

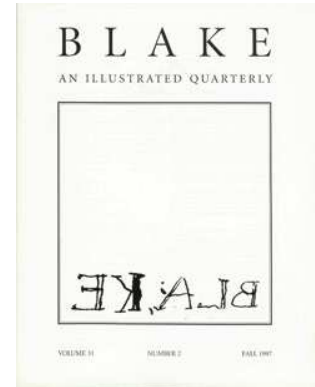
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A R T I C L E

William Blake and the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook

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[Editors' Note: Each of the following essays on the Sophocles Manuscript was designed to stand alone. Hence there will necessarily be some duplication in the information presented.]

William Blake and the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook

BY MICHAEL PHILLIPS

In January 1993 the London antiquarian booksellers Bertram Rota Ltd. invited me to inspect a manuscript notebook which contained a number of signatures by a William Blake. Following my inspection I concluded that the manuscript should be considered as once associated with William Blake, the poet, painter and printmaker.

My conviction was based primarily upon the signatures. They were clearly very early and the most convincing examples indicated that they had been made by someone learning basic techniques of printmaking; in particular, those formed of pen and ink dots in the manner of stipple engraving technique (folios 43^v and 45^v) (illus. 1 and 2) and the experimental example of Blake's surname printed in reverse or mirror writing (folio 116^v) (illus. 3). If they were authentic, these examples suggested that Blake had probably come into possession of the manuscript during the first part of his seven year apprenticeship as an engraver (1772-79).

The substance of the manuscript supported an association with Blake. The extant manuscript originally formed the blank leaves used to interleave an octavo letterpress text of four plays by Sophocles. These larger blank leaves had then been used intermittently to write translations of and annotations to the plays in several distinguishable hands, with some examples clearly resembling the hand of William Blake. At a later date, probably in the 1920s, the leaves of printed text had been torn out without breaking the binding. Of particular relevance to Blake was the inclusion of *Philoctetes* amongst the four plays, the subject of an etching by James Barry first produced in 1777 and of a major painting by Blake of 1812. In a letter to his brother of 1803 Blake had also referred to how accomplished he was becoming in his studies of Greek. Shortly before, William Hayley in correspondence had also made reference to Blake's study.

I suggested to John Byrne, then an associate, and to Anthony Rota, head of Bertram Rota Ltd., that the next step should be to take the manuscript to the British Library so that the examples of Greek letter formations in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook (as it will be referred to) could be compared with the examples in Blake's holograph present in the manuscript of *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*. This

would also provide an opportunity to make general comparisons of the holograph with those of Blake written in English in the manuscript of *Vala*, examples that vary widely in character from copperplate to less formal styles. I later met with John Byrne at the British Library to compare the manuscripts.

The description that follows is the outcome of these inspections and comparisons, together with study and comparisons made on my own with examples of Blake's holograph from manuscripts as varied as those of "Then She Bore Pale Desire" and "Woe Cried the Muse," *An Island in the Moon*, Blake's letters and receipts to Thomas Butts (*Letters from William Blake to Thomas Butts 1800-1803*. Printed in Facsimile with an introductory note by Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford, 1926) a range of Blake autograph signatures in particular from books he acquired early in life now in the Cambridge University Library and in my own collection, as well as the manuscript of *Vala* in the British Library. It is hoped that the illustrations from the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook will be found helpful in providing an opportunity for others to make their own comparisons. They accompany the description through the generosity of the owner, Mrs. Blunden, and Anthony Rota of Bertram Rota Ltd. For just such comparison the description was made available to G. E. Bentley, Jr., in December 1995.

With regard to the translation and annotation of Sophocles plays, the observations and distinctions that are made have been contributed by Alan Griffiths of the Department of Greek and Latin at University College London, without whose expertise the levels of scholarly and linguistic competence present in the manuscript, and the questions of authorship these raise, would not have been made clear. John Byrne, formerly of Bertram Rota Ltd., and Scot McKindrick, of the Department of Manuscripts at the British Library, have also contributed, especially in identifying similar idiosyncratic Greek letter forms present in the manuscripts of *Vala* and the Sophocles Notebook.

Included in the description are also my own speculations regarding similarities of handwriting which deserve to be assessed allowing for the wide variation of Blake's holograph over the course of his lifetime, as well as an indication of the circumstantial evidence that needs to be taken into account. It is the early signatures combined with the circumstantial evidence that persuade me that the manuscript deserves to be taken seriously. If an association is accepted, its significance for our further understanding only begins with the few suggestions that have been made here.

Description

The Sophocles Manuscript Notebook is made up of 189 leaves, approximately 20.5 x 16.5 cm. The binding is unsophisticated, of eighteenth century marble paper covered boards and vellum spine, the latter partially defective and

in a fragile state, and lettered in pen and ink "BLUNDEN" directly onto the spine.

The paper bears an undated watermark of Britannia within an oval frame surmounted with a crown and with the initials "G R" below. An example is found on folio 12 recto. It can be dated confidently before 1794, when this design went out of use. The earliest examples are from the mid to late 1760s. The present example is extremely simple: there is no writing around the outside of the oval and the drapery is plain. According to Edward Heawood, *Watermarks Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (1950), the simplest forms are the earliest, indicating that the paper used in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook was produced near the beginning of this period.

It is apparent from offsetting of varying strength throughout the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook that it was originally interleaved with a printed text of four plays by Sophocles: *Ajax*, *Electra*, *Trachiniai* and *Philoctetes*. At a later date the leaves of printed text were pulled free or torn away from the binding leaving some stubble still stitched in place. The text of Sophocles used for interleaving has not yet been determined, but the offset is clear and special photography and comparison will eventually make it possible to establish the edition used. Traces of pen marks or ticks against line endings and other forms of marginalia may be seen on some folios where these marks have continued beyond the edges of former interleaved text pages, as on folio 96 recto.

The handwriting is in various shades of sepia ink. Some sketches have been made using pencil.

The Sophocles Manuscript Notebook may be divided into four sections:

1. Verso front free end-paper to folio 22 recto. These folios contain an incomplete translation into English of *Ajax*, with some comparative notes found on folios 5 verso and 7 verso (illus. 4). The handwriting in this section of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook is mature and often fine (apart from the unsophisticated Greek on the front free end-paper and folios 4 recto and 7 verso). If the handwriting in English in this section is that of William Blake, a date later in Blake's life for this translation is likely. Examples of the handwriting in this part of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook may be compared with that in the manuscript of *VALA Night the First*, especially folios 4 through 9 verso (paginated in the *Vala* manuscript 7-18).

The Greek letter formations present in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook on folio 7 verso (see illus. 4) are immature and indicate a beginning student. They are compared with those present in the manuscript of *VALA Night the First*, folio 2 recto (page 3) (illus. 5, detail; illus. 6, another detail). There are no examples of William Blake's signature or other signs that would have drawn attention to the significance of the volume in this section.

2. Folios 23 recto to 37 recto. These folios contain Edmund Blunden's autograph manuscript reminiscences entitled *Some Notes on Friends & Acquaintances*, describing a meeting with Siegfried Sassoon and others in 1921, and his first visit to Thomas Hardy at Max Gate in 1923. From Blunden's hand it is believed that this was written within a few years of the events which it describes. This also indicates the period by which the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook had come into Blunden's possession, possibly together with two other volumes. A bookseller's note on the front paste-down reads "3 Vol £1-0-0." A search of the remains of Blunden's library in February 1993 did not discover the other two volumes, if they had been purchased as a lot by him. Blunden habitually bought fine blank paper cheaply whenever he could and he may well have acquired the present volume (alone) for this purpose.

Although Blunden considered himself "an old reader of Blake," as he remarked in the brief foreword to Bunsho Jugaku's *Bibliographical Study of William Blake's Note-Book* (Tokyo, 1953), he appears to have paid little regard to the possible significance of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook. During the course of writing his description of his visit to Hardy on folio 35 recto he deleted an early Blake signature isolated among the sequence of blank leaves he was using. There is also no record of his having shown the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook to his friend Geoffrey Keynes, although on at least one occasion he had invited Keynes's opinion on what he hoped to be a Blake discovery. This was a watercolor wash drawing contained in a manila envelope upon which Blunden recorded Keynes's response: "Not remotely possible." Blunden may also have been responsible for removing the printed text of Sophocles, of which only offset and occasional stubble remain.

3. Folios 37 verso to 140 recto. These folios contain a number of blank leaves but they also form a distinct section as they contain a series of what appear to be William Blake's early autograph signatures: on folios 43 verso, 45 verso, 48 recto, 60 recto, 71 recto, 79 recto, 81 recto, 83 recto, 91 recto, 103 recto, 113 recto, 114 recto and 116 verso; in addition to the signature on folio 35 recto deleted by Blunden. Two examples, on folios 43 verso and 45 verso, are formed of pin prick dots in the manner of stipple engraving (see illus. 1 and 2). Another example, on folio 116 verso, in roman capitals may be an early if not first attempt at reverse writing (see illus. 3). The only other example of Blake practicing reverse writing is later, where he has written the first three letters of his surname on the verso of the last leaf of the manuscript of *An Island in the Moon*. These examples on folios 43, 45 and 113 verso are indicative of an apprentice engraver learning his craft.

The early signatures present in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook may be most usefully compared with those found

in the earliest examples present in Blake's manuscript of *An Island in the Moon* (folio 16 verso) and in the books he owned and signed in his youth.

The name "Sunderland" appears frequently throughout these leaves. In almost every instance it has been overwritten with the signature "Blake"; for example, on folios 43 verso, 50 recto, 71 recto, 79 recto, 91 recto (illus. 7) and 114 recto, in addition to the example on folio 24 recto (illus. 8). This sign of previous ownership and of the effort to obscure it may explain why these pages were otherwise largely left blank, though blank leaves are also found in the manuscript of *An Island in the Moon*. There is no known association between a "Sunderland" and Blake nor between Blake and a "Taffy Williams" whose name is found on folio 103 recto. There is also one example of doggerel verse on folio 48 verso (cf. Macbeth, IV.i.10f):

In trouble to be troubled,
Is to have your trouble doubled

The handwriting in this section of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook appears to be of the early 1770s (with the exception of the doggerel verse), the beginning of Blake's seven year apprenticeship to the engraver James Basire (1772-79). This is suggested by the graphic experiments that have been noted as characteristic of a beginning apprentice engraver and the obvious immaturity and variation of the signatures.

There are also several casual sketches in this section. They show little promise of the William Blake, but the interlinking circles on folio 71 recto (illus. 9) could anticipate the links of chain decorating the inside margin of plate 65 of *Jerusalem* and the sketch on folio 79 recto (illus. 10), of a moth emerging from a chrysalis, could possibly anticipate similar devices used on the frontispiece to *The Gates of Paradise* (1793) and the separate plate known as *Albion Rose*.

4. Folios 140 recto to 189 verso. These folios contain detailed notes made in the course of studying *Philoctetes*. These include remarks on the Sophoclean tragic form, numerous citations of other classical writers both Greek and Roman, reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* on folio 172 verso, and comparative notes on linguistics and related themes. All authors and editions cited are earlier than c. 1785.

If the notes in this section of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook are to be attributed to William Blake they probably belong to the period c. 1800-12. These dates are suggested by comparisons with Blake's holograph in contemporary letters and receipts to Thomas Butts and in the manuscript of *Vala*. Specifically, examples in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook on folios 159 verso, 169 recto, 171 recto and 172 recto and verso may be compared with the

copperplate capital letters in *VALA Night the First*, folios 7 and 9 recto.

Attributing this section of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook to the period c. 1800-12 may also be predicated on the assumption that Blake's detailed scholarly interest in *Philoctetes* was prior to production of his pen and watercolor painting *Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at Lemnos*, now in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University. The painting is signed "W Blake. 1812." A description of the painting is given in Martin Butlin's catalogue, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (1981), No. 676 (see illus. 17).

This section of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook also contains several sketches in pen and ink or pencil on folios 116 recto, 147 recto and verso, 149 verso, 150 recto, 181 recto, 182 verso, 183 recto, 186 recto, and rear paste-down. They were probably made by some one other than Blake, perhaps by "Blandford" whose ownership signature is found at the beginning of the manuscript (see below under Provenance).

This period is also suggested by Blake's study of Greek and Latin referred to in a letter to his brother James written from Felpham on 30 January 1803, as follows:

I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin; am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy; am now learning my Hebrew [Hebrew letters for ABC]. I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master: astonishing indeed is the English Translation, it is Almost word for word, & if the Hebrew Bible is as well translated, which I do not doubt it is, we need not doubt of its having been translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost.

Blake's remark that "the Testament is my chief master: astonishing indeed is the English Translation, it is Almost word for word" suggests that he is still at an early stage, New Testament Greek being far less demanding than classical Greek. He is also relying upon an English translation that he probably knows by heart.

During his stay at Felpham Blake's study of Greek and Latin was undertaken with the help of William Hayley. Writing in February 1802 to the Rev. John Johnson, Hayley enclosed a titlepage for his new edition of William Cowper's translation of Homer together with a motto, commenting: "which I and Blake, who is just become a Grecian, and literally learning the language, consider a happy hit!" Referring to Blake, Hayley concludes the letter: "The new Grecian greets you affectionately." This assessment of Blake's proficiency as a beginning student of Greek in February 1802 set alongside Blake's own remarks of January 1803 further suggests that great progress in the writing of Greek was not made at this time, in spite of both Hayley's and Blake's enthusiasm.

The immaturity of some of the examples of Greek in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook, especially idiosyncrasies of letter formation, can be compared with an epigraph from *Ephesians* vi 12 written at the top of folio 2 recto of the manuscript of *VALA Night the First* (see illus. 5). John Byrne made the following comparisons. Following John Byrne's examples of erroneous letter-forms found in the Sophocles manuscript I have inserted in brackets similar examples of the erroneous letter-forms as written by Blake in the quotation from *Ephesians* taken from the *VALA* manuscript:

While the quotation from *Ephesians* used as the epigraph to *Vala* is brief, a few observations may be made. It is carefully, even stiltedly, written (and without accents). Certain quite distinctive letter-forms appear nonetheless, all of which may be found in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook:

The epsilon ϵ (one stroke) rather than ϵ (two strokes): see Sophocles Notebook f.4 recto and f.140 recto and verso (illus. 11 and 12-13) [*VALA* ϵ]

The sigma σ used at the beginnings of, and within, words rather than σ : see f.7 verso (see illus. 4); f.153 verso, line 18 (illus. 14); f.154 verso, line 1 (illus. 15) [*VALA* σ].

The omicron/upsilon diphthong written with the second letter on top of the first υ rather than beside it ou : see f.155 verso, line 4 (illus. 16). [*VALA* υ]

The phi written in a single stroke ϕ rather than the more conventional two strokes ϕ : see f.7 verso (illus. 4). [*VALA* ϕ]

General observations on the Greek in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook:

Verso of front free end-paper: the word is incomplete and ineptly written.

f.4 recto: not confidently written; still employing the single-stroke epsilon

f.7 verso: almost certainly written later: more fluent and with more character.

f.84 recto: these capitals are very poor, being of different heights and badly slanted.

ff.140 recto and 144 recto: again not very confident; employing the single-stroke epsilon and, unusually, the sigma. Perhaps predating *Vala*.

f.151 verso: hazarded as later than *Vala*; one ς is employed, but the two-stroke epsilon appears, also accents.

f.153 et seq.: the Greek is now written with skill, individual character (and beauty), demonstrating considerable mastery. This must surely be later than *Vala*.

Scot McKindrick, Greek handwriting expert in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Library, also compared the epigraph from *Ephesians* on the titlepage of *Vala, Night the First* (see illus. 5) and the passage on folio 4 recto of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook (see illus. 11):

The character of the writing style of each passage as a whole, its accent, is different, indicating that they are not by the same hand. However, both share the characteristics of being untutored and demonstrate the same mistakes in letter formation. Also, the respective context of writing is entirely different. In the *Vala* manuscript Blake is copying onto his titlepage the passage from *Ephesians* from a text of the New Testament and writing it like one would write a passage in English. The passage on folio 4 recto in the Sophocles manuscript is written as part of a learning exercise in classical Greek, which comparatively is very difficult.

Apart from the few letters of Greek engraved on the separate plate of Blake's *Laocoön* (c. 1820), which show an improvement in letter formation, the only other example that may indicate how much he improved after writing in the manuscript of *Vala* is present in his annotations in a copy of Robert John Thornton, *The Lord's Prayer, Newly Translated from the Original Greek* (1827, p. 2) in the Huntington Library, which I have not been able to compare.

If Blake is responsible for these two sections or parts of them, Section I of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook (the translation of *Ajax*) should probably be thought of as belonging to the period of nearly a year indicated by Hayley's letter of February 1802 and Blake's letter to his brother of January 1803. The study of *Philoctetes* presumably came later and nearer the time of his painting of 1812. A comparison of Blake's painting (illus. 17) and Barry's engraving (1777 reworked in 1790) (illus. 18) makes clear that Blake made a thorough study of the play that led to his own distinctive interpretation.

Provenance

1. Blandford. On the front paste-down is the signature "Blandford," apparently a signature of ownership but with no date associated with it. It seems likely that Blandford was the original owner, but none of the handwriting in the volume compares with that of the signature. There is no known association between a "Blandford" and Blake.

The name "Blandford" is written in the style of a nobleman, and on a number of occasions elsewhere in the manuscript, but in a quite different hand, is written the name "Sunderland." As Alan Griffiths first pointed out to me, the combination of the two names "Blandford" and

"Sunderland" suggests the possibility that the manuscript may have once been associated with the Spencer family; in particular, perhaps, George (Spencer), fourth Duke of Marlborough (1739-1817), Earl of Sunderland, and until 1758 styled Marquess of Blandford, or possibly his son George (b. 1766), Earl of Sunderland and Marquess of Blandford.

The manuscript originally interleaved the printed texts of four plays by Sophocles, and the surviving leaves were then used to make translations and notes. Some of the notes are impressive and call upon a wide range of scholarship up to the latter part of the eighteenth century, possibly those of a professional tutor working in the middle or later eighteenth century. However, some of the translation and other notes are also very elementary, suggesting a beginning student.

I also wrote the Secretary, Historical Archives, Blenheim Palace, Blenheim, Woodstock, Oxfordshire on 6 September 1993 for assistance with this attribution and supplied with photocopies of the signature. No reply has been received.

2. William Blake. On the evidence of the early signatures in Section III, the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook may have been in possession of William Blake from near the beginning of his apprenticeship to the engraver James Basire 1772-79 and remained so until c. 1803, when he wrote to his brother James of his current study of Latin and Greek, and probably through 1812 when he completed his painting of *Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at Lemnos*.

3. Edmund Blunden. On the evidence of Section II, the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook was in the possession of Edmund Blunden by the early 1920s. The identity of the bookseller from whom Blunden purchased it, and its previous ownership apart from Blandford and Blake, remains unknown. As noted, in early 1993 Mrs. Blunden helped in searching for the other two volumes of the "3 vol. £1.0.0" noted by an unknown bookseller on the front paste-down, without success.

Significance

If the signatures of William Blake are accepted as authentic, the early sections of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook present new insight into the beginnings of Blake's apprenticeship, not least in providing evidence of his attempting reverse writing, a point of contention for many years by those attempting to understand his invention and processes of Illuminated Printing with which he produced his own composite works of poetry and design. For the biographer, there is the intriguing possibility of a connection between the name "Sunderland," compulsively overwritten with Blake's own surname, and also the name "Taffy Williams."

The Sophocles Manuscript Notebook reveals a background of interest and scholarship hitherto unsuspected,

especially for the period during which Blake was writing *Milton* and *Jerusalem* and painting various biblical subjects including the great series of interpretations of the Book of Job.

Blake's knowledge of native traditions of poetry and painting as well as those of other cultures has always been acknowledged. We know he studied Italian in order to read Dante in the original. From the letter written by William Hayley and Blake's own to his brother James, we know that he also studied Latin and Greek as well as ancient Hebrew. But until the discovery of the present manuscript just how deeply and wide-ranging these studies were, especially in terms of the secondary scholarship that Blake may have sought and mastered, has largely been a matter of conjecture and internal reference.

His painting of *Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at Lemnos* at Harvard can be understood in a new light. Until now we have known little of the period following the failure of Blake's Exhibition of 1809 and completion of his painting in 1812: the period Gilchrist calls "Years of Deepening Neglect," *Life*, ch. 27. Apart from its biographical implications, and importance in relation to *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake's detailed study of Sophocles's play should now be set alongside the revival of his interest in the Book of Job, also at this time, and recognized as the classical counterpart to Job's trial, isolation and redemption through suffering. In short, Blake's study of *Philoctetes* forms an integral part of his preparations for his greatest work of interpretation as a graphic artist.

Problems of Attribution

As indicated, there is intermittent evidence in the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook of a favorable comparison of the handwriting with examples from Blake's manuscripts. But the extent of the handwriting that can be attributed to William Blake can only be properly assessed when the levels of sophistication of translation and scholarship are appreciated. In this regard, Alan Griffiths pointed out that there are three distinctive personalities who are present in the manuscript.

There is a beginning *student*, as on folio 4 recto (see illus. 11). There is a competent *translator*, as on folio 167 recto (illus. 19). And there is an expert *scholar*, as on folios 156 and 157 (illus. 20-21 and 22-23), in particular who has added comments opposite the text of *Philoctetes* which demonstrate an extensive and at times impressive use of the scholarship available up to mid-century, but who significantly does not refer to Brunck's excellent edition of Sophocles published in 1786. As the personalities of the *student*, *translator* and *scholar* emerge, and they are only based upon brief, sample translations and observations, they may or may not be, in part or on the whole, associated with William Blake.

It is possible that Blake may have contributed to some extent at all three of these stages. This may be explained if the manuscript came into his possession at the beginning of his apprenticeship in the early 1770s. In the first instance Blake introduced his series of signatures, including overwriting the (earlier) name Sunderland. In addition, he may have been responsible for making some of the elementary notes, in particular to the *Philoctetes*. During the 1770s it would be surprising if Blake had not become interested in *Philoctetes*, especially in relation to Job, as a result of the discussions by Winckelmann, Lessing and Burke and especially upon seeing the distinctive rendering of *Philoctetes* by James Barry (whom Blake greatly admired) in his etching first produced in 1777 (see illus.18). William L. Pressly discusses this background in his *Life of Barry* (1981, pp. 20-26).

Later, during the 1780s, perhaps encouraged by John Flaxman, who was an accomplished student of Greek and Latin, Blake may have developed his knowledge of the classics and spent more time with the manuscript. Flaxman left London for Rome in 1787. This could explain why there is no apparent reference to Brunck's edition of 1786, or to subsequent scholarship.

Beginning in the late 1790s while working on the manuscript of *Vala*, and later while living in the cottage at Felpham, Blake evidently renewed his interest in "Greek & Latin." This interest led to his painting of *Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at Lemnos* of 1812, an interpretation different from earlier renderings, including Barry's, and demonstrating the correlations he recognized between the subject of Sophocles's play and that of the figure of Job.

Alternatively, it would appear more likely that the sketches, translations and notes were in large part present at the time the manuscript came into Blake's possession. This would explain the apparent absence of reference to scholarship much later than mid century. If Blake did contribute to the translations and notes, and after the turn of the century became the accomplished Greek scholar present in the manuscript, then the apparent absence of reference to Brunck's and to later scholarship requires explanation. If William Hayley was responsible, and he is an obvious candidate, such scholarship may not have been immediately available and Hayley's knowledge may not have been up to date.

The specific edition of Sophocles that the manuscript originally interleaved has still to be identified from the off-sets. When it becomes known, some of the problems of dating and provenance may be resolved and an explanation found as to why reference to scholarship after 1786 does not appear to be present.

Conclusion

If accepted as authentic, the early signatures make clear that the volume was in Blake's possession from an early age. The

circumstantial evidence which includes Hayley's letter of 1802, Blake's of 1803 and his painting of 1812 demonstrate his later interest in learning Greek in general and study of *Philoctetes* in particular. These help explain why the manuscript was in his possession and at least some of the uses it was put to, whether he contributed largely or not to its contents.

However extensive Blake's contribution, if the early signatures present in Section III are accepted as authentic, the importance of the Sophocles Manuscript Notebook for our further understanding of Blake is considerable in helping to establish the extent and detail of his intellectual curiosity and its application to his art.

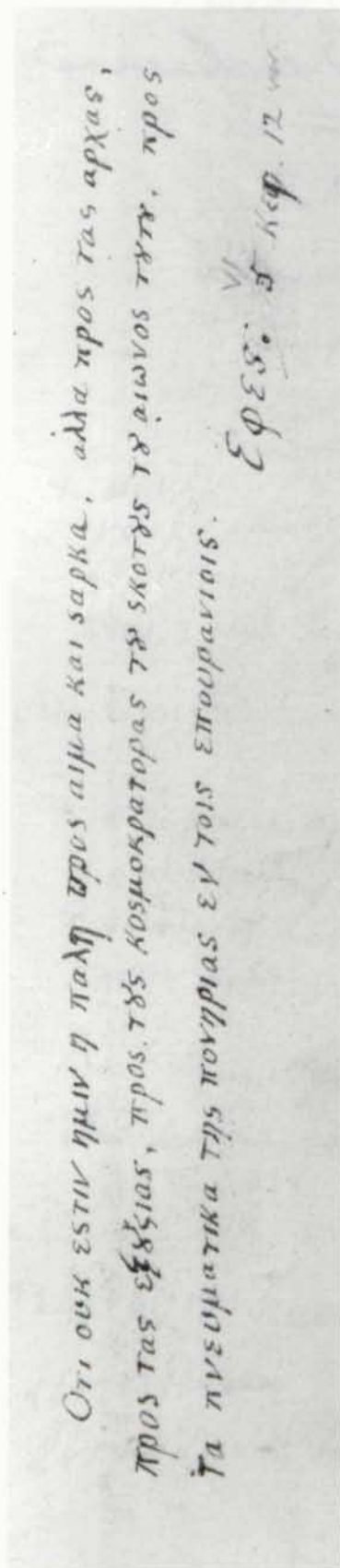
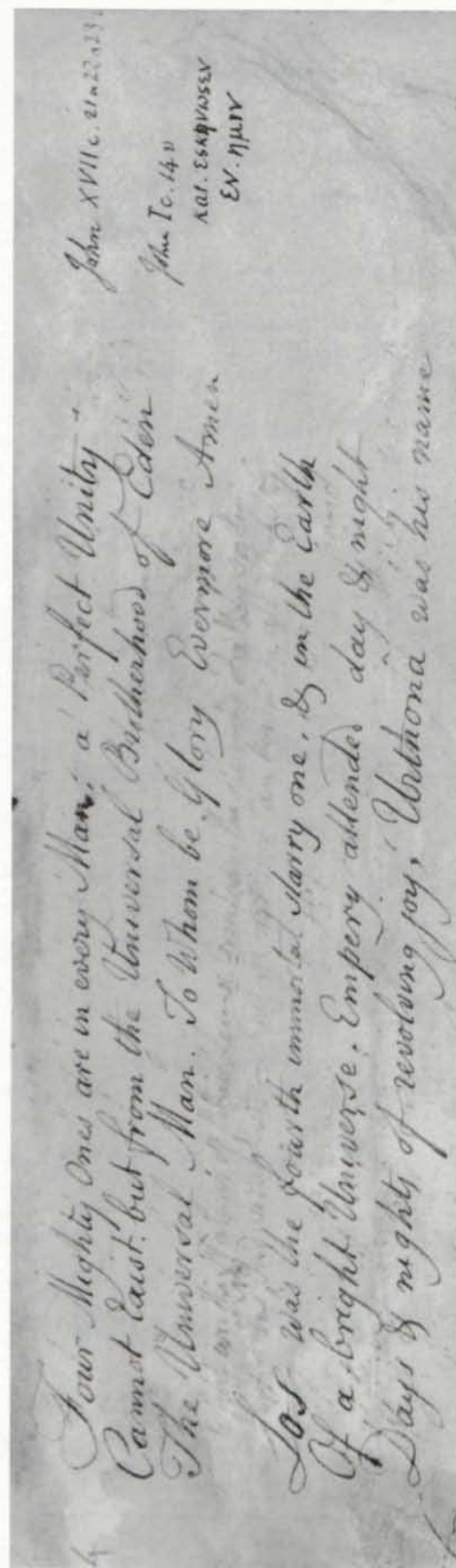
1 Sophocles MS f. 43^v [Bentley: "W.^m Blake" in stipple, and "Sunderland" over-written by "BlakeBlake"]

2 Sophocles MS f. 45^v [Bentley: "W.^m Blake"]

3 Sophocles MS f. 116^v [Bentley: "BLAKE" in mirror-writing. Each example of "Blake" is on an otherwise blank leaf except that f. 35^v bears a much later text by Edmund Blunden, f. 79^v has an obscure design, and f. 91^v has "Elektra," all apparently unrelated to the "Blake" on the same pages.]

he slew the ^{Two} Abido, and now some
other chiefs, while I urg'd him on in
his Phrenzy, striving to catch him in
snazes I laid, Tied with his Stenghles.
He binds in chains the living victims
drives home the herds, suspecting they
are Men; there with many a galling stroke
he beats the deer. To thee will I relate
this glaring Phrenzy, that having seen is
lost to the Greeks mayst soon record it.

+ In allusion to this circumstance, the title of the
Play in the original is *Asias Maschopocos*
or *Asias the Whelp Bearer* so called either by
Sophocles himself or some of y^e Ancient Comment:
to distinguish it from *Asias of Lorician*, another
Tragedy written by him but now lost. It's y^e
Appellation of *Whelp Bearer* how ever happily
adapted to an Attila might not so well suit y^e
delicacy of an English ear I have taken the
Liberty to sink it upon my readers who

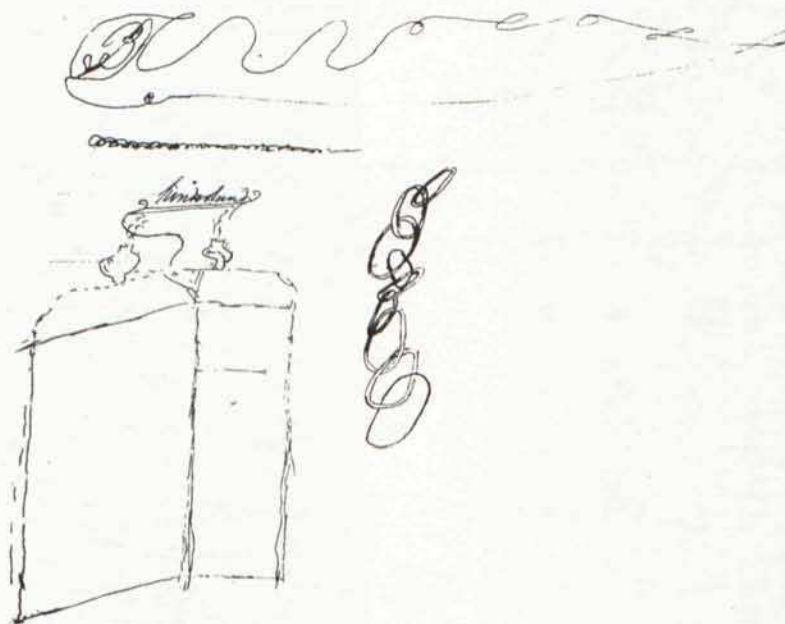
5 Detail of *Vala, Night the First*, William Blake, 1797-1803. Courtesy of the British Library.6 Detail of *Vala, Night the First*, William Blake, 1797-1803. Courtesy of the British Library.



7 Sophocles MS f. 91' [Bentley: "Sunderland" overwritten by "Blake"]

Sunderland

8 Sophocles MS f. 24'



9 Sophocles MS f. 71' [Bentley: "Bl" followed by a flourish]



10 Sophocles MS f. 79' (bottom) [Bentley: "Sunderland | Blake"]

Sophocles generally conducts his plays without a prologue.
prologue.

Prologue extended till the first chorus began.

Conclusion of the chorus ἐξόδος, κατὰ στρόφη.

First object — Fable.

Next — Chorus.

μελὰ ποικίλ — music.

Ὀψις — Story.

Δήμω — Non te Teantia proles

Expositum Lemnos nostro cum crimine habent.

Or. l. 19.

The Attic dialect is preserved throughout; the Ionic
sometimes however is made use of being so like the
old Attic.

— — — — — tu illa lucis Melibaei

Parva Philocteta subnixā Petilia Inuro.

Virg. Aen. 3. l. 401.

"Εὐθεὺς ᾧ προέειπε καρχεθεὸν Μελίβοιαν

Apoll. Hygm. l. 592.

14 Sophocles MS f. 153^v

νόστον. So Euripides. νόστον ἤλθον. Eur. Iph. T. v. 412.

— — — — — νόστον. Eur. Iph. A. v. 1187.

Vid. Markland in loc. & Suid in V.
περινοστήντας.

νώδυρον. — Virg. de Dictamnaro.

— — — — — subitq; omnis decorus fugit
διώππε δολο. An. 12. v. 421.

λαβεῖν. Some καὶ μολεῖν, but λαβεῖν is preferred.

Instatur Patroci Pyrrhus. An. 2. 491.

15 Sophocles MS f. 154^v

τεχνιστῆς. So Apollonius Rhodius.

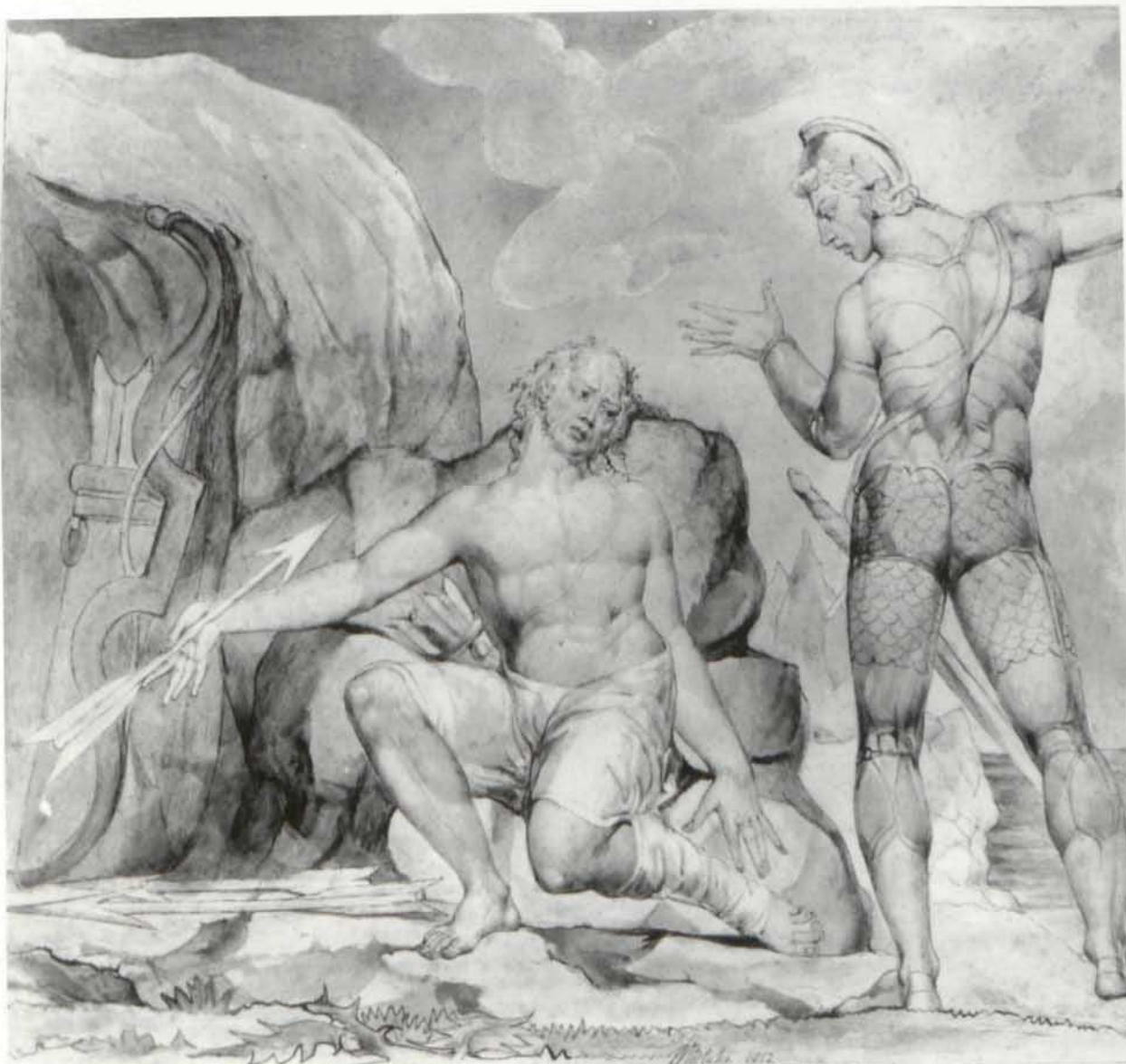
Εἶκε δόλον φείνοισιν ἐκάνδρῳ τεχνήναιτο. L. 4. v. 463.

Λαερτιάδαι. Sic in off.

αἰμεν ὦ παῖ Λαερτιάδ. contra. Λαερτιάδ

Σὺ δ' ἦν γὰρ ἄν' αἰ Λαερτιάδ' ἄνδρ' ἔχον τόχον. Troad. Eur.

16 Sophocles MS f. 155^v



17 William Blake, *Philoctetes and Neoptolemus at Lemnos*, 1812, watercolor, black ink and graphite on off-white paper.
Courtesy of Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop.

18 James Barry, *Philoctetes*, 1777, etching and aquatint. Courtesy of the Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow.



μεγατιφεμερος. *Alii volunt μεγατιφεμερος.*

Οραυ. *Οι μετα την αριστοφην στιχοι ιαμβικοι τριμετροι.*
The third act begins here.

*Αλλ' αινχα μερτοις. At turpest sane me officii
 negligentium quam tu quidem te produs
 hospitii in dom. Prudye.*

19 Sophocles MS f. 167^r

Τὸς ἀφροκτοῖς.

Pegnas viouras iternum Trojanu sagittas.
Tene jubas Paunte satum. W. Met. L. 9. v. 233.

ἐς κέρδος. *Ad Trojam capiendam.*

Quum vetri proovant, peccat qui recte fuit. Unde hic
verus est illi geminus, τὸ κέρδος ἢ δὲ πᾶν ἀπο ψεύδων ἐν,
quum Sophocles se testatur Plutarchus de Aud. Pot.
Sententia improbo Ulyssae non Neoptolemo digna.
melius citante Plutarcho idem Sophocles, Οὐκ ἔ.

κοίρω πᾶσαν αἰσχύναν ἀρεῖς. In Mecha. Ἐξέτω αἰδώς
Ἐξέτω αἰδώς. Apoll. Rhod. L. 3. v. 784.

20 Sophocles MS f. 156'

Egeus-Callidum quicquid placuit juro

Condere furta. Hor. L. 1. Od. 10.

Mercurius here introduced as being the God of Craft.

----- an magis color

Pejora praeda, quam praesens Mercurius fort.

Hor. Sat. L. 2. P. 3.

Regum timendum in propriis greges

Regis in ipso imperium est Jovi, Hor. L. 3. Od. 1.

21 Sophocles MS f. 156'

Ω δὲ στεναγεῖ. *Of all human things the most fragile & fortune,*
et inanes motus contentiones. sic.
θνητῶν. ποτὶς θνητῶν. *Doi.*

ακαρτῶν καὶ λωπράμορος. *Pindar.*

λασίῳ μετὰ. *Stanleius in Koch. S. T. v. 783. per*
στικτὰς βήρας aus diontan; per λασιβς καὶ φρασ
ingeniis monet. R.

Οἰμῳγας. *su. Ar. R. — ἐκτυπε δ' αἰδοῖ*
Οἰμῳγῇ. *L. a. u. 261.*

22 Sophocles MS f. 157^r

ὑποφωτός. *haec Epitheta ostendit hic Phrygiam*
nympham esse, non urbem vel insulam ut
quidam volunt.

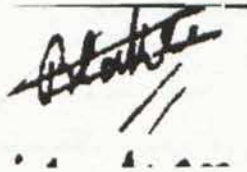
ἐκεβη. *Legimus ἀκεβη, nisi ἐκεβη signatissimum*
esset verbum, & proprium de morbo graffante.

In ceteris editionibus interpungitur post
κη δὲ μορων, quia interpretis sensum promittit.

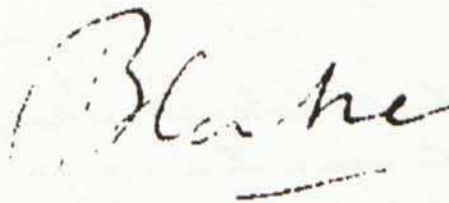
Τροίαν. *Alld. et. Vet. lld. Τροία.*

στιβς. *Sic Alld. et Vet. lld. et Schol. sub. ἐκί, quam lectionem ego*
magis probavi, inquit Stanleius, in Koch. S. T. v. 162,
nam τὸ ἔχειν transitivum exemplum facile non occurrit.
al. στιβον, quod magis aridet Heathio, qui tamen
propositionem ἐκί ante accusationem vult intellectum.
Sibi iudicat Lectr.

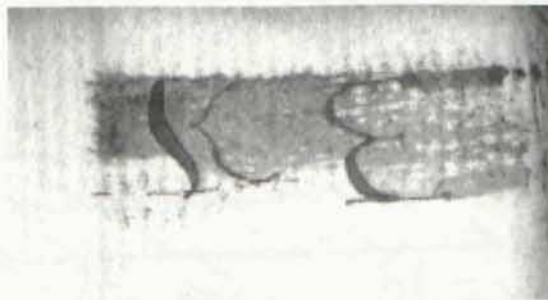
23 Sophocles MS f. 157^r [Bentley: Learned annotations in Greek and Latin with two different pen-points]



24 Sophocles MS f. 35r "Blake" deleted by Blunden



25 Sophocles MS f. 48r "Blake"



26 Sophocles MS f. 51r "KE," perhaps the end of "BLAKE" with the first three letters written on the missing leaf of printed Sophocles text



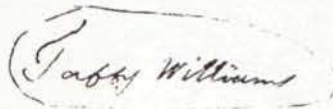
27 Sophocles MS f. 60' "Blake" (greatly enlarged)



28 Sophocles MS f. 81' "Blake," the "B" in stipple



29 Sophocles MS f. 83' "Blake" smudged (enlarged)



30 Sophocles MS f. 103' "Blake | Taffy Williams | Blake"

Blake
~~KKKK~~

31 Sophocles MS f. 113^r "Blake [KKKK ~~(del)~~]" (greatly enlarged)

Sun =

Blake:
 land

32 Sophocles MS f. 114^r "Sun= der= land" overwritten by "Blake"



33 Sophocles MS f. 147^r Portrait of a man looking faintly like William Blake

1204. *Le Violon* Erden prop. en. "Italian violin." *U. S. v. B.*



34 Sophocles MS f. 183^r Sketch of Violin man

My Dear Sir

I beg you will have the goodness to
accept my warmest Thanks, for the distinguished honor
you have done me, in presenting me with your Volume
of Poems, as well as for the pleasure, which I am
persuaded I shall enjoy in the perusal, With every
sentiment of esteem and regard, I am

My Dear Sir

Your much Obliged and faithful
humble Servant

Bedford Row
May 12th. 1806

Wm Blake

35 Letter from William Blake of Bedford Row, 12 May 1806. Collection of Robert N. Essick. Compare the handwriting with that of the Sophocles MS.