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The 1821 Edwards Catalogue

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for *Jerusalem* 4 and 33.

⁵Several scholars have commented on the watery shore in plate 14: Wicksteed calls it "a promontory surrounded by gentle water"; Keynes notes the "water's edge"; and Erdman names it a "foaming ocean."

⁶Hall, p. 284. Blake's engraving of a Cumberland design of Cupid and Psyche (in Irene Chayes, "The Presence of Cupid and Psyche," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. Erdman and Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), illus. 14, 118) shows two butterflies resting on a hill that looks like a rainbow. Could this further connect Iris with the butterfly wings that Blake has given her?

⁷Another interpretation could be that Albion is shown as a body, without its soul, carried down to the banks of Lethe by Sleep and Death.

⁸A. S. Roe, "The Thunder of Egypt," *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. A.H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), p. 170. Bryant's *Mythology* (1774) contains a section entitled "Of Egypt and Its Inhabitants . . ." that was probably Blake's early source for Egyptian symbols.

⁹Many scholars have commented upon this quality in Blake's art: W.J.T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 10, where he asserts the "multiple metaphorical complexities"; Bo Lindberg, *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job* (Abö: Abö Akademi, 1973) p. 114, states that what Blake was really using in his images was a "common language of art"; and Wicksteed pronounces Blake's borrowings a "pictorial language."

¹⁰Erdman, p. 293, describes Albion as "miserable in his tomb" and "as stone cold as an effigy on a gothic tomb" (p. 293). It is well known that Blake sketched tomb monuments in Westminster Abbey as a young apprentice engraver. He was also linked to current funerary symbolism through a close friendship with John Flaxman, who conducted a substantial and successful trade in designs for tomb monuments.

¹¹Seemingly unique to Blake (I have found it nowhere else) are the angels turned away from the deceased. Their unusual position certainly lends gravity to Albion's condition.

In Buddhist iconography, Albion's pose is called the "lion-posture," a pose assumed by Buddha when he was about to pass from the world of rebirths or into the state of Parinirvana.

Although this symbolic posture contains none of the other elements of Blake's design, its similarity to the actual pose of Albion is intriguing. Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 355.

Keynes and Wicksteed refer to the angels as "guarding" the figure. Ellis and Yeats state that the human form "lying upon its side . . . is then in . . . [a] region of instinctive or vegetative feeling."

¹²The arch in the Frederigo tomb is an Islamic/Gothic one and contains grape leaves symbolizing Christ's role as the Vine of the Church. It could just as well be a rounded arch and contain cherubs, as in *The Death of The Virgin*. Erdman and Hagstrum both note the "mandorla" wings of Jerusalem.

¹³Erdman identifies the planets on the upper right of plate 14 as Saturn, Venus, Mercury, Earth and the Moon. He presents an interesting theory: the six stars surrounding Jerusalem identify her as the true sun or seventh star. Several scholars have commented upon the portion of the sky within the arch of the rainbow: Erdman "Universe within" Albion (p. 293); Damon the State of Beulah; and Ellis and Yeats, Mundane Shell.

¹⁴The rainbow in emblem literature (i.e., Emblem XXXII, Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient & Moderne*, 1635) follows the Old Testament precedent as a good omen, covenant or reward for suffering. John Gage in "Blake's Newton," "Warburg & Courtald Institute Journal," 34 (November 1971), 376, argues that the rainbow in Blake's work represents materialism (coming from water, not light) because it used the Newtonian order of colors, thus representing a negative or pessimistic element. This does not seem an accurate reading for *Jerusalem*.

¹⁵Wicksteed, p. 140. "The eyes seem to be watching the Vision as though to show it as a dream . . ." This detail in plate 14 varies among the copies of *Jerusalem*.

¹⁶As Mitchell says (p. 6) "the essential point is to note the wealth of implication which Blake can deposit in a design that has no 'illustrative' function . . . an independent symbolic statement."

The 1821 Edwards Catalogue

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One of the most important early printed references to William Blake appeared in the 1821 shop catalogue of Thomas Edwards of Halifax. However, the catalogue is very uncommon and has rarely been seen in this century. It was first—and last—reported in print in an article by T. W. Hanson on the Edwards family in 1912–1913¹; there-after Mr. Hanson forgot where he had seen it, and numbers of scholars searched vainly for it in scores of libraries on four or more continents, particularly since about 1960. Now a copy of the catalogue has been found in the collection of a member of the family, and a few more details can now be provided about it.

Thomas Edwards was a member of a family important for selling antiquarian books, for publishing new books, particularly illustrated ones, and for inventing new and beautiful methods of binding, particularly in painted transparent vellum or Etruscan calf with illuminated fore-edges. The firm was apparently founded by William Edwards in Halifax in the first half of the eighteenth century, and four of his sons carried on the business, Thomas in Halifax until about 1826, and James, John, and Richard with two shops in London from 1785 to 1799. Richard Edwards commissioned William Blake's 537 watercolors for Young's *Night Thoughts* and published the first forty-three engravings of them in the autumn of 1797, before he abruptly left the publishing business midway through 1798. The *Night Thoughts* designs evidently stayed in his possession even when he went briefly to Minorca in 1799 as a servant of the crown, for they bear an inscription on the titlepage of High Elms where he lived for a time on his return to England about 1803. However, the drawings had passed to his brother Thomas in Halifax by 1821, for they were offered in his shop catalogue for that year,² with a description in terms which are not repeated elsewhere:

3 Young's *Night Thoughts*, the Author's original Copy, illustrated with drawings, very spirited designs by Mr. Blake, many of them in the style of Michael Angelo, they occupied nearly two years of the time of this singular and eminent Artist, which renders this Work unique, as well as highly valuable, in 2 vols. Atlas Folio, each leaf surmounted with a border and sumptuously bound in red morocco, gilt leaves, 300 l.

1743

This Work is perhaps unequalled for the boldness of conception, and spirit of execution, exhibited in the masterly designs of Mr. Blake. The Bookbinder from inattention lost the blank leaf, with the Author's signature.

Fortunately T. W. Hanson had quoted this passage accurately, so there is little need to expatiate upon it here.³

What is important is to record other details about the newly rebound volume. Its owner was Mrs. Rosa M. Edwards, whose husband the late Col. Walter P. Edwards, Emeritus Professor of Greek, was a descendant of James Edwards; Professor Edwards seems, however, to have acquired the book by purchase rather than by inheritance. The work is described here through the courtesy of Mrs. Edwards, who generously provided me with a xerox copy of it. It was sold in 1983 to the Bodleian Library.

Unfortunately the title leaf of this copy is missing, so the title can only be reconstructed hypothetically as EDWARDS'S CATALOGUE. I = I *Superb Books of Prints, Atlases, Books printed on Vellum I with Miniatures, and other Superlatively fine Articles.*⁴ I R. Sugden, Printer, Hall-end, Halifax⁵ I [for Thomas Edwards] At No 2. Old Market Halifax, 1821.⁶

Size: 12.4 x 20.2 cm.

Format: Octavo by half-sheets: [?a]² [A]⁴ B-P⁴ A-D⁴ [bis]
Contents: [?Half-title]; [titlepage]; Folio Books of Prints, &c. (pp. [1]-20); [other] Folios (pp. [21]-27); Quarto (pp. [28]-53); Octavo (pp. [54]-84); Duodecimo Et Infra (pp. [85]-117); Magazines and Odd Volumes Octavo (pp. [117]-118) and Duodecimo (p. [119]); advertisements for Whitaker's *Craven* (1811) and *Whalley* "lately published by Thomas Edwards of Halifax", plus colophon (p. [120]); Drawings (pp. [1]-4); Books of Prints (pp. 5-6); Historical Prints (pp. 6-10); Shakespeare (pp. 10-12); Shipping (p. 12); Views (pp. 13-15); Scripture Prints (pp. 15-17); Antiquities (p. 18); Battles (pp. 18-19); After the Antique (p. 19); Portraits (pp. 19-27); and [miscellaneous] Prints (pp. 27-31, p. [32]). In all, there are 2103 lots of books and 901 lots of prints.

Plate: None.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the catalogue is the bindings. One might expect splendid bindings in the catalogue of a famous bookbinder, but the care with which the bindings are described here is unusual even among the Edwards' catalogues, and Thomas Edwards is unlike his brother James in identifying the family styles of binding. Two lots here are said to be "sumptuously bound," three are "richly bound," thirty-one more are "superb" or "splendid,"⁷ and ninety-nine lots (one in twenty-six volumes) are merely "elegant." A number of the "elegantly bound" works are in Etruscan calf (thirty-four lots, fourteen omitting the qualifier "elegantly"), and eighteen of these are further described as "Elegant in Etruscan binding, gilt leaves, with a drawing thereon," while five more lots specify a fore-edge painting but do

not mention Etruscan calf. The Etruscan style of binding, with classical designs burned with acid through the surface patina of the calf, was apparently invented by the Edwards family and largely confined to their Halifax and London binderies, but none of the shop catalogues of James Edwards in 1785, 1787, 1789, 1790, 1794, and 1796 mentions these bindings, though some of the books there were certainly bound thus.

Even more striking is the mention of fore-edge paintings, for though the Edwardses had revived this long-lapsed art, it was apparently quickly imitated, and today it is very difficult to ascertain whether an individual fore-edge painting on an old book was made either for the Edwards family or even in their time—some have been added to eighteenth century books in very recent times. When the fore-edge subject is actually identified, we have information which will enable us to identify positively a work from this catalogue, if it were found today, as being virtually unimpeachably from the Edwards atelier. These valuably identified copies with fore-edge painting are:

- 629 Bewick, *General History of Quadrupeds* (Newcastle, 1807), 8vo, in Etruscan calf, gilt edges (= g.e.) "with a drawing of Blackfriars bridge," £2.12.6
- 630 Bewick, *History of British Birds* (Newcastle, 1809), 8vo, Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing of Blenheim thereon," £2.12.6
- 644 Bewick, *Quadrupeds* (Newcastle, 1807), 8vo, Large Paper, Etruscan binding, g.e., "with a drawing of Chatsworth thereon," £3.10.0
- 818 Gessner, *Death of Abel*, with plates after Stothard ([London:] Heptinstall, 1791), 8vo, Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of Melvin Constable," £2.10.0
- 827 *Ibid* (1797), 8vo, Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of Harewood House," £2.12.6
- 934 Mason "on Self-Knowledge" (1813), 8vo, in Etruscan calf, g.e., "and a drawing thereon of Coomb Lodge on the Thames," £1.16.0
- 973 [Dodsley] *Economy of Human Life* ([London:] Gardiner, 1806), 8vo, "first impressions of Harding's fine plates," in Etruscan binding, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of Coghill Hall," £2.10.0
- 1021 [i.e., 1022] Lady Rachel Russell, *Letters, from the Manuscript in the Library at Wooburn Abbey* (London, 1801), 8vo, in Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of Harewood House," £2.10.0⁸
- 1023 D. Robertson, *Tour to the Isle of Man* (1794), 8vo, in Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a Drawing thereon of Milton Constable in Norfolk," £2.12.6
- 1244 Young, *Night Thoughts* (1798), 8vo, Large Paper, in Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing of the Grounds in Ham Hall, Staffordshire," £2.7.6
- 1899 [i.e., 1299] *Holy Bible* ([London:] Bowyer, 1796), 12mo, red morocco, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of King's College Chapel," £3.3.0
- 1378 *The Book of Common Prayer* ([Edwards] 1791), 12mo, in vellum "with a drawing of Oxford on the leaves," £1.16.0
- 1706 Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Edinburgh, 1810), 12mo, in red morocco, g.e., "with a drawing of Comb Lodge thereon," £1.7.6

- 1865 Rev. F. Skurray, *Bidcome Hill and other Rural Poems* ([London:] W. Miller, 1808), 12mo, in Etruscan calf, g.e., "with a drawing thereon of Brocket Hall, Herts," £1.15.0

Clearly the prices of the twenty-three books with fore-edge paintings were based chiefly upon size; £3.13.6 for a quarto, £2.7.6 to £2.12.0 for an octavo (with one inexplicably at £1.16.0 and a Large Paper copy at £3.10.0), and £1.15.0 to £1.16.0 for a duodecimo. Manifestly the genius of the artist scarcely affected the price.

The catalogue contains a number of publications by the Edwards family, four by Richard Edwards, eleven by Thomas Edwards, and a striking thirty-six by James Edwards, who had gone out of business over twenty years before. In particular, there are five copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the printing of which James Edwards had arranged with Didot in Paris and which the Edwardses published in 1791, and three of them (lots 1378–1380) have fore-edge paintings, while two (lots 1377–1378) are in "vellum bindings," which may well be the painted transparent vellum style of binding which James Edwards patented in 1785—no book is identified in any Edwards catalogue known to me as being in a painted transparent vellum binding.

Many of the lots are colored, extra-illustrated, with proofs, or otherwise "unique." Two works of special incidental interest are:

- 13 *Holy Bible*, 7 vols. ([London:] Macklin, 1800), folio, extra-illustrated "with a great profusion of old and curious prints by Sadeler, Lucas Van Leyden, Martin Schoen, Albert Durer, Visscher, Pintius, Bloemart, Rembrandt, Goltzius, Barraccio, Poilly, Strange, and others; after the finest pictures by Raphael, Caravaggio, Rubens, Pietro di Cortona, Guercino, Poussin; etchings by Bartolozzi, Strange, &c. likewise a fine miniature of the Virgin Mary, in gold and colours, executed by Don Sylvestro about the year 1350. Splendidly bound in russia, gilt leaves, and the insides lined with crimson velvet, *unique*," £200⁹
- 75 Shakespeare, *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (1632), Second Folio, purple morocco, g.e., £12.12.0

There are also three minor Blake items:

- 16 Young, *Night Thoughts* ([London:] R. Noble for R. Edwards, 1797), "Many fine plates by Blake," g.e., half russia, £2.12.6
- 314 R. Blair, *The Grave* "with 12 Etchings after Blake's designs, by Schiavonetti," ([London:] "Bensley" [not Cromek], 1808), boards, £3.3.0
- 217 in the appended prints "Fall of fair Rosamond, 6s. . . . [Painter] Stothard [Engraver] Blake"

All these Blake lots seem somewhat random; the remarkable thing is that there is only *one* copy of Blake's edition of Young's *Night Thoughts*—and no more appear in Thomas Edwards's other catalogues of 1826 and 1828. What happened to them all? Clearly the work was not sold out when Richard Edwards went out of business in 1798—indeed, it is generally assumed that the work was a commercial failure. Who then got the copies Richard Edwards still had in stock when he went out of business?—for the work is not rare today. One might perhaps expect them to have gone to his brother James, whose business in Pall Mall was not far from Richard's

shop in Bond Street, but James too was winding up his business then, and they did not go to James Edwards's successor R.H. Evans—or at least, they do not appear in Evans's catalogues of 1804 and later. And they do not appear, except very casually, in Thomas Edwards's catalogues either. Indeed, I know no contemporary catalogue in which there are more than a couple of copies of the 1797 *Night Thoughts*. Even the discovery of a copy of the long-lost Thomas Edwards shop catalogue of 1821 does not solve this mystery.

The long-lost-to-sight Thomas Edwards shop catalogue of 1821 is an exceedingly impressive work for a provincial bookseller, and it is of considerable importance today for what it tells us of William Blake and of the Edwards bookbindings.

¹ T.W. Hanson, "Edwards of Halifax. Book Sellers, Collectors and Book-Binders," *Halifax Guardian*, Dec. 1912 & Jan. 1913, reprinted in *Papers, Reports, &c. Read before the Halifax Antiquarian Society*, 1912 (Halifax [1913]), pp. 142–200; Hanson deals cursorily with the same material in "Richard Edwards, Publisher," *Times Literary Supplement*, 8 Aug. 1942, p. 396.

² It is possible, I suppose, that Thomas was merely offering the drawings on commission for Richard Edwards, but this seems unlikely, as he offered them again, also in vain, in auctions of his stock in 1826 and 1828.

³ Such commentary may be found in *Blake Records* (1969).

⁴ The title thus far derives from the heading on p. 1, which may apply only to the first section of the catalogue.

⁵ The printer's name derives from the colophon on p. [120].

⁶ Thomas Edwards's address derives from the inscription by Professor Edwards on the flyleaf; as this address is not recorded elsewhere, it must derive from another copy of the 1821 catalogue which Professor Edwards had seen.

⁷ "Splendidly" and "superbly" are evidently used here as synonyms, for lot 13, Macklin's Bible (1800) "Splendidly bound," is "uniform" in binding with lot 14, which is Boydell's Shakespeare (1802) "superbly bound."

⁸ No. 1019 is a Large Paper copy of the same work with an unidentified fore-edge painting (£2.10.0), and this (or another) copy, with a fore-edge of Woburn Abbey and an inscription of 1826 by Thomas Edwards, is now in my own collection.

⁹ Extra-illustrated Macklin Bibles were popular; see E.B. Bentley & G.E. Bentley, Jr., "Bishop Phillpotts Library, The Franke Parker Bequest and Its Extra-Illustrated Bible, 1800," *Book Collector*, 29 (1980), 363–94.

