew Chatto, who was joined in partnership by W. E. Windus. The plan for an extensive Blake facsimile was not abandoned, and in the following year considerable progress was made on it. On 17 September 1874 Chatto wrote to William Michael Rossetti, who had assisted Hotten with his Blake projects:

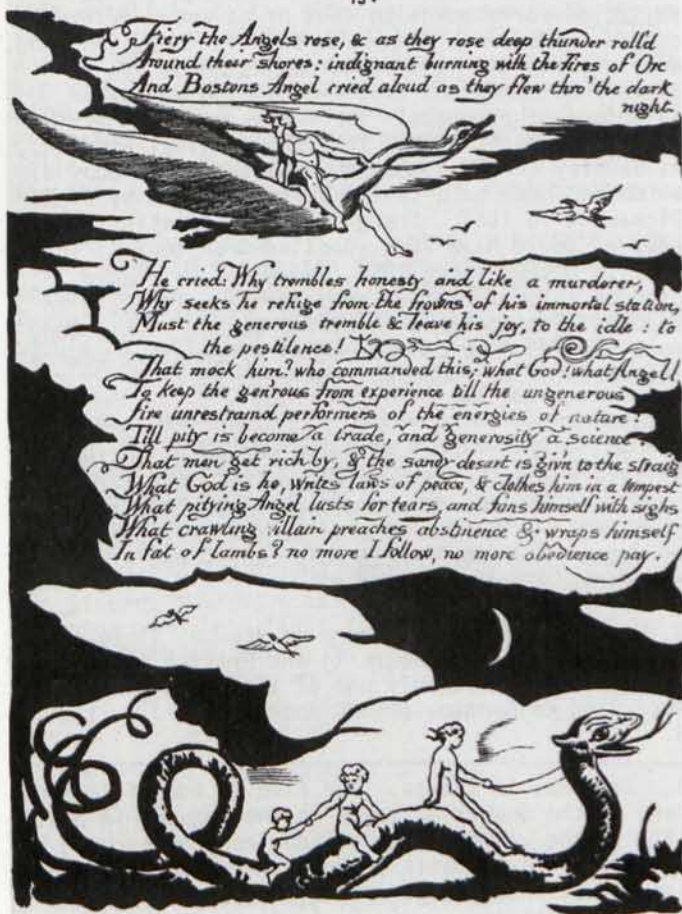
Dear Sir

I send herewith sample proofs of facsimiles of six more of W^m Blake's works. When carefully coloured by hand they will look wonderfully like the originals.

Printed on paper the present size the whole of Blakes works might be contained in 2 volumes, but I think it will be desirable to strike off a few copies to be sold separately on paper the approximate size of the originals.

Yours very faithfully,
Andrew Chatto

Chatto must have found, however, that the time required was longer than had been anticipated, for



1 *America*, plate 13. From 1876 *Works*. By permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

his ledger shows that on 17 November 1877, he ordered one hundred sets of "Blake reproductions" to be printed by Banks and that on 26 January 1878, 103 printed sets were dispatched to the binder Sotheran.⁶ That this was a lithographic reproduction is indicated by the ledger notation "Illustrations: / Stone Bonds *rubbed off*." (Possibly the lithographic stones had previously been used for printing bonds. The word could equally be "bands," but this makes no sense). The costs were £100--a surprisingly large sum, especially in view of the poor quality of the work--paid to an unnamed artist, £37/10 for printing and £21 for binding. The disposition of stock is not indicated, an unusual feature in these meticulously kept ledger books.

In their list for 1877, Chatto and Windus advertised the facsimile as follows:

Blake's Works

A series of Reproductions in Facsimile of the Works of William Blake, including the

"Songs of Innocence and Experience" [sic], "The Book of Thel," "America," "The Vision of the Daughters of Albion," [sic] "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "Europe, a Prophecy," "Jerusalem," "Milton," "Urizen," "the Song of Los," &c. [in preparation]⁷

This is a considerably broader list of titles than was actually published: the inclusion of *Milton* and *Jerusalem* would have almost doubled the number of pages, necessitating the two volume publication that Chatto had envisaged in 1874. The actual contents are correctly indicated, though there are some mistakes as to titles and dates of publication, in J. W. Bouton's catalogue no. 56 (undated, but probably published c. 1881):

Works of William Blake

A reproduction of the Original issues of the works of this remarkable Artist, comprising "Songs of Innocence and Experience," 55 leaves (1789); "Book of Thel," 8 leaves, 1789; "America, a Prophecy," 18 leaves, 1793; "The First Book of Urizen," 26 leaves, 1794; "The Song of Los," 8 leaves (1794). Carefully printed on heavy plate paper in the original colors. 1 vol. folio, hf. roxb., morocco, gilt top, uncut. \$22.50.

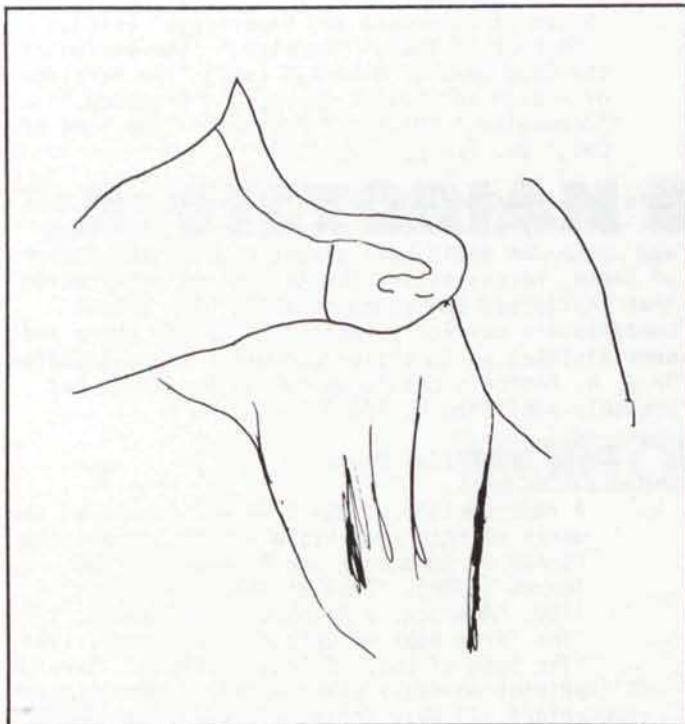
* * "One hundred copies printed for private circulation"
Reprinted in facsimile from the excessively rare Original Editions. 1789-94. Printed on one side only.⁸

Apparently the advertisement was issued before Bouton had seen a copy of *Works*, since the facsimile is *not* "in the original colors," though Chatto had intended that it be. When Bouton advertised *Works of William Blake* in his catalogue 63 (c. 1885), the wording was almost identical with that of catalogue 56, but mention of color was omitted.

With this information in mind, we are in a position to reconstruct the circumstances leading to the publication of *Works*. The facsimile scheme was initiated by John Camden Hotten and taken over after Hotten's death by his successor Andrew Chatto. Some proofs were ready in September 1874. Publication was anticipated for 1876, for a letterpress title page bearing that date was printed. (The absence of a publisher's imprint is not inconsistent with the practice of the time: neither Hotten's 1868 *Marriage* nor Pearson's 1877 *Jerusalem* bears one.) The plan was to issue a hand-colored facsimile, and some colored proofs may have been prepared, but possibly owing to the poor quality of the facsimile work, the book was issued uncolored and reduced in its scope. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, still available in Hotten's edition, was left out, and so were Blake's two longest illuminated books, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. The collection was published in a single volume in 1878.

Works by William Blake comprises facsimiles of six of Blake's illuminated works, as follows:

1. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 55 leaves



(including the rejected "A Divine Image"). The foliation corresponds to that of no known original copy: no *Songs of Innocence* ends in "Laughing Song," and in *Works* the "Introduction" to *Songs of Experience* comes not at the beginning but after seventeen other poems! The inclusion of "A Divine Image," makes it likely that the original used was, as Bentley (*Blake Books*, p. 426) suggests, copy a, which had been sold to the British Museum by B. M. Pickering in 1864. "Laughing Song," missing from copy a, could have been supplied from copy T, in the British Museum since 1856. However, Dr. David Bindman informs me that copy BB, recently sold in London, also contains "A Divine Image." This copy must therefore be considered an alternative source. Its location was unknown from 1830 on.

2. *The Book of Thel*, 8 leaves. Copy D, in the British Museum Print Room since 1856, had already been used for the reproduction of the *Thel* title page in A. C. Swinburne's *William Blake*, published by Hotten in 1868. Presumably copy D was also used for *Works*.

3. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 11 leaves. Two copies, A and B, were in the British Museum Print Room. Presumably one of these was used. According to Bentley (*Blake Books*, p. 473), it was B.

4. *America*, 18 leaves. The clue to identification here is the number of tails on the serpent in plate 13. In the various original copies, the serpent has either three tails or one. The serpent of *Works* has three, and so must derive from one of the following copies: E, F, G, I, K, or L. Bentley (*Blake Books*, p. 102) suggests that copy F, acquired by the British Museum in 1859, was the one used.

5. *Europe*, 17 leaves. In *Works* the "Ancient of Days" frontispiece is placed after the title page by mistake. Page 3, found only in copies H and K, is not present. A very likely source is copy D (as Bentley, *Blake Books*, p. 181, suggests); this had also been acquired by the British Museum in 1859. There is, however, one other possibility--copy F. In plate 18 (numbered 15 in *Works*) of the facsimile a garment obscures the penis of the male figure. This may well be a concession to Victorian prudery, but it may be significant that the penis is similarly obscured in copy F. (Owing to the fragility of the original, it has not been possible to obtain a

3 Freehand drawing of an enlarged detail from plate 18, copy F. In the original the cloth is colored pink.

2 *Europe*, plate 17. From 1876 *Works* (where it is numbered 15). By permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

4 William Muir's advertisement for *The Edition of the Works of William Blake*. By permission of the Library of Congress.

photograph, but I have made a freehand drawing of this detail.) In the other copies, the male figure is nude, though as Bentley (*Blake Books*, p. 156) notes, "In copy D there are lines on the man's left hip as if to represent cloth, but the cloth is not colored." Copy F was acquired in 1866 by B. M. Pickering. Pickering later sold it to an unknown collector whose monogram was D W J. It is now in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.

As we have seen, it is virtually certain that the records in the Chatto and Windus ledger entry headed "Blake reproductions" refer to the "1876" *Works*. One other hypothesis concerning these records should be mentioned here. *Blake Books* assigns the facsimile of *Jerusalem* hitherto attributed to John Pearson to Chatto and Windus on the basis of this same ledger entry.⁹ However, it seems incontrovertible that John Pearson did in fact produce the photolithographic black-and-white facsimile of copy D of *Jerusalem* in 1877. Two reliable sources indicate this. John Muir, in a prospectus included with his facsimile of *The Song of Los* (1890), asserts that he has not published a *Jerusalem* because Pearson has already done so. As Pearson acted as the distributor of Muir's first four Blake facsimiles in 1884,¹⁰ Muir was surely in a position to know who had published *Jerusalem* in 1877. Furthermore, E. W.

Hooper, who bought Pearson's original copy (now in the Harvard University Library), wrote: "Blake's 'Jerusalem' was reproduced by John Pearson, bookseller of London. A Copy of this reproduction is in the Boston Public Library. I have compared the reproduction carefully page by page with my original hand tinted copy (which I bought from John Pearson) & find it was taken from my copy."¹¹ There was no reason for Pearson, a reputable dealer and collector with a special interest in Blake,¹² to misrepresent the origin of the *Jerusalem* facsimile. It should therefore be restored to his credit as publisher, and the Chatto and Windus ledger entry must be taken to refer to the "1876" *Works*.

¹ *The Edition of the Works of William Blake* (Edmonton: The Blake Press).

² Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: Grolier Club, 1921), pp. 293-94.

³ G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 501, 102, 159, 126, 181, 426, 473. Professor Bentley now agrees that *Works* should be attributed to Chatto and Windus and the 1877 *Jerusalem* to John Pearson, and has kindly given me the benefit of his criticism in the preparation of this note. I am also indebted to Professor Robert N. Essick for invaluable information.

⁴ See my article "John Camden Hotten, A. C. Swinburne, and the Blake Facsimiles of 1868," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 79 (1976), 259-96. The quotation is from an excerpt from a sale catalogue in a copy of the Hotten *Marriage* facsimile in the collection of Robert N. Essick.

⁵ Quotations from the letters of John Camden Hotten and of Andrew Chatto are from the copies in the Letter Books of Chatto and Windus, to whom I am grateful for permission to use them.

⁶ Ledger 3, p. 185. The Huntington Library copy of *Works* bears the stamp of the binder Bone, who also worked extensively for Hotten and for Chatto. It may be that Sotheran farmed out some of the binding to Bone.

⁷ From an unpaginated list appended to *Choice Humorous Works* by Mark Twain (London: Chatto and Windus, 1877).

⁸ The readings should of course be "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" and "Visions of the Daughters of Albion." The latter was published in 1793, not 1789; *The Book of Thel* bears the publication date 1789 and not 1794; and *The Song of Los* was published in 1795 not 1794. For some reason *The Book of Los*, the sole known copy of which had been sold to the British Museum in 1866, was not part of the plan. Neither was *The Book of Ahania*, the sole known copy of which was then in the collection of Lord Houghton. The first facsimiles of these two books were published by E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats in volume III of *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic and Critical* (London: B. Quaritch, 1893).

⁹ *Blake Books*, p. 264. Professor Bentley agrees that this hypothesis should now be withdrawn, and in "A Supplement to *Blake Books*", p. 148, he identifies Pearson as the publisher.

¹⁰ Pearson issued a prospectus in that year, but after Pearson's retirement from business in 1885, Bernard Quaritch became Muir's agent.

¹¹ From a note by Hooper on a card accompanying copy D of *Jerusalem* in the Harvard University Library.

¹² Pearson owned the former Flaxman copy of *Songs of Innocence*, copy D, from which Muir's facsimile was produced in 1884. He also owned a copy of *Poetical Sketches* and a rather dubious-sounding water color showing "a number of Nude figures being led captive by a Devil, and others following; the great head of a marine monster, in the mouth of which are several figures, etc." --*Catalogue of the Valuable and Interesting Library formed during the past 40 years by Mr. John Pearson (Sold in consequence of declining health). The Third Portion. Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge. Tues. 7 Nov. 1916 and following Day (nos. 40, 41, 42).*

No. 13 W. Muir £

THE SONG OF LOS.

LAMBETH. - PRINTED BY W. BLAKE, - 1795.

*Facsimiled at Edmonton, anno, 1890, by W. C. Ward, E. Drutt, H. T. Muir, S. E. Muir
and Wm. Muir, from an original in the British Museum.*

This issue completes "The Edition of the Works of Wm. Blake," prepared by "The Blake Press at Edmonton," as follows:—

QUARTO: THEL, 1884; VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION, 1884; SONGS OF INNOCENCE, 1885; SONGS OF EXPERIENCE, 1885; MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL, 1885; MILTON, 1886; THERE IS NO NATURAL RELIGION, 1886; THE GATES OF PARADISE, 1886; URIZEN, 1888.—FOLIO: AMERICA, 1887; EUROPE, 1888; THE SONG OF LOS (*hic est*) SINGLE SHEETS: LITTLE TOM THE SAILOR; THE ANCIENT OF DAYS; SERYLLENE LEAF.

I have not issued JERUSALEM because Mr. Pearson's excellent facsimile can be had by all; nor have I issued THE FRENCH REVOLUTION and AHANIA because I have not been able to get originals to work from; nor have I issued THE BOOK OF LOS because others are about to do so.

I would have issued THE SONG OF LOS long ago, but for the fact that it has taken me four years to rediscover the peculiar vehicle or colour-medium used in it by Blake. I hope all will agree with me in thinking that the result justifies the delay.

I now bid farewell to our subscribers, and my fellow workers join with me in thanking them with all our hearts for the support and appreciation they have given us during so many years.

For the Blake Press.
WM. MUIR.

Edmonton, November, 1890.

BERNARD QUARITCH, 15, PICCADILLY, AGENT.