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R E V I E W

G. E. Bentley, Jr., *The Blake Collection of Mrs.
Landon K. Thorne*

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were being relieved of something alive and worse. Home? I would have DeMott to dinner, but only to write a review would I trap myself in a room with his taped voice.

In short, what could be deadlier than a taped lecture, except a required live one? What is designed to bring more certain calamity to the classroom and the home? Only reviewers, teachers without consciences, and practical jokers would mess with this stuff. Readings by poets with stirring voices at reasonable prices, yes. The hypnotic spells of jumbo-mumbling lecturers spun on reels of brown tape, nevermore.

Available in the same series with *Blake and Manchild*: Benjamin DeMott, *Hardy and Manchild*, fifty minutes, \$11. Could that be a better buy?

The Blake Collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne. Catalogue by G. E. Bentley, Jr. Introduction by Charles Ryskamp. New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1971. Pp. 65 + 30 plates. \$10 paperback.

Reviewed by Robert N. Essick

Although *The Blake Collection of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne* was issued in conjunction with the exhibition of Mrs. Thorne's collection held at the Pierpont Morgan Library from 19 November 1971 to 22 January 1972, it is not an exhibition catalogue. Rather, Bentley's work is the definitive catalogue of one of the last three great Blake collections in private hands. As such, this handsomely produced volume goes far beyond the commemorative function of the usual exhibition handbook both in the amount of detailed information it provides and in its lasting importance to Blake scholarship.

Bentley's description of Mrs. Thorne's ten illuminated books, five of which are color printed, and her copy of *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* form the heart of the catalogue. The format is more convenient than that used in the Keynes and Wolf *Census* because the information is arranged under marginal headings ("Paper Sizes," "Numbering," "Binding," etc.) rather than lumped together in paragraph-length notes. The bibliographic details provided for each book frequently add to the information in the *Census*. For example, Keynes and Wolf state only the number of pages with a watermark, whereas Bentley lists each page where it occurs. Further, Bentley has paid more attention to

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offsetting, stab holes, and other keys to binding history. This may appear to some as only so much useless trivia, but it can be crucially important to someone investigating the original sequence of plates and whether or not the present arrangement corresponds to Blake's intended ordering of his work. I have not been able to check Bentley's entries against Mrs. Thorne's copies themselves, but I suspect that the enrichment of details has brought with it an increase in accuracy. Only the following comments seem called for.

Page 19 *There Is No Natural Religion*, title-page. Bentley's statement that "in no copy is the author, printer, place, or date supplied" is potentially misleading. This is true of the title-page, under which heading this sentence appears, but it is of course not true of the whole book. As the first reproduction in the catalogue reveals, Blake inscribed in reverse "The Author & Printer W Blake" on the frontispiece to the first series of *There Is No Natural Religion*. Bentley considers the reverse lettering an error, stating that Blake "forgot to etch it reversed to make it print straight" (p. 20) while experimenting with his new technique of relief etching. It seems unlikely that Blake would have made this kind of mistake. Although his new mode of printing no doubt offered some unique difficulties, Blake had been long familiar with intaglio etching and engraving where writing in reverse on the plate, or employing some process for transferring writing from paper to plate in a way that reverses its direction, is no less necessary than in relief work. One should at least consider the possibility that Blake had a purpose for reverse lettering on his first frontispiece, just as he did years later in *Jerusalem*. However, the fact that the inscription is very faintly printed, and in some copies partly colored over, suggests that Bentley may be right, and further that Blake tried to minimize the consequences of his error.

Page 21 watermark. Bentley states that "no copy of *Thel* is watermarked," but the *Census* records three different watermarks in the Morgan proofs (copy a), in copy F, and in copies N and O. In her facsimile edition of *Thel*, Nancy Bogen confirms the *Census* readings.

Page 21 variants. "In pl. 3, the men at the right . . ." should read "In pl. 3, the men at the left . . ."

Page 22 *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, title-page. In his transcriptions of titles, Bentley consistently makes no distinction between vertical and slanted letters, except in this case, where the decorative letters of "Marriage" are transcribed as italics. It is practically impossible to represent accurately an etched title with type, but it seems possible to indicate slanted letters in Blake's titles without getting into too many difficulties. For example, THE | BOOK | of | THEL is a little closer to the original than Bentley's THE | BOOK | of | THEL. "Marriage" presents special problems, and only a reproduction can give a sense of the original.

Page 24 variants. Bentley writes that "ordinarily" the top of the frontispiece to *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is "open sky" and not "colored like the mouth of a cave" as it is in the Thorne copy. In all copies I have examined (A, C, E, G, L, P--6 of the 16 recorded in the *Census*) the top of the cave, and the vegetation hanging from it, appear to have been printed from the copperplate itself. Although in some cases the top of the cave is not emphasized with strong coloring, in no copy examined is it painted over to indicate sky.

Page 28 *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, title-page. Bentley records a period after the "W" of "W Blake" on the title-pages to *Innocence* and to *Experience* in the Thorne copy. These periods are not found in any of the eight copies of *Innocence & Experience* I have examined (three originals, the rest through reproductions). It seems unlikely that these periods ever appeared on the copperplate, but Bentley does not record them as a variant unique to the Thorne copy. Like Blake's etched letters, his punctuation in the illuminated books presents special problems for the descriptive bibliographer since it is often difficult to tell the difference between a punctuation mark and an element of the coloring or design. I suspect that any attempt to weed out all the commas from the vegetation and record every variant splash of color that might be punctuation would be a frightfully complicated task, and the sheer number and randomness of variants discovered would militate against their significance. These are good reasons for not recording punctuation variants, but if they are part of the rationale for Bentley's bibliographic procedures they should be pointed out as such. Otherwise, users of the work might waste time fussing over matters with which the catalogue is not concerned.

Page 35 *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, title-page. Bentley's statement that "no copy gives author, printer, publisher, place, or date" may mislead some readers. As with the similar statement about *No Natural Religion* (noted above), this is true of the title-page only, for in *The Gates of Paradise* at least some of this information appears on sixteen other plates in the book.

The remainder of the catalogue is devoted to descriptions of manuscript materials (including the "Pickering Manuscript," the only long fair copy of Blake's poems extant), Mrs. Thorne's three Blake watercolors, and fourteen printed or engraved works ranging from *A Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 to an impression of "The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlor." I have not been able to check Bentley's transcriptions of printed title-pages against Mrs. Thorne's own copies, but a comparison with other copies has turned up a number of discrepancies. These may indicate that Mrs. Thorne owns an astonishing number of variant issues, but none of her copies are indicated as such in the catalogue. Many of these possible errors listed below are of course the most minute of particulars, but Bentley's catalogue commands the kind of authority to make their recording here worthwhile.

Page 37 *A Descriptive Catalogue*. There is a comma after "Soho" in the Huntington Library copy and in the reproduction of the title-page in Keynes' *Bibliography* (1921), verso of p. 85.

Page 41 *Tragedies of Aeschylus*. There is a period after "TRANSLATED" in the Huntington copy.

Page 56 *Gay's Fables*. In four copies examined, the "F" of "FABLES," the "J" of "John," and the "G" of "GAY" are a few millimeters larger than the other letters in these words. The "ol" of "Vol." is in small capitals. There is no period after "1793" in either volume and none after "Piccadilly" in the second volume. There is a period after "Blake Mr" in the subscription list.

Page 57 *Young's Night Thoughts*. In nineteen copies examined, the Latin inscription is printed in italics.

Page 58 *Hayley's Ballads* (1805). In ten copies examined, the "E" of "Esq." is an italic capital and the "sq" is in small italic capitals. I was not able to check the transcription of Flaxman's *Letter . . . for Raising the Naval Pillar* also on this page of the catalogue.

Page 60 *Blair's Grave*. In five copies examined, "William Blake" is in italics (capitalization as recorded by Bentley).

Page 61 *Chaucer's Prologue*. In the three copies examined and in the reproduction in Keynes' *Bibliography* (1921), p. 210, all but the "C" of "Colnaghi's" is in small capitals. A period appears after the "M" in the date rather than after the "D."

Page 62 *Dante illustrations*. In the Huntington copy and the reproduction in Keynes' *Bibliography* (1921), p. 182, there is no period after "2." There is a period after the Roman numeral in "Canto xxii. line 70," not a comma as Bentley records for the Thorne copy.

Other sections of the volume contain Mr. Ryskamp's introduction, a brief essay on "The Great Collections of Blake's Books" followed by a list of important collectors past and present, and a concluding selection from Blake's writings. This last part is clearly directed at the general reader, but even the informed Blakean should find much to value in the list of collectors where Bentley records the copies of the illuminated books, with their *Census* designations, owned by the collectors. Many of the copies now owned by Mr. Paul Mellon were acquired after the publication of the *Census*, and thus their recording here can help in updating the work of Keynes and Wolf. The thirty high-quality monochrome plates were chosen with care in order to illustrate aspects of Blake's art unique to the Thorne collection and some of the variants listed in the catalogue. After seeing the *Job* engravings reproduced over and over again, one is pleased to come upon plates which open up some new vistas. Of particular interest are the two sets of the same page from different copies of an illuminated book,

one color printed and the other water colored. Some of the differences between the two coloring methods are revealed by these comparisons, although monochrome reproductions, and even most color reproductions, never do justice to the richness of color printing. Unfortunately, these important illustrations were published too late to be included in my *Finding List* of Blake reproductions, *Blake Newsletter*, 5 (Summer and Fall, 1971).

Bentley has written an excellent catalogue, setting a high standard for future bibliographies of important collections. This book is a paperback, but the value of its contents and the quality of the sewn binding, paper, and illustrations justify the price. A good deal of space in this review has been devoted to pointing out probable errors, but to my mind these do not seriously hamper the great usefulness of Bentley's work. It has already become an essential part of any Blake library.

Martin Butlin. *William Blake: A Complete Catalogue of the Works in the Tate Gallery*, with an introduction by Anthony Blunt and a foreword by John Rothenstein. 2nd ed., rev. London: The Tate Gallery, 1971. Pp. 80, over 100 plates, 18 in color. £1.90. (Exclusively distributed in U. S. A. and Canada by Boston Book and Art Publisher, 655 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.)

Kathleen Raine. *William Blake*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1970. The World of Art Library. Pp. 216, 156 pls., including 28 in color. £2.10 (paper £1.25). New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971. \$8.50 (paper \$4.95).

Reviewed by Michael J. Tolley

The first edition of Martin Butlin's Tate Gallery catalogue has proved very serviceable and the new one is most welcome, being superior to the old, excellent as that was, in nearly every respect. Fittingly, a brilliant color reproduction of "God Judging Adam" spreads across the dust cover: that this design should be presented afresh and with the correct title (not "Elijah in the Fiery Chariot," as we thought until 1965 when Martin Butlin published the new identification) was itself an outstanding cause of revision. However, in supplying us with some beautiful new reproductions and with at least a monochrome reproduction of every Blake work (excluding engravings) in the collection, the Gallery has gone beyond the needs of mere revision.

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More importantly, in the revision we get no perfunctory updating but a thorough rechecking, more rigorous and ample descriptions and new speculations by the leading scholar in this branch of the field, a foretaste of his promised *catalogue raisonné* of Blake's graphic work.

The new format, with its low, wide pages of varying color and texture, is very attractive, though there are disadvantages. It is highly convenient to have the designs reproduced on the same page as the commentary, but this is sometimes at the expense of quality of reproduction, notably of the pencil drawings and some vertical designs. The old edition is in this respect still valuable for reference use, in studying the details of designs such as the Hervey "Epitome" or the composition sketch "The Fall of the Rebel Angels." It is noteworthy that some of the old color reproductions have been strikingly improved, particularly the old lurid frontispiece design, "The Simoniac Pope."

That Anthony Blunt's prefatory essay on "The Art of William Blake" could be left unchanged from the 1957 edition, "save for minor revisions of detail," says much for its lasting quality. It is good to see that the old "serpent, symbol of materialism" found in "Elohim Creating Adam" has been quietly replaced by the "worm, symbol of mortality" that is actually present in the design. I am sorry to see that Anthony Blunt's myth that "static horizontal designs" are always used by Blake "to symbolize sorrow and man's imperfect state" is retained, with reference to the titlepage of *Songs of Experience* (p. 13), as this view is still influential. Stiffness may be vertical as well as horizontal, as we find in this particular design. What we should look for is the condition where mere stasis becomes petrific.

A case in point is "God Judging Adam," now described by Blunt in accordance with Butlin's reading (p. 15) as showing Blake's "stern oppressive God of the Old Testament . . . in the likeness of Urizen" imposing "his law on the aged Adam," while around "the figures blaze the sterile fires of 'Eternal fury,' and . . . a massive half-circle enforces the theme of the imposition of the material will." Both God and Adam are petrific forms or, more accurately, are in the process of becoming petrific, since there is still some color in their flesh (alternatively, both are becoming leprous or frozen). This is a companion design to "Elohim Creating Adam" because there stone is being turned to flesh, but here flesh is being turned to stone. One might go further and say that whereas one design shows God creating man, the other shows man creating God (as a punisher: the design shows man becoming what he beholds while God becomes what He does). However, it is difficult to locate the scene of "God Judging Adam" in Blake's mythology, whereas "Elohim Creating Adam" is clearly described in the last three stanzas of *The Book of Los*, where Los humanizes Urizen, ending,

Till his Brain in a rock, & his Heart
In a fleshy slough formed four rivers
Obscuring the immense Orb of fire
Flowing down into night: till a Form