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A R T I C L E

“Blake . . . Had No Quaritch”: The Sale of William Muir’s Blake Facsimiles

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"Blake ... Had No Quaritch"

The Sale of William Muir's Blake Facsimiles*

by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Blake printed few copies of his writings, and even fewer of his poems were reprinted during his lifetime and long after his death.¹ When they were reprinted in the nineteenth century, the text was normally adjusted to Victorian sensibilities² and purged of its integral designs. For a century after Blake's death, few readers of Blake had any knowledge of the color and variety of Blake's designs which surround and elucidate and modify his poems. There was a color facsimile by Camden Hotten of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1868, eight titles were reproduced in black-and-white in *Works by William Blake* (1876), and a monochrome facsimile of *Jerusalem* appeared in 1877, but there had been no facsimile of *Milton*, *There is No Natural Religion*, *All Religions Are One*, *On Homer*, *The Gates of Paradise*, *The Book of Ahania*, or *The Book of Los*, and only one copy (F) of one work (*The Marriage*) had been reproduced in color. Blake's works in the form he had intended them to be seen in, with colored designs integral to the text, were scarcely visible to the book-buying public until more than half a century after his death in 1827.

In 1884, William Muir set to work to make available colored facsimiles of Blake's works in Illuminated Printing. Working by methods similar to Blake's, he made lithographs (not copperplate relief etchings) of the outlines which he and his assistants printed and then colored by hand. Usually, of course, Muir used one original as the model for all copies of a facsimile title, rather than making each copy deliberately different as Blake generally

did. Altogether he reproduced 13 works in Illuminated Printing, generally in editions not exceeding 50 copies, and a few in more than one edition. His editions were larger than Blake's, though not much larger, and, until the Blake Trust began publishing Blake facsimiles in 1951, Muir's facsimiles were often the only color reproductions available. His color facsimiles of *Milton* (1886) and *The Song of Los* (1890) were the only ones for almost a century (1967 and 1975).

Muir generally finished half-a-dozen copies at a time, and sometimes the last copies were finished 30 or even 48 years after the first one. The number of colored copies of each title apparently varied from 18 (*Urizen*) to over 100 (*Innocence* and *Experience*, each in two editions). The history of the production and sale of the Muir facsimile provides an interesting indication of the popularity of Blake's works in the form in which he wanted his works to be seen.

About 1884, John Pearson & Co. issued a "PROPOSAL FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS, AND THE SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE" "For Subscribers only, limited to 50 Copies"; "after this has been done *the materials will be destroyed*." Pearson issued the first copies of *Innocence*, *Thel*, *Visions*, and *Experience* in 1884 and 1885, but, as Muir reported, "When Mr. Pearson left business last March [1885] I arranged with his excellent successor Mr Shepherd that Mr Quaritch should be my agent."³

Muir's "Edition of the Works of Wm. Blake" consisted of:

Volume I (quarto)	Volume II (folio)
<i>Innocence</i> [D] (1884); [A] (1927)	<i>America</i> [R; A]
<i>Thel</i> [D] (1844); [?] (1927)	<i>Europe</i> [A, D, c] (1887); [D] (1931)
<i>Visions</i> [A] (1884); [?G] (1928)	<i>Urizen</i> [B] (1888)
<i>Experience</i> [U] (1885); [A, T] (1927)	<i>Gates of Paradise</i> (1888), uncolored
<i>Marriage</i> [A] (1885)	<i>Song of Los</i> [A] (1890) ⁵
<i>Milton</i> [A] (1886) ⁴	
<i>No Natural Religion</i> [A, L] (1886)	
<i>On Homer</i> [?C] (1886), uncolored	
Hayley, "Little Tom" (1886), uncolored	
"Appendix" of the "Order" of the Songs and "A Divine Image" (Songs pl. b)	

Copies were apparently produced, or at least colored, as orders came in, and as late as 1921, according to Keynes's *Bibliography of William Blake*, copies of everything save the Songs were "still to be obtained." Indeed, some of the original versions were still for sale as late as 1936.

The firm of Bernard Quaritch continues to be one of the great antiquarian book firms, and they still have copies of the Muir facsimiles of Blake for sale, though these are now second-hand copies. They also have correspondence with Muir which is extremely interesting about the ways in which Muir made his facsimiles and when and for how much he sold them. Since the Muir facsimiles are now as rare as some of Blake's originals, it is worth making the most interesting of these records public.⁶

* Mr. Keri Davies has generously allowed me to see his essay on Muir, coincidentally written at the same time as my own, and to improve mine on the basis of his.

LETTER 1

Muir's letter of 5 May 1919 makes it plain that he had printed a number of copies in advance of orders:

538 Romford Rd London E7

5 May 1919

Messrs Quaritch Ltd

Dear Sirs

In reply to your esteemed order of May 2 and to your Mr Mudies letter of May 3.

1) The facsimiles that I can still supply are

The Act of Creation⁷ 2 copies only

America mono colour

do coloured

Europe

No Natural Religion

The Gates of Paradise

Milton

The Song of Los Price to be determined⁸

The Book of Urizen Do

A sybelline leaf (a single sheet)⁹

I have no other single sheets except — Little Tom which I still can supply[.]

2) I enclose a/c as Mr Mudie asks me to do . . .

Yours truly

W^m Muir

LETTER 2

In his letter of 4 October 1920, Muir gives a summary of his receipts from Quaritch for the Blake facsimiles thus far:

538 Romford Rd London E7

4th October 1920

Dr Mr Mudie

I have been looking over my Ledger a/c with "Quaritch" since the beginning of the Blake facsimiles in 1885 and think that the following abstract of it, shewing value of deliveries each year, will interest you, *and give encouragement for the future?* Yours faithfully

W^m Muir

Year	Value of goods delivered	Year	Value of goods delivered
1885	£415.16.0	Brought forwd	1503. 1.6
1886	564.18.0	1904	0. 0.0
1887	171. 3.0	1905	12.18.0
1888	98.14.0	1906	0. 0.0
1889	21. 0.0	1907	35. 3.6
1890	105.13.6	1908	2.14.0
1891	71. 5.0	1909	1. 2.6
1892	13.13.0	1910	9. 0.0
1893	21.0.0	1911	9. 0.0
1894	1.14.6	1912	43. 1.0
1895	0. 0.0	1913	0. 9.0
1896	0. 0.0	1914	23.17.0
1897	1. 1.0	1915	17. 2.0
1898	0. 0.0	1916	10. 4.0
1899	9.16.6	1917	31. 4.0
1900	3. 3.0	1918	7.13.0
1901	0. 0.0	1919	75.18.0
1902	0. 0.0	1920 ¹⁰	93. 9.0
1903	4. 4.0		3 1875.16.6
Carried	1503. 1.6		£625. 5.6 ¹¹
for-ward			£1250.11.0

Paid to Mr Muir Twelve hundred and fifty pounds 11/0!!! This is more (alas!) than ever Blake himself got.—He had no Quaritch[.]

LETTER 3

One of the most interesting letters from Muir was written as a result of a letter of enquiry to Quaritch from Professor John Le Gay Brereton of the University of Sydney.

London
Mess^{rs} Quaritch
Dear Sirs

31 March 1922

I thank you for sending me Prof Brereton's letter of 20th Feb'y which I return enclosed.

I heartily appreciate Prof Brereton's kind words. This is all I need say about what is past.

The following remarks will, I hope, enable Prof Brereton to understand why original Blakes differ so much [from one another]—I mean originals of the Songs, Thel, Visions, Heaven & Hell [, *The Song of*] Los, Urizen &c &c—

The fact is that Blake took impressions from his copper plates (plates etched in *relief* for the Songs. —Etched in *intaglio* for the other books¹²) with what I can only call a *skilful carelessness*.

I think that sometimes he did not even use a press, but got the impression by rubbing the paper placed on the inked plate.—The back of a table spoon used as a rubber does very well—¹³ If the spoon is soft metal such as silver you must put a second sheet above the one to be printed, to take the marks left by the spoon—Therefore the prints so obtained often were, as *prints*, of very poor quality, but that was what Blake wanted, or was contented with, for their imperfections left him free to colour them and draw on them just as his fancy (often stimulated by these very imperfections) led him to do at the moment. Let me give examples.

1) Let Prof Brereton take a first [1863] or second edition of *Blakes Life* by Gilchrist [1880], and look at the sixteen impressions from Blakes own plates at the end. (Songs of Inn & Exp) —turn to the first plate of the "Echoing Green"—observe the back ground behind the oak—You can make nothing definite of it.—Well in one Copy that I have seen (I think it was Mr Linnells) the indefinite touches of that back ground are developed into a *crowd* of active little figures at play.¹⁴ In the same copy the large flower of the page [of] "Infant Joy" was bright blue instead of scarlet as usual,¹⁵ and there were *no doubt* other variations.

2) In most copies of the *title page* of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* there are indefinite patches of light, or light rays, (some of both) in the bottom right hand corner.—Well—in one copy these patches and rays become a terrific group of sheeted ghosts rising out of an abyss—¹⁶

3) In the case of Thel that Prof Brereton asked about, I have no doubt that the reason why Blake gives the back of the nymphs head in the *Brit. Mus.* Copy just was that the profile did not print at all (or else was blurred by too much ink) in that case, So Blake coloured it as the back of the head—to save trouble.¹⁷

Urizen contains even more startling variations than any of the above, and I have no doubt that many variations would be found in almost *any two* copies of any coloured work if carefully looked for. I mean actual variations in drawing—variations often *allowed* or often *suggested* by *technical* imperfections in the printed foundation.

As far as I have *noticed* (I have not looked with care—Indeed have not looked at all for this purpose—but) as far as I have *noticed* the Folio engraved books *Los*, *Europe*, *America*, are free from these variations in drawing. Probably because the large plates could not be printed from in the free and easy way possible with little plates—but this is only a pious opinion that I attach no importance to.

Again thanking Prof Brereton for his kind words, and relying on your transmitting my thanks to him I am

Yours faithfully
W^m Muir

P.S. The following may interest Prof Brereton if he (or any of his students) care to try colour printing *a la* Blake as described by Gilchrist, who however is not able to give workable directions for the preparation of the necessary medium with which the colours have to be mixed. Blake calls the method "Fresco."—see Gilchrist[.]

Receipt for "Blakes Medium" *as made and used by W Muir* [.] Make (say) half a pint of a solution of good common glue in water[,] a *sollutio*¹⁸ so thin that it will just *not* set into a jelly at say 70° Fahr—to this add from 1/4th to 1/2 pint of Copal Varnish.¹⁸ Shake well together. You thus form an *emulsion*. Mix your dry powder colours with it. In drying the paper the emulsion breaks up, and gives Blakesque effects. By this means only can y[ou] copy "Los" [.]¹⁹

W M²⁰

LETTER 4

Some of the information in Muir's letters throws invaluable light upon the history and variants in individual copies of Blake's works in *Illuminated Printing*, as in that to Quaritch's agent Mr Mudie of 26 July 1922:

538 Romford Rd London E7

26 July 1922

Dear Mr Mudie

Urizen N^o 15 is correct—*only 14 were done previously*—I have not seen Mr Keynes['] book²¹—I do not think I gave him any information—I have no recollections of doing so. I do remember his calling twice or thrice, and spending time in looking over our "first copies", and chatting—He may have got a wrong impression from some chance remark—N^o 14 was delivered to Mr Quaritch on 31 Dec^r 1907[,] the receipt is signed by yourself, the one before that was N^o 13 on 15 May 1899 signed E.H.W.

The wife mentioned to you when she handed you the book that page 4 (the man amidst black flames) does not occur in any other *Urizen*.²²—I got it from a volume of scrap "Blakiana" which I purchased for £80 from the first Mr Quaritch, and sold some years afterwards to Mr MacGeorge of Glasgow.²³ It makes the text of *Urizen* complete *for the first time*.—If you compare pp. 3 & 5 (read from 3 to 5, omitting 4) you get the ordinary text. The hiatus is obvious.

I think you told me that this copy (N^o 15) is going to Mr Newton [in] Philadelphia[.] It will be amusing to see if he noticed the new page *without having had his attention called to it*—He should certainly observe it for he has an Ellis & Yeats—If he asks for explanations you are now in a position to give them[.]

Yours truly
W^m Muir

LETTER 5

On 17 February 1936, Muir wrote with a summary of all his dealings with Quaritch, identifying the day on which each copy was sold. The accounts suggest that Quaritch wished to keep on hand a few copies of at least the more popular works and that Muir colored them as Quaritch sent him orders.

538 Romford Road
Forest Gate E,7
17th Feb^y 1936

Mess^{rs} Quaritch, Ltd.
Dear Sirs

I regret that my indolence is about to cause you inconvenience. I hope the following narrative will prevent this.

In March 1884 I arranged with John Pearson of 46 Pall Mall that I would produce 50 facsimiles of Blake's works from such originals as we could get the use of. These facsimiles to be an edition limited to 50 copies for subscribers found by M^r Pearson. These subscribers were purely imaginary, but the phrase was used to prevent the enterprise falling into the clutches of Public Libraries such as the Bodleian who have a legal right to a gratis copy of everything "published".

The work proceeded merrily till 27th April 1885 when M^r Pearson suddenly retired owing to ill-health. By that time M^r Pearson had sold 25 [*i.e.*, 35] copies of "Thel"[,] also 12 copies of "The Visions of the daughters of Albion"[,] 8 Copies of "The Songs of Innocence" & 9 copies of "The Act of Creation". Then M^r Bernard Quaritch appeared upon the scene, took over the enterprise & sold everything else.

He took them as follows:—

1885				
11 th May	"Daughters of Albion	Nos. 13 & 26 to 36	inclusive	
15 th "	"Songs of Innocence"	Nos. 6, 14, 20 & 24 to 32	"	
18 th "	6 "Act of Creation"	Nos. 10 to 15	"	
23 rd "	6 "Act of Creation"	Nos. 16 to 21	"	
28 th July	6 "Songs of Innocence"	Nos. 33 to 38	"	
1885	([page] 2)			
7 th Aug ^t	12 "Songs of Experience"	Nos. 1 to 12	inclusive	
10 th Sept.	6 "Songs of Experience"	" 13 to 18	"	
24 th "	4 " " "	" 19 to 22	"	
6 th Oct	4 "Songs of Innocence"	" 17, 39, 41	" [<i>sic</i>]	
" "	6 "Thels"	" 36 to 41	"	
9 th "	2 "Songs of Experience"	" 23 & 24	"	
" "	6 "Daughters of Albion"	" 23 & 37 to 41	"	
30 th Nov	2 Songs of Experience	" 25 & 26	"	
" "	12 Marriage of H. & H.	" 1 to 12	"	
24 Dec ^r	6 " " "	" 13 to 18	"	

1886				
8 th April	18 "Miltons"	" 1 to 18	"	
12 th May	3 Marriage of H. & H	" 19, 20, 21	"	
" "	2 "Miltons["]	" 19, 20	"	
" "	3 "Songs of Innocence"	" 42[,] 43, 44	"	
17 th "	3 "Miltons"	" 21, 22, 23	"	
" "	3 Songs of Experience	" 27, 28, 29	"	
25 th "	12 "No Natural Religion"	" 1 to 12	"	
1 st June	3 Natural Religion	" 13, 14, 15	"	
1 st July	4 " " "	" 16, 17, 18, 19.	"	
3 rd "	1 "Songs of Innocence["]	" 48	"	
" "	2 Songs of Experience	" 31, 32	"	
3 rd Aug	3 Songs of Innocence	" 45, 46, 49	"	
" "	2 No Natural Religion	" [28 <i>del</i>] 20, 21.	"	
4 th "	2 Marriage of H & H.	" 22, 24	"	
" "	4 Miltons	" 25, 26[,] 27, 28	"	
11 th "	1 Songs of Experience	" 30	"	
" "	1 Songs of Innocence	" 47	"	
" "	1 Marriage of H. & H.	" 23	"	
8 th Sept	1 Milton	" 24	"	
" "	4 No Natural Religion	" 22, 23, 24, 25	"	
21 st "	3 Songs of Experience	" 33, 34, 35	"	
27 th Oct.	3 " " "	" 36, 37, 38	"	
" "	3 Marriage of H. & H.	" 25, 26, 27.	"	
1886	([page] 3)	nos.		
9 th Nov	5 Thels	42[,] 43, 44, 45, 46	inclusive	
" "	5 Daughters of Albion	42, 43, 44, 45, 46	"	
" "	3 Marriage of H & H.	25[,] 26[,] 27 ^a	"	
" "	12 plates of "Little Tom"		"	
7 th Dec	3 "Songs of Experience"	39-40, 41	"	
9 th "	1 Act of Creation	22.	"	
18 "	1 Marriage of H & H	31	"	
" "	2 Songs of Experience	42, 43.	"	
1887				
16 th Feb ^y	3 America	1, 2, 3	"	
22 ^d "	6 " "	4 to 9	"	
15 th Mar	7 " "	10 to 16	"	
20 th April	3 " returned	17, 18, 19	"	
27 th May	1 No Natural Religion	26	"	
" "	1 Act of Creation	9	"	
31 st "	2 Daughters of Albion	4 [<i>i.e.</i> , 24?], 47	"	
" "	2 Thels	20, 25 [<i>i.e.</i> , 30, 35?].	"	
28 th June	3 Songs of Experience	44, 45, 46	"	
11 th July	3 America	20, 21, 22	"	
10 th "	2 No Natural Religion	27, 28	"	
20 th Oct ^r	2 Act of Creation	25[,] 26	"	
" "	2 Little Toms		"	
29 th "	12 Europe	1 to 12	"	

1888				
21 st Mar	6 Urizen	1 to 6	"	
1 st May	2 Act of Creation	27, 28		
5 th "	5 Urizen	7 to 11	"	
4 th Sept	6 Gates of Paradise	1 to 6	"	
15 th "	1 Gates of Paradise	7		
10 th Oct.	1 " " "	8		
19 th "	1 " " "	9		
1889				
9 th May	2 Gates of Paradise	10, 11		
" "	1 Marriage of H. & H.	35		
21 st Oct	1 Act of Creation	29		
1890				
25 th Aug	1 Thel	47		
1890		([page] 4)		
30 th Aug	1 Thel	No. 42 [i.e., 32]		
" "	1 Daughters of Albion	" 48		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 12		
5 th Sept	4 Songs of Experience	" 47, 48, 49, 50	inclusive	
" "	1 America	" 19		
" "	1 Europe	" 13		
" "	1 Marriage of H & H	" 32		
" "	1 Milton	" [11 del] 30		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 13		
8 th "	3 Thels	" 48, 49, 50		
15 th "	3 Daughters of Albion	" 3, 49, 50		
12 th Nov	1 Gates of Paradise	" 14		
24 "	5 Song of Los	" 1 to 5	"	
12 th Dec	1 Gates of Paradise	" 15		
1891				
23 rd Jan	5 Song of Los	" 6 to 10	"	
" "	10 Homers Poetry	—		
9 th Feb	1 Europe	" 30		
" "	1 America	" 21		
" "	1 Marriage of H & H	" 33		
3 rd June	2 Los	" 11, 12		
" "	1 Milton	" 24		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 16		
" "	2 Little Toms			
16 th Dec	1 Los	" 13		
1892				
21 st Mar	1 Los	" 14		
28 th April	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 34		
12 th Aug	1 Los	" 15		
1893				
21 st Feb.	1 Urizen	" 12		
4 th Mar	2 Marriage of H. & H	" 35, 36		
10 th "	1 " " "	" 37		
12 th June	1 Los	" 16		
1894				
20 th July	1 Act of Creation	" 30		
1894		([page] 5)		
4 th Jan	1 Act of Creation	No 31		
1899				
15 th May	1 Urizen	" 13		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 17		
" "	1 Homers Poetry			
" "	1 Little Tom			
1900				
28 th April	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 37		
1903				
12 th Jan.	1 Act of Creation	" 32		
1 st Oct	1 Marriage of H & H	" 38		
1905				
3 rd Mar	1 " " "	" 40		
30 Mar	1 Gates of Paradise	" 18		
" "	1 America	? 22		
1907				
18 th Mar.	1 Marriage of H: H.	" 41		
24 April	1 " " "	" 42		
" "	1 Milton	" [29 del] 31		
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 33		
27 th May	1 America	" 23		
31 st Dec.	1 Urizen	" [45 del]-214		
" "	1 Europe	" 30		
1 "	1 Little Tom			
" "	Homers Poetry	[no number]		
1908				
1 st Feb	1 Sybilline Leaf			
" "	1 Little Tom			
20 "	1 Act of Creation	" 34		
4 th Mar	1 Act of Creation	" 35		
1909				
25 th Mar	1 Act of Creation	" 36		
" "	2 Little Tom			
16 th May	1 Act of Creation	" 37		
29 th Sept	1 " " "	" 38		
1910		([page] 6) No.		
17 th Feb	2 Acts of Creation	" 39, 40		
7 th Sept	1 No Natural Religion	" 29		
11 th Nov	2 Marriage of H. & H.	" 43, 44		
1911				
24 th Jan	1 No Natural Religion	" 30		
17 th Feb	1 Europe	" 31		
6 th Mar	1 Gates of Paradise	" 19		

1912		
15 th Jan	1 Europe	" 32
27 th Feb	1 copy page 53 Jerusalem	
29 th Mar	1 Sheet 'To the Queen'	
" "	3 pages of Urizen—"Old Man with book" [pl. 1?]	
" "	"Corruption" [pl. 8?] & "Retreating figure" [pl. 27]	
28 th April	1 Songs of Experience	No. [no number]
1 st May	1 Leaf "To the Queen"	
1 st July	2 Acts of Creation	" 41-42
2 nd Sept.	1 Gates of Paradise	" 20
19 th "	1 Europe	" 33
" "	1 Marriage of H. H.	" 45
7 th Oct	1 " " "	" 46
24 th "	2 No Natural Religion	" 31-32

1913		
18 th Aug	4 Little Toms	
15 th Dec	1 Gates of Paradise	" 21

1914		
15 th April	1 America	" 24
14 th Sept	1 America	" 25
" "	1 do.	" 22
28 th Oct	1 Europe	" 34
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 34

1915		
4 th Mar	1 No Natural Religion	" 35
12 th April	1 Marriage of H & Hell	" 47
26 th "	1 Milton	" [2 del] 32
19 th June	1 America	" 26

1916		([page] 7)
25 th Jan	1 Act of Creation	No 46
14 th Aug	1 No Natural Religion	" 37
9 th Nov	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 48
11 th Dec	1 America	" 27

1917		
20 th Jan	1 No Natural Religion	" 38
29 th "	1 " " "	" 39
23 ^d Feb	1 Marriage of H. H.	" 49
" "	1 America	" 28
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 40
26 th Mar	1 America	" 29
28 th May	1 "	" 30
4 th June	1 Act of Creation	" 47
16 th July	1 Marriage of H & H	" 50
16 th Nov	2 Little Toms	
1 st Dec	2 " "	

1918		
16 th April	1 Songs of Experience	" [no number]
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 48

1919		
2 ^d May	1 Milton	" [30 del] 33
" "	2 Little Toms	
12 June	1 Milton	" [31 del] 34
" "	1 Europe	" 31
27 th "	1 Europe	" 35
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 41
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 49
14 th Aug ¹	1 Ancient of Days	" 50
" "	1 Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)	[no number]
4 th Sept	1 Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)	
" "	1 Europe	" 36
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 42
9 th Sept	3 Gates of Paradise	" 22, 23, 24
4 th Dec	1 " " "	" 25
" "	1 America	" 32

1920		([page] 8)
15 th Jan	1 Los	No 17
19 th Feb	1 Los	" 18
5 th Mar	1 Milton	" [32 del] 35
25 "	1 America	" 33
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 26
22 ^d April	1 America	" 34
" "	1 "	" 35
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 43
6 th May	1 Songs Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)	[no number]
13 th May	1 page of Thel	
3 ^d June	1 Europe	" 37
8 th July	1 Milton	" [33 del] 36
22 ^d "	1 No Natural Religion	" 44
5 th Aug	1 Thel 2 ^d edition	" 1, 2
4 th Sept	1 America	" 36
" "	1 Thel 2 nd edition	" 3
27 th Sept	1 Los	" 19
" "	1 Thel 2 nd edition	" 4
2 ^d Dec	2 " " "	" 5, 6
26 th Oct	2 " " "	" 7, 8
16 th Dec	2 " " "	" 9, 10

1921		
3 rd Feb.	2 " " "	" 11, 12
24 th Feb.	1 No Natural Religion	" 4, 5 [i.e., 45].
" "	1 Thel 2 ^d edition	" 13
17 th Mar	2 " " "	" 14, 15
15 th April	2 " " "	" 16, 17
13 th May	2 " " "	" 18, 19
2 ^d June	1 " " "	" 20
16 th Aug	1 Europe	" 38
16 th Sept	1 Milton	" [34 del] 37
22 "	2 No Natural Religion	" 46, 47
8 th Nov	3 " " "	" 48, 49, 50

1922		([page] 9)	1927	Centenary Edition	
3 rd Feb ^y	1 Milton	No [35 del] 38	12 th Jan.	6 copies Songs of Innocence	" 1 to 6 inclusive
16 th "	1 Urizen title page [i.e., pl. 1] ²⁴		" "	1 " of Experience	" 1
" "	2 " page 23 [i.e., pl. 21]		18 th "	6 Songs of Innocence	" 7 to 12
" "	1 " page 22 [i.e., pl. 20]		" "	3 " " Experience	" 2, 3, 4
" "	1 Urizen page 5 [i.e., pl. 14]		17 th Feb ^y	6 " " Innocence	" 13 to 18
" "	1 " " 9 [i.e., pl. 10]		11 th Mar	6 " " "	" 19 to 24 "
9 th May	2 Thel [2nd Edition]	" 21, 22	8 th April	7 " " "	" 25 to 31 "
24 th July	1 Urizen	" 15	16 th May	5 " " "	" 32 to 36 "
17 th Aug	1 " page 5 [i.e., pl. 4]		24 th June	5 " " "	" 37 to 41 "
14 th Sept	1 Milton	" [36 del] 39	22 ^d July	5 " " Experience	" 5 to 9
8 th Dec	1 Urizen	" 16	11 th Aug	5 " " "	" 10 to 14 "
			30 th Sept	5 " " "	" 15 to 19 "
1923			4 th Oct	2 Song of Los	" 23, 24 " [sic]
9 th Mar	2 Americas	" 37, 38	19 th "	4 Songs of Experience	" 20 to 23
17 th May	1 Urizen	" 17	4 th "	" " " "	" 38 [all sic]
1 st Aug	1 Europe	" 39	24 th Nov	5 " " "	" 24 to 28 "
27 th Sept	2 Song of Los	" 20, 21			
15 th Oct	1 America	" 39	1928		
15 th Oct	1 " rich colouring	" x 40	4 th Jan	5 " " "	" 29 to 33 "
			7 th Feb	5 " " "	" 34[-]35, 36, 37, & 39
1924			13 th Mar	5 " " "	" 40 to 44 inclusive
24 Mar	1 [i.e., 2] Thel [2nd Edition]	" 23, 24	3 rd April	1 Europe	" 50 [circled]
15 th May	1 Urizen	" 18	2 ^d May	5 Songs of Innocence	" 42 to 46 inclusive
20 th Aug	1 Europe	" 40			
18 th Sept	1 Europe	" 41	1928	([page] 11)	
20 th Oct	1 America rich colouring	" 40 x	2 ^d May	1 page no 2 of Daughters of Albion no.	
			24 th "	4 copies of Songs of Innocence	47, 48, 49, 50
1925			2 ^d Aug	2 " America	" 45, 46,
11 th May	1 America rich colouring	" 41	3 ^d Sep	6 Songs of Experience	" 45 to 50 inclusive
" "	2 Gates of Paradise	" 27[-]28	" "	5 Daughters of Albion	" 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
" "	1 Little Tom coloured		8 th Oct	5 " " "	" 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 [last circled]
22 ^d June	1 Europe	" 43	26 th Nov	1 Songs of Innocence	} sent for review
27 th Aug	1 "	" 44	" "	1 Song of Experience	
" "	2 Little Toms				
28 th Oct	1 America richly coloured	" 42			
			1929		
1926			12 th Mar	1 America richly coloured	47.
23 ^d Mar	1 Europe	" 45	29 th April	1 [sic] ditto monochrome	48 [circled]
1926		([page] 10)	" "	2 Miltons	39, 40 [i.e.] 41-2
29 th April	2 Thels [2nd Edition]	No 25, 26	" "	3 Ancient of Days	1, 2, 3
18 th Aug	2 Little Toms		4 th June	1 Daughters of Albion	3
" "	1 Europe	" 46	" "	5 Act of Creation	4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
" "	1 Milton	" [37 del] 40	12 th Nov	5 Songs of Innocence	51 to [57 del in a circle to] 55 inclusive
27 th "	1 Europe	" 47			
" "	2 Thels [2nd Edition]	" 27, 28			
27 Sept	1 Europe	" 48			
" "	2 Thels [2nd Edition]	" 29[,] 30			
7 th Dec	1 Europe	" 49			
" "	1 America rich colouring	" 44	1930		
			30 th Oct	1 Gates of Paradise	29
			" "	2 Thel [2nd Edition]	31, 32 [circled]
			16 th Dec	2 Europe	1, 2 [circled]
			1939 [sic]		
			1935		
			3 May	2 Gates of Paradise	30, 31 [circled]

538 Romford Rd London E7 18 Feby 1936

The foregoing pages contain a detailed account of *all* my dealings with the House of Quaritch up to date. You can make what use of them you choose. I have at the moment Blake facsimile stock as over leaf

Yours faithfully

W^m Muir

[page 12]

18 Feby Mr Muir's Stock

4 Songs of Experience

[2 Miltons *del*] ord Feb 36

Mr Muir then said he had 4 or 5 uncoloured but some may be imperfect

Your orders will oblige

Yours [I try] I

W^m Muir

[In the second hand:] Milton. ?No. of copies done. Mr Muir's figures give: 1-18, 19-20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 24, [11, 24, *del*] 29, [24, *del*] 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, & 2 in hand = [44*del*] [42 *del*] 41

Muir's own figures for his sales to Pearson (1884-85) and to Quaritch (1885-1936) may be summarized as shown in Table 1.

Notice that the copies were not always sold in strict numerical order. Further, some numbered copies are not accounted for in this list: *Europe*, No. 14-29; *Marriage*, No. 39; *Songs of Innocence*, No. 9-13, 15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 40, 50; *No Natural Religion*, No. 33, 36; *Visions*, No. 14-22, and 25. There are also some duplicate or extra numbers for *America* (3 copies), *Europe* (1), *Marriage* (3), *Songs of Experience* (2), and 2nd Edition (5), *Songs of Innocence* (1), and 2nd Edition (6), and *Visions* (3). For at least the first editions, 50 copies of each were promised, but fewer than 50 copies were sold for most titles: *America* (48), *Urizen* (18), *Gates of Paradise* (31), Hayley's "Little Tom" (36), *On Homer* (12), and *Song of Los* (24). The maximum number of complete sets of "The Edition of the Works of Wm. Blake" by "The Blake Press at Edmonton" was 12, though they seem never to have been sold as sets. Probably there are considerably fewer complete sets which could be found today.

Volumes I and II		
Title	Dates of Sale	Numbered Copies Sold
<i>America</i> ²⁵	(1887-1928)	1-48 (17-19 returned, 19 resold) + duplicates of 21, 22, 40; "richly coloured" 1923 ff.
<i>Book of Thel</i>	(1884-90)	1-50
<i>Book of Thel</i> (2nd Edition)	(1920-30)	1-32
<i>Europe</i>	(1887-1928)	1-13, 30-50, + duplicate of 30
<i>Europe</i> ²⁶ (2nd Edition)	(1930)	1-2
<i>First Book of Urizen</i> ²⁷	(1988-1924)	1-18 (<i>N.B.</i> , not limited to 15 or 25)
<i>Gates of Paradise</i> ²⁸	(1886-1936)	1-31
Hayley, "Little Tom" ²⁹	(1886-1926)	36 unnumbered copies, one in 1925 colored
<i>Marriage</i> ³⁰	(1885-1917)	1-38, 40-50, + 25a, 26a, 27a
<i>Milton</i> ³¹	(1886-1929)	1-42, + 2 colored and 4-5 uncolored in stock in 1936
<i>On Homer</i>	(1891-1907)	12 unnumbered copies
<i>Song of Los</i> ³²	(1890-1927)	1-24
<i>Songs of Experience</i> ³³	(1885-90)	1-50, + 2 more in 1912, 1918
<i>Songs of Experience</i> (2nd Edition)	(1927-28)	1-50, + 1 for review + 4 in stock in 1936
<i>Songs of Innocence</i>	(1884-1928)	1-8, 14, 17, 20, 24-39, 41-49, + duplicate of 6
<i>Songs of Innocence</i> (2nd Edition) ³⁴	(1927-28)	1-55, + 1 for review
<i>There is No Natural Religion</i>	(1886-1921)	1-32, 34-35, 37-50
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	(1884-90)	1-13, 23-24, 26-50, + 3 bis
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i> ³⁵ (2nd Edition)	(1928)	1-10 + 3 bis
Miscellaneous Plates Not in Vol. I-II		
"Act of Creation"	(1884?-1929)	1-22, 25-42, 46-50, + a duplicate of 9 ³⁶
"Ancient of Days"	(1920)	1-8
<i>Jerusalem</i> pl. 53	(1912)	1 unnumbered copy
<i>First Book of Urizen</i> pl. 1, 8, 27	(1912, 1922)	2 unnumbered copies of pl. 1, 1 each of the others
<i>Ibid.</i> pl. 1, 10, 14, 20-21	(1922)	1 unnumbered copy of each + 1 of pl. 14
<i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i> ("Ellis & Yeats")	(1919-20)	3 unnumbered copies
"To the Queen" ³⁷	(1912)	2 unnumbered copies
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	(1928)	1 plate

Table 1.

These detailed letters from William Muir to Quaritch are extraordinarily interesting to anyone concerned with the development of Blake's reputation and the reproduction of his works in Illuminated Printing. In future, any extended consideration of the Muir facsimiles of Blake or Blake facsimiles in general will have to consider these letters.

A comparison of the success of William Blake in selling his works in Illuminated Printing in the 38 years from 1789 to his death in 1827 and of William Muir in selling facsimiles of these works in the 52 years from 1884-1936 indicates that Muir was far more successful than Blake, though the genius of the two men is incomparable (see Table 2).

Blake's comparatively slight success as a salesman of his own works arose in part, of course, because he had to create virtually unaided a market for his strange (i.e., unfamiliar) works. Muir had greater success in selling some-

	America	Tbel	Europe	Urizen	Gates	Marriage	Milton
Blake*	15	16	11	8	14	9	4
Muir**	51	82	37	18	31	52	49
	Song of Los	Experience	Innocence	No Natural Rel	Visions		
Blake*	5	29	50	0 ³⁸	17		
Muir**	24	107	93	48	54		

* (surviving copies)

** (copies sold)

Table 2.

what approximate facsimiles of the same works because, by 1884 when he issued his first proposals, Blake's reputation had been firmly established in the biographies of J. T. Smith (1828), Allan Cunningham (1830), and especially Alexander Gilchrist (1863, 1880), in the critical eulogies of Swinburne (1868), and others, and in editions such as those by Sheperd (1874), and Rossetti (1874 et seq). But there is, I think, more to it than this.

Blake complained to Dawson Turner on 9 June 1818 that "I have never been able to produce a Sufficient number

for a general Sale by means of a regular Publisher[.] It is therefore necessary to me that any Person wishing to have any or all of them should send me their Order to Print them."³⁹ However, Muir apparently worked in the same way that Blake did, coloring (and perhaps even printing) a few copies at a time, and Muir was far more successful than Blake was, even though his facsimiles are not nearly so beautiful as Blake's originals. Surely the explanation, at least in part, is that, as Muir said, "Blake . . . had no Quaritch."

¹ See the table of Blake's Poetry Reprinted in Conventional Typography before 1863 in *Blake Books* (1977) 74-75.

² D. G. Rossetti was unrepentant for his "rather unceremonious shaking up of Blake's rhymes [in *Gilchrist's biography of Blake*]. I really believe that is what ought to be done" (*Anne Gilchrist: Her Life and Writings*, ed. H. H. Gilchrist [1887] 94), and the three texts of E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats together (1893, 1979) and separately (1893 [two editions] 1905, 1906, 1910, 1920, 1969, 1973) are often even more inaccurate.

³ *Blake Books* 487-89, the source of most of the information here which does not come from the Quaritch mss. I am deeply grateful to my friend Dr. Arthur Freeman of Quaritch for his generosity in providing me with reproductions of the Muir documents and giving me permission to quote from them. The biography of Quaritch, on which he has been working for some years, will provide a fuller context for Quaritch's dealings with Muir. Note that Quaritch was also the prime agent in the distribution of Blake Trust facsimiles.

A great mass of Quaritch documents is

in the British Library, with a "time-lock" until the year 2000.

⁴ A facsimile of Blake's letter of 16 March 1804 is included.

⁵ According to a flyer of May 1885, facsimiles of *The Book of Abania* and *The Book of Los* were "in contemplation," but apparently they were never issued.

⁶ Quaritch also has fascinating records of the Ellis & Yeats edition of Blake (1893) and of the *Facsimile of the Original Outlines before Colouring of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience* [U] (1893).

⁷ That is "The Ancient of Days," the frontispiece of *Europe*.

⁸ In another letter to Quaritch of 5 May 1919, Muir wrote: My Letter of 5 May 1919 leaves price of Los undetermined[.]

"I told Mr Mudie it would be more than it used to be[.] This (£6.6.0) is less than it should be. It should be £7.7.0 but I fear you will not think so[.]"

⁹ "On Homers Poetry & On Virgil."

¹⁰ A marginal note says "nine months."

¹¹ This sum of £625.5.6 presumably represents Quaritch's 33% commission, and the £1,250.11.0 is what Muir received.

¹² This is an odd mistake for a printer as careful and experienced as Muir, for almost all the works by Blake of which he made facsimiles—*Innocence*, *Tbel*, *Visions*, *Experience*, *Marriage*, *Milton*, *No Natural Religion*, *On Homer*, Hayley's "Little Tom," *America*, *Europe*, *Urizen*, and *Song of Los*—are etched in relief. Only *The Book of Abania* and *The Book of Los* (which Muir did not reproduce) plus *The Gates of Paradise* (which he reproduced in 1890) are conventionally etched in intaglio. The method of etching, in relief or in intaglio, determines the method of printing. Of course, none of Blake's copperplates for any of these works survives (though there are electrotypes of 16 of the *Songs* plates originally made for Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*, "Pictor Ignotus"), so our evidence of the form of etching is indirect. There is, however, no ambiguity as to whether the etching is in relief or intaglio.

¹³ I have used this method in printing from electrotypes of Blake's plates (on conspicuously modern paper, signed on the versos) with effects very like those Blake achieved.

¹⁴ I have not observed this phenomenon in either Linnell's copies of *Innocence* (I) and *Songs* (R, X, AA) or elsewhere. As the blue flower in "Infant Joy," to which Muir refers below, is found in only nine copies, including *Songs* (X), perhaps Muir saw copy X, which remained in the Linnell family until 1918.

¹⁵ The flower in "Infant Joy" (pl. 25) is blue rather than the usual red in *Innocence* (A, G-H, X) and *Songs* (D-F, I, X).

¹⁶ I have not observed this phenomenon in any copy of *Visions* pl. 2.

¹⁷ Apparently Professor Brereton had asked why Muir's facsimile of *Thel* pl. 7 shows *Thel*'s bent head in profile [as in copies N-O], while that in *The Works of William Blake*, ed. E. J. Ellis & W. B. Yeats (1893), III, unnumbered facsimile page, shows only the top of *Thel*'s head (as in copy D in the British Museum Print Room).

¹⁸ Made from a hard, lustrous resin obtained from various tropical trees.

¹⁹ This formula is clearly for producing the effects of Blake's color-printing, as in *The Song of Los*, the only work Muir reproduced by his own method of color-printing.

²⁰ By an odd chance, Professor John Le Gay Brereton, the nephew of the author of this letter, was a dear friend of ours. I have enquired for other parts of this correspondence, but neither members of his family nor the archivists of the University of Sydney Library and the State Library of New South Wales, which have collections of his papers, have been able to throw light on the matter.

²¹ *A Bibliography of William Blake* (1921) 297, says that "Only about twenty-five copies [of *URIZEN*] were done; the plates, which were etchings on zinc, have since been lost."

²² A note at the bottom of the page says: "incorrect. It is in 2 other originals." In fact, this pl. 4 is found in copies A-C, H, and I (the last two copies consist of only five plates altogether). Most of the emendations seem to have been made at Quaritch's.

²³ This is apparently the collection of miscellaneous Blakeana, including *Urizen* pl. 4, acquired by Muir in 1885, described in *Blake Books* 437-41.

²⁴ In *Urizen* (B), which Muir reproduced, the titlepage is pl. 1, the fifth plate is pl. 14, the ninth plate is pl. 10, the 22nd plate is pl. 20, and the 23rd plate is pl. 21.

²⁵ According to Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 243, "Only 48 copies were issued of which 12 were coloured."

Notes here on the copies issued supplement the information in *Blake Books* (1977).

²⁶ Quaritch Catalogue 486 (1934) Lot 79, says that of the "1931" version "Only seventeen copies will be reproduced" and Catalogue 560 (1939) adds: "Only two copies were reproduced."

²⁷ According to Quaritch Catalogue 373 (Dec 1922) Lot 160, When Mr. Muir made his facsimile of 'Urizen' [in 1888] only fourteen copies were coloured. The sale was rather slow, and after his removal from Edmonton the zinc plates could not be found and in consequence no more were done.

The above copy [of 1922] was recently completed by Mr. Muir.

And Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1939) Lot 103, adds that there were only "four copies reproduced entirely by hand by Mr. Muir . . . numbered 15 to 18"; No. 15 is in the Essick collection, and an unnumbered copy is in the Huntington.

²⁸ According to Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1937) Lot 100, "Although the edition was intended to be one of 50 copies, only 31 were published."

²⁹ Quaritch Catalogue 405 (Dec 1926) Lot 256, offered "Little Tom" "with two illustrations COLOURED BY HAND from the copy in the British Museum (1925)."

³⁰ Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1939) Lot 105, says: "50 copies were printed, only a very small number being coloured from the Fitzwilliam copy [I]," though the only ones seen by Robert N. Essick and GEB seem to have been colored from Copy A.

³¹ According to Quaritch Catalogue 530 (1927) Lot 101, "Only 42 coloured copies were issued."

³² Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 250, says: "Only 23 copies were reproduced," and Keynes (1921) adds that "Some . . . have been executed recently."

³³ A volume marked "Drawings for Songs of Experience" presented, according to its inscription, by Wm & S. E. Muir to the Revd Mr. Eastward on 14 Sept 1914 (in the collection of Robert N. Essick) consists of reproductions of *Experience* (pl. 1, 28-37, 39-54), most of them in wash but nine of them (pl. 1, 29, 33-34, 36, 46-47, 53) in lithographs. The lithographs are probably those Muir used for his own facsimile (though pl. 29 lacks the date in this

copy). Gilchrist reproduces different lithographs of pl. 29 (lacking the date), 33-34, 36, 43, 46-48, 53; perhaps Muir began with lithographic copies of the Gilchrist plates and then added wash outlines of the *Experience* plates not in Gilchrist.

³⁴ In one late copy, pl. 8, 22-23, 25 and 54 were "completed by hand" (i.e., without any printed base), according to an inserted letter by William Muir (Ken Spelman Catalogue 13 [May 1988] Lot 1, cited in Essick, "Blake in the Marketplace, 1888," *Blake* 23 [1989]: 12).

³⁵ Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 254 offers a version of "(1928)"

Reproduced from the most richly coloured known copy [G] which was at one time in my possession, but which has not previously been reproduced. The outlines are printed from [the same] etched plated, and the colouring done by hand by Mr. Muir and his staff of expert colourists.

And Catalogue 530 (1937) Lot 106, adds: "Although the edition was announced as consisting of 50 copies, only 10 were issued."

A curious hybrid edition, printed in black (as in Copy a), the plates colored mostly like those in Copy G but a few like Copy F (color printed) and H, on paper watermarked 1923, may be "the 1927 reissue" of which "only two copies were issued," according to an anonymous note of 17 Sept 1945 about "oddments" from "William Muir's Library" acquired from "his [Muir's] widow by Bernard Quaritch Ltd." (all these materials are in the collection of Robert N. Essick).

³⁶ Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 258, offers a copy of "The Ancient of Days" of "(1929)"; "Only 9 copies . . . [have been] issued."

³⁷ Presumably the dedicatory poem to Blair's *Grave* (1808) in conventional typography, though perhaps it is the frontispiece drawing bearing the poem in the British Museum Print Room.

³⁸ Apparently Blake never issued a complete set of the plates for *There is No Natural Religion*.

³⁹ *William Blake's Writings* (1978) 1649.