

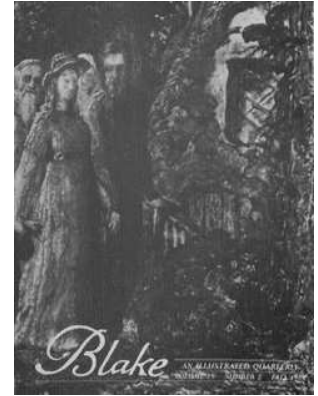
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
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M I N U T E
P A R T I C U L A R

The Crying of Lot 318; or, Young's Night
Thoughts Colored Once More

Karen Mulhallen

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Gallery, and it will be paralleled by the separation of the illuminated and other graphic works in the British Museum Print Room from the typographical and manuscript works in the British Library when the latter eventually finds its new quarters. It is a touching irony that Blake labored all his life to unite the arts of the eye and the ear, the vision and the word, but that this union is posthumously divorced in the disposition of the great collections of his works.

The Crying of Lot 318; or, Young's *Night Thoughts* Colored Once More

Karen Mulhallen

Sotheby's (London, Monday, 17 December 1984, 2.30 p.m.)

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Blake (William)—Young (Edward) *The Complaint and the Consolation, or Night Thoughts*, 43 pictorial borders designed and engraved by William Blake and coloured by hand, slightly soiled, three borders slightly offset, a few short tears in margin of explanation leaf and one slightly affecting one border repaired, red straight-grained morocco gilt, uncut, folio, R. Noble for R. Edwards, 1797

The Clarendon edition of Blake's *Night Thoughts*¹ lists and describes 23 colored copies of the engraved work, and refers to one more, the Moss-Bentley copy G² recently rediscovered by Thomas V. Lange in a closet of the Lutheran Church of America (*Blake Quarterly* 59, pp. 134–36). To these 24, in 1983, James McCord added the copy housed for over 50 years, but not recorded, in the library of Washington University, St. Louis.³ While doing research in London in the winter of 1984–85, I came upon yet another unrecorded copy of the *Night Thoughts*, bringing to 26 the number of recorded copies. Following the format of the Clarendon census, I would list this most recent copy as

III-2 (Previously unknown) Grey Death.

Description: Handsome, early twentieth century "Arts & Crafts Style" binding in red straight-grained morocco gilt with five raised bands running horizontally across the spine terminating in stamped fruit and leaf motifs. Binding stamp WHS (for W.H. Smith and Sons) on lower border of inner back cover. Spine stamped in gold "Night Thoughts By Edward Young. Designs By W^m Blake 1797." Pale pink and blue marbled endpapers. All edges uncut. Watermarked in lower right hand corner on ten sheets, pp. iii–iv, 3–4, 5–6, 29–30, 31–32, 49–50, 55–56, 69–70, 85–86, and 91–92, as well as on the "Explanation of the Engravings" sheet which

appears after page 95, "J Whatman 1794."

The prints are in good condition, except for one repair slightly affecting the border of pp. 89–90, a few short tears in the margin of the explanation leaf, some slight soiling, and three borders a little offset. As is usual, in a few instances the plate marks extend slightly beyond the foredge of the leaf, but only five borders have the engraved surface touching the page edge.

Provenance: Inscribed on the verso of the title page in pencil in the upper left hand corner is "Baron Dimsdale". According to Sotheby's, this copy was acquired by Charles John, fifth Baron Dimsdale, together with copies of *The Book of Urizen* and *Songs of Innocence*.⁴ Sold by Sotheby's (London, 17 December 1984) to Sims, Reed & Fogg, £13,750.

Pencil Markings: There are four sets of pencil markings in this copy: Front of fly-title "2.P 7"; verso of title page, upper left, "Baron Dimsdale"; page 50 "1.5—" or "1. 7.", or upside down "—6.1", difficult to make out but likely bookseller's price code; verso of Explanation leaf, near gutter in lower right hand corner, "EB".

Some other distinctive features: Page 23 has a faint L-shaped line in ink in the bottom margin, as if the plate accidentally skipped in the press, thereby creating a line with the same configuration as one of the etched/engraved lines in the plate.

Pages 23, 26, 27 and 33 use the color red for drapery, clothing and wine, and in some instances the color seems blotchy, as if, as the color dried, the pigment has come out of suspension in patches.

Pages 37 and 70 stand out from all the others in that the foliage and ground are in various shades of green, appearing as a surprisingly naturalistic use of color, especially in comparison to other of the engravings.

The title page to *Night III* displays Narcissa, illustrated in the Sotheby's catalogue in color, as remarkably naked, the slight drapery on the front of her body emphasizing this.

Page 75, Phoebus, shows quite clearly the coloring technique. The whole page was first washed in yellow, grey was then added to the clouds and hair, then a deeper yellow was added to the sun and to the body of Phoebus. Finally, his body while still wet was wiped and a pink wash applied. In coloring this plate seems to have a close connection with one copy in the Rosenwald Collection (Copy I-4), where the horses, the sun, and Phoebus are all golden yellow. In I-4, the gold is set against an iridescent sky of reds, blues, purples and yellows. While it would be difficult to make a case for one as a model for another, the similarity of some of the coloring and the coloring steps as revealed in the Dimsdale copy together suggest a close dating for the two copies.

Issues raised by the Dimsdale Copy (III-2): The Clar-

endon census codes copies according to the color of Death's gown on the title page to Night I, the most common color being white (Type I), the next green (Type II), with a single copy, in the Houghton Library at Harvard, being grey (Type III). Grey is the key color for the entire Dimsdale copy. Not only is Death charmingly portrayed in a grey gown, but many other figures are also robed in grey. The angels, for example, from pages 40–42, are depicted with grey wings, whereas in several other copies these are multi-colored with an iridescent effect. And on page 80, the red-faced Thunder God with gold rays emanating from his head is dressed by dramatic contrast in grey clothes while the sea beneath is grey and green.

In III-2 special attention has also been paid to skin, hair and eyes. Death's skin is quite tanned and many figures show very careful highlighting and pale blue veining. Hair is often cap- or wig-like, and the eyes are usually brightly demarcated.

Pages 53–54, 60 and 62 of the Clarendon census discuss the "non-standard" details of Type III, "the colouring of the beard of Time in 11E (NT36)⁵ being brown, rather than white or grey as in all other copies." In the Dimsdale copy, however, Time's beard is white, although his topknot by contrast is black. The Clarendon editors conjecture that the Harvard copy was "quite likely to have been done by some possessor of an uncoloured copy for his own enjoyment, or as a forgery" (p. 60). They conclude that III-1 "Stands apart from all others. In such specific details as the colour of Death's garments and the colours of the garments and hair of other figures as well as in its general character, this copy is peculiar. Of all copies it seems most likely to have been done without close reference to any copy that might have had Blake's authorization" (p. 62).

The discovery of the Dimsdale copy necessitates a re-examination of the Clarendon speculations about Type III, and the similarity of III-2 to Type I copies reconfirms the need to be sceptical about fixity of coloring patterns and their dating.

¹William Blake's *Designs for Edward Young's "Night Thoughts,"* edited by John E. Grant, Edward J. Rose, Michael J. Tolley, coordinating editor David V. Erdman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 62–72.

²Clarendon *Night Thoughts*, p. 61 and n. 81, p. 92; G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 636–46.

³James McCord, "An Unrecorded Colored Copy of Young's *Night Thoughts*," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 18 (Fall 1984), 116–18. McCord's tally of copies includes Bentley copy T, the Cook copy, which he argues is not included in the Clarendon census. He is incorrect, as this is Clarendon copy I-15.

⁴The Dimsdale copies of the illuminated works are described

in *Blake Books*, pp. 170, 180, 384, and 410. The Sotheby's catalogue states that the *Night Thoughts* was "probably acquired . . . together with copies of *The Book of Urizen* and *Songs of Innocence*." No evidence is given for this assertion, although Michael Heseltine of Sotheby's confirmed the copy's provenance and wrote the catalogue entry. However, *Blake Books* notes that it was the first Baron Dimsdale (1712–1800) who acquired copies of the illuminated books, whereas the Sotheby's catalogue states that it was the fifth Baron Dimsdale who acquired all three.

⁵11E is in the masculine state.

An Unpublished Poem by S. Foster Damon

Josephine McQuail

On a particularly gloomy winter day in 1984 I attempted to cheer myself up by a visit to my friend John Guillot's bookstore in Charlottesville, Virginia. John, now the proprietor of Magnum Opus in Charlottesville, usually had some tempting volume in the antiquarian section of Heartwood Books, which he managed then. That day he came up with a first edition of S. Foster Damon's *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, in which, he said, there was an amusing poem inscribed by the author. Sure enough, the flyleaf traced a mysterious exchange involving this book, which fell eventually into its author's hands. The book bears several bookplates, including one of "Richard and Caroline Hogue," and Damon predicated the poem:

From Caroline Hogue
to S. Foster Damon
and back again
April 29, 1941

The poem itself reveals S. Foster Damon's sense of humor, which is quite refreshing! He imagined that

Hamlet once met William Blake
They chatted, for politeness' sake.
Said Hamlet: "Do you see that
cloud?"
Said William: "Yes! It is a crowd
Of Seraphim shouting 'Glory!
Hail!'"
Said Hamlet: "No. It's like a whale."
And so they parted, each one glad
that the other, and not he, was mad.

The readers of *Blake* will understand why I immediately purchased the book. I am happy to share it with the readers of the *Quarterly*, and I would like to thank Morton Paley for suggesting that I submit the poem to *Blake*, and Catherine Brown, S. Foster Damon's literary executor, for giving permission to print it.