

# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

N O T E

## Blake's Corrections in Poetical Sketches

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Victoria and Albert Museum drawings have, like the present example, a price scrawled on the *verso*, and in some cases crossed out and reduced. The present drawing has the price of two guineas reduced to one, and furthermore the word "guinea" is incorrectly spelt "guinie" as on some of the Victoria and Albert drawings. It is probable then that the prices were put on by Harvey, who must have sold the residue of his Blake drawings to Parsons, and they seem to have been priced according to the degree of finish. In the meantime he had sold a number of them previously to collectors, including a pencil drawing of "A Squatted Devil" (Rossetti, no. 123) to Bell Scott.<sup>7</sup> To sum up, the probable early provenance of the drawing is as follows: Mrs. Blake, Frederick Tatham, Evans by 1863, Harvey before 1880, William Bell Scott. Most of Blake's miscellaneous drawings came through Tatham as Mrs. Blake's executor so the provenance is hardly surprising, but if the scrawled prices on the back of many of Blake's drawings can be established as that of the dealer Harvey then they could provide a link between existing drawings and the often cryptic descriptions in Rossetti's list.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>W. B. Scott sale (14 July 1892), Sotheby's, lot 135, bt. Ellis (£1.13.0).

<sup>2</sup>*The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1957), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>See W. B. Scott, *William Blake: Etchings from his Works* (London, 1878).

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, "Pictor Ignatus" (London and Cambridge, 1863), II, 250.

<sup>5</sup>See Tatham's letter to W. M. Rossetti of 6 November 1862 (W. M. Rossetti, *Rossetti Papers* [London, 1903], p. 16).

<sup>6</sup>For example, Rossetti, nos. 121, 122, 143. The twelve drawings were bought from E. Parsons in 1881 for £7.14.0 (accession nos. 8761-65).

<sup>7</sup>K. Preston, ed., *The Blake Collection of W. Graham Robertson* (London, 1952), p. 239, no. 126, lot 138 in the Bell Scott sale of 14 July 1892.

## 2. MICHAEL PHILLIPS: UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

### Blake's Corrections in *POETICAL SKETCHES*

My primary purpose here is to provide a complete list of all corrections which Blake made in copies of *Poetical Sketches*. What is offered are the results of a systematic inspection and collation of the original emended copies of the poems. These findings anticipate a more comprehensive study which will provide detailed descriptions of the individual corrections that are present in each of the eight emended copies with photographs of the corrections in their varying states to complement my discussion. Remarks on the author's changing attitude toward specific corrections and also an attempt to fix approximate dates to the various copies as to when they were corrected and presented will also be given, together with a discussion which will present new material regarding the printing of the poems. Before listing Blake's corrections and their frequency of occurrence it will be of interest if a few introductory remarks are



made regarding Blake's manner of proceeding with his poems following their return from the printer. I have also chosen to discuss Blake's attitude toward *Poetical Sketches* after 1783. The attention that is given here to Blake's corrections in *Poetical Sketches* owes much to the textual foundations established by Margaret Ruth Lowery and especially Sir Geoffrey Keynes in their respective studies of the poems. To Sir Geoffrey Keynes and to David V. Erdman I am particularly grateful for advice and opinion given at various stages in my researches.

*Poetical Sketches* were returned to Blake from the printer in open sheets and probably in an edition of fifty copies as Sir Geoffrey Keynes has surmised.<sup>1</sup> At the time of printing and periodically thereafter Blake folded the sheets of his poems and hand-stitched them in plain blue-gray paper wrappers; copy B is extant as issued. He then emended his text with care and precision, usually employing what appears to be an India ink and frequently keeping the nib of his pen finely trimmed. During the course of his life Blake's attitude toward a number of specific corrections changed as the corrections themselves vary in number and kind from copy to copy. For example, only two copies contain the same series of corrections.

J. T. Smith recorded that *Poetical Sketches* were "given to Blake to sell to friends, or publish, as he might think proper."<sup>2</sup> Blake neither sold nor published his poems at any time; at least we have no evidence to suggest the occurrence of either possibility. At the time of Blake's death there still remained in his possession a number of copies in their open unbound state.<sup>3</sup> This indicates that he must have bound and emended copies at a rate which corresponded with demand, that is, on the occasion when he wished to give a copy of his first poems to a newly-made friend or acquaintance. The suggestion that he only bound and emended a few copies at a time is substantiated by the variation in the number and nature of corrections that are present in the eight emended copies of the poems which have survived.

During the period immediately following the return of the sheets from the printer Blake presented at least three emended copies of his poems to John Flaxman and his wife. Flaxman, of course, was almost certainly instrumental in having *Poetical Sketches* printed. Dr. William Long and William Hayley both received emended copies of *Poetical Sketches* (E and S) from Flaxman toward the end of April 1784,<sup>4</sup> and on 15 May of the same year Mrs. Flaxman presented a third copy (F) which had been emended by Blake. This third copy was almost certainly presented by Mrs. Flaxman to Isaac Reed, a close friend of both Long and Hayley. All three men possessed considerable influence in the literary world of the day, and this could well suggest the Flaxman's purpose in bringing their attention to Blake's first literary efforts. Although no evidence exists which would substantiate the presentation of additional copies during the period 1783-84, it would be reasonable to assume that at least a few other copies were presented at the time, probably to the Reverend and Mrs. A. S. Mathew and perhaps to Stothard, Fuseli and Barry.

After the Flaxmans, George Cumberland and Thomas Butts are the earliest of Blake's friends to whom copies of the poems can be traced. Copy D of *Poetical Sketches* (uncorrected) bears George Cumberland's signature on the titlepage. Although the earliest extant letter that was written by Blake to Cumberland is dated 6 December 1795, their friendship evidently began some years before, possibly during the early 1780's.<sup>5</sup> Blake met Thomas Butts during the early 1790's<sup>6</sup> and it may have been during the first years of their long association that Blake presented Butts with his emended copy (B) of the poems.

The copy of *Poetical Sketches* (C) presented to Charles Tulk is distinguished by Blake's personal inscription:

"Charles Tulk Esq<sup>re</sup>

from William Blake"



Charles Augustus Tulk was born in 1786, three years after the printing of the poems. Tulk was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, and returned to London in 1805 aged nineteen to read for the bar. It is probable that he did not become acquainted with Blake before 1810, when together with Flaxman he assisted in founding the London society for publishing Swedenborg's works.<sup>7</sup> Blake also emended the copy of *Poetical Sketches* which he presented to Tulk. An emended copy (T) can also be traced to John Linnell, and it is well known that Blake first met Linnell at Rathbone Place in 1818.<sup>8</sup>

Unpublished entries in his diaries and correspondence disclose that Henry Crabb Robinson owned two copies of *Poetical Sketches*,<sup>9</sup> one of which may have been presented to him by the Flaxmans in 1810 and the second by Blake himself shortly after the two men first met at the dinner party that was given by Mrs. Charles Aders in December 1825. I believe one of these two copies to be that which is now in possession of University College London (copy W), which contains corrections and other MS. addenda a few of which are in Blake's hand. This new knowledge of Crabb Robinson's ownership of two copies of *Poetical Sketches*, the consequent implications regarding their availability to Robinson's circle of friends, and his subsequent presentation of one of these copies to J. J. Garth Wilkinson, who in turn through Henry James, Sr., introduced a number of the poems to American readers for the first time, is the subject of a separate article which should be available shortly.

We also know that Blake showed his first poems to Benjamin Heath Malkin and that with him he evidently discussed several of *Poetical Sketches* in detail. Their meeting and subsequent discussions probably took place in 1805, but possibly earlier.

We can see that the presentations by Blake of just the copies which can be traced to their original owners are spread almost equally over the four decades of his life that followed the printing of the poems. The variation in corrections from copy to copy supports this and also manifests the care with which Blake reread his first poems at varying intervals during his later life. This clearly reverses the traditional view, which is still widely accepted by critics and scholars alike, that Blake abandoned or lost interest in *Poetical Sketches* either before or at any time after they were printed.

For seventy pages of text Blake made only fifteen corrections in all, four of which are recorded here for the first time. I have also recorded two additional corrections, but there is some doubt still remaining as to whether they were made by the author. No single copy contains all of Blake's corrections and only two copies (B and F) contain the same series in kind and number. In copies E and S, for example, which Blake gave to Flaxman in 1783-84, and who in turn presented them to Dr. Long and William Hayley, there occur five and six corrections respectively. In the copy presented by Mrs. Flaxman (F) less than a month following her husband's presentations there occur only four corrections in Blake's hand, but also present in this copy in four other hands are a number of suggestions for corrections together with a few sparse comments on individual poems written in adjacent margins. In the copy (B) which Blake presumably presented to Butts in the early 1790's there also occur only four corrections. In all four of these copies (E, S, F and B) the same four corrections will be found, those made in "To Winter," "Fair Elenor" (p. 9, l. 61), and the two in "Mad Song."

In the copy which Blake presented to Tulk (C) probably after 1810 there are also only four corrections, but one of these appears in the Tulk copy for the first time. An even greater change in Blake's attitude toward specific corrections is evident in the copy which can be traced to John Linnell (T). In the Linnell copy there occur six corrections in the author's hand, but of these four are found for the first time. Indeed, the four corrections that are present in the Linnell copy are not known to exist in any other emended copy. In the University College London copy (W), which I believe to be one of the two copies owned by Henry Crabb Robinson, there occur only four cor-



rections in Blake's hand. As I have already suggested, it is probable that one of Robinson's two copies was presented to him by the Flaxmans in 1810, and in the light of this probability it is interesting that the four corrections that are present in copy W are identical with those which are to be found in the three emended copies which Blake gave to the Flaxmans in 1783-84 to use for presentations.

The most interesting and perplexing copy is that which is now in possession of the Preston Blake Library (Q). This copy contains ten corrections in Blake's hand, three of which are unique. I believe this copy to have been emended by Blake toward the end of his life; it may be Robinson's second copy, given to him by the author as late as 1825 or 1826. Until the original owner of copy Q is traced, however, we shall have to look (with due caution) to the corrections that are present in the Linnell copy (T) for what may be the author's final judgements. However, the corrections which Blake was consistent and most assured in making will be apparent from the list of corrections that is given below, where their frequency of occurrence is recorded.

In the light of the relatively small number of corrections and the nature of the corrections themselves it may be fairly deduced that Blake was pleased with the printed text and also that the text must have been relatively faithful to his original fair copies. For the poet himself I think that we can also say that his first poems evidently continued to hold a significant place in his esteem, probably as representing an integral and important stage in his own development and in the development of his canon.

The findings that are given below have been obtained by my proceeding in the following manner. The eight extant copies of *Poetical Sketches* that Blake emended have been located and then carefully examined, either by myself, whenever possible, or by responsible scholars on my behalf. The handwriting of corrections has also been compared with corresponding examples of Blake's hand present in his surviving manuscripts. If it has not been possible for me to examine a copy then photographs have been requested and the copy has been inspected in facsimile. Questions concerning erasures, inks that have been used and other factors that are not generally clear from a facsimile have then been clarified through correspondence. I should like to acknowledge here my gratitude to those who gave such assistance, particularly Professor D. F. McKenzie, who dealt expertly with the problems presented by copy F in possession of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

The following is a list of the eight extant copies of *Poetical Sketches* which have been emended by Blake. The ordering of these copies follows that of Sir Geoffrey Keynes in his "Census of Copies" published in *Blake Studies* (1949).

- B Thomas Butts copy. British Museum [Ashley No. 2366].
- C Charles Augustus Tulk copy. H. E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California [57432].
- E William Long copy. (Owner has asked to remain anonymous).<sup>10</sup>
- F Mrs. Anna Flaxman copy. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Q Graham Robertson copy. Preston Blake Library, City of Westminster Public Reference Library, London.
- S William Hayley copy. H. E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California [Dev. 80 30].
- T John Linnell copy. Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Alverthorpe Gallery, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania.
- W University College London copy. University College Library, London.



## BLAKE'S EMENDATIONS

Capital letters following individual corrections refer to the copies cited above in which the correction will be found. Page numbers refer to the 1783 text, line numbers correspond with those of the editions of Erdman, *Poetry and Prose* (1965) and Keynes, *Complete Writings* (1966). The descriptions of corrections given below are intended to be of a general nature, and it is to be allowed that the same correction will vary in detail from copy to copy with regard to the manner in which it has been accomplished. I have listed a few corrections present in copies F and W as being Blake's, as I am convinced of their authenticity. However, it is only correct to state that with regard to the authenticity of these corrections in copies F and W, Sir Geoffrey Keynes remains "unconvinced" (letter to the author, 31 August 1967).

1. "To Winter," p. 4, l. 11: the word "in" has been deleted by pen from "and in his hand."  
B, C, E, F, Q, S, T, W total: 8
2. "To the Evening Star," p. 5, l. 2: the word "whilst" has been altered by pen to "while."  
Q total: 1
3. "Fair Elenor," p. 7, l. 6: the letter "s" in "cheeks" has been scraped away or deleted by pen.  
C, E, Q, S total: 4
4. "Fair Elenor," p. 9, l. 61: "I am" has been scraped away or partially scraped away and "behold" has been hand-lettered by pen in the text in imitation of the type.  
B, E, F, Q, S, W total: 6
5. "Song," ("Love and harmony combine"), p. 12, l. 16: the word "her" has been altered by pen to "his," or deleted and "his" has been written in above the line.  
C, Q total: 2
6. "Mad Song," p. 15, l. 4: the lefthand portion of the letter "u" of "unfold" has been scraped away and a dot added over the remainder altering the word to "infold."  
B, E, F, Q, S, W total: 6
7. "Mad Song," p. 15, l. 7: the word "beds" has been deleted by several fine strokes of the pen and the word "birds" has been very neatly penned immediately above the deletion.  
B, C, E, F, Q, S, W total: 7
8. "An Imitation of Spencer," p. 24, l. 14: the letter "s" in "others" has been deleted by several fine strokes of the pen.  
T total: 1
9. "An Imitation of Spencer," p. 24, l. 15: the letter "c" of the word "cares" has been altered by a single stroke of the pen to "e" changing the word to "eares."  
Q, T total: 2

10. "An Imitation of Spencer," p. 25, l. 44: "O warrior, maid invincible" has been altered by pen to read "O warrior maid, invincible." The comma following "warrior" has been deleted by pen and a comma has been penned in following "maid."

Q

total: 1

11. "Blind-Man's Buff," p. 28, ll. 64-65: the punctuation has been altered by pen from

"Who on the blinded man impose.  
Stand in his stead as long a-gone"

to

"Who on the blinded man impose,  
Stand in his stead; as long a-gone"

The alteration of the full stop to a comma and the insertion of a semi-colon following "stand" have been made very tidily in order to appear like printed type.

Q

total: 1

12. "King Edward the Third," p. 29, sc. i: in the italic description of the scene, the words "before / it" have been struck out by pen.

S

total: 1

13. "King Edward the Third," p. 44, sc. iii, l. 236: the word "her" has been deleted by pen and "his" has been hand-lettered in imitation of the type in the adjacent margin.

T

total: 1

14. "King Edward the Third," p. 46, sc. iii, l. 292: the word "them" has been deleted by pen and the word "him" has been hand-lettered with pen in imitation of the type near the deletion.

T

total: 1

15. "Contemplation," p. 64, ll. 37-39: in the line "... he followed me up and down in the house when I grew up; he was my school-fellow ..." a colon has been penned in between the words "house" and "when" and the semi-colon between the words "up" and "he" has been deleted by pen. The emended line reads "... he followed me up and down in the house: when I grew up he was my school-fellow ..."

T

total: 1

#### QUESTIONABLE EMENDATIONS

1. "To Spring," p. 2, l. 14: it would appear that the word "soft" in "Thy soft kisses" has been deleted by pen, but this could either be a perforation that has become discoloured or a genuine correction which has become discoloured. This correction, if genuine, is unique.

T

total: 1

2. "Fair Elenor," p. 9, l. 61: the "y" in the word "thy" has been partially scraped



away, the paper being rubbed through immediately below; the rub mark is soiled. This may be a manifestation of Blake's dissatisfaction with this line, viz., "I am" in the line altered in other copies to "behold."

C

total: 1

3. "Mad Song," p. 15, l. 7: the word "beds" has been deleted by pen and "birds" has been hand-printed by pen above the deletion. Some question still remains as to whether Blake made this correction.

T

total: 1

4. "An Imitation of Spencer," p. 24, l. 15: the letter "c" of the word "cares" appears to have been altered by a single stroke of the pen to "e" changing the word to "eares." The very small pen stroke that is involved here appears to have been smudged out.

W

total: 1

#### PROLEGOMENON

I should like to note here what remains to be accomplished if a definitive text of *Poetical Sketches* is to be established. There are at least fourteen copies of the poems which are known to be extant but which it is assumed that they do not contain any corrections by Blake. All of these copies must be carefully inspected again in the unlikely event that they do contain undiscovered corrections by the author or any other contemporary MS notes or markings which could be of interest. I have tried to accomplish these inspections whenever possible, but the location of several "uncorrected" copies is unknown, at least to me. May I suggest that if anyone knows of the present location of an original copy, regardless of how obvious that location may appear to be but given that it differs from the location given in Keynes' census of 1949, would he please inform me so that arrangements for its inspection and the recording of findings can be made. This information will also greatly assist in bringing Sir Geoffrey Keynes' "Census of Copies" of 1949 up to date.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Blake Studies* (London, 1949), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>*Nollekens and his Times* (London, 1828), II, 457; reprinted in Bentley, *Blake Records* (Oxford, 1969), p. 457.

<sup>3</sup>Three copies of *Poetical Sketches* (G, H and N) in their open unbound state were found by John Linnell in March 1890 in the house of Samuel Palmer; see *Blake Studies*, p. 36, notes to copy G.

<sup>4</sup>Refer to Flaxman's letter to Hayley of 26 April 1784 as given in *Blake Records* and see Bentley's note (p. 27, n. 3). Flaxman's presentations in April 1784 could indicate that *Poetical Sketches* were printed very late in 1783, and perhaps not even returned from the printer until after the first of the year. Of course it would have taken Blake time to bind and then to carefully emend even a few copies in the midst of more pressing commercial tasks.

<sup>5</sup>Geoffrey Keynes, "Some Uncollected Authors XLIV: George Cumberland 1754-1848," *The Book Collector*, 19 (Spring 1970), 31-65.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, ed. Ruthven Todd (London, 1942), p. 96.



<sup>7</sup>DNB LVII, 303-04.

<sup>8</sup>Blake Records, pp. 256 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Refer especially to entries and corresponding letters from 16 April 1848 to 24 May 1848; Henry Crabb Robinson MS. Diary, vol. XXI, "December 2, 1846-January 19, 1850," Dr. Williams' Library, London.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Blake Records, p. 27, n. 4.