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Young's Night Thoughts (London: R. Edwards,  
1797): A New Unillustrated State

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warned of its highly poisonous nature, and, in addition, he wished to prevent anyone else claiming credit for the discovery," Harley, pp. 75-76. Ralph Mayer, whose *The Artist's Handbook*, Third Edition, The Viking Press, New York, 1970, is invaluable in many ways, is slightly untrustworthy on the history of pigments, during the period with which we are concerned, as are the authors of another necessary book, Rutherford J. Gettens & George L. Stout, *Painting Materials A Short Encyclopaedia*, Dover, New York, 1966, but both mention the more widespread use of copper aceto-arsenite, Emerald Green, probably first produced commercially in Schweinfurt in 1914, as a popular insecticide, Paris Green, which was in use, to my personal knowledge, into the 1940s, and it still retains an important place in von Oettingen, *op. cit.*, p. 242, as well as, still a pigment, in the newspapers recording the misfortunes of children eating the flaking paint in old houses.

One thing that is certain is that Prussian Blue has nothing whatever to do with the Zyklon-B used at Auschwitz or the cyanide-tablets formerly employed in certain American states. There is no possible excuse for giving a good color a bad name, Junkers, Berlin, Prussian, and condemning it with no trial or reason, as Robert M. Ryan has done in *Blake Newsletter*, 7 (Spring 1974), 87-89. [If I can digress for a moment, I would like to say that whenever I have a brilliant idea, I note it down and then spend a week or two in playing the Devil's Advocate and trying to tear it to pieces. If it stands up to my vicious attacks, I assume that, even if I am wrong, it is worth exposing to the blasts of my peers. A plenitude of references *is* too persuasive, and, even though the theory is false, can lead others astray.]

Now, having stated my tentative idea that the "poisonous blue" was merely the nitric acid with which Blake bit his copperplates, and having done my best, thanks to Dr. Harley, to show the innocence of Prussian Blue, I feel that I should list the various blues, with some note of their toxicity, which were available to William Blake. In doing this I draw not only upon Dr. Harley's book but also upon personal correspondence with her. I should remark here that Woad is kept for a third section of these notes. It had a more symbolical than actual pigmentary meaning by the end of the 18th Century.

[Todd's typescript leaves off here.]

**YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS  
(LONDON: R. EDWARDS, 1797):  
A NEW UNILLUSTRATED STATE**

By G. E. Bentley, Jr.

**W**illiam Blake's five hundred thirty-seven watercolor drawings and forty-three folio engravings for the edition of Young's *Night Thoughts* which Richard Edwards published in 1797 were the largest commercial undertaking on which he ever engaged, but surprisingly little is known of it. No review has ever been discovered, only one periodical announcement is known,<sup>1</sup> and the publisher evidently went out of business within a year or so of its publication. Any light in this obscurity is welcome.

The work is generally known today in two illustrated States:

- 1) With the forty-three engravings uncolored--though in a few copies (such as that in Bodley) one or a few of the plates may have been accidentally omitted from the text-pages on which they were supposed to be printed--these uncolored copies are not uncommon;
- 2) With the engravings colored, at least some of them by Blake and his wife--some twenty-one copies of these are traced in *Blake Books* (1977), 642-646, 956-957.

A new unillustrated State of the work has recently been noticed:

- 3) Without any of the normally integral engravings.

Note that the engravings were normally printed on the same leaves as the text, surrounding the text. Consequently there is no question of the unillustrated copy having been separated from its illustrations during its subsequent history. The engravings were never present at all. And fairly clearly this was an original mode of issue, though no other copy in this unillustrated State has yet been traced.

The unillustrated copy may be described as follows:

**BINDING:** Bound in original pale green (card)boards, now much faded, covered with green paper in the same shade, with a leather label on the spine reading "YOUNG'S / NIGHTS." There is no clear ownership mark or date in it, but a modern printed slip inserted reads "3530 / 994"<sup>2</sup>; the recto of the first flyleaf reads "[2.298 *del*] 2. 323" (presumably a shelf-mark); the top left and bottom right corners of the inner front board read in pencil "J / E" (?for James Edwards, Richard's brother); the bottom right corner of the back inner board has, upsidedown, "5/-" and, right side up, "9 / 70 / eoo" (presumably a code for the price at which a dealer bought it in September 1970). The first and last free flyleaves are watermarked 1794 / J WHATMAN and are conjugate with the front and back paste-downs, indicating that they were probably bound about the time the work was printed, since the binding uses the same paper for fly-leaves and paste-downs as is used in the text.

HISTORY: Sold by Maggs Bros. in 1979 to G. E. B.

SIZE: 32.5 x 41.6 cm. (the uncut size is 33.0 x 42.2 cm.); edges trimmed but not gilt.

WATERMARKS: 1794 / J WHATMAN vertically at the outer margin (where it would be in a quarto) on the first and last free fly-leaves (there is only one at each end) plus pp. [i-ii], 5-6, 9-10, 15-16, 23-24, 33-34, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48, 53-54, 59-60, 61-62, 71-72, 75-76, 83-84, 93-94. This gives a pattern of watermarks impossible in a quarto but possible in a folio using half-sheets. In the following list, italic numbers have the watermark:

i-iv		5-8	9-12	13-16
23-26		31-34	35-38	39-42
53-56	57-60	61-64	71-74	75-78
83-86		91-94	95-96	

N.B. In the unillustrated copy there are many more leaves with watermarks (16) than in my illustrated copy (7): pp. 29-30, 43-44, 51-52, 55-56, 59-60, 79-80, 89-90: in the former, two-thirds of the half-sheets are watermarked, in the latter one-third.

Because the sheets are unsigned and the work was ordinarily taken apart after the text was printed in order to print the illustrations on the same leaves, it has always been difficult to ascertain the format of the book. The present evidence indicates fairly clearly that it was printed as a folio on half-sheets.<sup>3</sup>

In the illustrated State of the work, all the engravings are printed on text-leaves except the titlepages for each of the four Nights. These titlepages have no letterpress text at all, their versos are blank, and they would therefore have appeared as entirely blank leaves in the unillustrated State. The unillustrated State has the same letterpress text on the same paper as in the illustrated State, with the following exceptions:

State with Plates	State without Plates
has pp. [ix--x] with titlepage for <i>Night the First</i>	lacks pp. [ix--x]
has pp. [17-18] with titlepage for <i>Night the Second</i>	lacks pp. [17-18]
has pp. [43-44] with titlepage for <i>NIGHT THE THIRD</i>	lacks pp. [43-44]
has pp. [65-66] with frontispiece for Night IV	lacks pp. [65-66]
has the leaf of Explanation of the Engravings	lacks Explanation

Fairly clearly, the half-sheets of text of this unillustrated copy were not sent with the others to have the engravings added, presumably by Blake at his own press.

Note incidentally that no attempt was made to accommodate the text to the space left for it in the engravings, or vice versa, for pp. 16, 63, and 95 at the ends of Nights I, III, and IV have text which ends well short of the space left for it in the designs.

It is possible that this unillustrated State of the 1797 *Night Thoughts* is not rare, as Maggs Brothers and other dealers have claimed. On the other hand, neither I nor Sir Geoffrey Keynes,

Professor Robert N. Essick, D. V. Erdman, and John E. Grant have any evidence about other copies of this unillustrated State, and it is at least possible that this copy of it is unique. The "J / E" on the boards may suggest that it belonged to Richard Edwards' brother James, who was a book-seller and book-collector of some importance, though it did not appear in the sales of his library by Christie on 25-28 April 1804 and by Evans on 5-8, 10-11 April 1815.

As is the case with most Blake discoveries, this raises as many questions as it answers. If this copy of the unillustrated State is unique, was it printed for Richard Edwards, or was it an accident? If there are other such copies, were they part of a commercial issue? If so, the book might have been issued by pre-arrangement in three States:

- 1) Unillustrated, for the benefit of Richard Edwards, who had paid the paper and letterpress printing expenses;
- 2) Illustrated but uncolored, for the joint benefit of Richard Edwards and William Blake;
- 3) Illustrated and colored, for the benefit of Blake, who had apparently borne all but about £21 of the expenses of designs, engravings, and perhaps plate printing.

At any rate, we have now one more fact about the edition of Young's *Night Thoughts* which Richard Edwards published in 1797. Unfortunately it does not answer any question very clearly.

<sup>1</sup> *The Monthly Epitome and Catalogue of New Publications*, I (Jan. 1797), 79: "Young's *Night Thoughts*, with Etchings and Engravings, in Four Parts, Atlas sized 4to. to Subscribers 51.5s. to Non-subscribers 61.6s. (Part I. in a few days.) Edwards, Bond-street." It cannot have been published before June, for some plates are dated 1 June 1797. Notice that Blake is not named.

The integral "Advertisement" to the book is dated 22 December 1796. If the notice in *The Monthly Epitome* is to be trusted, the letterpress was probably printed not long thereafter. The letterpress text may therefore have been finished six months before the last of the plates.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot identify this symbol.

<sup>3</sup> Roger R. Easson & Robert N. Essick, *William Blake: Book Illustrator: A Bibliography and Catalogue of the Commercial Engravings*, I (1972), 13, argue that the work was imposed as a quarto on whole sheets ("the absence of conjugacy can only be explained by the necessity of imposing the plates on quarter-sheets"), whereas the new evidence indicates that it was imposed as a folio on half-sheets.