

New *Night Thoughts* Sightings

BY WAYNE C. RIPLEY

WAYNE C. RIPLEY (wripley@winona.edu) is an associate professor of English at Winona State University in Minnesota. He is the co-editor of *Editing and Reading Blake* with Justin Van Kleeck for *Romantic Circles*. He has written on Blake and Edward Young.

- 1 TO my list of catalogue references to Blake's *Night Thoughts*, which was augmented by G. E. Bentley, Jr.,<sup>1</sup> should be added eight new listings. Perhaps the most important is the February 1800 auction catalogue for the library of George Galwey Mills: *A Catalogue of a Large, Extensive, and Valuable Parcel of Books, in Every Science, and in Most Languages; Being the Genuine Library of George Galwey Mills, Esq. (Gone to the West Indies) ... Which Will Be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Jeffery, at No. 11 Pall-Mall, on Monday, the 24th of February, 1800, and the Twelve Following Days, (Sundays Excepted).*<sup>2</sup> Mills is best known as the owner of the Sherborne Missal,<sup>3</sup> which was sold at the 1800 auction for £215. The goal of the auction seems to have been quick cash for Mills's move to his family's plantation on St. Christopher.<sup>4</sup> *Night Thoughts* is lot 457: "Young's *Night Thoughts*, finely printed, folio 1797," and the handwritten note in the margin records that it was purchased for 10s. (30).<sup>5</sup>
- 2 What is noteworthy in the description of the book is the fact that Blake's illustrations are not mentioned. Blake's edition was the only folio of *Night Thoughts* published (and certainly the only one in 1797). In addition, the book is classified under the category "Miscellaneous, Including the English Classics" and not under "Natural History, and Books of Prints," which includes other well-illustrated books, most of which are folios. Moreover, because Mills

was desperate for cash, the presence of any plates and other potentially lucrative bibliographic details are carefully noted in both categories. It is possible, therefore, that the catalogue describes the unillustrated state of *Night Thoughts*, first noticed by Bentley in 1980.<sup>6</sup> Whether or not this is the case, Mills did know at least one of the Edwardses, and his bookplate is found in a copy of Junius's *Stat nominis umbra*, 2 vols. (London: T. Bensley, 1796-97), with the inscription "1796 B[ough]t. of Edwards."<sup>7</sup> As Bentley notes, the initials "J / E", James Edwards, appear on the inner front cover of the unillustrated *Night Thoughts*. As my discovery of the advertisements for volume 2 suggests, James may have been more involved in the production and distribution of the book than has been recognized.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, if Mills did, in fact, own the unillustrated copy, the sales catalogue explains neither why he did so nor why the copy was created in the first place.

- 3 The second new listing occurs in *A Catalogue of Books, for the Year 1807, ... by Cuthell & Martin, Middle Row, Holborn* (London: n.d.). It is lot 960: "Young's *Night Thoughts*, beautifully printed, with engravings round the letter press, part I, all that was ever published, 15s — 1797" (39). What is painfully significant here is that Blake's name is not mentioned as either the designer or engraver, even as Robert Cromek was publicly trying to puff up Blake's status as a designer while privately denigrating his engraving skills. The catalogue offers many other editions of *Night Thoughts*, and the listing for an 1802 reprint of Thomas Stothard's illustrations does mention his name. Like the Mills listing, Cuthell and Martin's listing emphasizes the beauty of the printing. It also confirms that there were no more volumes.
- 4 The third listing appears in *A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Sir H[enry]. C[harles]. Englefield, Bart. ... Which Will Be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Stanley* ([London], 1833). The copy is lot 1135, and it has a minimal description: "Young's *Night Thoughts*, illustrated by Blake" (52). The Catholic Englefield (1752-1822) belonged to many scientific and artistic societies, including the Society of Antiquaries, the Geological Society, and the Society of Dilettanti. He also served as the antiquary for the Royal Academy, and his works were on display there between 1787 and 1789 (ODNB).

1. Wayne C. Ripley, "Printed References to and Known Prices of Blake's *Night Thoughts*, 1796-1826," *Blake* 43.2 (fall 2009): 72-75; G. E. Bentley, Jr., "Sales and collection records, 1798-1840," in "William Blake and His Circle: A Checklist of Publications and Discoveries in 2010," *Blake* 45.1 (summer 2011): 18-19.  
 2. The text is available via ECCO. The other listings are found in *Google Books*.  
 3. Janet Backhouse, *The Sherborne Missal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 56-57.  
 4. For Mills's financial situation, see Backhouse 60.  
 5. The following item, *Granger's Biographical History of England*, is also numbered 457.  
 6. Bentley, "Young's *Night Thoughts* (London: R. Edwards, 1797): A New Unillustrated State," *Blake* 14.1 (summer 1980): 34-35.  
 7. Bloomsbury Auctions: <<http://www.bloomsburyauctions.com/cms/pages/lot/352/263>>.  
 8. Ripley, "In Great Forwardness?: 1798 Advertisements for Volume Two of William Blake's *Night Thoughts*," *Notes and Queries* 58.1 (2011): 57-59.

- 5 The fourth and fifth references are in the collection catalogues of Richard Heber and Edward Littledale. Heber's vast collection was sold at several auctions, spread over more than a year, and the *Night Thoughts* listing is found in *Bibliotheca Heberiana. Catalogue of the Library of the Late Richard Heber, Esq. Part the Seventh, Removed from His House at Pimlico. Which Will Be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Evans* ([London], 1835). It is lot 6789: "Young's (E.) Night Thoughts, with Blake's Designs, 1797" (305). Littledale's copy is in the *Catalogue of the Library of the Late Edward Littledale, Esq. ... Sold by Auction by Mr. Evans* ([London], 1837), lot 2890: "Young's Night Thoughts, plates by Blake, 1797" (124).
- 6 Heber's and Littledale's copies are significant because both collectors were members of the Roxburghe Club, as were fellow *Night Thoughts* owners T. F. Dibdin and Francis Wrangham. Dibdin belonged to the Roxburghe Club from its founding in 1812 until 1843, and served as the club's secretary. He met Blake in 1816 and owned several copies of the illuminated books, but it is not known which copy of *Night Thoughts* he owned. Heber was also an original member of the Roxburghe Club, while Littledale joined in 1813. Dibdin had a great interest in Heber's collection, and after Heber's death he played a major role in organizing and cataloguing the collection until the latter's sister dismissed him for unknown reasons.<sup>9</sup>
- 7 Wrangham was a relative latecomer to the club, joining in 1822, but like Dibdin, he would have brought a great deal of information about Blake. In addition to his copy of *Night Thoughts*, Wrangham also owned the *Descriptive Catalogue*, the illustrations to Hayley's *Designs to a Series of Ballads*, Blair's *The Grave*, and the engravings of Job.<sup>10</sup> His own copy of *Night Thoughts* may have been obtained quite early, since he knew Richard Edwards, who published his *Reform: A Farce* (London, 1792) and sold copies of his *Restoration of the Jews* (Cambridge, 1795). *Reform* was a satire of Thomas Paine written under the pseudonym "S[amuel]. Foote, J<sup>r</sup>." which shows that Wrangham placed himself in the tradition of the comic playwright Samuel Foote (bap. 1721–1777), whom Blake would attack in *Jerusalem* for his parodies of Methodism. In light of Blake's later enmity to Foote, it may be significant that *Reform* makes a hostile reference to his and Fuseli's "Fertilization of Egypt," which had been published in Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*. Attributing the design to Fuseli alone,

Wrangham claims that what he calls "the *Fertilization of Nile*" was "borrowed from the Jupiter Pluvius of the Columna Antoniniana," an engraving of which, in Pieter Burman's *Petronii Arbitri Satyricôn* (1709), Wrangham reproduces to indicate the obvious borrowings.<sup>11</sup> Since he makes no reference to Blake in the passage, however, how much knowledge he possessed of Blake at this date is unclear. In addition to his early connections to Edwards, Wrangham was a promoter of Leigh Hunt, providing moral support at the time of his government prosecution<sup>12</sup> and making solicitations on behalf of the *Examiner* (ODNB). Given his interest in the *Examiner*, it is likely that he read Robert Hunt's reviews of *The Grave* and the 1809 exhibition, which he may have attended, and his Job impressions suggest that he maintained an interest in collecting Blake's commercially available works.

- 8 Since neither Heber nor Littledale owned other works by Blake, it is probable that their connection to Dibdin or Wrangham accounts for their possession of *Night Thoughts*. Moreover, the ownership of *Night Thoughts* by four members of the Roxburghe Club provides a new context for Dibdin's widely reprinted remarks on the illustrations. These were first printed in *The Library Companion*, published two years after Wrangham had joined the club:

Wherefore is it, that I love to read that portion of the poem, published in a folio form, with bizarre but original and impressive ornaments by BLAKE? At times, the pencil of the artist\* attains the sublimity of the poet: and it is amidst the wild uproar of the wintry elements—when piping winds are howling for entrance round every corner of the turretted chamber, and the drifted snow works its way into the window casement, however closely fastened—it is in moments LIKE THESE that I love to open that portion of the text of Young which has been embellished by the pencil of Blake. My friends will laugh .. peradventure deride .. but let us all be endured in these venial moments of hallucination. The soul of poetry itself (we are told) is fiction: and I would feign happiness at such moments.<sup>13</sup>

Dibdin's note refers to Isaac D'Israeli's Blake collection:

My friend Mr. D'Israeli possesses the largest collection of any individual of the very extraordinary drawings of Mr. Blake; and he loves his classical friends to disport with them, beneath the lighted Argand lamp of his drawing room, while soft music is heard, upon the several corri-

9. Arnold Hunt, "The Sale of Richard Heber's Library," *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle [Delaware]: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2001) 143-71.

10. Bentley, *Blake Books Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 284.

11. [Wrangham], *Reform: A Farce* (London, 1792) 6.

12. See Wrangham's 29 December 1808 letter of support to Hunt in *The Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1862) 44-45.

13. Dibdin, *The Library Companion* (London, 1824) 734.

dores [sic] and recesses of his enchanted staircase. Meanwhile the visitor turns over the contents of the Blakēan portefeuille.

Heber, Littledale, Wrangham, and other club members may have been among the “friends” who derided Dibdin’s dreamy admiration of Blake or among the visitors who floated about D’Israeli’s private exhibitions of Blake’s works. Where Heber and Littledale obtained their copies is unclear, but it may suggest that Alexander Akehurst’s 1824 claim that copies were “now reposing in the warehouses of some of the London Booksellers” has some validity.<sup>14</sup>

- 9 The sixth new listing is in an advertisement for the Saturday, 10 November 1838 issue of the *Athenaeum*, no. 576. The copy was offered by John Bryant at the Camden’s Head, 9 King William Street, and the advertisement reads: “YOUNG’S NIGHT THOUGHTS, with Blake’s curious Designs, imp. 4to. large paper, half blue mor. 1l. 16s. 1797.” Four previous listings had also described the illustrations as “curious.”
- 10 The seventh listing is in a Sotheby auction catalogue dated 20 November 1839. Three collections were offered: one of a deceased clergyman, one of a deceased gentleman, and a third whose owner is not described. This last was the prize collection, with its key items, like Audubon’s prints, highlighted on the title page. Blake’s *Night Thoughts* was in this collection, listed as lot 417: “Young’s Night Thoughts, with engravings after Blake 1797” (15). The error in not attributing the engravings to Blake may suggest that the compiler was familiar with *The Grave*, since Blake did not engrave his designs in that work. Coincidentally, in the copy of the catalogue held by the Bodleian and available through *Google Books*, the title page contains the signature of “Rev D<sup>r</sup> Bandinel,” the longtime Bodleian librarian, who was also a member of the Roxburghe Club (1839–58). Bandinel’s membership commenced the year of the catalogue, and he was also an acquaintance of Isaac D’Israeli.<sup>15</sup>
- 11 The final new listing can be found in the literary advertisements to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* for December 1839. The copy was offered by J. F. Setchel, No. 23 King Street, Covent Garden. It was listed as lot 747: “YOUNG’S Night Thoughts, with Blake’s Designs, fol. 35s. hf.-bd. 1797” (13). This listing also emphasizes Blake’s designs over the engravings.

14. Bentley, *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 388.

15. Marc Vaubert de Chantilly, “Property of a Distinguished Poisoner: Thomas Griffiths Wainwright and the Griffiths Family Library,” *Under the Hammer* 130. I have not been able to access the catalogue of Bandinel’s own extensive collection to see if he owned any Blake items.