A Supplement to The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue

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BY ROBERT N. ESSICK

In June 1981, I finished all but a few last-minute corrections in a typescript of a new catalogue of Blake’s so-called “separate plates,” including plates probably executed as book illustrations but known only through separate impressions. This work was published in May 1983 by Princeton University Press as *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue*. In the intervening twenty-three months, the Blake Industry did not stop its wheels within wheels. Important discoveries were made about known works, new impressions were brought to light or passed through the auction rooms, and the ownership and exhibition histories of recorded impressions changed. I present here this new information, much of which has come to me through the kindness of scholars, collectors, and dealers whose names are a pleasure to record in the following notes. Unless otherwise indicated, all entry and page numbers and impression designations refer to the *Separate Plates* catalogue. Included are some corrections of typos and stupidities perpetrated by the author.

The most significant change in ownership affects all plates listed in Sir Geoffrey Keynes’ collection. Shortly after his death on 5 July 1982, they were removed to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. This transfer included prints—such as the first and second states of “Job” (impressions 1A, 2D), “Ezekiel” (impression 2C), and “Mirth” (impression 2B)—not listed as part of Keynes’ original bequest to the Fitzwilliam. The collection is not yet owned by the Museum, but is on deposit there as part of Sir Geoffrey’s estate. The materials are not at present available for study.

An important discovery about one of Blake’s color printed drawings deserves notice here. In *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, Martin Butlin notes the presence of what looks like a platemaker’s mark in the lower right side of “God Judging Adam” in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In a review of Butlin’s great catalogue, I noted that, if we could eliminate the overpainting from the Philadelphia Museum of Art impression of the design, “we would have a print looking very similar to a monochrome pul of a relief etching.” Patrick Noon, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Yale Center for British Art, has now conclusively proven that “God Judging Adam” not only looks like a relief etching but *is* a relief etching. What looks like a platemaker’s mark in the Metropolitan Museum impression *is* a platemaker’s mark. Even the beautifully hand-colored Tate Gallery impression (illus. 1) has major outlines printed in monochrome from a relief etched plate. Thus, “God Judging Adam” forms the experimental link between Blake’s illuminated books of c. 1794–1795 and the other color printed drawings, still believed to have been stamped from millboards. Perhaps Blake’s experiences with etching such a large piece of metal, as well as the planographic printing of “Charity” and the Song of Los title-page, convinced him that he need not go to the expense of metal plates or the trouble of etching to produce large, color printed designs. In the *Separate Plates* catalogue, I excluded the color printed drawings because they are more in the nature of paintings than prints, and they had already been described with admirable precision by Butlin. Although defining the genre of “separate plates” is fraught with difficulties, it now would seem appropriate to include the three known impressions of “God Judging Adam” as members of that group. The techniques used to create it are the same as those Blake used in IX, “A Dream of Thirathatha,” and XI, “Joseph of Arimathea Preaching to the Inhabitants of Britain.”

Notes on individual sections of the catalogue follow.

P. 4, “Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion,” impression 2E (Estate of Sir Geoffrey Keynes). This impression was also offered for £4 in a Bernard Quaritch advertising flyer dated November 1886. A copy of this 4 pp. pamphlet has come to me through the generosity of Thomas Lange.

P. 6, “Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion,” impression 2I (Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut). Exhibited at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1982, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1982–1983, no. 2 in the catalogue, reproduced p. 67. The sharp eyes of Patrick Noon and David Bindman have spotted on this impression “small areas of scraping out, and most unexpected, what appears to be the expressive use of plate tone on the surface to give a greater richness of texture.” At the Toronto exhibition I inspected the...
Joseph's costume, on the fold farthest to the left on his right hip, on his right wrist, just below his right elbow, on his left hand and wrist, on the curved folds between his legs, and perhaps in the sunburst upper left. This rubbing out is similar to the "odd white lines and flicks" (p. 5) on impression 2H (National Gallery of Art, Washington). Plate tone also appears in impression 2G (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York). As Bindman points out, this concern with the subtle interplay of light and shadow suggests a printing date in the 1820s. These effects also offer more circumstantial evidence that the second state of the plate itself, with its burnished passages of illumination, is also a late production.


P. 69, "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," Fourth state, impression 4AA (Douglas Cleverdon). The print was cleaned at the British Museum in 1983 and re-laid once again. A label, probably written by a frame maker, was removed from the old backing sheet. It states that the print should be sent to a "Mrs. Tattersall" of Bournemouth, probably a former owner of this impression of the rare fourth state.

Pp. 70–75, "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," fifth state. A few further impressions:


b. Alexander Gourlay, Wooster, Ohio. A Sessler restrike, sheet 44 x 101 cm., with the "FRANCE" watermark lower right. Slight yellow stains on edges and verso; small puncture top left. Acquired by an upstate New York dealer at a community auction for $30 and sold "recently" (according to the owner) to Keith A. Gourlay for $350. Given by K. A. Gourlay in 1983 to his son, the present owner, to whom I am indebted for all information about this impression.

c. Charlotte M. Horner, Cobourg, Ontario, Canada. Probably a Colnaghi restrike, matted and framed when seen in Toronto, February 1983. Acquired before 1905 by Arthur Harvey, from whom it passed by inheritance to his granddaughter, the present owner. Destined for the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. I am grateful to Katherine Lochnan, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Art Gallery of Ontario, for showing this impression to me.

d. Warren Stevenson, Vancouver, Canada. Yellowed and slightly foxed; matted and framed. Very slight fragments of the scratched inscriptions of the fourth state are present, suggesting that these were never purposefully removed from the plate but simply wore away after a few pulls (see p. 70). Acquired at an estate sale at an unknown time by Dr. Patrick, a Vancouver antiques dealer, from whom it passed to Mrs. Stephens of the Canterbury Curios antique shop, Vancouver. Acquired c. 1975 by Professor Stevenson, to whom I am indebted for this information.

P. 76, "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," untraced impression 11. This impression was also offered for £7.10s. in Quaritch's advertising flyer of November 1886 (see entry for p. 4, above).

P. 83, "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims," untraced impressions. An additional untraced impression: sold Christie's New York, 7 May 1983, lot 405, fifth state on laid India, some staining ($1430). I have not been able to trace the purchaser. Probably a Colnaghi restrike, many of which have approximately the plate mark dimensions of this impression (35.6 x 96.5 cm.). The plate mark varies among various printings because of different amounts of paper shrinkage. The auction catalogue records the provenance as "Henry Richmond R.A., according to a pencilled note in the hand of M.A. McDonald." I can find no record of a member of the Royal Academy named "Henry Richmond"; this may be an error for George Richmond, R.A. Perhaps the same as untraced impression 128. M.A. McDonald was a New York print dealer.

P. 86, "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims." It is not true that the plate mark dimensions of any impression exceed the size of the copperplate. The original copperplate was exhibited at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1982, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982-1983, no. 97b in the catalogue (see note 6).


1. "God Judging Adam." Relief etching, c. 1795, one of three impressions color printed c. 1795 (?) with water colors and pen drawing added to the impression c. 1805 for Thomas Butts. Image 43.2 x 53.5 cm. on paper approx. 54.5 x 77 cm. Tate Gallery, London.
P. 90, "The Chaining of Orc," impression 1A (National Gallery of Art, Washington). Exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1982, no. 18 in the catalogue (see note 8). The catalogue includes an important discussion of the techniques that may have been used to create this print.


P. 110, "The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour." The parallel wavy lines added in the second state were probably executed with a multi-toothed graver often called a "threading-tool."

Pp. 111–17, "George Cumberland's Card." An additional impression: Dr. Garth Huston, Eagle Rock, California. Printed on laid paper, 9.6 x 14.6 cm., of the "rough texture" type (see p. 120), chain lines 2.1 cm. apart. Purchased by Dr. Huston in 1975 for $50 from Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles.

P. 116, "George Cumberland's Card," impression 1AA (University of Texas, Austin). The ink is not black, but a very dark green, similar to the ink of impression 1N (Estate of Sir Geoffrey Keynes) but darker. Both are on cards of almost the same size and are probably from the same early press run.


P. 128, "Morning Amusement," untraced impression 7. It is not true that Russell, Engravings of Blake,\(^\text{11}\) records a 1911 sale of color printed impressions of "Morning Amusement" and "Evening Amusement" once in the W.E. Moss collection. Indeed, Russell catalogues only the former, apparently not colored, but based on a 7 October 1911 sale catalogue issued by "Henry Young & Sons, booksellers of Liverpool." Thus, Young had only one set printed in colors, purchased in 1913, and these may be the prints acquired by Moss.


Pp. 155–56, "Rev. John Caspar Lavater." In my discussion of drawings possibly related to this portrait print, I failed to mention a profile of Lavater by Felix Maria Diog (or "Diogg," Swiss portraitist and engraver, 1762–1834) in a Swiss private collection.\(^\text{12}\) The subject looks to the left, wears a skullcap, and is framed by an oval, just as in Blake's print. The two works are very similar in general format and effect, but there are many minor differences in the amount of Lavater's body shown (more in the painting) and in the hair, cravat, collar, and angle of the mouth. None of these differences, however, would exclude Diog's work from being the prototype (with an intervening drawing?) for the print. Mary Lynn Johnson Grant has told me of another similar portrait by the Swiss-German artist Markus Dinkel (1762–1832). According to Thieme & Becker, Dinkel's watercolor of Lavater, signed and dated 1790, is in a private collection in Basel.\(^\text{13}\) This date places the Dinkel portrait after the first state (1787) of Blake's print.

P. 159, "The Idle Laundress," third state. An additional impression: Robert N. Essick, Altadena, California. Color printed in black, brown, and light blue on wove paper, 26.6 x 29.9 cm., watermarked 1794 / J WHATMAN. Hand tinted with watercolors (blue, red, black). Two scratches on the tree; scuffed in the lower margin, with parts of the imprint obliterated. Sold anonymously at Sotheby's, 17 June 1983, lot 981, with "Industrious Cottager," fourth state impression described below, p. 167 (£198 to Donald Heald for Essick).

Pp. 160–61, "The Idle Laundress," impressions of unidentifiable state. Two additional impressions:

a. Robert N. Essick, Altadena, California. Color printed in black, reddish-brown, light brown, and dark blue on laid paper, 21.2 x 26.1 cm., with unidentifiable fragments of a watermark obscured by the image. Hand tinted with watercolors (light blue, brown, red). All inscriptions have been trimmed off, but the title has been retained. Dust and age stained, but recently cleaned. The color printing is very sim-
ilar to impression 1A, but the stippled letters of the title indicate that this must be a second or third state (probably the former, dated 1788 in the imprint like the first state). Acquired in June 1982 by the London dealer Donald Heald and sold by him to Essick in July 1982 ($210).

b. Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts. Printed in brown on laid paper trimmed inside the plate mark to 25.7 x 28.6 cm., cutting off all but the tops of the letters of the imprint. The ink color and paper are the same as impression 2B, suggesting that this is a second (1788) state impression, a companion to the third (1788) state of "Industrious Cottager" in the same collection. Bequeathed to the Worcester Museum by Laura Norcross (Mrs. Kingsmill) Marrs of Boston, whose collection stamp appears on the verso of both prints. Both prints accessioned to the Museum on 2 December 1926. For information on these two prints (see pp. 166-67 below), I am grateful to Norma Steinberg, Worcester Art Museum, and to Joseph Viscomi. P. 165, "Industrious Cottager." The entry number for this plate, "XXXI," was not printed at the beginning of the catalogue entry.


P. 167, "Industrious Cottager," fourth state. An additional impression: Robert N. Essick, Altadena, California. Color printed in black, brown, and light blue on wove paper, 26.5 x 29.9 cm., watermarked J WHATMAN (remainder, if any, obscured by the image). Hand tinted with watercolors (blue, red, black). Scuffed in the lower margin, with part of the imprint obliterated. For provenance, see "The Idle Laundress," p. 159 above.


Pp. 201-208, "Wilson Lowry." Raymond Lister has very kindly shown me two impressions of this plate acquired by him c. 1967-1968 from the London book and print dealer E. Seligmann, who probably acquired the prints from Ruthven Todd. One impression is in the third state on laid India paper, the wove backing sheet measuring 30 x 22.2 cm. The other is also on laid India with a wove backing sheet 31.5 x 26 cm. It is in a state between the third and fourth recorded in the Separate Plates catalogue, showing a double rather than a single line (third state) along the left outline of the figure's nose but none of the other fourth state revisions. After having this very slight difference pointed out to me, I must now concur with Keynes that his impression 3E is in a state later that his impression 3D. Thus, the "Wilson Lowry" plate is known in a total of six, rather than five, states.


Pp. 203-204, "Wilson Lowry," fourth (herein corrected to fifth) state, impression 4I (Huntington Library). I can now identify the "T" watermark as a fragment of a Dupuy Auvergne countermark. Parts of this countermark and its companion, a Dovecote watermark, are also to be found among the T.H. Riches proofs of Blake's Job engravings (Fitzwilliam Museum) and the W.A. White and J. Linnell sets of Job proofs (both National Gallery of Art, Washington). The watermark is similar, but not identical, to Heawood nos. 1232-1234.


P. 223, six Butts copperplates. The purchaser ("Last") of these untraced coppers at the W.E. Moss sale, Sotheby's, 2 March 1937, lot 278 (£1), was probably the book dealer G.H. Last, 21A High Street, Bromley, Kent. He is no longer in business and I still have not been able to turn up these remnants of Blake's activities as an engraving instructor.

Pp. 233-34, "Four Classical Figures." David Bindman has shown me that the drawing (in his collection) for this print does have very slight pencil indications of the fresco on the right. Indeed, these marks are visible in the reproduction (Fig. 103) in the catalogue, even though I did not notice them when I first saw the drawing.

Pp. 247, "Coin of Nebuchadnezzar and Head of Cancer." The tracing or copy of the head, formerly in Linnell's collection and probably drawn by him, was sold by Quaritch to me in June 1983. It is reproduced in Martin Butlin, The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), II, pl. 977.

P. 251, The Wit's Magazine. I have acquired some
hand colored impressions of these plates, but they are bound in the book and not "independent of the Work," as the quoted advertisement states. The coloring is crude and incomplete.

P. 259, "The Ancient of Days." The William Muir facsimile was also advertised in a Quaritch flyer dated November 1886 (see entry for p. 4, above). According to Keynes, Bibliography of Blake, Muir's facsimiles of the illuminated books were also advertised by Quaritch in a prospectus of May 1887, which I have not seen. This too may have listed Muir's reproduction of "The Ancient of Days."

This supplement completes the record of exhibitions and sales through May 1983. I will continue to record sales of separate plates in my biennial review of "Blake in the Marketplace" in this journal. I would greatly appreciate hearing from readers who have further information about Blake's separate plates.

3 Blake / An Illustrated Quarterly, 16 (1982), 36.
7 Bindman, "Afterthought" (see note 4), p. 225.
10 [Shelley M. Bennett], Prints by the Blake Followers: An Exhibition at the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, November 1981–February 1982 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982).
13 Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines lexicon der bildenden künstler (Leipzig: Seemann, 1908–1950), q.v. This is apparently the portrait reproduced in Carol Louise Hall, Henry Fuseli and the Aesthetics of William Blake, Univ. of Maryland Ph.D. dissertation, 1979. I am thankful to Mary Lynn Johnson Grant for telling me about this dissertation and supplying a xerox of the reproduction.
16 Edward Heawood, Watermarks Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries (Hilversum: Paper Publications Society, 1950), q.v.