

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

N O T E

Fifty Additions to Blake Bibliography: Further Data for the Study of His Reputation in the Nineteenth Century

Suzanne R. Hoover

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 5, Issue 3, Winter, 1971-72, pp. 167-172



SUZANNE R. HOOVER: SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

Fifty Additions to Blake Bibliography:
Further Data for the Study of His Reputation
in the Nineteenth Century

is still innocent and unformed. If he were fully to understand his own nature, the smith's words, "I trust the blood that runs in your veins, and the spirit of your fathers, will guide your actions . . ." would be interpreted as a call to peace, not to war, to imitate his father rather than to avenge him, but the smith also calls him to use the sword, and Donald's hand is already resting on it. In a few years, therefore, he will be a complete "man of blood" in the ignoble sense, his energies fully devoted to destruction. Following the smith's misdirection, indeed, he will end by murdering the smith's own wife--the nurse whose mercy and care had originally preserved him from the effects of war and whose gestures in Blake's design are still inviting him to a more visionary and merciful view of humanity.

Study of Burt's book suggests, in other words, that Blake found in the story of "Donald the Hammerer" an echo of his interpretation of *Macbeth* (as also of his own smith-figure, Los) and a fitting emblem of the misapplications of energy in his own industrialized and war-obsessed civilization. Just as the Spirit and the Bride of the Arlington Court picture were seen calling humanity to a fuller exercise of energy and imagination than that offered by self-imprisonment in a world limited by generation and death, so the inner lineaments of the male and female of the design suggest a better sphere for the energetic man; those of the male indicating a world which would benefit from works other than those of weapons of war, those of the female indicating the larger world of imaginative vision which he might enjoy as an artist.

In his letter to me Dr. Corson also points out that Scott returned to Donald in his *Tales of a Grandfather* (ch.xxxix); but this, as he points out, was after Blake's death. It follows, of course, from the date of Burt's fifth edition that Blake's design was executed in or after 1818; and it is by no means impossible that the line of thought which gave rise to it also played its part in the gestation of the Arlington Court picture, which is customarily dated about 1821.

Bibliographies, like other books, may be made for many reasons. But whatever may have moved the compiler to his labors, the bibliography of a single author provides, among other things, the raw materials for the study of that author's reputation. Thus, the historical account of Blake's reputation began officially in 1921 with Sir Geoffrey Keynes's splendid, pioneering *Bibliography of William Blake*. Wide-ranging and filled with new material as it was, the *Bibliography* may be seen now, not surprisingly, to have been fairly incomplete. For example, its census of Blake's Illuminated Books was expanded by Keynes himself in a later work,¹ and its list of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century biographical and critical items has since been multiplied several times over. And yet, Keynes was able, through his numerous--and, one would say, strategic--discoveries, to reveal both a breadth of interest and a lack of interest in Blake during the nineteenth century that had not previously been suspected.

The manner of publication of Keynes's bibliography is itself a paragraph in the history of Blake's reputation. This useful volume was not published in a regular edition. It was, instead, printed for New York's Grolier Club in a "sumptuous"² edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies. Of these, fourteen were given to Keynes to distribute among the great libraries of England and Scotland; the remaining copies were offered to Club members at the price of seventy-five dollars. Thus, the *Bibliography* was accessible, outside the Club, only to more or less determined scholars: a limitation due, surely--even if only in part--to the fact that interest in Blake was at a rather low ebb in the second decade of this century.

But that was about to change. Within a few years of the *Bibliography* (approaching the centenary of Blake's death), several very important books on Blake were published; in the fifty years since, appreciation of Blake has grown to an almost alarming degree--especially in the last ten years. With so many people newly attuned to Blake's original and prophetic voice, we have at last become properly curious about the way in which Blake was regarded--and disregarded--in the past. Partly to answer this need, the bibliographical study of Blake was resumed in the 1950's by G. E. Bentley, Jr. and Martin K. Nuri. Their *Blake Bibliography* was published in 1964 in a regular edition by a university press.³ It aspired to exhaustiveness in every area it dealt with except that of commentary on Blake after 1863 (i.e., after the publication of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*). By thus aspiring, and particularly by making some further strategic discoveries of early commentary on Blake, the new bibliography made a detailed history of

his reputation feasible for the first time. And in fact, it has provided the basis for at least two extended studies of that fascinating subject.⁴

Perhaps a word should be said here about the efforts, past, present, and future, of Blake bibliographers to be exhaustive. Individual items in the present list, or another list, may vary widely in importance, but there is virtually no item that is unimportant, especially when viewed as part of the history of Blake's reception by succeeding generations. For example, the smallest review of Gilchrist's biography of Blake modifies, however slightly, our general view of the public response to it. Or, several minor items may assume a collective importance, like the articles below by Sir Sidney Colvin that mention Blake only briefly but which, brought together, suggest a sympathetic preoccupation with Blake on the part of one of the most influential art critics of the late Victorian period. But happily, there are important items in the present list, as well as minor ones. Special mention might be made of the catalogues and handbooks of both the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition of 1857 (see items 8 and 9 below), and the International Exhibition of 1862 (see items 11 and 13). In spite of Gilchrist's mention of the Blakes at the Manchester exhibition,⁵ it has been implied in our time that Blake's work was never publicly exhibited between 1812 and 1876.⁶

1796

- 1 Anon. "Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana . . . by Captain J. G. Stedman." *British Critic*, 8 (Nov. 1796), 539.

The reviewer finds fault with some of the plates engraved by Blake, without mentioning his name. For a detailed account of this review by the present writer, see the *Blake Newsletter*, 1 (June 1967), 7-8.

1830

- 2 Anon. "The Lives of the most eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. By Allan Cunningham. Vol. II." *Gentleman's Magazine*, 100 (1830), 141-43.

Review of Cunningham that dismisses Blake as "an amiable enthusiast, on the wrong side of the line of demarcation as it respected his sanity" (p. 142). The "Ghost of a Flea" anecdote follows.

- 3 Howitt, Mary. In Alaric Alfred Watts, *Alaric Watts*. 2 vols. London, 1884.

Mary Howitt comments on some works by Blake in a letter of February, 1830 (II, 6-7).

1833

- 4 Anon. "Art. II.--Works of Mrs. Child." *North American Review*, 37 (1833), 138-64.

Sentimental anecdotes of Blake quoted from "the life of Mrs. Blake" in *Biographies of Good Wives* (1832-1833), one of the works under review. The anecdotes are taken from Cunningham.

1834

- 5 [Lister, T. H.] "Art. III.--Lives of the most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. By Allan Cunningham." *Edinburgh Review*, 59 (April 1834), 48-73.

Interesting Blake reference on p. 64 omitted by Bentley and Nurmi in their entry for this article (item #633). Author now identified in the *Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals*.

1848

- 6 Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Journal Gulistan 1848" [Houghton Library Ms. #108].

"I cannot remember J.(ones) [sic] Very without being reminded of Wordsworth's remark on William Blake, 'There is something in the madness of this man that interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron and Walter Scott'" (p. 136). The *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, from which this remark appears to be quoted, was published in 1869. Emerson and Robinson became acquainted in 1848. See items 16 and 17 below.

1850

- 7 Scott, William Bell. *Memoir of David Scott, R.S.A.* Edinburgh, 1850.

From David Scott's notes: "Blake touched the infinite in expression or signification, without distraction from lower aims, and in a kind of Christian purity. He is very abstract in style or meaning, but very defective in execution" (p. 238). As the epigraph to his last chapter (p. 334), W. B. Scott quotes Blake's dedication "To the Queen" of his illustrations to Blair's *Grave* (1808). This poem was requoted by George Walter Thornbury at the end of his chapter on David Scott in *British Artists from Hogarth to Turner* (London, 1861).

1857

- 8 Anon. *Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom collected at Manchester in 1857*. London, 1857.

Two Blakes listed under "Drawings in Water-Colours": "130. *Oberon and Titania on a Lily*, lent by Wm. Russell, Esq.; 130a. *Vision of Queen Catherine*, lent by C. W. Dilke, Esq."

- 9 Anon. *A Handbook to the Water Colours, Drawings, and Engravings, in the [Manchester] Art Treasures Exhibition*. London, 1857.

The *Handbook* is "a reprint of critical notices originally published in 'The Manchester Guardian.'" Blake is paired with R. Dadd "as examples of painters in whom a disordered brain rather aided than impeded the workings of . . . fancy" (pp. 12-13).

1859?

- 10 Ruskin, John. Letter (unpublished) to Miss [Maria] Denman [no date] in Flaxman's copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

A note of thanks for having been permitted to borrow the volume, with observations on Blake's feeling for color. Maria Denman, Flaxman's sister-in-law, died on 23 December 1859 at the age of eighty, which gives us the latest possible date for the letter.

1862

- 11 Anon. *International Exhibition of 1862. Official Catalogue of the Fine Arts Department* [corrected, 1862].

Blake's paintings were listed as "221. Christ in the Lap of Truth, and Between his Earthly Parents . . . R. M. Milnes, Esq.; 965. Joseph Ordering Simeon to be bound . . . J. D. Coleridge, Esq.; 966. Joseph Making himself Known to his brethren . . . J. D. Coleridge, Esq.; 967. Joseph's Brethren Bowing Before Him . . . J. D. Coleridge, Esq.; 968. Canterbury Pilgrimage . . . W. Stirling, Esq." The first of these, a tempera, was listed as an oil painting. The next three were watercolors, and the last was a tempera listed with the watercolors.

- 12 P.[algrave], F.[rancis] T.[urner]. "The British School of Water-Colour Painting." *International Exhibition of 1862. Official Catalogue of the Fine Arts Department* [Corrected, 1862], pp. 46-47.

A considerable part of this short article is taken up by a comparison of Blake with Stothard, whose "Canterbury Pilgrimage" was also exhibited.

- 13 Palgrave, Francis Turner. *Handbook to the Fine Arts Collections in the International Exhibition of 1862*. London, 1862.

Interesting remarks on Blake and Stothard, pp. 65-66. See the preceding item.

- 14 Anon. "International Exhibition. The English Water-colour Pictures." *Athenaeum*, 17 May 1862, p. 663.

Negligible mention of Blake in one cryptic (misprinted?) sentence: "Blake's transcendental fancies are freely seen." This review was reprinted in Robert Kempt, *What Do You Think of the Exhibition?* (London, 1862).

- 15 Anon. "International Exhibition, 1862: Pictures of the British School." *Art Journal*, 1 (July 1862), 149-52.

A comparison, favorable to Stothard, of his "Canterbury Pilgrimage" with that of Blake (p. 151).

- 16 Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Journal WAR 1862" [Houghton Library Ms. #77].

Remarks by Blake (pp. 244-46), apparently quoted from H. C. Robinson. See item 6 above.

1863

- 17 Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Journal FOR 1863" [Houghton Library Ms. #79].

More Blake remarks, apparently quoted from Robinson, and two Proverbs of Hell from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (p. 284).

- 18 Anon. "The Life of William Blake." *London Review*, 14 November 1863, pp. 519-20.

Review of Gilchrist's biography. This item and the one following are evidently the first published reviews of the *Life*.

- 19 Anon. "William Blake." *Saturday Review*, 14 November 1863, pp. 650-51.

Review of Gilchrist.

1864

- 20 Anon. "On Books." *British Quarterly Review*, 77 (1864), 245.

One of the earliest reviews of Gilchrist (1 January), which can be quoted here in its entirety: "The life of an eccentric man of genius, poet and artist, full of anecdotes concerning artists and literary people, and written in the spirit of hero-worship."

- 21 Anon. "Retrospect of Literature, Art, and Science, in 1863." *Annual Register* [for 1863], pp. 345-78.

Short review of Gilchrist's *Life*, "an addition to biographical literature of some importance" (p. 352).

- 22 Anon. "Notes on Books, Etc." *Notes and Queries*, 5 (April 1864), 312.

Very favorable review of Gilchrist, of just over two hundred words.

- 23 Eastlake, Lady Elizabeth. In Anna Brownell Jameson, *The History of Our Lord*, continued and completed by Lady Eastlake. London, 1864.

This very appreciative passage on Blake's *Job* series (I, 229-31) written by Lady Eastlake, was called to my attention by Professor D. A. Robertson, Jr.

1866

- 24 Tyrwhitt, R. St. John. "Ancilla Domini: Thoughts on Christian Art. [Part] II. --Symbolism and the Grotesque." *Contemporary Review*, 2 (1866), 59-79.

Blake discussed (pp. 67, 78-79) as master of "the sublime or terrible grotesque" by disciple of Ruskin.

1867

- 25 Anon. "Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience" *Saturday Review*, 5 January 1867, pp. 24-26.

Review of R. H. Shepherd's Pickering edition of the *Songs* (1866).

- 26 Colvin, Sidney. "English Painters and Painting in 1867." *Fortnightly Review*, 2 (1867), 464-76.

Comparison between Blake and Stothard (p. 472), very favorable to Blake. See item 30 below.

1868

- 27 [Green, J. R.] "William Blake." *Saturday Review*, 1 February 1868, pp. 148-49.

Review of Swinburne's *William Blake* (1868). Author identified in *The Swinburne Letters*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959), I, 289.

- 28 Page, H. A. [pseudonym of Alexander Hay Japp]. "The Old Morality and the New." *Contemporary Review*, August 1868, pp. 597-620, and September 1868, pp. 51-79.

On pp. 76-78 of the second article Blake is compared with Whitman and Swedenborg.

c. 1868

- 29 Whitman, Walt. *Faint Clews & Indirections*. Ed. Clarence Ghodes and Rollo G. Silver. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1949.

A one-paragraph comparison of himself to Blake, apparently prompted by the lengthy comparison by Swinburne in his *William Blake*. According to the editors, this miscellaneous jotting "is contemporary with the appearance of Swinburne's book" (p. 53).

There is a passing reference to "the half-mad vision of William Blake" in *Good-Bye My Fancy* (1891). (See *Prose Works 1892*, ed. Floyd Stovall, [II, 670], in *Collected Writings of Walt Whitman* [New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961-].)

1873

- 30 Colvin, Sidney. "From Rigaud to Reynolds: Characteristics of French and English Painting in the 18th Century. XIII. --George Romney (continued)." *Portfolio* (1873), pp. 34-40.

Interesting description of Blake (p. 39) as the only successful painter in the eighteenth century of "the sublime and the terrible." In the next article in the series, on Fuseli (*Portfolio* [1873], pp. 50-56), that artist is compared with Blake (p. 50).

In Colvin's *Memories & Notes of Persons & Places, 1852-1912* (London, 1921) there is an account of Colvin's visit to Trelawny (1792-1881) in February 1881. Trelawny "declared his great admiration for William Blake . . ." and then stood to recite "London" (pp. 250-51).

- 31 Anon. "Art." *Atlantic Monthly*, 31 (March 1873), 370-73.

An article on varied topics, including a review of Sidney Colvin's *Children in Italian and English Design* (1772). Blake is the central figure of this review.

1874

- 32 Rossetti, W. M. "News and Notes." *Academy*, 6 June 1874, p. 645.

Report of the discovery of Blake's original illustrations for Young's *Night Thoughts*.

1876

- 33 Rossetti, W. M. "The Blake Catalogue." *Academy*, 15 April 1876, pp. 364-65.

Corrects some of W. B. Scott's statements in the catalogue of the Blake exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club.

- 34 Scott, William B. "The Blake Catalogue." *Academy*, 22 April 1876, p. 385.

Scott replies to Rossetti's criticisms of the previous week.

- 35 Anon. "William Blake's Works." *Art Journal*, 15 (April 1876), 127.

Review-notice of the Blake exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club: "This collection is the largest and most varied we have ever seen. . . ." The review concludes with this note: "At the *conversazione* held by the Graphic Society in University College on the 8th, there was also exhibited a goodly collection of Blake's works; but, to the honour of the members of the Burlington be it said, the great proportion of the pictures came from their club."

- 36 Symonds, John Addington. *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*. Ed. Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters. 3 vols. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967-69.

Ecstatic reference, apparently to the Blakes at the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition (II, 417 [May 1876]). Also, there is an interesting allusion to Blake's illustration "Help! Help!" from *For the Sexes: the Gates of Paradise* (II, 590 [1879]; III, 504 [1890]).

1877

- 37 Anon. "Etchings from Blake." *Spectator*, 50 (29 December 1877), 1660-61.

Review of William Bell Scott's renderings of ten of Blake's paintings and drawings.

1881

- 38 Gray, J. M. "The Life of William Blake; with Selections from his Poems and other Writings. . . . A New and Enlarged Edition." *Academy*, 19 March 1881, pp. 212-14.

Review of the second edition of Gilchrist (1880). See item 42 below.

- 39 Anon. "Gilchrist's Life of William Blake." *London Quarterly Review*, 56 (1881), 249-55.

Appreciative review, interesting for its remarks about the availability, in the 'seventies, of the first edition of Gilchrist.

- 40 Anon. "The New Edition of Gilchrist's Blake."

Atlantic Monthly, 47 (1881), 717-19.

Review.

- 41 Rossetti, W. M. "The Wives of the Poets. --III." *Atlantic Monthly*, 47 (1881), 382-91.

Blake's wife and marriage considered (pp. 389-91).

- 42 [Gray, J. M.] "David Scott, R. S. A." *Blackwood's Magazine*, 130 (1881), 589-611.

An article that eulogizes Scott and compares him to Blake and Dürer.

1882

- 43 Anon. "The New Edition of Gilchrist's Blake." *Century*, March 1882, p. 788.

Review.

1886

- 44 Melville, Herman. *The Letters of Herman Melville*. Ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1960.

Two letters about James Thomson ["B.V."] and Blake (pp. 282-83).

Before he wrote these letters, Melville had been compared to Blake at least twice. See review of *Clarel*, *New-York Daily Tribune*, 16 June 1876; and W. Clark Russell, "Sea Stories," *Contemporary Review*, 46 (1884), 343-63. On p. 357 of Russell's article *Moby Dick* is compared to "a drawing by William Blake . . . madly fantastic in places, full of extraordinary thoughts, yet gloriously coherent."

In Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), there is the following note: "New York, June 4 [1870], M[elville] acquires Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*" (II, 712).

- 45 Anon. *Critic*, 6 (1886), 91.

An indignant note accusing Mr. Alfred H. Combe of having plagiarized a "design for the interior decoration of a family tomb" in the *Decorator and Furnisher* for July 1886 from Blake's design for *The Grave* entitled "Death's Door."

1890

- 46 Carman, Bliss. "The Country of Har." *Athenaeum*, 15 February 1890, p. 213.

Poem celebrating centenary of *Songs of*

Innocence. Called to my attention by Professor Morton D. Paley.

- 47 Anon. "The Blake Drawings in the Quaritch Collection." *Critic*, 13 (1890), 110.

Descriptive article.

There are more *Critic* notes and reviews in the 'nineties. Perhaps the most interesting of these is a review-notice of an exhibition of drawings and sketches by Blake, Turner, and Gainsborough at Keppel's. "The Blake drawings, which are the most important, belong to Dr. Charles E. West of Brooklyn . . ." (12 [1892], 188). The remaining items are as follows: 15 (1891), 85 and 116; 16 (1891), 60; 20 (1893), 86; 21 (1894), 4.

1893

- 48 Anon. "William Blake." *Nation*, 57 (16 November 1893), 376-77.

Review of *William Blake: His Life, Character, and Genius*, by Alfred T. Story (1893).

- 49 Anon. "Fine Arts. The Works of William Blake. By E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats." *Athenaeum*, 30 December 1893, pp. 920-21.

Review of the Quaritch edition (1893).

1905

- 50 Raleigh, Sir Walter [Alexander]. *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*. 2 vols. Ed. Lady Raleigh. London, 1926.

Of the nine letters that contain Blake references, seven were written to John Sampson in connection with Raleigh's preface to Sampson's Oxford edition of Blake's *Lyrical Poems* (1905). All the important letters were written in 1905.

Notes

¹William Blake's *Illuminated Books: A Census*, compiled by Geoffrey Keynes and Edwin Wolf 2nd (New York: Grolier Club, 1953).

²Keynes's own word. See his account of the making of the bibliography in "Religio Bibliographici," *Library*, 8 (1953), 64-76.

³G. E. Bentley, Jr. and Martin K. Nurmi, *A Blake Bibliography: Annotated Lists of Works, Studies, and Blakeana* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1964).

⁴I.e., "William Blake in the Wilderness: The Early History of His Reputation," unpublished doctoral dissertation by the present writer, Columbia Univ., 1966; Deborah Dorfman, *Blake in the Nineteenth Century: His Reputation as a Poet from Gilchrist to Yeats* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969).

⁵Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake* (London 1863), I, 3. It might be said that the Blakes at the International Exhibition also are mentioned by "Gilchrist," but this is a more complicated matter. As Gilchrist died in 1861, he had nothing to say about the International Exhibition of 1862, nor was notice of it added to the biography proper by those who completed the manuscript left unfinished at his death. However, W. M. Rossetti, in the "Descriptive Catalogue" which formed part of the supplementary material that made up the second volume of the *Life* as published, notes the presence of works by Blake at the International Exhibition. All of the items in Rossetti's Catalogue that had been sent to the two exhibitions (seven works in all--see items 8 and 11 below) bear notes to that effect. The second edition of Gilchrist in 1880 introduced into the biography itself brief notices of the display of four paintings at the International Exhibition (*Life*, I [1880], 57, 274).

⁶Nothing is listed in Keynes or in Bentley and Nurmi having to do with the Manchester Exhibition or the International Exhibition. Bentley and Nurmi state that the so-called Blake Revival, begun by Gilchrist, "introduced Blake to a mass audience for the very first time, both as an artist and as a poet" (*Blake Bibliography*, p. 15). Although Blake's works at these two exhibitions were not much noticed or sympathized with, it is only fair to say that he *had* been introduced to a "mass audience" as an artist before 1863. Indeed, it was a much larger audience than Gilchrist's was to be. An article on the exhibitions and Blake by the present writer will appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Blake Newsletter*.

1 (near right) Frontispiece of Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man*, 3rd ed. (London, 1794), engraved by Blake after a design by Fuseli. The Greek inscription, written in capital letters, transliterates GNOTHI SEAUTON ("Know thyself"). From the Library of Congress, Rosenwald Collection.

2 (far right) Fuseli's pen and ink design for the frontispiece of Lavater's *Aphorisms*. Photograph courtesy of Ernest Seligmann.