

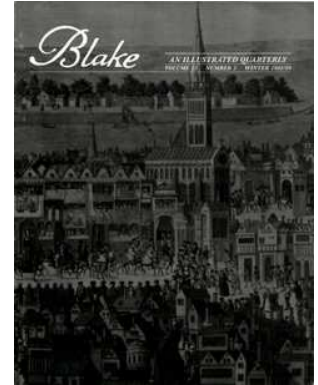
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

R E V I E W

David Bindman, ed., William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job; David Bindman, ed., Colour Versions of William Blake's Book of Job Designs from the Circle of John Linnell

Martin Butlin

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1785. Michael Phillips argues that the MS is a fair copy with revisions "composed intermittently between 1782 and 1785, or perhaps even later" (6), but the evidence for a date before 1784 is not very persuasive. Indeed, even the conventional date of 1784 is not very firm. The claims for novel conclusions here are put with appropriate caution, and, while some scholars may not accept all the conclusions which Michael Phillips presents, at least the evidence is laid out plainly.

In sum, this is a satisfactorily faithful reproduction of the manuscript, the transcription, introduction, and notes are just what they should be and what they pretend to be, and the whole is a genuine contribution to Blake scholarship. Anyone concerned to know the appearance and implications of Blake's puzzling manuscript of *An Island in the Moon* can in future turn with confidence to this careful and valuable edition. [See Michael Phillips's comment, below]

<sup>1</sup>For that matter, it is not reproduced in its entirety now, for the original consists of a booklet of 32 pages, of which the first 17 bear the text and the last one has a drawing on it. Only the first 17 pages and the last 1 are reproduced; the 12 blank pages are not reproduced, and the work is therefore not, strictly speaking, a facsimile. Much reduced photographs of the text-pages of the *Island* are reproduced in William Blake, *En Ö På Månen*, ed. Göran Malmqvist (Uppsala, 1979) 133-149.

David Bindman, ed. *William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job*, London: The William Blake Trust, 1987. 172 pp., 53 pp. reproductions, 22 plates.

David Bindman, ed. *Colour versions of William Blake's Book of Job designs from the circle of John Linnell*, London: The William Blake Trust, 1987. 28 pp., 48 color facsimiles.

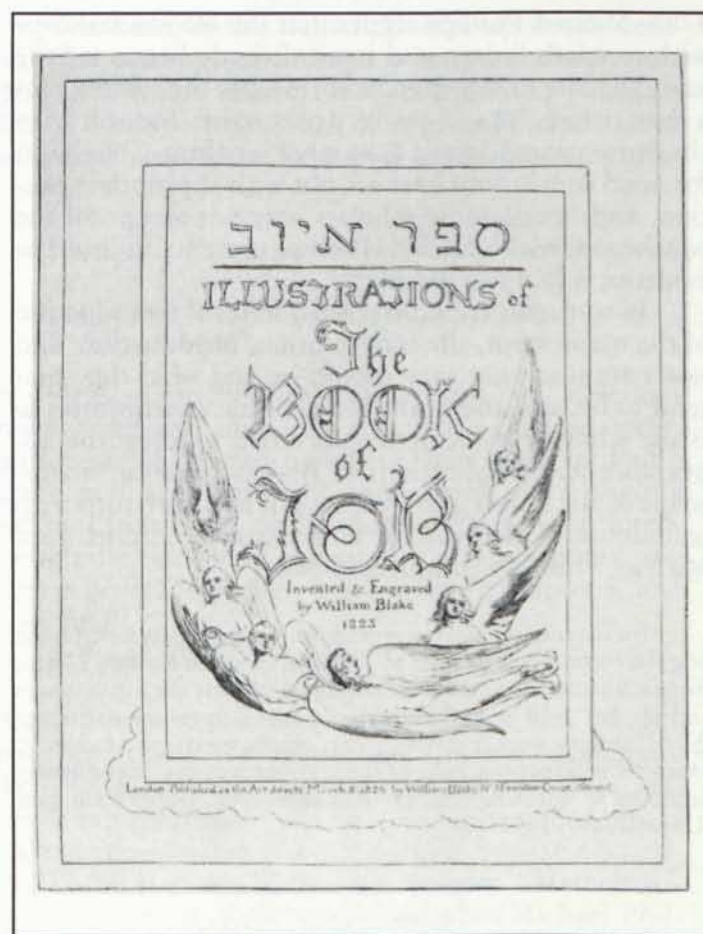
Deluxe edition with stencils, proofs, and an extra set of plates, 22 copies at £1,600 for both publications. Standard edition, 250 copies at £580 for both publications. Standard edition, 50 copies, £260 and £360 respectively for each publication.

Reviewed by Martin Butlin

It is a long time since I have received one of these wonderful William Blake Trust publications. The excitement of unwrapping a package large enough to enclose a complete set of hi-fi equipment, the characteristic smell of glue and leather, the sumptuous effect of gold tooling on brown leather with carefully attuned cloth and marbled papers, beautifully clear and legible typeface—I had feared that these were a thing of the past. And of course, in many ways this publication is a product of the past. The "onlie begetters," Sir Geoffrey Keynes and Arnold Fawcus, died in 1982 and 1979 respectively, leaving the work unfinished, and a new team, David Bindman, Barbara Bryant, Robert Essick and Bo Lindberg, some already involved in the project, have brought the work to completion. The result is something rather different from, and rather more ambitious than, what was originally envisaged. The long list of color facsimiles produced by the Trianon Press under Arnold Fawcus for the William Blake Trust were above all objects of beauty, recreating as near to perfection as possible Blake's original achievements. The accompanying text, though fully adequate, was deliberately kept as short as possible. Only in a few of the later publications, such as *Blake's Laocoön, a Last Testament*, published in 1976, and *The Complete Portraiture of William and Catherine Blake*, of 1977, was the accompanying matter of necessity fuller and more scholarly. Now, as the preface by David Bind-

# WILLIAM BLAKE'S Illustrations of the Book of JOB

THE PLATES  
with an introduction and  
plate-by-plate commentary by  
Bo Lindberg



man and John Commander states, "a more extensive range of discussion, analysis and documentation" has been included. From the simplicity of the original idea this publication has become a multipart, complex production including not only the visual evidence, but also a profusion of analysis and description. For the scholar this has obvious advantages, but it also has two major disadvantages, particularly for the primary market for this publication, the Blake enthusiast.

First, there is no consistency of opinion throughout the publication; different theories as to order of execution and so on are put forward by the different authors. The preface somewhat disingenuously suggests that "this partly reflects the many-layered complexity of Blake's involvement with the *Job* theme and is also an acknowledgement that the range and depth of Blake studies can no longer be embraced by one scholar." The problem is at its greatest in connection with Keynes's introductory text on "The Development of the *Job* Designs." This was written some years before Keynes's death and indeed the main substance dates back to the great five-part publication of *Illustrations to the Book of*

*Job* by William Blake edited by Keynes and Laurence Binyon in 1935, and subsequently republished with emendments in *Blake Studies* in 1971. The editors were faced with a difficult decision and in the end, "It was decided not to attempt to bring the text up to date but to leave it essentially unchanged. A few minor editorial alterations have been made . . ." However, this has left not only contradictions between Keynes's text and what is written elsewhere in the publication but even contradictions within Keynes's text itself. On page 18, the date of the first, Thomas Butts set of watercolors, is brought back from the 1820s to the first decade of the nineteenth century but the subsequent text is left largely unaltered, leaving Keynes to suggest at the head of page 19 that, after a few early isolated depictions of subjects from the *Book of Job*, Blake did not set about "telling the story in his own way . . . in the series of 'Inventions' until after his second spiritual rebirth following the dark days of 1810-18." On the other hand, it is not just for sentimental and nostalgic reasons that one is glad that Keynes's piece has been retained. There is a characteristic lightness of touch and sense of humor largely lacking from the writings of later writers on Blake, as in the juxtaposi-

tion of the transcription of the entries recording the sale of proofs to the King and to Josiah Taylor, the latter having been "sent to the House of Correction by F. Tatham, Taylor being St [sent] H. of C. for swindling."

Much the most crucial result of the decision to submit the whole question of Blake's illustrations to the Book of Job to a thorough scholarly review is that it has proved impossible to suppress the doubts concerning the genuineness of the works that had already been printed in expensive color facsimile by the Trianon Press before Fawcus's death, the so-called New Zealand set, the Collins hand colored engravings, and the four hand colored plates in the Fitzwilliam Museum. By the time he died, Keynes must have been the only reputable Blake scholar still to insist on the authenticity of the New Zealand set; even Fawcus, who had previously been persuaded that they were genuine, had begun to have his doubts, which were later reinforced by his widow's researches. Other scholars had doubted them long before. The result is that this fine but expensive publication is largely taken up with what at the best can only be regarded as peripheral material, together with a scholarly apparatus that demonstrates just how peripheral it is. In fact the scholarly apparatus is perhaps almost too damning in its judgement on at least one group of the works.

To make things easier for the impecunious the Blake Trust has made 50 copies of the two main parts of this publication (each in its own box) available separately; however, the 22 deluxe copies and 250 of the standard copies can only be acquired both parts together. Nevertheless it will perhaps be helpful if this review continues with a discussion of the contents of the publication section by section so that people wanting to buy only one part will know what is involved.

The first box, devoted to *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job*, contains two sections, one a book of most of the introductory texts, the other a box filled with a series of 22 fascicules each devoted to the various treatments of one composition in the series. The text volume starts with a select bibliography which also serves as a list of abbreviations, a page of acknowledgements written by Stephen Keynes, and a foreword, discussing the activities of the William Blake Trust, by Charles Ryskamp. This is followed by the preface by Bindman and Commander, already mentioned, which discusses and explains the complicated evolution of the publication. Then follows Keynes's essay on "The Development of the Job Designs."

The rest of this introductory text volume is required reading for the Blake scholar. It begins with an essay on "The Book of Job Designs from Butts series to final engravings" by Bindman, which discusses the evolution of the various series of illustrations and relates them to the

evolution of Blake's thought. He starts by establishing the present view that the first set of watercolor illustrations for the Book of Job, those executed for Thomas Butts, were mainly done in the first decade of the nineteenth century rather than at the beginning of the 1820s, and that two of the series are later additions. One small addition can be made to his account of the stages by which this new dating was reached: in the 1971 second edition of my 1957 catalogue of the works by Blake in the Tate Gallery I had already suggested (see page 63) a dating of c. 1810. More important than the question of precedence however is the fact that Bindman makes sense of the redating in the context of Blake's changing opinions as between the first decade of the century and the Indian summer of Blake's last years. He also throws in the interesting speculation that the watercolor illustrations to the Bible, which seem to have immediately preceded the first series of illustrations to the Book of Job, were designed for an extra-illustrated volume. However, my own view is that the Bible watercolors, with their large inscriptions in a copperplate hand, were designed for display; the badly faded condition of many of these shows that they were so displayed and suffered from the ruinous effect of daylight.

Bindman's essay is followed by Essick's on "Blake's Engravings to the Book of Job: An Essay of their Graphic Form with a Catalogue of their States and Printings." This is as detailed and exhaustive as one would expect and includes a lot of new material including, for instance, the fact that glue spots on the reduced size drawings in the Fitzwilliam Museum show that they were actually stuck to the copperplates as an aid to their engraving. Again the factual examination of the evidence, in this case Blake's actual technique, is related to the wider issue of his artistic philosophy. Reading Essick's analysis of the difference between the various states of the engravings is laborious, but well worthwhile in that it gives an insight into Blake's working methods and attention to "minute particulars." One slight disadvantage is that the various sets of pre-publication proofs are not discussed in chronological order but by location, which makes it difficult to follow the progression through from one series of proofs to the next. However a hitherto unknown set of proofs in the University of Texas library is included and, most fascinating of all, there is an analysis, as full as the circumstances allow, of a set of proofs that was last recorded when sold in 1936 (this has already formed the subject of an article in *Blake* 19 (1985-6): 96-102). These last include evidence, not fully taken into account elsewhere in this publication, that even at this late stage Blake did not regard Job's act of worship in the first design as merely an act of uninspired conformity, an inscription in the margin at the

foot of the altar reading "Prayer to God is the Study of Imaginative Art." Only the fact that this set of proofs has now disappeared can account for the relative calm that has followed the publication of this revolutionary piece of information.

The final section of this first volume of text is that on "The Job designs; a Documentary and Bibliographical Record," compiled by Bryant with introductory notes by Bindman. This sets out all the Linnell accounts that relate to the publication of Job illustrations and includes fascinating short biographical notes on nearly every figure mentioned. These are especially full on lesser known figures and are made readily accessible through an index at the end. Only in amazingly few cases have the authors had to admit total failure in discovering anything about their subject. One small correction must be made: at the top of page 104 it is stated that three watercolors from the John Linnell set are not in the Fogg Art Museum; in fact one is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, one is in a private collection in Paris, but the third, although parted at one stage from the rest of the Fogg Museum set when it passed through the collection of A. E. Newton, has now rejoined that set (Butlin no. 551 14).

In addition to the introductory volume of text, the first of these two joint publications contains a box of fascicules each containing monochrome reproductions of the various stages in the evolution of each composition in the series: the Butts watercolor, the John Linnell watercolor, the reduced-size Fitzwilliam Museum drawings and the final engraving, together with some of the related tempera paintings, watercolors or drawings, some proof engravings including all those with marginal sketches, and the corresponding composition from the New Zealand set of watercolors. There is an introductory folder containing "The Meaning of Blake's Job" by Lindberg, and each fascicule bears on the front of each folder a plate by plate commentary together with notes on previous interpretations by such writers as Wicksteed and S. Foster Damon. This commentary does not, perhaps thankfully, go into great interpretive detail but is more of a basic introduction of the kind found in earlier Blake Trust publications.

However, the long evolution of this publication has led to certain problems. In the first place Essick's researches have produced rather more states for some of the prints than were known when these fascicules were printed in the 1970s. The new information is available, but only in Essick's catalogue. The short list of contents on the inside of the enclosing page of each fascicule, printed at the same time as the rest, gives the earlier, incorrect information. Certain additional reproductions have been made since the first printing, and these are listed on the back of the introductory folder, but again not at the front of the appropriate fascicule.

More seriously, certain related works are omitted both from this collection of reproductions and indeed, so far as I can discover, from the text as a whole. The tempera painting related to plate 20, *Job and his Daughters* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, is reproduced and mentioned in the text with the correct date of c. 1799–1800 (thus correcting the dating in the 1820s of William Rossetti and of Lindberg in his pioneering book on *The Illustrations for the Book of Job*, 1973). However, there is no mention at all, let alone a reproduction, of the Tate Gallery's tempera on panel of *Satan smiting Job with sore Boils*, surely the final summation of that composition. Similarly, of the three pencil and watercolor sketches that play an important part in the evolution of certain of the later versions of the composition (Butlin nos. 552, 553 and 556), that showing *Job's Sacrifice* in the City Art Gallery, Leeds, is mentioned but not reproduced (though there is an acknowledgement for permission to reproduce to the Leeds City Art Gallery). Only the recto of *Every Man also gave him a piece of Money*, a version of the upright variant of the composition, and now in the Tate Gallery, is reproduced, but not the recently discovered drawing on the reverse. This means that this collection of reproductions, in some ways the most useful part of the whole publication, is maddeningly incomplete; one still has to refer to other publications for certain works essential to the evolution of Blake's designs.

The second of these two joint publications, devoted to *Colour versions of William Blake's Book of Job designs from the circle of John Linnell*, consists of a large box containing a seventeen-page introduction by Lindberg on "The Authenticity of the New Zealand Set and of the Colour Engravings; Comparisons between the sets," together with the three sets of color facsimiles that were the original *raison d'être* of this publication: the so-called New Zealand set of watercolors, the size of the engravings though without the margins, including all the compositions together with the title page; the so-called Collins set of hand colored engravings, the complete set with title page; and the four hand colored engravings, of compositions 11, 15, 18 and 20, in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. These facsimiles are of the highest quality, hand colored through stencils by the pochoir process.

Lindberg's introduction is, to put it bluntly, a detailed and, in all but one case perhaps, a convincing demolition job on the authenticity of all three sets of works. In the case of the New Zealand set some of his arguments have been given before, as in his own 1973 publication on the Job illustrations; some are new and include observations made independently by Fawcus's widow Julie. Lindberg kindly acknowledges my contribution, which I can confirm was also arrived at indepen-

dently. Once again, to put the record straight, I should perhaps point out that my suspicions were voiced, if only by omission, in the second edition of my catalogue of the works by Blake in the Tate Gallery: in the first edition I had mentioned the New Zealand set among the authentic works of Blake, while in the second I omitted all reference to it. To sum up the arguments, in every case the New Zealand watercolors depend either upon the final state of engravings where these have been altered or, where they differ from the final state of the engravings, upon the John Linnell set of watercolors. There is no way in which they can be regarded as independent works by Blake himself, whereas Lindberg convincingly places them within the circle of John Linnell and his sons and pupils whom Linnell is known to have instructed by having them copy works by Blake.

For the two sets of hand colored engravings the arguments are less technical and more based on the judgement of the eye. The coloring of both sets is closely related to that of the New Zealand set, as is convincingly demonstrated by Lindberg. Moreover, the hand colored engravings and the New Zealand set are closer to each other than they are to the Linnell set of watercolors. One technical argument against the authenticity of the hand colored engravings, like that of the New Zealand set, is that the coloring of Job's three friends is wrong in compositions 15 and 18, but this argument is somewhat vitiated by the fact that Blake himself seems to have made a similar mistake in composition 16.

The very quality of the color facsimiles makes this reviewer doubt the almost overwhelming evidence produced by Lindberg, at least in the case of the four Fitzwilliam Museum prints. It is not really correct to say, as Lindberg does, that the coloring in plate 11 is paler because the work has faded, though this argument does perhaps apply in the case of plate 18. In each case, to my eye, the coloring of the Fitzwilliam Museum version is more sensitive than that in either the Collins set or the New Zealand series of watercolors. Given that it is at least arguable that in other cases of hand colored engravings of Blake compositions, for instance the *Night Thoughts*, there is at least one prime original hand colored by Blake himself, from which his wife or whoever made subsequent hand colored copies, it strikes me that the Fitzwilliam Museum prints could represent either the compositions surviving from a complete set or an incomplete set begun by Blake himself.

Unfortunately there is no provenance for the Fitzwilliam Museum engravings prior to 1935. That of the Collins engravings can be traced back to the middle of the nineteenth century and Lindberg has been able to supply new information about the history of the New Zealand set, two watercolors from which, it has been discovered, were exhibited at the Auckland Society of Arts in 1881 as being by William Blake. This attribution is

clearly not enough in itself to authenticate the works. Lindberg dismisses another argument for the authenticity of the Collins set of hand colored engravings, that the monochrome engraving itself was deliberately printed paler to make the coloring more effective: as Linnell seems to have been responsible for much of the early printing, it could have been his intention that the works should be colored, or indeed, if I am correct in assuming that Blake himself was responsible for the Fitzwilliam Museum coloring, Blake himself could have intended the coloring but not actually executed it.

Only in one further, minor point would I wish to disagree with Lindberg's most thorough analysis of the various problems connected with Blake's illustrations to the Book of Job. Lindberg suggests that the two compositions added to the Thomas Butts set of watercolors, clearly in the 1820s, were done before the corresponding compositions in the John Linnell set; Bindman and myself hold that they were executed subsequent to the Linnell watercolors. In the case of composition 17, *The Vision of Christ*, Lindberg argues that the position of the three friends, facing the vision of Christ in the Butts watercolor, is reversed in all the other versions and that this reversal is subtler in effect, particularly in the final engraving. However it could well be that Blake, or perhaps his widow who may have finished at least the coloring of this watercolor, wanted to give Butts, an old patron, something rather different from what had been done for the much younger patron John Linnell. In the case of *Job and his Daughters*, composition 20, the two preliminary sketches (and significantly there are more such sketches for this composition than for most of the others) and the Linnell watercolor show Blake undecided as between setting his figures in a landscape or in an interior. In the final engraving he reverted to the solution of some 25 years earlier, the composition of the biblical tempera painting now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Rather than see the Butts watercolor as a stage in the evolution from a landscape setting towards an interior setting, I would suggest that the landscape solution of the Butts watercolor could again be a deliberate effort to distinguish his watercolor from the composition as evolved for John Linnell.

It is because of the excellence of the reproductions and the thoroughness of the scholarship, that one can argue over such detailed points. Access to the Collins set of hand colored engravings is not easy but I have been fortunate enough to see them in the past (and even more fortunate in being able to examine the Fitzwilliam Museum prints laid out on my own grand piano!). But the quality of the facsimiles, even unaided by memories of the originals, is so high that value judgments can be made to supplement the detailed arguments of the text. Whether the effort and expense is worth it one must leave to the customer. For the scholar of Blake's work in

the visual arts, both publications will be essential. For somebody willing to be satisfied with the main core of Blake's achievement perhaps the first of the two publications will be sufficient, particularly if one has access to the 1935 Pierpont Morgan Library publication, which contains color facsimiles of the Butts and Linnell set of watercolors (only reproduced here in monochrome), and indeed of the New Zealand set, together with reproductions of the Fitzwilliam Museum drawings, many of the related sketches, and the final engravings.

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## DISCUSSION

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*with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought*

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### An Island In The Moon

Michael Phillips

G. E. Bentley, Jr., has generously invited my comment on his review of the facsimile of William Blake's *An Island in the Moon*. The only aspect where I feel that it may be appropriate for me to do so is in answer to the questions he raises regarding the "Description" of the manuscript, as these questions may lead some readers to conclude that the edition may not present: 1 of the material that it should, or that what has been presented may not be faithfully described.

A misunderstanding appears to stem from reference to the binding of the manuscript and to knowledge of its history prior to 1978. At the time of Keynes's inspection, and later that of Bentley, the manuscript was bound together with leaves of later Van Gelder paper, upon which were mounted a proofsheet of Blake's woodcuts for Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil* (1821) and a note referring to their provenance by Samuel Palmer's son, A. H. Palmer. In 1978 it was disbound for restoration and rebinding by the late S. M. Cockerell. As the old binding was removed Cockerell made the following description of its condition and contents and of the processes of rebinding:

*Note by Binder; DC6477; Island in the Moon; William Blake. Condition when received: Binding red hard grain, title blocked in gold on front board, leaves overcast very close to the text and the book sewn on five sawn cords, slips cut off. Collation—paste down and three blank leaves at front, paste down and one blank leaf at the back all Van Gelder paper plus six blank leaves at the back of the same thin paper as the manuscript; the third blank leaf numbered*

*1, two A. H. Palmer notes mounted on leaf 2, wood engraving mounted on leaf 3, text on leaves 4 to 12, drawings on the verso of leaf 13, leaves 2 and 3 foxed.*

*Leaves disbound, overcasting removed, acidity of paper checked, average reading pH 4.12, leaves deacidified with a solution of Barium Hydroxide in Methanol, reading after treatment pH 5.30, the Palmer notes and the wood engraving remounted on handmade paper, leaves edged with handmade paper using heatset tissue and mounted in handmade paper frames, each mounted leaf bound separately in quarter brown morocco, buckram sides, gold lettering, the blank leaves in one binding, the thirteen bindings housed in three buckram covered boxes. (Solvent for the adhesive of heatset tissue—I. M. S.) [Signed] SMC; D. C. and Son November 1978*

It was after rebinding, and while the manuscript was being photographed for the color facsimile, that it was first inspected for the edition.

As Cockerell's description suggests, the manuscript leaves were not conjugate. It had been bound as separate folio leaves in the order given, with the leaf of sketches bound out of order, before the six blank leaves. The narrow inside margins of each of these leaves, of thin and quite brittle paper, showed evidence of being broken, and at the time, I understood this condition to indicate that each leaf had previously been mounted on a guard for binding.<sup>1</sup> Cockerell's description, "leaves overcast very close to the text," indicates that in fact each leaf had only been "overcast"<sup>2</sup> and then sewn directly onto cords for binding. If any part of the manuscript had been conjugate this would have been noted and the full sheet preserved.

The surviving sixteen leaves contain an equal number of watermarks and countermarks.<sup>3</sup> In this sense the extant manuscript is described as complete, in that what has survived represents eight complete sheets of the original gathering, each sheet containing a watermark and a countermark. However, in absolute terms, the "Description" also makes plain that at least one sheet is missing from the center of the gathering, indicated by the lacuna between the surviving eighth and ninth leaves of an otherwise consecutive text.

There remains the question of the other contents of the volume, as disbound by Cockerell. Understandably, Bentley associates these materials with the manuscript as they were bound together at the time of his inspection, and duly noted in *Blake Books*.<sup>4</sup> As they bear upon the subject of the facsimile, a distinction was made: foremost, that no *intrinsic* relationship exists between the manuscript and the other materials that were at one time present in the same binding. A consideration was the binding itself and its history. Exactly when and for whom the binding was made could not be determined at the time, and remains unknown. What was clear, from the nature of the binding and its contents, was that the manuscript had only been placed together with the other materials some time after Blake's death.