

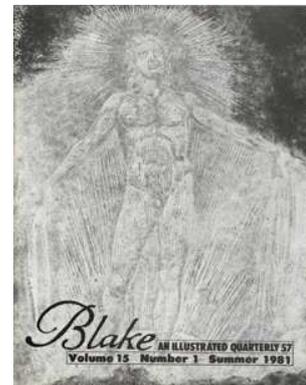
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

N E W S

Songs Copy h

Robert N. Essick

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Thanks to David Bindman's query, I can now see that the "P" of "Perry" is rather more like the "P" as engraved in the published plates than it is like Blake's--though, *pace* Bindman's other viewers of the original sketch, nothing like a formal "L" can be seen here. The letter is a formal "P" in the style of copperplate hand employed by Blake (see "O Prince" for a flourished example, in *FZ* 38:15) as well as in that of the lettering engraver.

Why should "Perry" be crowded up so against the last word of the caption, and too close for a properly flourishing "P"? And why "W.B." put off toward the left edge? I take it that although the caption itself had to be carefully spaced and its style indicated, the placing of the names would depend on the final shaping of the plate. They were simply jotted here, by Perry or by some foreman, as reminders. If the design were used as a vignette under "SECOND VOLUME" (to guess at a number) it might float as a cloud above blank space and the names be tucked inconspicuously under the corners of the cloud: compare Bindman, plates 381 and 382.

As for the caption itself, however, infrared photography yields no trace of any letter where Bindman hesitantly conjectures (and abandons) a "b" for "bard." But "ardours" stands out even more clearly than "dead"; the pencil mending Bindman mentions I take to be Blake's turning the sketch into setting-copy, so to speak. If the New Mexico printer doesn't now betray us, I think no one need worry further about this transcription. David Bindman, however, has generously invited the curious to consult the original.

And what next? Perhaps someone working in publishing history will discover what aborted Volume these ardours were intended to adorn.

W B. The dead ardours Perry
David Bindman Collection.

NEWSLETTER

BLAKE AT MLA IN 1981

A session on "Blake and Criticism," organized by Thomas A. Vogler (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz), has been approved for the 1981 annual meeting of the MLA in New York. The theme of the session will be "Blake as a self-conscious critic and theorist of language and literature, one who anticipated the principal issues in the current theoretical debate, and addressed them in ways that deserve exploration at this time." Brief papers will be presented by Nelson Hilton (Univ. of Georgia), Morris Eaves (Univ. of New Mexico), and Paul Mann (Univ. of Texas at Dallas), and the papers will be followed by a response from W. J. T. Mitchell (Univ. of Chicago). The time and place for this session will be announced later this year.

QUERY

Mary Lynn Johnson is writing the Blake chapter for the fourth edition of *The English Romantic Poets: A Review of Research and Criticism*, edited by Frank Jordan, Jr., to be published in 1983 by the Modern Language Association. She would like to hear from readers of *Blake* who have suggestions as to content or emphasis--particularly in regard to neglected (or overrated) critical works on Blake. Write to M. L. Grant, 15 South Seventh Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240.

SONGS COPY h

Another copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* has re-emerged on the auction market after a disappearance of over sixty years. At an unknown time, the great bibliophile H. Buxton Forman acquired at least ninety-eight posthumous impressions of the *Songs*. These he had mounted on linen stubs and bound in three volumes in dark maroon levant morocco, Jansen style, with elaborately gilt dentelles. Each is stamped on the tail of the front paste-down endpaper "BOUND BY RIVIERE & SON FOR H. BUXTON FORMAN" and each bears Forman's bookplate on the inside front cover. One volume, designated as g¹ in *Blake Books* and containing 23 plates, is now at Princeton; another (g²), with 18 plates, is in the Rosenwald Collection of the Library of Congress. The third and largest volume (h), containing 57 plates on 57 leaves, disappeared after its sale to the bookdealer A. S. W. Rosenbach at the Buxton Forman auction at Anderson Galleries in New York on 15 March 1920, lot 53 (\$90). This volume, not previously described in any detail, has now come to light at Christie's New York auction of 22 May 1981, lot 36, with "A Divine Image" and "The Sick Rose" reproduced in the catalogue. It is now in my collection.

The 57 plates in copy h are in the sequence given below and show fragments (cut by the edges of the sheets) of J WHATMAN 1831 and 1832 watermarks as indicated. Unless otherwise noted, the ink is gray, ranging from very light to almost black. Plates: 1, 1 (a light red-brown terra cotta ink, hereafter designated simply as "brown"; watermark J WH/18), 3 (ATMAN/31), 2 (J WH/18), 4, 6 (ATMAN/31), 7, 8, 5, 25, 9, 10 (J WH/18), 22, 23, 16, 17, 24 (brown; J WHA/18), 19 (brown), 11 (ATMAN/31), 12 (ATMAN/31), 18 (brown), 20, 21, 26 (brown), 27, 13 14, 28 (brown, with a few spots of gray), 29, 30 (brown), 31 (brown), 38, 40 (brown; J WH/18), 42, 34, 35 (J WH/18), 36 (brown,

with dark brown ink or paint stains on the lower right corner of the leaf), 32 (brown; J WHA/18), 45 (brown; TMAN/31), 33, 49 (brown), 41 (brown), 39 (TMAN/32), 52 (brown), 52 (J WH/1), 54 (brown), 43 (brown; ATMAN/31), 44 (brown; TMAN/31), 50 (brown), 48 (brown), 53 (J WH/1), 53 (brown), 46 (brown), 51 (brown), 37 (brown), 47 (brown), b (dark reddish brown--clearly a different ink than the other brown; ATMAN/832). Plate 15, "Laughing Song," is lacking; it is not included in any of the three volumes bound up for Forman.

The leaves measure approximately 28 x 19.5 cm., except that the first leaf and the 45th (bearing "To Tirzah" in gray) are short at the bottom, only 24.1 and 24.3 cm. high respectively. This is the approximate leaf size in copies g¹ and g². These two smaller leaves are a slightly thicker wove paper than all the rest. Each leaf is numbered in pencil consecutively, 1 through 57, below the lower left corner of the plate. Other pencil inscriptions are "KSNS/200 (clearly a bookdealer's notation) on the verso of the front free endpaper, "2" below the plate on the first leaf, "Gilchrist calls this 'Christian Forbearance' II. 65 1863" below "A Poison Tree" on the 41st leaf, and "20" on the verso of the last leaf (bearing "A Divine Image" on its recto).

Three plates are partly hand colored in water colors. Plate 38, "Nurse's Song" in *Experience*, is awkwardly painted in green, rose red, blue, and yellow, with the title gone over in gold. The pale blue, green, and yellow washed on plate 40, "The Fly," are more skillfully applied. Plate 45, "The Little Vagabond," has been touched with blue and olive green in a few spots.

The vendor of copy h at Christie's auction was Charlton M. Theus, Jr. According to his letter to me of 11 June 1981, Mr. Theus acquired the book c. 1946 from Mr. Reid, a bookseller of Chesterton, South Carolina. I have not been able to learn anything of the book's whereabouts between 1920 and 1946.

Like all posthumous copies of the *Songs* I have seen, copy h contains a good many poorly inked and printed impressions. Some plates were printed with such great pressure that they have been embossed into the paper. But copy h has one distinctive characteristic. With its three duplicate plates (1, 52, 53) and inclusion of only the sixth known impression of "A Divine Image," it has more plates than any other copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. ROBERT N. ESSICK, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE.