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M I N U T E
P A R T I C U L A R

An Unrecorded Colored Copy of Young's Night Thoughts

James McCord

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MINUTE PARTICULARS

The Daughters of Albion and the Butts Household

G.E. Bentley, Jr.

Thomas Butts was a munificent patron of William Blake in 1795–1810 and perhaps longer, paying him regular sums for books and pictures to be delivered and filling his walls to overflowing with designs such as "Samson Breaking Bonds" and "The Sons of God Shouting for Joy." Blake used to go regularly on Tuesday evenings to the spacious Butts house in Marlborough Street, round the corner from where he had lived at No. 28 Poland Street in 1785–90, and in 1801–09 he painted miniature portraits of Mrs. Butts, Mr. Butts, and Master Tommy Butts.

We know something of Thomas Butts's profession as clerk in the office of the Commissary General of Musters, of his income, and of his property at his death,¹ but we know little of his household. Some surprising light is thrown on this by the printed census return filled out in manuscript in 1801 for the city of Westminster.² The house of Mr. Butts (at No. 9) on the North side of Great Marlborough Street, five houses from Blenheim Mews (the houses were not numbered in the return), was occupied by a single family of *twenty-two* persons, consisting of three males and "19" females. Among the members of this family, none was occupied in Agriculture, there were three "Persons chiefly employed in Trades, Manufactures, or Handicrafts," and "19" persons, presumably the females, were not employed at all.

The three males pose little problem. One must be Mr. Thomas Butts the clerk in the Muster Master General's office, another may be his son Tommy, then thirteen years old, who was later (from 1805) trained by Blake as an engraver and also employed in his father's office, and the third may be an otherwise unknown son or, more probably, a servant such as a butler, coachman, or bootboy.

But who can all those nineteen females have been? A wife and perhaps a daughter or so we may grant readily enough, and even a few parlormaid, tweenies, and female cooks might be permitted, despite the fact that all the females in the Butts family were said to be unemployed. But this leaves us with at least ten females

still unaccounted for, and perhaps as many as eighteen.

Can Butts have taken in female relations on an heroic scale? Did he provide lodgings for female orphans? Can his wife have had a little boarding school? (Almost next door to him in the 1790s lived Thomas Martyn, who had a house full of boys whom he trained to engrave and color his natural history designs for his extraordinarily beautiful books.) Can Butts, then forty-three years old, have had nineteen children, eighteen of them female? Can he have had a harem—did Butts agree with Blake that, as Crabb Robinson reported of Blake in 1826, "Eine Gemeinschaft der Frauen statt finden sollte"?³

What were all those females doing in his house? I don't know,⁴ but William Blake must have, though he gives no hint of the explanation in his letters to Butts of 1800–03. Such a number of females must have dominated the arrangements of the house. Here are enough women to represent all the Daughters of Albion. Can Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) have been, as it were, addressed to Thomas Butts's household? Was it at his house in Great Marlborough Street that "The Daughters of Albion hear her [*Oothoon's*] woes & echoe back her sighs?"

¹ "Thomas Butts, White Collar Maecenas," *PMLA*, 71 (1956), 1052–66.

² Westminster Public Library Archives, Buckingham Palace Road, London; pressmark D1742.

³ *Blake Records* (1969), 332; Robinson translated this in 1852 as "wives should be in common" (p. 548).

⁴ The figure is unlikely to have been a simple clerical error, for the numbers are repeated in the census-return; 22 in the family, 3 males, 19 females; 3 in the family employed in Trades, 19 unemployed, 22 in all.

An Unrecorded Colored Copy of Young's *Night Thoughts*

James McCord*

In their two-volume study, *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts* (Oxford, 1980), the editors write that "at present twenty-three coloured copies are believed to exist."¹ Their census includes twenty-two copies, the twenty-third being Moss-Bentley G, which is discussed briefly in the "Introduction" and described in footnote 81; it was omitted from the census apparently because it was untraced. Another copy, Bentley T, is not mentioned at all, and it may still be owned,

as G.E. Bentley, Jr. records in *Blake Books*,² by Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Cook. In part to justify their "new census" and "new system of coding copies," the editors write that a "useful system should . . . allow for the addition of new copies, which recent experience suggests will continue to come to light."³ For their edition, Erdman, Grant, Rose, and Tolley were, in fact, able to add four new copies to the list of twenty compiled by Bentley for *Blake Books*; and recently Thomas V. Lange has written of his rediscovery of the Moss-Bentley G copy, describing it in full.⁴ The occasion for this "minute particular" is to share information about a previously unrecorded colored copy that has been housed in the library of Washington University, St. Louis, for over fifty years,⁵ a volume that brings to twenty-five the number of colored copies that are thought to be extant.

Following the format adopted by the editors of the Oxford *Night Thoughts*, the copy would be described as follows:

I-6B or I-7B (Previously unknown) *White Death*

Bound in full red morocco with gilt-tooling around the edges and gilt dentelles by Riviere & Son. Spine stamped in gold: "YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS ILLUSTRATED BY BLAKE 1797." Blue, red, yellow, green, and white marbled pastedowns with facing marbled endpapers. Front cover unhinged. Top edge of papers gilt; side and bottom uncut. Six sheets (pp. v-vi, 29-30, 61-62, 73-74, 81-82, and 91-92) watermarked "J. Whatman 1794." Explanation of the Engravings after p. 95. Grotesque coloring on 6E (p. 10) and 20E (p. 35); slight grotesque coloring on 18E (p. 31). On 11E (p. 17) Death wears a black hood and cloak that covers his head and body. No J C monogram. Pencilled "As Pattern" at bottom left on 37E (p. 86). Four designs are uncolored: 22E (p. 40), 29E (p. 57), 38E (p. 87), and 39E (p. 88).

A letter of 9 April 1920 from Katharine N. Rhoades to W. K. Bixby that apparently accompanied the book when it was sent to Bixby is laid in.

(1) Acquired by Charles Lang Freer (1856-1919), whose executors sent it as a gift on 9 April 1920 to

(2) William K. Bixby. It was probably between 1921 and 1926 that the book was given as part of the William K. Bixby Collection to

(3) Washington University, which attached its bookplate, "Library of Washington University The Gift of W. K. Bixby." A second bookplate, "Library of Washington University The George N. Meisner Rare Book Department," was added when the copy became housed in that department in 1962. Special Vault PR 3782 N5 1797 fol.

Except for heavy foxing on 13E and 14E, and touches of foxing on 15E, 16E, and 17E, the prints are in very good condition. The copy is carefully washed in vivid colors with the colorist(s) using two distinct methods; some prints are finished in soft, light tones with subtle modulations in shading (e.g. 1E, 10E, 18E, 30E, and 31E), while others are worked up in bright contrasting tones for dramatic effect (e.g. 8E, 24E, 25E, 26E, 32E, and 36E). In 11E (which is in the common "masculine" 4th state) a black hood and gown cover the head, entire

left forearm, and body of the figure of Death, the added coloring being almost identical to that of the same print in the Moss-Bentley G copy which is reproduced in Thomas Lange's article.⁶ This unusual addition is recorded as a distinct feature in only three other copies besides Moss-Bentley G: I-8, I-9, and I-11.

So-called "grotesque colouring" in 6E, 18E, and 20E accounts for the other main variation in coloring. What has been described as a "generally muddy effect" in 6E is clear in this copy as a blotchy brown medium applied over light violet watercolor on the lower back and both legs and feet of the figure of Disease, and on the left side only of her sweeping gown. As scholars have described,⁷ the texture and effect of this medium are quite different from those of the "grotesque colouring" in 18E and 20E. In 20E heavy lines of brown-black coloring accent the old pedagogue's brow and forehead, eye, and the side of his nose, with two dashes on his beard. The same dark and rather ominous coloring appears on the aged woman's eyebrows, beneath her eyes, on her throat, and under her chin. By comparison, the touches of brown-black in 18E are much less evident, though they do appear beneath the brow of the "good man," as well as beside his nose, under his chin, and on his throat. That these striking touches are strong in 6E and 20E and comparatively slight in 18E is a circumstance that this copy seems to have in common with only two others: I-3 and I-5.

It is curious that a copy worked up so carefully, characterized by these coloring variations, and complete in every other way would include four uncolored prints. The colorist, of course, may simply have overlooked these designs, but evidence also suggests that they may be substitutes for "lost" colored plates that were originally in the copy. For unlike other prints in this volume, the four uncolored designs on three leaves are tipped in, the bottom margins of each are trimmed, and the inlaid text of E39 is seriously askew to the design. Assuming that these prints were added at a later date, it seems reasonable to hope that colored leaves of 22E, 29E, and 38E and 39E may come to light, and that they might be then reinserted in this volume from which at one time they were separated. Taking all of the distinguishing details and variations into consideration, and using the criteria established by the editors of the Oxford *Night Thoughts*, this copy would fit most comfortably after I-6 or I-7 in the census compiled by Erdman, Grant, Rose, and Tolley.

The main clue to the provenance of the volume is an ink inscription on the plain verso of the marbled front endpaper written by W.K. Bixby shortly after he received it:

This book was sent me by the sister in law of Chas L. Freer and Miss Katharine Rhodes [sic] Frank Hecker Freer's Executors together with another book & a Chinese painting they being requested

by him to send after his death. He was an old and dearly prized friend of mine. He died Sept 25th 1919.

W K Bixby

S Louis 4/15/20

Bixby's references and lack of punctuation here are somewhat confusing, but he probably received the book directly from Anna Hecker Freer (one of several sisters-in-law of Charles Freer) and Katharine N. Rhoades, Freer's secretary, who would have made the request of the two executors of Freer's will: Frank J. Hecker, a lifelong friend and business associate of Freer's, and Charles D. Walcott, Secretary of the Smithsonian. Below this inscription, also in Bixby's hand, is written in pencil:

Wash. Un.
Comps.
W K B

which was Bixby's way of designating those books and manuscripts in his collection that were slated for Washington University with his compliments ("Comps."). The only other notations in the volume are the penciled directive, "As Pattern," on 37E, a variant that appears in only three other copies: I-10, I-11, and I-13; what might be the name of a bookseller or earlier owner—"L [or P] Dawsons"—this signature scrawled upside down in ink on the verso of 43E; and a dealer's price code that reads "x gli sx" and is located on the blank recto of the back marbled endpaper. I have not been able to trace the provenance of this copy further back than Freer, but information might come to light that would help identify eighteenth- and nineteenth-century owners of the book, or associate it with one of the sales catalogue descriptions that has been listed in reference to another copy.

This unrecorded color copy of Young's *Night Thoughts* is the most unusual Blake item in Washington University Special Collections, but there are also several other books with commercial engravings by Blake that are worthy of mention: Robert Blair, *The Grave* (London: for R.H. Cromek, 1808); Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (London: for J. Johnson, 1806); two copies of John Gay, *Fables* (London: for John Stockdale, 1793); C.G. Salzmann, *Gymnastics for Youth* (London: for J. Johnson, 1800); James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens*, volume 3 (London: John Nichols, 1794); and Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life* (London: for J. Johnson, 1791).

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¹ *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts*, edited with commentary by John E. Grant, Edward J. Rose, and

Michael J. Tolley; co-ordinating editor David V. Erdman (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 52-53.

² G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 956-57. For Bentley's description of Young's *Night Thoughts* and full census, see pp. 636-46. See also the earlier studies by W.E. Moss, "The Coloured Copies of Blake's 'Night Thoughts,'" *Blake Newsletter*, 2 (Fall 1968), 19-23, and G.E. Bentley, Jr., "A Census of Coloured Copies of Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797)," *Blake Newsletter*, 2 (Winter 1968-69), 41-45.

³ Grant, Rose, Tolley, and Erdman, p. 61.

⁴ Thomas V. Lange, "A Rediscovered Colored Copy of Young's *Night Thoughts*," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 15 (Winter 1981-82), 134-36.

⁵ This copy is, incidentally, listed in the *National Union Catalog Pre-1956 Imprint*, vol. 679, p. 278.

⁶ Lange, 135.

⁷ There have been at least two sound technical explanations for the unusual coloring in 6E. The editors of the Oxford *Night Thoughts*, pp. 58-59, suggest that "a running wet paint" was applied over dry or nearly dry color. Some scholars have also discussed the possibility of pigment decay.

Two Blakes Reappear and Make Three Martin Butlin

Two Blake drawings listed in my *Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 1981, as untraced since 1949 have now reappeared in the United States. They are my no. 177, "Head of a Bearded Man in Profile, possibly from the Antique" (reproduced as Butlin pl. 214), and no. 592, "Satan between Two Angels (?)" (Butlin pl. 828). My last record for these drawings was that they were bought by the London booksellers Maggs at the Graham Robertson sale at Christie's on 22 July 1949. It now appears that they were in the collection of the late Edward Dickinson of New York State whose widow sold them to Giuliano Ceseri; "Satan between Two Angels (?)" still belongs to him, while the other drawing has passed to his associate Joel L. Fletcher, also of Lafayette, Louisiana.

The exciting news is that when the later drawing was removed from its old mount a further drawing, similar in general composition but with the main figure in reverse, was found on the back. Unfortunately this new discovery does not help the present writer towards any closer identification of the subject, save that it does perhaps reinforce my first thought that the central, Orc-like figure is holding vials rather than the sun and the moon; some force or element seems to be projected from each of these towards the possibly demonic figures in the lower corners of the composition. Besides the parallels given in my catalogue entry there seem to be