

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

BLAKE

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

Improving the Text of The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake

David V. Erdman

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 20, Issue 2, Fall 1986, pp. 49-52



William Muir

Raymond Lister

Robert Essick's review of the Manchester Etching Workshop's Blake facsimile, in which he says that "little is known about Muir and why he labored so long and hard on Blake facsimiles," reminds me that in 1961, when I was running the Golden Head Press at Cambridge, and was experimenting, among other things, with hand-colored books, I planned to write and publish a small book on Muir. Unfortunately I was, owing to other commitments, unable to do this, but the plan did produce some comments in a letter from the late Kerrison Preston which, in view of the small amount known about Muir, ought to be placed on record.

The Georgian House
Rockshaw Road
Merstham, Surrey
22 August, 1961

Dear Mr. Lister,

Many thanks for your letter to-day. I congratulate you on getting Muir's "Visions," which is well worth having. If it is the same as Lot 467 at Sotheby's on the 1st August, I think Quaritch paid £16 for it, so they are not making an unfair profit. The Lot included a loosely inserted letter from Muir to the Editor of *The Academy*, which would be interesting.⁽¹⁾

I had many letters myself from Muir, some of which I still have.⁽²⁾ When I knew him he was a little, wizened old man, uneducated (like Blake) and very quiet and calm in spite of his great enthusiasms. He lived with his little old wife in East London and I think he had a Chemist's shop there. I happened to mention this to Geoffrey⁽³⁾ the other day but he did not seem to know of any shop.

I never went to Muir's house or shop, but he used to come to see me at Bournemouth. He talked incessantly about Blake who was his great hero but in spite of this he always struck me as having more of a scientific than artistic cast of mind. He made these remarkable facsimiles with the aid of his wife and other helpers, using any mechanical means available as well as his artistic skill.

I knew nothing of Chemistry or the scientific side in which he was so interested, but he often used to go on from Bournemouth to Kimmeridge Bay in Dorset where he had a great scheme for extracting oil from shale, which he thought might become enormously valuable and lucrative. But he was by no means a money-grubber and his ideas were mostly unworldly, like Blake's. He lived in a very modest way and was utterly unpretentious.

There—that is about all I know about Muir. I have very friendly and admiring recollections of him, but I am afraid they do not amount to enough to help you with constructing a Biography. I should be greatly interested to hear what contributions there might be from other people to a composite portrait of him. He must have had a number of Blake friends through his Agent, Quaritch, and others, but his facsimiles were, of course, laborious and therefore limited in number. Their artistic success, especially in colour, depends largely on which of the Blake originals he happened to get hold of. He would not have a wide choice in that. I think the "America" is the best, with its brilliant colouring.

I hope you will have a go at making at least a sketch of his

life. It might, as you say, make a "pretty little booklet," if not more.

I will remember (probably) not to pester you in September. I hope you will have the thoroughly good holiday you deserve, despite the Welsh language.

Kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Kerrison Preston

¹ Apparently my copy of the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* was not this same lot; there was no letter in it from Muir when I acquired it.

² I do not know the present whereabouts of these, but it is probable that they are in the Westminster Public Library with Preston's Blake collection.

³ Sir Geoffrey Keynes.

Improving the Text of *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*

David V. Erdman

Despite the extended cooperative effort of several Blake scholars to make it a faithful and accurate as well as complete edition, the Doubleday and California text of 1982 retained a sprinkling of misprints and even a few mistranscriptions. By the summer of 1983, *Blake* 17 (1983), 14, could report about a score of mostly simple errata and note the problems of some of Blake's Hebrew lettering.

By the autumn of 1984 a sizable list of errata was sent to Doubleday and to California. And now that the Doubleday (paperback) is in a second printing, it is comforting to find that proper corrections have been made of that first score and another two score errata. When the California hardback goes into its next printing, we can expect these to be attended to there.

It is a curious thing, however, that one mistake, which the California printers corrected before their first printing, has been left alone by the Doubleday printers. Illustration 2, *The Laocoön*, facing page 272, as first printed gives a negative instead of a positive impression: the text reads white on black instead of black on white as Blake wanted it. Let's hope that the *third* Anchor printing will get the joke.

In the list that follows, it seems best to include the earlier as well as the later errors discovered—so that possessors of the first printing (hard or soft) will not

need to buy a new edition to make the noted improvements. Corrections already made, in the Doubleday second printing, will be marked with asterisks. Most of the mistakes were in text; some were in headings and apparatus.

ERRATA EMENDATA

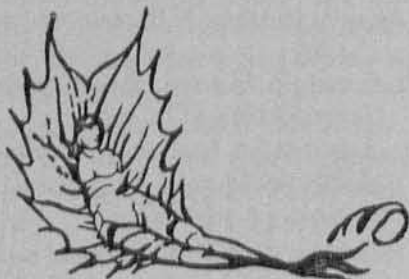
- p. xvii Line 28: Centerbury *should read* canterbury
- *p. xx Preceding "TEXTUAL NOTES . . . ERDMAN": *insert* RECENT CONJECTURAL ATTRIBUTIONS 785
- *p. 3 Top: reverse the paragraphs headed "Conclusion" and "Application." As John Grant points out, it would be a further nicety if the closing "line" were to be printed thus:
- Therefore
God becomes as we are.
that we may be as he
is
- p. 71 Margin: [line number] 50 *should read* 40
Line 26: abominable *should read* abominable [the one erratum spotted by the Santa Cruz collective]
- p. 85 Running head: THE BOOK OF URIZEN
should read THE BOOK OF AHANIA
- p. 103 Lines 42-44 have broken letters
- *p. 121 Line 63: flutes *should read* flutes["]
- p. 131 Margin, bottom: The Hebrew letter at the top of Blake's marginal note is Kaph but should be Khaph.
- p. 145 After line 3 of paragraph 2: *insert ' in the margin*
- *p. 148 Line 60: Jersaulam *should read* Jerusalem
- *p. 167 Line 25: Jerusalm *should read* Jerusalem
- *p. 271 Running head: ADEL *should read* ABEL
- p. 273 [Jah, for Jehovah] *should read* [Jehovah] [The Hebrew letters are Heh and Yod, not Jah.]
- p. 371 Beside "End of The Seventh Night": *delete ' in margin*
- *p. 387 Line 11: Roaming *should read* Roaring
- * Line 15: astitial *should read* [asterial]
- *p. 390 Line 40: self destroying *should read* self-destructing
- * Line 45: deceit *should read* deciet
- * Line 24: self cursd *should read* self-cursd
- *p. 391 Line 40: guard *should read* Guard
- * Line 3: awake from deaths *should read* awake to life from deaths
- * Line 21: said *should read* Said
- *p. 392 Line 34: autumn *should read* Autumn
- * Line 1: slaves *should read* Slaves
- * Line 19: While *should read* while
- *p. 393 Line 31: your *should read* Your
- *p. 395 Line 39: thro the Mercy *should read* thro Mercy
- * Line 12: oblivion *should read* Oblivion
- *p. 397 Line 19: branching *should read* branchy
- *p. 398 Line 11: o my flocks *should read* O my flocks
- *p. 399 Line 14 (of p. 131): Tharmas, O *should read* Tharmas O
- *p. 400 Line 35: depart the clouds *should read* depart. the clouds
- *p. 401 Line 32: What *should read* what
- * Line 38: dead *should read* Dead
- *p. 402 Line 32: inconceivable *should read* inconcievable
- *p. 404 Line 16: sons & daughters *should read* Sons & Daughters
- *p. 405 Line 10: by sons *should read* by the sons
- p. 482 The Pickering Manuscript (Morgan Library):
In my textual note on "Auguries of Innocence" (p. 860), I indicated that the Pickering ms was hastily written; one more look at the ms makes me realize that it is not only the mending of letters that causes trouble, but the difficulty of making sure whether a capital or lower case was intended. Most of these make little significant difference, but I'd now like to report the following somewhat—i.e., more or less—conjectural readings of letters.
- p. 483 Line 5: disdain *should read* Disdain
- p. 484 Line 21: day *should read* Day
- p. 484 Line 8: sow *should read* Sow
- p. 485 Line 28: seventy *should read* Seventy
- p. 485 Line 52: Beggar *should read* Begger
- Line 57: allay *should read* Allay
insert ' in margin
- p. 486 Line 15: waters *should read* Waters
- p. 487 Line 25: dove *should read* Dove
- Line 32: Envy be free *was mended from* Envy is free
- p. 489 ["Auguries of Innocence"] ["The Crystal Cabinet"] Line 27: air *should read* Air
- p. 490 Line 6: dove *should read* Dove
doves *should read* Doves
- Line 23: strife *should read* Strife
- p. 491 Line 52: on *was mended from* in
- Line 53: truth *should read* Truth
- Line 74: death *should read* Death
- p. 492 Line 99: deform *should read* Deform
- Line 109: doubt *should read* Doubt
- Line 111: do *should read* Do
- p. 496 Title: John Brown & Mary Bell *became expanded to* Long John Brown & Pretty Mary Bell, *and then* Pretty *was changed to* Little
Line 1: Pretty *became* Little
Line 2; Young John *became* Long John

- Line 3: Young . . . Pretty *became* Long . . .
Little
- Lines 6–8: *each devil should read* Devil
- Line 15: glory *should read* Glory
- Line 19: the Fairy *should read* The Fairy
- p. 497 Line 21: O William *first read simply* William
- Line 45: shine *should read* Shine
- p. 498 Line 52: there *should read* There
- *p. 501 Line 27: so feeling *should read* in pity
- * Line 30: Spell removed unwound *should read*
ninefold Spell unwound
- p. 517 After "The Washer Womans Song": *insert* this
new poem (including signature at bottom):
- THE PHOENIX TO MRS BUTTS
- I saw a Bird rise from the East
As a Bird rises from its Nest
With sweetest Songs I ever heard
It sang I am Mrs Butts's Bird
And then I saw a Fairy gay 5
That with this beauteous Bird would play
From a golden cloud she came
She call'd the sweet Brid by its name
She call'd it Phoenix! Heavens Dove!
She call'd it all the names of Love 10
But the Bird flew fast away
Where little Children sport & play
And they strok'd it with their hands
All their cooe's it understands
The Fairy to my bosom flew 15
Weeping tears of morning dew
I said: Thou foolish whimpring thing
Is not that thy Fairy Ring
Where those Children sport & play
In Fairy fancies light & gay 20
Seem a Child & be a Child
And the Phoenix is beguild
But if thou seem'st a Fairy thing
Then it flies on glancing wing
- WILLIAM BLAKE
- p. 563 Line 15 (from bottom): Visions also *should*
read Vision is also
- *p. 687 Line 6: Incriptions *should read* Incriptions
- p. 687 Line 9: *after* It is Spiritually Discerned] *insert*
the deleted words: [*Prayer to God is the*
Study of Imaginative Art]
- p. 688 After Line 12: *insert* XXI [Below "In burnt
Offerings for Sin thou hast had no Pleasure"
Blake first wrote [*Praise to God is the Exer-*
cise of Imaginative Art.]
- *p. 689 Near bottom: move "On design No 38 . . .
Venus" down the page to follow "On verso
of No 36 . . .?window"
- p. 727 Line 8 (from bottom): *delete colon following*
Hebrew [Blake's phrase means "my He-
brew alphabet," but he gives the actual
aleph-beth-gimel. N.b.: The Hebrew let-
ters are correct, and in the correct order.]
- *p. 729 After line 7 (from bottom): *insert* Maries at
the Sepulcher. 4 The Death of Joseph. 5
The Death of the Virgin
- p. 763 Two sentences of the letter are repeated: de-
lete lines 8–10 and the first word of line
11.
- p. 785 Under "Recent Conjectural Attributions": *de-*
lete last three lines; insert A more evidently
genuine "piece of Blakean doggerel written
in pale blue water colour with a brush" and
discovered by Geoffrey Keynes is "The
Phoenix to Mrs Butts," a manuscript now
in the family of a great grandson of Mrs.
Butts and signed by an authenticated Blake
signature. We include it above (p 517).
- *p. 789 After "imperfection." (bottom): *insert* That the
"Conclusion" belongs *before* the "Applica-
tion" has been pointed out by John Grant.
(One cannot apply a conclusion until it has
been reached.)
- *p. 791 [{"The Blossom" note] *should read* 6 my] falsely
reported as "thy" in posthumous copies,
but see M.E. Reisner in *Blake Newsletter*
40: 130.
[{"The Chimney Sweeper" note]: *insert* 20
He'd] But *inked tracing in copy AA* (destroy-
ing the sense).
- *p. 808 Note on Hebrew for *Milton* 32:15: This entry
makes no sense, since the "wrong" reading
has been silently corrected by the printer
to the "right" reading. Blake wrote a Kaph
(כ) where he should have written a Khaph
(כּ). So we must change the first Hebrew
word in this line, having it begin (at the
right end) with a Kaph (כּ). Leslie Bris-
man, however, argues that Blake may have
intended an etymological pun; so the let-
ters as Blake place them may be allowed
to stand (with the Kaph at the beginning
but above the line).
- *p. 814 After 1:19:*insert* 1:28 serpents] serpents [?all]
1st rdg
- p. 843 Left margin, bottom, above "Night the Ninth":
insert PAGE 117
Left margin, bottom: [First line under PAGE
118] *should read* 15 asterial 2nd rdg del]
eternal 1st rdg del]
- *p. 845 Near top: PAGE 136 *should read* 135 and
PAGE 135 *should read* 136
- *p. 863 Line 12 (from bottom): [30 . . . line] *should*
read 30 ninefold] *inserted above the line*
Line 2 (from bottom): [11 . . . man] *should*
read 11 After "said" Blake first wrote
"Beli", a start for "Believe"; my previous

reading "Rich" has been corrected by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

- p. 874 Top: below "The Washer Womans Song" *insert* The Phoenix to Mrs Butts, first published in *TLS*, September 14, 1984, pp 1021-22.
- *p. 882 Line 17: (1981) *should read* 60 (1981) 69-86.
- p. 891 Under [Inscriptions in . . . *Job*, 1825] *add a new paragraph after* Insignificant variants . . . pp 55-66.: The canceled sentences on plates I and XXI were first discovered by Robert N. Essick, as reported in *Blake* 19 (1985-86) 96-102, on early versions of Blake's plates. These recovered declarations somewhat conflict with modern critical interpretation which assumes a sharp contrast between Job's beginning and his latter end. Before and after Job's trials, he and his family were concentrating on the Right Thing.
- p. 974 Line 10: 494, '782 *should read* 503, '864
- *p. 981 Line 5: 6850 *should read* '850
- *p. 982 After line 13 (from bottom): *insert* Nightingale, To the 785
- p. 983 After line 7 (from bottom): *insert* The Phoenix to Mrs Butts 517
- *p. 983 Bottom line: '864 *should read* '846
- *p. 985 Line 20: 622 *should read* 662
- * Line 30: borth *should read* birth
- *p. 986 Line 7: Cert *should read* Art
After line 14 (from bottom): *insert* "The Use of Money & its Wars" 687
- p. 987 After line 16: *insert* "Till thou dost injure . . ." '835
- *p. 988 After line 7: *insert* "To the Nightingale" 785

Has anyone found other errata? If so, please let me know, to make corrections in the *next* printings.



DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

A Reply to Martin Butlin

Raymond Lister

I refer to the note by Martin Butlin printed in the Spring 1986 issue of *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*. I regret if in my review I unintentionally misrepresented what Mr. Butlin said about the Keating forgeries; I of course accept his version. But so far as I know he did not at the time nor at any subsequent time publicly deny the *Times* report (his alleged comments were printed in *The Times* on 16 July 1976; Keating's admission appeared there on 20 August 1976).

As a principal prosecution witness at the Keating trial I saw most of the newspaper and other reports, but I do not recall seeing a denial, so my assumption that the report was correct was natural. If, however, a denial was published, it would be helpful if Mr. Butlin would state when and where it appeared. I suggest this in no hectoring spirit, but simply, if the record is wrong, to get it right.

My main point is not invalidated: that some members of the British art establishment, both trade and curatorial, were badly taken in by the forgeries (perhaps it would be more accurate to say by the forged provenance). I do not agree with Mr. Butlin that I have accorded the affair more attention than it deserves. Under all circumstances what I wrote was mild enough; it is a good thing to be reminded that such things are possible, even among the well informed. Surely, too, it is proper that reference to the Keating affair should be made in a scholarly journal, the main subject of which is so closely related to Samuel Palmer.

Mr. Butlin is kind enough to refer to what he calls "the reviewer's cleverness." I make no claim to have been clever; little perception was required, if one looked at the forgeries properly, to see them for what they were.

As for being an "enthusiastic amateur," I can only say that I agree. There is nothing wrong with having enthusiasm for one's subject; and as an amateur I am in excellent company.