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BLAKE

N O T E

The Auckland Fuselis

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⁶Rossetti's comment explains his reservations regarding the second passage but not the first. A letter to Mrs. Gilchrist, dated 13 Decr. [1862] is suggestive, however; Rossetti writes, "I will consider about the Paradise Regained. The designs were shown to me by John Linnell as being more than usually beautiful, & I do not directly *dissent* from the terms used in the slip you send me; only my feeling is that Blake has here been less inspired than usual, and the result comparatively tame" (*Letters of William Michael Rossetti Concerning Whitman, Blake, and Shelley* [Durham, N.C., 1934], p. 11).

2. The Auckland Fuselis

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The editor has asked me to comment on the Fuseli drawings that were purchased in January 1965 from a private source in Dunedin, New Zealand, by the Auckland City Art Gallery. The illustrated catalogue, *A Collection of Drawings by Henry Fuseli*, Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery (1967), 100 pp., reproduces the 37 main drawings and also several of the verso sketches. The work for the catalogue seems to have been almost entirely the responsibility of P.A. Tomory, who contributes a brief introduction. The drawings are carefully annotated. The collection itself is, I suppose, still on tour: I saw it on exhibition in Cork Street, London, March 1968 (it was mentioned in several newspapers). Unfortunately, the catalogue seems to be little known by Blake scholars. A case in point is Albert S. Roe's article, "'The Thunder of Egypt'", in *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Providence (1969), pp. 158-195. On p. 160, Professor Roe argues that the illustration to Darwin's *Botanic Garden* entitled "Fertilization of Egypt", which is stated to be designed by Fuseli and engraved by Blake, may have been Blake's inspiration. Against Roe's argument is other written evidence, as well as two other Fuseli designs that have figures unmistakably similar to that of Anubis in the Darwin illustration, acknowledged by Roe on p. 444. In the Auckland collection, however, there is a third sketch with (basically) this figure, incidentally on a subject that would have appealed to Blake, "Hephaestus, Bia and Crato securing Prometheus on Mount Caucasus" (c 1810) from Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*. In the catalogue is a note explaining that the figure we are concerned with "is initially taken from the executioner in Andrea del Sarto's *Decapitation of St. John* (Courtyard of the Scalzo, Florence)" (p. 68). (The del Sarto painting is conveniently illustrated in Heinrich Wollflin's *Classic Art*, now a Phaidon paperback.) P.A. Tomory concludes his introduction with some remarks on Fuseli's connection with Blake:

The connection is illustrated here in nos 4, 18, 24, 30, 36. The evidence of nos 4, 30 and 36 seems to support Mason's opinion that Blake used the older artist as a figurative source, even though his final conceptions were entirely individual. Todd . . .

suggests it was Fuseli whom Stothard accused when he ' . . . allowed he [Blake] had been misled to extravagances in his art and he knew by whom'. While Fuseli freely admitted that Blake was ' . . . d--d good to steal from', one must agree with Mason that it is difficult to find any direct reference to Blake in Fuseli's work. It would appear that if Fuseli 'stole' from Blake it was a 'painterly' borrowing. For instance, in general Fuseli's colour and tones are very similar to Blake's (cf: *The Four and Twenty Elders*, c.1800-5: Tate, London). More specifically, Fuseli adapts Blake's yellow aura behind a head (cf: *Glad Day*, c. 1780: British Museum) in such a drawing as no. 25 and Blake's scalloped cloud form (cf: *Elohim Creating Adam*, c. 1795: Tate, London) is found in less precise form in nos. 34 and 36. As he confessed, it was colour that eluded Fuseli; and there was none better to turn to than Blake in this field.

No. 4, "Subject from Milton's L'Allegro" (c1780), has a figure of Laughter "not unlike, in spirit and pose" the figure of Laughter in Blake's "Mirth" (c1815). No. 18, "Chriemhild throwing herself on the body of Siegfried, assassinated by Trony" (1815) has a central group "found also at the foot of Blake's title page to *America*" -- a woman embracing a warrior's body. No. 24 is the Aeschylus illustration already mentioned. No. 30, "Vergil, Dante and Geryon" (1811) is very different from Blake's conception in his later Dante illustration. Not much can be made of Blake's following Fuseli here and Tomory points the difference: Fuseli's Geryon is "a *terribilita* image and yet accurately drawn from the text -- Blake's, a creature of gentle deceit and more arbitrarily conceived". No. 36, "Death and Sin bridging the 'Waste' of Chaos and met by Satan on his return from Earth" (c1819-21) also follows Blake: "The same figure of Satan also appears in Blake's *Argument from The Daughters of Albion* of 1793 [the figure springing from the sunflower], and in the top section of the title page to his *America*". That Fuseli follows Blake in this and no. 18 seems to contradict Tomory's assumption that Fuseli was little indebted to Blake for other than "painterly" qualities.

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3. J. Deffett Francis: THE SWANSEA BLAKES

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"Half-a-dozen of William Blake's finest works, which did belong to his wife, will attract attention by reason of their quaintness and beauty. They bear the date 1793." On 20 September 1878, *The Cambrian* reported these items in its list of 155 prints, drawings and watercolours in the newly opened J. Deffett Francis Art Gallery. Below, in the main reading room of the Swansea Public Library, were 4,000 volumes from the same benefactor.