Blake in the Marketplace, 1976-77

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The trends I outlined in my last survey of Blake sales (Blake Newsletter, 10 [1976], 53-59) have continued. A new German interest in Blake—note the purchase of the study of Jerusalem pl. 51 by the Hamburg Kunsthalle—and the improving British economy have added new stimuli to an already active market. The book market, particularly for early facsimiles and volumes with Blake's engravings, remains on its steep upward course. Two young dealers, Donald Heald of London and Edwin C. Epps, Jr., of Columbia, South Carolina, have begun businesses with a special emphasis on Blake. Both bring considerable expertise to the field. Three of Blake's most important series of intaglio illustrations—Night Thoughts, The Grave, and Job—have increased considerably in price, although their continued availability has held off the sharp rise that will undoubtedly occur as soon as these works become truly rare. Once again, no complete illuminated book came on the market, but several individual pages or fragments did appear. The best drawings and prints have fared well, but the market continues shallow and weak for the less impressive drawings. When none of the half-dozen major dealers or collectors compete for a drawing, its sale price (or frequently buy-in by the seller) is about the same as it would have been five years ago.

The following lists have the same format as the 1974-75 survey, with only minor modifications. All Sotheby, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, and Christie's auction catalogues have been surveyed, as have the catalogues of the major dealers who regularly handle original Blake materials. I have made no attempt to search out every sale of original works, and thus there are no doubt a good many sales of the more common printed items not included here. A few late 1975 and early 1976 sales are also listed.

I wish to thank Martin Butlin, Detlef W. Dörrecker, Ruth Fine, and Shaunagh FitzGerald of P. & D. Colnaghi & Co. for their assistance in compiling this list.

ABBREVIATIONS

CL Christie, Manson & Woods Ltd., London
CNY Christie, Manson & Woods, New York
cat. catalogue or sales list issued by a dealer or auction house (usually followed by a number or letter designation)
illus. the item or part thereof is reproduced in the catalogue
SB Sotheby Belgravia, Motcomb St., London
SH Sotheby & Co., Hodgson's Rooms, Chancery Lane, London
1 Blake. "The Virgin Hushing the Young Baptist as He approaches Jesus." Tempera, inscribed lower left "WB 1799," 26.3 x 38.1 cm. Reproduced by permission of Mr. Warren Howell, John Howell Books.

SL Sotheby & Co., Main Rooms, Bond St., London
SNY Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York
# auction lot or catalogue item number

I. DRAWINGS, WATERCOLORS, & PRINTED DRAWINGS

"Adam and Eve." Pencil and grey ink, 8 5/8 x 9 7/8 in. CL, 9 Nov. 1976, #78, illus. (£700). Sold (or bought-in?) for 450 gns. in the same rooms, 9 Nov. 1971, #77. Now collection of Colin Hunter.


"Every Man also Gave Him a Piece of Money." Pencil and wash drawing, formerly Robertson collection, 22.8 x 17.7 cm. Colnaghi, Sept. 1976 drawings cat., #83, illus. (£15,000). Stolen on the last day of the Colnaghi exhibition, but recovered in Feb. 1978, and now in the possession of Colnaghi's insurance company. This drawing, a variant of Job pl. 19, was previously sold SL, 21 March 1974, #16 to Colnaghi for £9500.


"The Good Farmer." Pencil, black ink, and grey wash (recto & verso). Early 1780s, 12 3/4 x 18 1/4 in. SL, 18 Nov. 1976, #163, illus. (Bought-in, £1600.) In March 1977, the drawing was seriously damaged in transit between Sotheby's Parke-Bernet, New York and their Los Angeles office. Now restored and in the author's collection. SEE ILLUS. 2 & 3 (photos made prior to damage).


"Pestilence." Water color, 7 1/8 x 10 3/4 in., the second of four known versions, early 1780s. CL, 2 March 1976, #97, illus. (Bought-in at £2400.) Now in the author's collection.


"The Virgin Hushing the Young Baptist as He Approaches Jesus." Tempera, 10 1/3 x 15 in. John Howell Books, April 1976 private offer at $85,000. Now in a private Chicago collection. See Illus. 5.


II. PRINTS

This section includes pages from the illuminated books and commercial book illustrations removed from the volumes in which they originally appeared. Plate numbers and copy designations follow G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Books.


2 Blake. "The Good Farmer." Recto, pencil, black ink, and grey wash. Early 1780s, 32.5 x 46.5 cm. Essick Collection.

3 Blake. "The Good Farmer." Verso, pencil, black ink, touch of grey wash. Inscribed in pencil upper left, not in Blake's hand, "The Good Farmer giving his field[s?] / in Famine / both sides." Essick Collection. This working sketch is the transition between the earlier and later groups of the six known versions of the composition. The first two pen drawings (British Museum) have the central figure dressed as on the recto of this drawing (Illus. 2). Like this verso sketch, the later pen and wash drawings (Tate Gallery, University of Texas) show him with two garments, a cloak over a gown, rather than the single gown of the earlier versions. The change from the energetic pose of the central figure and the swirling hem of his clothing to a more restrained and rectilinear composition may have been motivated by the same neoclassical norms also influencing Blake's friends, Stothard and Flaxman, in the early 1780s.


Gay, J. Fables, 1793. Epps, Feb. 1978 cat. 5, #5 (Pls. 2, 3, 10--£20 each; 4--£25 each; 5--£30 each; 11--£27.50; 12--£15).


Hayley. Life of Cowper, 1802. Pls. 1, 2, 5 (2 copies), 6 (2 copies), some tears. SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #10 (bought-in).


Hayley. Triumph of Temper, 1803. Pls. only, waterstains lower corners, tear in pl. 2. SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #6 (£30).

"The Hiding of Moses" from Remember Me!, 1825. SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #3, illus. (£130).

Jerusalem. Three hand colored clippings from: pl. 37, top design with top design of pl. 4 on verso; pl. 18, upper design with pl. 19, lines 4-16, on verso; pl. 35, lower design with pl. 28, lines 7-23, on verso. Offered for sale privately by a New York collector, and now in two private New York State collections.

Jerusalem, pl. 47, design only, hand colored, Europe title-page on verso. The "Preston" proof. Colnaghi, March 1977 prints cat., #1, both sides illus., color (£30,000). Now in the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Job. Proof issue, original wrappers with label. SH, 12 Nov. 1976, #385, pl. 18 illus. (Lott, £3000). Proof issue on laid India, from the Pierpont Morgan Library (the copy that contained Blake's watercolors when it was sold at the 1903 Lord Crewe sale). SNY, 17 May 1977, #154, pl. 7 illus. (£5500).


"Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion," second state, probably a posthumous impression. SH, 12 Nov. 1976, #386 (Heald, £1000). Sotheby catalogued this item with a copy of The Grave and noted this inserted print only in passing. The estimate was £20.

Lavater, J. C. Essay on Physiognomy, 1789. Epps, Feb. 1978 cat. 5, #10 (Pls. 1, 2--£15; 3--£35); #2 (Pl. 2--£50).


"Night," lower design only of the second pl. of the poem in Songs of Innocence. Hand tinted with watercolors, 31 x 65 mm. SB, 5 April 1977, #208 (£420).

Sir Charles Grandison, 1783. Blake's three pls., Epps, Feb. 1978 cat. 5, #3 (pls. 1, 2--$25 each; 3 (lacking border)--$15; $50 the lot).


Scott, J. Poetical Works, 1782. Epps, Feb 1978 cat. 5, #4 (pls. 1--$22.50; 2-4--$27.50 each; $90 the lot).

"The Shepherd," design only from the pl. in Songs of Innocence. Color printed, touched with black ink and watercolors, 71 x 65 mm. SB, 5 April 1977, #210, illus. color (Somerville & Simpson, $2500).

"Spring," the tailpiece design only from the second pl. of the poem in Songs of Innocence. Ragged borders, color printed and touched with black ink and watercolors, 28 x 75 mm. SB, 5 April 1977, #207 ($280). Cut evenly, color printed and touched with black ink and watercolors, 42 x 69 mm. SB, 5 April 1977, #209, illus. color (Somerville & Simpson, $2000).


There is No Natural Religion, 1788. Pls. a3, 4, 6, b3 from copy G and pls. a9, b12 from copy I, formerly Peirpont Morgan Library. SNY, 24 May 1977, #153, pl. a4 illus. (Argosy, $5000). Pls. a4, 6, b3 now in a private American collection; pls. a3, 9, b12 now collection of the author. SEE ILLUSS. 7


Wollstonecraft, M. Original Stories from Real Life, 1796. Final states of the pls. mounted in a small album; from the collection of Sir Geoffrey Keynes. SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #4 (110).


"Zephyrus and Flora," Blake after Stothard. Printed in black, imprint faint (no. 3 in Keynes, Separate Plates cat.). SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #1 (75).

III. BOOKS WITH BLAKE'S COMMERCIAL ENGRAVINGS

Allen, C. New and Improved Roman History, 1798. Uncut in original boards. Heald, July 1976 cat. 1, #15 ($150). This copy, now in my collection, contains the pls. printed on a single sheet, folded and bound at the front. A continuous platemark runs across the top and bottom of the sheet, indicating that the pls. were engraved on and printed from a single copperplate. This was a common practice in the 18th and 19th centuries for small book illustrations, but this is the only example I know that definitely indicates that Blake executed his plates this way.


Darwin, E. Collected Works, 3 vols., 1806, with only 17 pls., not specified. George's, May 1976 cat. 625, #1280 (£60).


Hoare, P. An Inquiry into ... the Arts of Design in England, 1806. Frontis. stained, sold with 2 other vols. SL, 30 May 1977, #296 (Quevedo, £45).


Blake. "The Gambols of the Ghosts." Pencil, 46 x 31.5 cm. Inscribed "Blake" lower right; "For the Grave" on the verso, not in Blake's hand. For some years on deposit at the Fitzwilliam Museum by a South African collector under the title "An Allegory of Human Life," now destined for the Yale Center of British Art. This is apparently the illustration to Blair's _Grave_, never published, described by Flaxman in his letter to Hayley of 18 Oct. 1805 as "The Gambols of Ghosts according with their affections previous to the final Judgment." Also described by Rossetti in Gilchrist, _Life of Blake_ (1863), II, 242, no. 21. On p. 2 of _The Grave_ (1808 ed.), Blair writes of "light-heel'd ghosts and visionary shades" performing "their mystic rounds" near a yew tree, but does not associate the scene with the Last Judgment. While frenzied spirits circle about the yew in the composition, more pious types parade into the church at the left. A small figure hovering just above the church door holds an object in his upraised right hand (the lash of Conscience?) and a figure with a lash dominates a group cowering on top of the tomb, lower right. Below, graves open as the "ghosts" of the dead are pulled out—or pummeled, lower right—by other embodied spirits.
June 1977, #122 (Heald, £195). This is the first copy to be sold at a British auction since 1928, according to British Auction Records.

Wollstonecraft, M. *Original Stories from Real Life*, 1791. First states of the pls., with a duplicate of pl. 1. Seven Gables Bookshop, Blake List Dec.

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**VI. UNIQUE MATERIALS RELATED TO BLAKE**

D'Israeli, I. Letter to the bookseller G. Dyer asking for a copy of "Blake's Young" and complaining about two portfolios "which he had of him." SL, 13 Dec. 1977, #309 (J. F. Fleming, £65).

Miró, Joan. Relief etching printed in colors of a poem by Ruthven Todd; one of the Miró-Todd plates following Blake's techniques. SNY, 12 Nov. 1976, #366, illus. ($1200); another print by Miró of a poem by Todd using Blake's relief etching method, #367 ($550).
**V. BLAKE'S CIRCLE & FOLLOWERS**


"The Flood," lithograph, inscribed "original impression from Miss Calvert's Collection." SB, 25 May 1976, #2 (£120).


**Flaxman, John.** Self-portrait and study of a sarcophagus, two pages from a sketchbook, pencil, one inscribed 1779, 4 x 5 in., 5 1/4 x 3 1/2 in. SL, 1 April 1976, #75 (not sold).


"The Tempest," extensively inscribed, and design for a tomb, two wash drawings, 5 1/4 x 7 in. CL, 27 April 1976, #11 (£50).


**La Divina Comedia . . . Compoato . . . Flaxman, proofs of all 111 pls., all but the last 23 captioned in pencil. Amsterdam, 1793. A note in an early hand on the cover states that these are first proofs, with the captions by Mrs. Flaxman and annotations by Flaxman on one Purgatorio pl. There are also minor revisions in pencil in some designs corresponding to the plates in later editions.** Bentley, *The Early Engravings of Flaxman's Classical Designs*, p. 47, locates only one copy, incomplete, of this first ed. of the Dante pls. SH, 20 June 1977, #292 (Heald, £170). Now in the author's collection.


For Flaxman's classical designs, see also "Flaxman," Part III.

Four letters. SL, 22 June 1976, #168 (not sold).

Seven early receipts, 1781-84. SL, 22 June 1976, #168 (Jeffrey, £60).

**Fuseli, Henry.** "Daniel," ink drawing, 8 5/8 x 5 in. CL, 1 March 1977, #13, illus. (£850).


Sheets of figure studies, ink, 7 1/2 x 8 in. SL, 24 Nov. 1977, #190, illus. (£2200).


"Journey to Emmaus," mezzotint, 1839. SB, 25 May 1976, #5 (£100).


"Mount Siabod," watercolor, 14 3/4 x 18 7/8 in. CL, 8 June 1976, #184 (£1350).


"Etchings Top the Art Union of London by the Etching Club, 1857, with 3 pls. by Palmer. CL, 26 July 1977, #403, "Sleeping Shepherd" and "Weary Ploughman" illus. (£300).


7 Blake. There is No Natural Religion, series a, copy G, pl. 3. Relief etching, c. 1788, touched with green watercolor in lower design, tiny patches of what may be color printing or blotting in dark brown on tree at right. Plate mark 5 x 4.2 cm. Essick Collection. The upper margin of this impression is more clearly printed than in most copies, particularly F (repro. Erdman, illuminated Blake), and shows several figures among the letters of The Argument not previously described. These are, from left to right, a standing figure with one knee and arm raised and leaning forward against the vertical of the Z; a figure, perhaps winged, hovering above the space between the two words; a figure with his left side against the left diagonal of the A and his right arm reaching toward the hovering figure (who may be reaching down to him); a figure with his right arm and leg against the right diagonal of the A, his left leg extended toward the v and his left arm (is there something in his left hand, or is it just an accidental droplet of ink?) extending toward a large bird (similar to that in The Book of Thel, pl. 3) soaring (to the right?) above the u and m. That the compositional use of these small figures and lettering style are similar to Songs of Innocence and The Book of Thel suggests that this plate, along with pl. b12, was etched somewhat later than the other plates in There is No Natural Religion.


Gallery, Dec. 1977 cat. 11, #1, illus. ($305).
Third state. CL, 27 July 1976, #281 (€65).
About 140 letters, 1836-81, to George Richmond and his family, together with letters by Hannah Palmer and others. SL, 22 June 1976, #172 (Grinke, £1400).
Early autograph manuscript, entitled "How to Choose Teas" and "Snuff," 2 pp., with address leaf to Richmond, postmarked 6 Oct. 1823. Heal'd July 1976 cat. 1, #33 (€80).
Richmond, George. 23 early drawings, 1824-30, 13 illus., from the collection of Richmond's great-great granddaughter. Among the more important are "Figure of Plague" (#174, €650), "Prospero" (#173, €340), "Gathering In of the Vintage" (#174, €680), "The Enchanted Vale" (#181, €420), and a portrait of Richmond as a boy by his father (#170, not sold). SL, 18 Nov. 1976, #171-88.
24 early drawings, 1824-30, 8 illus., from the collection of Richmond's great-great granddaughter. The most important are "A Pilgrim" (#25, €340), "Portrait of a Man Holding a Crook, possibly a portrait sketch of Blake" (#31, €80), "Portrait of Welby Sherman" (#32, €800). Pencil sketch of the artist's wife, inscribed Oct. 27, 1831, 8 1/2 x 7 in. CL, 27 April 1976, #66 (€150).
"The Young Warrior" (dated 1829), a reclining nude and a devil, three pen drawings, 7 1/2 x 4 in., 3 1/4 x 2 in., 3 x 4 in. SL, 24 Nov. 1977, #22 (not sold).
33 letters to his wife and 15 by his wife, the latter with references to sales of Blake's Job and Dante plates. SL, 6 July 1977, #291 (Rota, £1700). Letter to Palmer, 22 Feb. 1828, with sketches of Richmond. SB, 22 June 1976, #173 (Grinke, £130). See also letters to Richmond under Palmer, above.
Sherman, Welby. "Christ Praying in the Desert," pencil, 4 1/4 x 2 1/2 in. SL, 18 Nov. 1976, #179, illus. (€580). The sale catalogue notes that "this appears to be the first drawing by Welby Sherman to have come to light."
"The Shepherd," engraving, Sherman after Palmer. SB, 3 Feb. 1976, #24, illus. (€620). SB, 14 Dec. 1976, #316, illus. (€620). There seem to be only 4 known impressions of this plate, one of which is in the British Museum. Sherman received help from both Palmer and Richmond in executing the engraving.