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**BLAKE**

N E W S

**Gardner on the Songs**

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## ROSENWALD COLLECTION AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

As reported in an earlier issue, with the death of Lessing Rosenwald the bulk of his significant Blake collection has passed to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress (for a listing of the collection and its distribution between the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art see *Blake Newsletter* 35). The holdings were made available to the public in November; however, owing to the unanticipated heavy demand for the Blake materials, a written application and screening procedure has recently been instated.

The servicing of the Rosenwald Collection occasioned some unusual problems for the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, where any person with one piece of identification is entitled to reader privileges. According to Peter VanWingen, head of the Reference and Reader Service Section of the Division, there was always a great reader interest in Blake, but with the advent of the Rosenwald material, "the demand has really been quite frightening." Mr. VanWingen notes that while as a public library the Division has had a history of very seldom turning down requests, they are troubled by the number of enthusiastic casual readers who come with requests such as "'I don't care what Blake I see just so I see what it looks like.'" Severely limited exhibition space precludes any regular display of their originals.

The Division has now instituted a form for "Request to Use Original Blake Materials." Persons wishing permission to consult the holdings should request a copy of the form or submit a letter stating "the items requested, length of time items will be consulted, scope of project for which materials are requested (including publication plans, if any), summary of work done to date, Blake collections previously consulted, and reasons why originals are required as opposed to facsimiles." The Division is particularly interested in the latter point as many of the Trianon facsimiles are based on Rosenwald originals--the facsimiles, they feel, are "about as close as a person can possibly get to the originals." Under the new guidelines, according to Mr. VanWingen, "if a person needs an original Blake they have to prove that they need an original Blake--and a statement to the fact that they've been going around the country looking at original Blakes isn't enough." Nonetheless, such requests are more frequently "modified" or "streamlined" than rejected outright, and a kind ear still exists for the scholar who turns up on the doorstep: "we're being very careful about how we handle readers."

By the end of July the large file of negatives (mostly black and white) which grew up around the Rosenwald holdings will be transferred to the Division, which will handle requests for copies. The cost is currently \$5 per reproduction of existing negatives. The Division (which does not have any Blake specialist on its staff) looks forward to serving the increasing number of Blake scholars they will surely be seeing--correspondence regarding the

Rosenwald Collection should be directed to Mr. VanWingen at the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540. NELSON HILTON, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AWARD TO BENTLEY

SCHENECTADY, N.Y.--G. E. Bentley, Jr., professor of English at the University of Toronto, has been awarded the John H. Jenkins Award for Bibliography, a prize bestowed annually by Union College, Schenectady. Bentley won the award for *Blake Books* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977). Bentley's work was chosen from among bibliographies published in the U. S. and abroad in 1977. Union College President Dr. John S. Morris presented the \$500 award to Bentley Saturday, 10 May. Award ceremonies were held at the College in conjunction with a two-day Blake Symposium sponsored by Union and Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs.

Serving with chairman Carl A. Niemeyer, professor emeritus of English at Union, on the award committee are William B. Todd of the University of Texas, editor of the Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America; Walker Cowen, director of the University Press of Virginia; Ernest C. Mossner, professor emeritus of English at the University of Texas; and W. Loretta Walker, associate professor and head of information services at Schaffer Library, Union College.

## GARDNER ON THE SONGS

On 30 July 1980 Dr. Stanley Gardner of Colchester, England, addressed a group of students and teachers at York University's Atkinson College on the subject of a fresh look at the designs of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Dr. Gardner's approach has been colored by his discovery of a documented link between Blake's family and the school for destitute children in Blake's parish of St. James, Westminster. Gardner believes critics have been misrepresenting Blake's attitude to organized charity and formal education in the mid-1700's, and that there are new things to be said about the illustrations, and the relationship between *Innocence and Experience*. Gardner's talk was based on his forthcoming book, *Blake's Innocence and Experience Retraced*.

Gardner's approach to the illustrations focuses on the communal nature of adults and children in the *Innocence* designs, and sees the figure of the Nurse (as on the title page, or "Nurses Song") as positive. Some designs he believes must be based on Blake's own experience of seeing the charity children and the nurses holidaying on Wimbledon Common. In *Experience* designs, Gardner notes the visual themes of absence of family, and rejection of children by adults. In his remarks, Dr. Gardner mentioned many interesting details of the necessary and benevolent practices of charity schools, carrying out the work of Captain Coram with foundlings. JANET WARNER, YORK UNIVERSITY.