

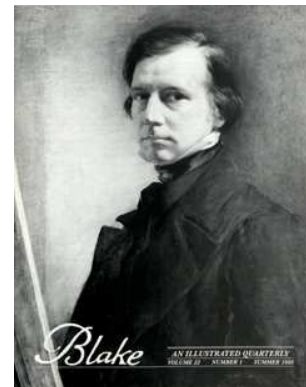
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“Under the Hill”

Nelson Hilton

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MINUTE PARTICULARS

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Despite frequent citation of "To the Accuser who is The God of This World" as "one of Blake's most perfect short poems" (Bloom 435, cf. Damrosch 356), no one seems to have remarked a probable source for the poem's concluding reference to (or, that) "The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill." Alicia Ostriker writes that "The lost traveller is man, and Satan is but his dream" (1040); W. H. Stevenson sees an "allusion to such common folktales as that of True Thomas, or Rip Van Winkle, in which a mortal is carried into a fairy hill" (845); Damon, perhaps choosing not to be too explicit, refers to "the mistaken ideals of those still wandering in the wilderness of life" (87).

But as the "prologue" of *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* is preoccupied with images involving the Sinai revelation of Exodus ("Sinai's heat," "his Mercy Seat," "Jehovah's Finger" writing the Law), it's not surprising to find that event in the "epilogue" as well. Moses' fellow travellers, Blake could read (reading white where we read black), are finally lost "under the hill." For in William Tyndale's translation (does anyone imagine Blake limiting himself to "the Authorized Version"?), "Moses brought the people out of the tētes to mete with God. and they stode vnder the hyll" (Ex 19:17). Later, according to both Tyndale and the AV, Moses builds "an altar under the hill" (Ex 24:4). And Tyndale's Deuteronomist has Moses remind the people that "ye came ād stode also vnder the hyll [AV: 'under the mountain'] ād the hyll burnt with fire" (4:11). "Under" in these translations of the common Hebrew preposition "tahat" ("under") has the evident denotation of "position at the bottom or foot of something" (s.v. *OED* I.7, cf. c. 1402 and 1662), though some literalist rabbis suggested that YHWH uprooted the mountain and suspended it over the Israelites to encourage acceptance of the Torah (Kasher 9:90). They submitted and — Blake seems to say — remained asleep.

The illustration offers another comment alongside the striking representation of psycho-sexual fantasy (Hilton 169). For the sleeping figure (Moses and his rod might suit the context) is graphically *under* a design that suggests an image of Lucifer, "The Son of Morn" — or, in terms of the text, "the Hill." Here we encounter a marvellous particular instance of how powerful texts

To The Accuser who is
The God of This World
~~~~~
Truly My Satan thou art but a Dunc
And dost not know the Garment from the Man
Every Harlot was a Virgin once
Nor canst thou ever change Kide into Nair

Thou art Worship'd by the Names Divine
Of Jesus & Jehovah: thou art still
The Son of Morn in weary Nights decline
The lost Travellers Dream under the Hill



Epilogue, *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. PML 9948.35 copy J pl. 21.

are overdetermined, since Blake knows the Hebrew *Hêlêl* for Lucifer or the morning star (as in Isaiah 14:12) and writes in *Milton* that "Hillel . . . is Lucifer" (32.8). We might further hypothesize the term **hillel* on the analogy of the Hebrew *harel* or "mountain of god," which, fascinatingly enough, is the AV gloss on Ezekiel's vision of "the altar" (43:15: "Harel, that is, The mountain of God"). In any event, the trajectory continuing Hillel's lowest visible right wing rib along the outline of the hill suggests we are to see both bodies as alternate states of the same dream-work. The Sinai context also suggests that, far from a happy "hill beyond which dawn is bursting on all sides" seen by Erdman (279), we end peering through smoke of hill-fire and wondering, with those earlier lost dreaming travellers, what and where is real.

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Footnotes on the Huntington Blakes

Martin Butlin

I have reviewed Robert N. Essick's exemplary catalogue of *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections*, 1985, in another place.¹ At that time my knowledge of the works in question was based on memories and detailed notes made as long ago as 1966. An invitation to attend the Blake symposium held at the Huntington to coincide with the exhibition of Robert N. Essick's own collection there last January gave me the opportunity to examine all the works again. The following observations should be seen very largely as minor footnotes on the occasional discrepancies between Essick's information and that given in my own catalogue of *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 1981, with one or two further observations made while looking at the illuminated books that are not included in my catalogue.

First, apropos the newly discovered drawing of *Pestilence* reported by Shelley M. Bennett and fully catalogued for the first time by Essick,² I was able to identify the fragment of an inscription in the lower left-hand corner, cut at the beginning where the paper had been torn away, as the name "Locker." The hand is precisely the same as that in which he inscribed his copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* now in the Huntington Library.³ It cannot be said that this adds anything of substance to what we know about the drawing: its provenance from the collection of Frederick Locker-Lampson

is already known. What is clear about the provenance of this drawing is that Bennett and Essick are absolutely correct in having transferred to this pencil drawing the provenance from Catherine Blake and Frederick Tatham to Harvey, and the reference to William Rossetti's 1863 list 2, no. 18, and 1880 list 2, no. 20, allocated by me to the watercolor of the same subject in the City Art Gallery, Bristol.⁴ Only by stressing the near monochrome tonality of the Bristol drawing was I able to justify, somewhat dubiously, the inclusion of the Bristol work among Rossetti's uncolored works and the items in Harvey's catalogue described as "Sketches in Ink and Pencil." The Bristol drawing thus remains without a provenance until the sale of works from the collection of Henry Willet at Christie's on 10 April 1904.

Looseness of wording on my part seems to have led to a misunderstanding in Essick's description of the fourth of Blake's illustrations to Milton's *Comus*, *The Brothers meet the Attendant Spirit in the Wood* (B 527 4). I describe it as having been "made up approx. 1/8 (0.3) along the bottom edge." Essick interprets this as meaning that I note "a three mm. strip of paper added to the bottom edge." In fact no paper was added but Blake extended the area of paper covered by the design by a small strip of extra watercolor along the bottom. Traces of his drawn outline can be seen, though the close trimming that this and the other Milton drawings in the Huntington have suffered tends to disguise Blake's original format. It seems to have been this that led Essick to describe the second illustration to *Comus*, *Comus, disguised as a Rustic, addresses the Lady in the Wood* (B 527 2), as having been "remargined with a narrow sliver of paper along the right margin . . ." Close examination shows that the line down the right-hand margin is not an actual break in the paper but the sharply drawn borderline characteristic of these illustrations. Blake seems frequently to have added to the extent of his designs before giving them their final drawn outline, both in the Milton illustrations and in other cases such as the illustrations to the Bible. His somewhat improvisatory approach is also reflected in the number of pentimenti to be seen in his watercolors (a medium in which it is particularly difficult for such things to be disguised); most are noted by Essick, though I was able to detect further examples.

The only observation that I was able to make which might be said to be of any consequence was in connection with the Huntington Library's copy of *The Song of Los*.⁵ As is noted by Essick, the unique ordering of the plates in this copy was probably Blake's original.⁶ Instead of culminating in the design of Los and his hammer this full page design is inserted as the fourth plate, so that the book proper ends with plate 7, the conclusion of the text, "The SONG of LOS is ended. Urizen Wept."