Blake has had a difficult publishing history. Delany twice initiated serial versions, but in each case circumstances intervened that have left us with truncated documents. Delany also wanted to publish Blake as a book, but that hope was not realized. No manuscripts or proofs appear to have survived. As a consequence, the only authoritative source documents are two serial versions, one incomplete, the other problematic in several ways. These are the twenty-six-chapter version that appeared in the Anglo-African Magazine (AAM) in 1859–1860, and the seventy-four-chapter version that came out in the Weekly Anglo-African (WAA) in 1861–1862.

AAM opened its first number (January 1859) with three chapters from near the end of Part I of Blake, offering these as a foretaste of the rest of the work, which was promised to follow in subsequent issues. These three chapters were numbered as Chapters 28–30, but in the second serialization, after Delany added another chapter, they became Chapters 29–31 (I use Arabic numerals here for ease of reference). As it happened, only Chapters 1–23 of the promised work were subsequently serialized in AAM. Delany stopped publication with the July 1859 issue.

AAM was put out by the enterprising black publisher Thomas Hamilton (1822–1865). Financial problems forced Hamilton to cease publishing AAM with the March 1860 issue. Undeterred by the failure of the magazine, Hamilton reconstituted it as a four-page weekly newspaper, the Weekly Anglo-African, with his brother, Robert, as editor. The first issue was published on August 3, 1861. Blake began to appear in WAA as the lead item in the issue of November 23, 1861 (no. 17), and it continued to appear in that privileged position without interruption in weekly installments of several chapters each, the number of chapters printed in each issue varying with the paper’s space constraints. The first seven chapters of Blake appeared in the issue of November 23, 1861, and subsequent installments appeared in each of the next twenty-one issues. Chapter 74 appeared in the April 26, 1862, issue (no. 39).

Unfortunately, the most complete surviving set of WAA stops with that April 26 issue, when Blake had reached a total of seventy-four chapters. Both Hamilton and Delany had previously indicated that the complete work comprised some eighty chapters (about six hundred manuscript
The narrative indeed appears to be incomplete, as the text breaks off just as the plot has reached a critical moment. Because a loose copy of the June 7, 1862, issue of *WAA* (no. 45) survives, we know that publication of the newspaper continued without interruption between April 26 and June 7 (issues 40–44). The June 7 issue has no chapters from *Blake*, nor do any of the later surviving issues of the newspaper. All efforts to find one or more of the five missing issues have failed, so we do not know how many further chapters were printed, if any. Most com-

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**CHAPTER II**

**COLONEL FRANKS AT HOME.**

On the return of Col. Stephen Franks to his home at Natchez, he met there Mrs. Arabella, the wife of Judge Ballard, an eminent jurist of one of the Northern States. She had arrived but a day before him, on a visit to some relatives, of whom Mrs. Franks was one. The conversation, as is customary on the meeting of Americans residing in such distant latitudes, readily turned on the general policy of the country.

Mrs. Ballard possessed the highest intelligence, and Mrs. Maria Franks was among the most accomplished of Southern ladies.

"Tell me, Madam Ballard, how will the North go in the present issue?" enquired Franks.

"Give yourself no concern about that, Colonel," replied Mrs. Ballard, "you will find the North true to the country."

"What you consider true, may be false—that is, it might be true to you, and false to us," continued he.

"You do not understand me, Colo ingestion, and that too with many apparent reasons; but for some cause, the preference for Baltimore prevailed.

Subsequently to the adjustment of their affairs by the most complete arrangement for refitting the vessel, Col. Franks took leave of the party for his home in the distant State of Mississippi.

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Facsimile of the beginning of Delany's *Blake*, as it appeared in the *Anglo-African Magazine* issue of February 1859
Editor's Note

Commentators believe that the final chapters have been lost, but a few have speculated that Delany deliberately left *Blake* incomplete.

Only one book version of *Blake* has ever been published: the Beacon Press edition (Boston 1970), edited by Floyd J. Miller. The intent of Miller's edition was to reproduce the *WA A* text, but unfortunately, it is a very unreliable printing. In addition, no serious effort was made to compare the chapters that were printed in both *AAM* and *WA A* in order to determine the most authoritative readings. Both *AAM* and *WA A* have printing errors.

Facsimile of Chapter I of Delany's *Blake*, as it appeared in the *Weekly Anglo-African* issue of November 23, 1861
Editor’s Note

as well as alternative readings that require judgment and editorial decision. The introduction and contextual notes for the Beacon Press edition are often helpful, but they fall far short of what a reader of the book, whether a general reader or a scholar, needs.

The present edition intends to improve readers’ access to this important work. It offers for the first time a complete and accurate transcription of Delany’s work as it appeared in the revised WAA version, correcting that text where correction is called for, and it supplies more extensive notes and introductory material.

To explain this edition’s editorial approach, two facsimiles of the first chapter of Blake—the printing in AAM and the reprinting in WAA—are reproduced above. An exploration of the differences exposed by this comparison highlights the editorial approach that I have followed in this edition.

First, we note that in the third sentence, AAM prints “appeared,” while WAA prints “seemed.” In fact, this represents the only deliberate substantive difference between the two texts printed as Chapter 1. But this small change hints at what a thorough collation of the two early printings conclusively demonstrates: that Delany undertook a wholesale revision of his book for the WAA printing.

Verbal changes between AAM and WAA are frequent. Some are small, like this one, but many others are much more significant. The most significant was the addition of a new chapter, “Studying Head Work,” numbered as Chapter 28 in WAA. That the chapter was new to the work is shown by the discrepancy between how the chapters are numbered in AAM and in WAA (Chapters 28–30 in AAM are numbered 29–31 in WAA). The fact that Chapter 28 was a late addition is corroborated by the clear narrative continuity between the chapters that precede and follow it (27 and 29 in WAA).

WAA is thus the substantive version of Blake that we present here. But while it is certainly the authoritative text, WAA is a problematic document because, as the facsimile shows, it was not as well printed as AAM. The missing “t” in “intelligence” (line 7) can stand for a feature of the WAA printing that is ubiquitous, as several other poorly inked letters in this paragraph also show. Here one does not encounter a reading problem as such because the intended words are clear. But serious reading problems regularly arise throughout the book because of these printing deficiencies.

As a consequence, wherever possible—which is to say, in Chapters 1–27 and 29–31—the text of WAA has to be checked against the text of AAM,
Editor’s Note

which often exposes the errors in WAA. Consider the only other substantive difference between AAM and WAA in their first paragraphs: AAM prints the name “Royer,” where WAA prints (incorrectly) “Rayer.” In this case the correct spelling can easily be determined. But misprints of the same kind abound in WAA. Because it is not always clear which variant is to be preferred, editorial judgments have to be made. (Incidentally, the Royer/Rayer variance strongly suggests that WAA was printed from the revised original manuscript, now lost.)

The two facsimiles also reveal a third general class of textual problems: orthographic inconsistencies within the same printing. In both AAM and WAA, the first paragraph prints “Colonel Stephen Franks,” but in the final paragraph, Franks’s title is abbreviated as “Col.” Regularizing these inconsistencies, as we do in this edition (in this case, spelling out “Colonel”), often poses no problem. Several names and words are spelled differently in different places in both AAM and WAA, so editorial decisions have to be made about which variant to use.

Making these decisions can be consequential, and in the case of two classes of inconsistent spellings, very consequential indeed. The first involves the representation of dialect. Delany deliberately represented dialect through use of nonstandard spellings, reflecting a culture shaped by oral discourse. In revising his work for WAA, Delany—perhaps in collaboration with his publisher—modified the orthography so that the dialects would be slightly easier for readers to understand. For example, the following are some of the differences between AAM and WAA in Chapter XVII: heahn AAM, hear WAA; heah AAM, hear WAA; ghin AAM, g’in WAA; foh AAM, for WAA; sahvin AAM, sarvin WAA; yehs AAM, years WAA; deh AAM, der WAA. In this edition I have preserved the more accessible WAA orthography.

The second class of inconsistent spellings involves British and American variants. British spellings predominate in both AAM and WAA—for example, “centre” rather than “center” and “enquire” instead of “inquire.” But as in the case of “despatch” or “dispatch,” “realise” or “realize,” and a few other words, orthographic choices are often inconsistent, and I think it’s likely that these differences reflect the presence of different typesetters rather than authorial intention. Whatever the source, Blake’s two texts deploy an American typography that is decisively inflected with “Anglo” linguistic forms. I have chosen not to regularize these usages.
But this edition does regularize orthography in certain cases. Consider the word “State” in the last paragraph of Chapter 1, in the phrase “the State of Mississippi.” In contemporary usage, “state” would be lowercase. Regularizing such forms is unproblematic, and the current edition does so in order to facilitate reading.

But even in such cases, uncertainties often arise. This happens because Delany’s style is so distinctive and even idiosyncratic. Normalizing for contemporary readers inevitably airbrushes Delany’s prose, however slightly. Consequently, while this edition silently corrects numerous printing errors of various kinds and regularizes certain orthographic forms (“Colonel” not “Col.,” “state” not “State,” italicizing where AAM and WAA use single quotes), a textual note is supplied whenever the case seems significant for retaining the rich flavor of Delany’s book.

Delany’s notes to Blake are placed at the foot of the relevant page. The editor’s historical and critical notes are located at the back of the book.