Two Blakes Reappear and Make Three

Martin Butlin

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 18, Issue 2, Fall 1984, pp. 118-119
Bixby's references and lack of punctuation are some-
what confusing, but he probably received the book di-
rectly 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 penci:

Wash. Un.
Comps.
W K B

which was Bixby's way of designating those books and
manuscripts in his collection that were slated for Wash-
ington 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 iden-
tify 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).

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. Ben-
tley, 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 Cata-
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.

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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 Ed-
ward 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 para-
allels given in my catalogue entry there seem to be

* I would like to thank Donald Finkel, Holly Hall, and
Timothy Murray of Washington University, and Ellen A. Nollman,
Head Librarian of the Freer Gallery of Art, for their expert assistance
in helping me with bibliographical details.

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

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similarities with certain of the illustrations in *Jerusalem* and also to those of the unfinished illuminated copy of the Book of Genesis in the Huntington Library.

Thanks to fresh measurements given me (in centimeters) by Fletcher I am able to give slightly revised dimensions for the two drawings. No. 177 is $5^{13/16} \times 5^{3/16}$ in. $(14.5 \times 13.2$ cm) and no. 592 is $4^{1/2} \times 8^{1/4}$ in. $(11.4 \times 20.6$ cm.).

William Blake. Verso of "Satan between Two Angels(?)" (c. 1815–20?). Courtesy of Giuliano Ceseri.