

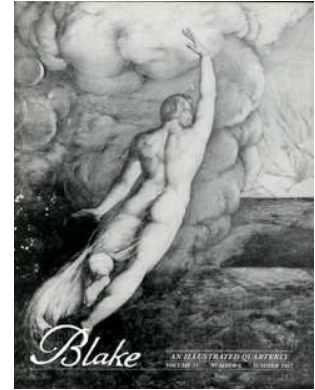
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

R E V I E W

A Catalogue of the Lawrence Lande William Blake  
Collection in the Department of Rare Books and  
Special Collections of the McGill University  
Libraries

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 21, Issue 1, Summer 1987, pp. 33-34





corded in *Zoonomia* received much imaginative reworking by Wordsworth. Indeed, *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets* sent me back again to read *Zoonomia*, where one is certainly struck by the frequency with which Darwin makes reference to patient case histories or to the observation of social behavior, either at first hand or by report. It could be that in dealing with Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular we need the mediation of *Zoonomia* before reaching for our Lacan *Écrits*. Darwin's period is the wonderful world of pre-Freudian psychological explanation. The following incident is classed by Darwin as a minor "disease of volition": "A little boy, who was tired with walking, begged of his papa to carry him. 'Here,' says the reverend doctor, 'ride upon my gold-headed cane;' and the pleased child, putting it between his legs, galloped away with delight, and complained no more of his fatigue" (*Zoonomia*, 1: 434-35). King-Hele is suggestive too in pointing out, with reference to "Kubla Khan," an incident Darwin had read about in the "Lausanne Transactions" concerning a "somnambulist" who "sometimes opened his eyes for a short time to examine, where he was, or where his ink pot stood, and then shut them again, dipping his pen into the pot every now and then, and writing on, but never opening his eyes afterwards, although he wrote on from line to line regularly, and corrected some errors of the pen, or in spelling . . ." (*Zoonomia*, 1: 228-29).

The issues raised by feminist literary criticism over the last ten years also seem to have left King-Hele untouched, but his account of the provincially claustrophobic tutor-pupil relationship of Erasmus Darwin and the poet Anna Seward might repay further investigation. At the moment it is difficult to see who has been "writing" the other amidst mutual charges of plagiarism. One would also want to qualify the page and a bit devoted to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley's preface is an elusive testament to emergent, lateral feminine writing and repays close reading: "They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin (I speak not of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him) . . ." King-Hele comments that "The clumsy sentence in brackets suggests that Mary searched for an account of this experiment in Darwin's works, but failed to find anything" (p. 260). I would imagine that most readers today would be prepared to see the parenthetical sentence as deliberately disruptive, casting the primacy of Mary Shelley's "purpose" against the second-hand reportage of Byron and her husband.

I have tried to indicate the types of limitation readers might find on the usefulness of *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets*. Most of the material on Blake is derived from the work of Nelson Hilton and the present writer and, while scrupulously acknowledged, only goes tentatively beyond them. The main problems are

brought about by the ambitious nature of the project, but I don't think King-Hele has anything to worry about. We already have every reason to be grateful to him for almost singlehandedly ensuring that no one could now overlook the importance of Erasmus Darwin's contribution to the thought and writings of the period.

*A Catalogue of the Lawrence Lande William Blake Collection in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the McGill University Libraries. Montreal: McLennan Library, McGill University, 1983. xv + 172 pp. \$50.00 Canadian.*

Reviewed by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

This is a collaborative work, with a foreword by the donor of the nucleus of the collection Lawrence Lande, a preface by the Blake scholar Christopher Heppner, whose "role . . . has been that of writing or verifying the annotation" (p. x), and an introduction by the Rare Books Librarian Elizabeth Lewis, who "organized the cataloguing, most of which was done by Mrs. Rosemary Haddad" (p. x). It is a large, handsome, oblong work<sup>1</sup> in double columns of admirable Baskerville type, generously leaded, with display pages in red and black, on Japan paper with deckled edges, with eight sharp reproductions, twenty-four blank pages within the text, and a "special binding" in an edition limited to five hundred copies signed by the collector, the Director of the McGill Libraries, the cataloguer, the Rare Book Librarian, the book designer, and the annotator. The greatest care devoted to the book seems to have been concentrated, successfully, upon the book's appearance<sup>2</sup> rather than its function as a work of scholarship.

A few of the lacunae here are easy to identify. There is no index, which makes it surprisingly difficult to use, nor is there a list of the reproductions, and the unnumbered reproductions themselves are so enigmatically titled—e.g., "Venus Anadyomene 5.1. B8V4 1805"—as to leave one puzzled about the artist (Thomas Butts), the medium (water color and ink), and where it is described in the book (p. 129). One may well wonder who is in charge here.



The catalogue entries are in standard Library of Congress style (repeated in their entirety for two or more copies of the same work), without italics or reference to Blake scholarship (though the "classification [is] based on *A Blake Bibliography*" of 1964 [pp. xi-xii]) or cross-references within the text, and they are serviceable and unambitious. They serve chiefly as a handlist of the collection.

What then is in the collection? The vast majority consists of secondary works about Blake, reprints of his writings and pictures, some of it is strikingly ephemeral, such as section 7 on "Prospectuses, Book Jackets, Postcards," and some of it has nothing to do with Blake at all (see, e.g., pp. 47, 50-51, 60-61). It is organized as reprints of Blake's writings (pp. 3-35), book illustrations (pp. 39-68), editions of books Blake read or owned (pp. 71-74), catalogues, biographies, criticism, and scholarship (pp. 77-126), separate drawings and engravings (pp. 129-47), manuscripts [none by Blake] (pp. 151-53), miscellanea (pp. 157-59), slides and microfilms (pp. 163-66), and an appendix of books with Blake illustrations elsewhere in the McGill University Libraries (pp. 169-72).

There is, of course, a great deal of Blake scholarship and ephemera here, a testimony to much patient effort and devotion. But the books of scholarship are not very difficult to locate elsewhere, and the ephemera will interest few besides myself.<sup>3</sup> For the Blake student, it is of course convenient to have so much gathered in one place.

One of the chief values of the collection to the scholar is probably in the section of books with Blake's illustrations to the works of others, though even here some fifty of the works are modern reprints. Some of the originals are in duplicate copies, such as Blair's *Grave of 1808* (3 copies), Ritson's *Select Collection of English Songs of 1783* (3 sets), Young's *Night Thoughts of 1797* (2 copies), *Job of ?1874* (2 copies), and some are genuinely uncommon, such as Mora's *Meditaciones Poeticas of 1826*, one of three copies traced in *Blake Books* (1977), and a unique set of Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, originally published in *The Novelist's Magazine* in 1783.<sup>4</sup> The section of original drawings lists four minor but interesting Blake drawings, and the section called "Blake 6 Manuscripts" has no manuscript by Blake at all but does have interesting contemporary manuscripts (unrelated to him) by Fuseli, Joseph Johnson, and others, as well as some by modern scholars such as Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Foster Damon, and Martin Butlin — it must make one feel monumental to have one's correspondence recorded in public institutions during one's lifetime. The most interesting such manuscripts are those of Anne Gilchrist, the biographer's widow. Among the loose prints are rare and important ones of Lavater, Edmund Pitts, proofs of *Job* pls. 17 and 19 — but the cop-

perplates for an unidentified facsimile of *Job*<sup>5</sup> are only referred to glancingly through the proofs pulled from them in 1969.

In sum, this is an extensive reference collection with a few quite unusual items in it. It is useful to have a catalogue of the collection, but the items it records and the manner in which it records them will rarely much concern scholars who are not actually working with the McGill Collections.

But I must conclude by saying that the work of Christopher Heppner here seems to be solid and valuable and that I have repeatedly worked in the Lande Collection with profit and gratitude. The staff is extremely eager to help, and the environment is warm and agreeable. There are great profits to be found at McGill if one is not led to expect too much.

<sup>1</sup>Well, yes, I know, all books are oblong. I mean this one is wider than it is high.

<sup>2</sup>On the other hand, there is a curious variation in the length of the columns on a page, differing by as much as six inches (e.g., p. 170).

<sup>3</sup>See Christopher Heppner, "Notes on Some Items in the Blake Collection at McGill," *Blake Newsletter*, 10 (1977), 100-108.

<sup>4</sup>Vol. 1 was published for T. Kelly in 1818, vol. 2 for C. Cooke probably about 1811. I have a set of the 1811 edition but have not seen a complete set of that of 1818.

<sup>5</sup>See "Blake's *Job* Copperplates," *Library*, 5S., 26 (1976), 234-41.

Robert Gleckner. *Blake and Spenser*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. pp. 384. \$29.50

Reviewed by George Anthony Rosso, Jr.

A larger human brain will be developed by Man when the whole of human life is seen and understood as a single mental form. This single mental form is a drama of creation, struggle, redemption and restoration. . . . the archetype of all prophecy and art, the universal form which art reveals in pieces, and it is also the Word of God. (Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*)

Northrop Frye, the unacknowledged legislator of *Blake and Spenser*, built archetypal literary theory on the idea that a single universal mental form, derived from the Bible, establishes the "ultimate context for all works of literature whatever" ("The Road of Excess," in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Harold Bloom [New York, 1970], 129). Frye elaborated the theory following his book on Blake, when a study of *The Faerie Queene* even-