

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

N O T E

A Minute Particular Particularized: Blake's Second Set of Illustrations to Paradise Lost

Martin Butlin

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 6, Issue 2, Fall 1972, pp. 44-46



Notes

A "MINUTE PARTICULAR" PARTICULARIZED: BLAKE'S SECOND SET OF ILLUSTRATIONS TO *PARADISE LOST*

Martin Butlin

In his otherwise admirable article on Blake's illustrations to Milton, published in the collection of essays on *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in honor of John S. Diekhoff,¹ Joseph Anthony Wittreich challenges my statement in an earlier issue of the *Blake Newsletter* that the second set of illustrations to *Paradise Lost*, painted for Thomas Butts in 1808, originally consisted of twelve watercolors, thus following the earlier, smaller series done in 1807 for the Rev. Joseph Thomas and now in the Huntington Library.² Although he now accepts that "The Judgment of Adam and Eve" in the Houghton Library can be added to the nine designs in the Boston Museum, I should perhaps spell out the main arguments for also including "Satan arousing the Rebel Angels" in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the larger version of "Satan, Sin and Death" in the Huntington Library, though most of these arguments can in fact be deduced from the available printed sources.

Wittreich's first objection is that the two last-named designs are larger than the Boston watercolors. I have examined and measured all the watercolors (that in the Houghton Library unfortunately only in its mount) and the dimensions are as follows (inches first, followed by centimeters in parentheses):

- i "Satan arousing the Rebel Angels"
20 3/8 x 15 1/2 (51.8 x 39.3)
- ii "Satan, Sin and Death"
19 1/2 x 15 7/8 (49.5 x 40.3)
- iii "Christ offers to redeem Man"
19 1/2 x 15 1/2 (49.6 x 39.3)
- iv "Satan watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve"
20 x 15 1/16 (50.7 x 38.2)
- v "Adam and Eve asleep"
19 3/8 x 15 5/16 (49.2 x 38.8)
- vi "Raphael warns Adam and Eve"
19 9/16 x 15 5/8 (49.7 x 39.7)
- vii "The Rout of the Rebel Angels"
19 5/16 x 15 1/16 (49.1 x 38.2)
- viii "The Creation of Eve"
19 11/16 x 15 3/4 (49.9 x 40)
- ix "The Temptation and Fall of Eve"
19 5/8 x 15 1/4 (49.7 x 38.7)
- x "The Judgment of Adam and Eve"
19 9/16 x 15 3/8 (49.6 x 39)
(sight measurements only; possibly larger)

Martin Butlin is Keeper of the British Collection at the Tate Gallery, London, and a specialist on the work of Blake and J. M. W. Turner. He is the author of *William Blake: A Complete Catalogue of the Works in the Tate Gallery*, and he is compiling a complete catalogue of Blake's paintings, watercolors, and drawings.

- xi "Michael foretelling the Crucifixion"
19 3/4 x 15 (50.1 x 38.1)
- xii "The Expulsion of Adam and Eve"
19 11/16 x 15 1/4 (50 x 38.8)

From this it will be seen that "Satan, Sin and Death" is in no way exceptional in size, while the extra height of "Satan arousing the Rebel Angels" represents no greater variation than that between other works in the series.

Wittreich's second argument is that the two designs excluded by him are conventional in subject matter. Both Blake and Thomas Butts might well have contradicted this expression of personal opinion. In fact the latter might well have been annoyed had Blake omitted two of the subjects that one might most reasonably expect to find included in a series of illustrations to *Paradise Lost* (he already had a color print of another famous scene from the poem, "The House of Death" now in the Tate Gallery). The long tradition of eighteenth-century representations of "Satan, Sin and Death," to say nothing of Burke's use of this subject as the ideal exemplar of the Sublime, is also an argument in favor of its inclusion in any series. Conventional though they may be, Blake did duplicate these subjects for some reason or other: the completion of Butts' set seems the most obvious.

Thirdly, Wittreich argues from the premise that "Satan calling [up] his Legions" was, in Blake's words, 'painted at intervals' as an experiment Picture."³ This quotation from Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* refers however to the last of the tempera paintings included in his exhibition of 1809, not to one of the watercolors, each of which was qualified as "A Drawing." The tempera, which belonged to Samuel Palmer, is now, like the watercolor, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, while the "more perfect Picture," afterward executed for a Lady of high rank, "who was in fact Lady Egremont, is still at Petworth.

All twelve of the larger watercolors came from the Butts collection, though the nine at Boston left that collection at a different time from the other three, being sold by Thomas Butts, Jr., at Foster's on 29 June 1853, lot 139, when they were bought by J. C. Strange; like other works from Strange's collection they were with Quaritch's in the 1880's, figuring in catalogues in 1883 and 1887, and they were sold by Quaritch's to the Boston Museum in 1890. The other three watercolors were all included in List 3 ("Works of Unascertained Method") of the catalogue of Blake's works by William Rossetti included in the second volume of the first, 1863 edition of Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*. All three were

1 Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "William Blake: Illustrator-Interpreter of *Paradise Regained*" in *Calm of Mind: Tercentenary essays on Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes in Honor of John S. Diekhoff*, ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Cleveland and London: Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1971), pp. 93-132.

2 *Blake Newsletter*, 3 (1969), 57. For Thomas' ownership of the 1807 series see Leslie Parris, "William Blake's Mr. Thomas" in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5 December 1968, p. 1390.

3 Wittreich, p. 100. See Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* 1809, p. 54 no. ix, reprinted in Keynes, *Complete Writings of William Blake*, 1957 and subsequent editions, p. 582.

starred as "more probably coloured" and described as being in the collection of "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts."⁴ A number of Apocalyptic subjects from the series of illustrations to the Bible painted in watercolor for Thomas Butts between 1800 and 1805, similarly described as belonging to "Mr. Fuller, from Mr. Butts," are listed by Rossetti⁵ with quotations from an unspecified "Sale-catalogue" which unfortunately cannot be traced, and all, together with the three *Paradise Lost* watercolors, passed to H. A. J. Munro and were sold from his collection at Christie's on 24 April 1868. The full details for the three *Paradise Lost* designs are as follows:

- i "Satan arousing the Rebel Angels." Listed by Rossetti, no. 17, as "'Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen.'" Munro sale 1868, lot 501, under the same title, bought by Colnaghi, sold 1869 to the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- ii "Satan, Sin and Death." Listed by Rossetti, no. 18, as
 "'O Father, what extends thy hand,
 she cried,
 Against thy only son?'
 (Satan, Sin, and Death, from 'Paradise Lost')."

Munro sale 1868, lot 500, as "'O Father! what intends thy hand,'" etc., bought by "Cuff"; lent to the Burlington Fine Arts Club Blake exhibition of 1876 by R. P. Cuffe; sold anonymously by "Chas. De C. Cuff" (see annotated catalogue at Christie's) at Christie's on 19 July 1907, lot 46, bought by F. T. Sabin; it was with Rosenbach's by 1911, and was sold in 1916 to Henry E. Huntington. An inscription on the back confirms that this was "drawn for Mr. Butts from whom it passed to Mr. Fuller."
- x "The Judgment of Adam and Eve." Listed by Rossetti, no. 16, as "'So judged He man.' - (Paradise Lost)." Munro sale 1868, lot 502, as "'So judged he man, both judge and Saviour sent,'" bought by Kibbe; passed, with other Blakes from Kibbe, to Marsden J. Perry; sold 1908 to Walter A. White; presented 1966 by John H. White and Harold T. White to the Houghton Library.

While Butts' other sets of illustrations to Milton have remained intact, it is not impossible that his son, in his dispersal of the collection, should have broken up the *Paradise Lost* illustrations into two groups, selling the majority in 1853 and the other three at the other, untraced sale at which they were bought by Fuller. The admittedly much larger group of illustrations to the Bible was sold off at a number of different times.

A further, though contradictory, line of inquiry is provided by the form in which the watercolors are signed and dated. All of those at Boston with the exception of no. xi, "Michael fore-

telling the Crucifixion," which is unsigned, are inscribed "WBlake 1808."⁶ Nos. i, "Satan arousing the Rebel Angels," and x, "The Judgment of Adam and Eve," are inscribed in precisely the same way. The exception is no. ii, "Satan, Sin and Death," which bears Blake's standard "WB inv" monogram and no date. It is tempting, but probably unreliable, to use the form of Blake's signature as an argument for dating his works. For instance, one set of the large color prints of 1795 was inscribed with the "WB inv" monogram, though perhaps not until they were sold to Butts in 1805. Those of the Biblical temperas and watercolors that were signed and dated between 1799 and 1805 were similarly inscribed, as was the first, Rev. Joseph Thomas' set of illustrations to *Comus* of c. 1801, now in the Huntington Library. Four isolated Biblical watercolors of 1806 and 1809 are, on the other hand, signed more fully.⁷ The first set of *Paradise Lost* designs also represent a transition, some being signed "WB," without "inv," others "WBlake," in either case with or without the date "1807." Later works, such as the Rev. Joseph Thomas' set of illustrations to Milton's *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* of 1809 (Whitworth Institute, Manchester), those to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York) and *Paradise Regained* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), both of which are watermarked "M & J LAY 1816" (evidence for their date omitted by Wittreich in his essay⁸), and the late temperas at the Tate Gallery of "The Ghost of a Flea,"

4 Gilchrist (1863), II, 255, nos. 16, 17 and 18. In Rossetti's own notes to his lists, now in the Houghton Library (see *Blake Newsletter* 2 [1968], 39-40, and 3 [1969], 48-51), he mistakenly associates "The Judgment of Adam and Eve" with the earlier version of the subject in the 1807 set, then in the possession of Alfred Aspland, which he had not included in his 1863 lists. In the revised lists printed in the 1880 edition of Gilchrist's *Life*, which included the Aspland set, Rossetti omitted all three *Paradise Lost* watercolors from his List 3, inserting "Satan at the Gate of Hell, guarded by Sin and Death" into his main List 1 (of "Works in Colour") as no. 234 with the note: "May presumably have belonged at first to the set of Nine Designs from 'Paradise Lost', No. 90 [the Butts-Boston set]." He also inserted as no. 233 a "Satan calling up his Legions." This he described as a tempera, different in composition from his no. 51 (the Palmer-V. & A. version), but as he also lists the Petworth tempera as no. 52, his no. 233 was in fact probably the V. & A. watercolor; in many ways his 1880 lists, though fuller, are more confused than those of 1863.

5 Gilchrist (1863), II, 255, nos. 174-77.

6 No. iv, "Satan watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve," is in fact so inscribed twice in the lower right-hand corner; presumably Blake's original mount obscured the lower inscription so he repeated it immediately above. The inscription can be clearly seen in the reproduction in Helen D. Willard, *William Blake water-color drawings* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1957), which includes plates of all nine Boston designs for *Paradise Lost*.

7 "The Assumption of the Virgin" in the Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, is inscribed "WB. inv. [not in monogram] 1806" (repr. Geoffrey Keynes, *William Blake's Illustrations to the Bible*, 1957, p. 51, no. 174); "The Repose of the Holy Family in Egypt" in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and "By the Waters of Babylon" in the Fogg Art Museum are inscribed "1806 WB inv," again not in monogram (repr. Keynes, *Illustrations*, p. 31, no. 96b); and "The Whore of Babylon" in the British Museum is inscribed "WBlake inv & del 1809" (repr. Keynes, *Illustrations*, p. 51, no. 168).

8 Wittreich, pp. 96-97, 125 n. 15.

THE STATES OF PLATE 25 OF *JERUSALEM*

Deirdre Toomey

Plate 25 of Blake's *Jerusalem* exists in three states. The Preston Proof Plate, the British Museum copy, the Rinder copy and the Cunliffe copy are all in the first state. The Harvard and Mellon copies are in the second state. The Pierpont Morgan and all posthumous copies are in the third state.

When one compares Plate 25 in the British Museum copy [illus. 1--see the front covers for all five illustrations] with that in the Harvard copy [illus. 2], major differences are immediately obvious. In the background of the Harvard copy additional fibers are present under the central female's right arm. Small horizontal lines have been added between the right-hand female's head

Deirdre Toomey is writing her doctoral thesis at the University of London. She co-authored with Morton Paley an article on the visual sources of Jerusalem 25 that was published previously in the Newsletter.

and hands and above the central female's left hand. Similar lines, though wavy, are present in the space above the right-hand female's lap, in the text between "bosom" and "Evermore Amen" and to the right of the central female's head. The rocks are slightly stippled and roughly cross-hatched, as is the ground in front of Albion. A line is present along the edge of the square stone block. A considerable amount of anatomical detail has been added to the figures. The right-hand female has received the most attention. A whole series of details has been added to her back, shoulder, upper arm, thighs and calf. She has also received an additional lock of hair in the small of her back and a line clarifying her jaw. Her left eye has been redefined and two tears have been added on her cheek. Albion has received four delicate lines on his upper chest and two small lines on the inside of his right thigh. From my point of view the most interesting change is that to the central figure, who receives a clearly marked pudendum reminiscent of the Rosso *Tre Parche*.¹

¹ See Morton D. Paley and Deirdre Toomey, "Two Visual Sources for Plate 25 of *Jerusalem*," *Blake Newsletter*, 5 (Winter 1971-72), 185-90.

(Butlin, continued)

c. 1819, and "The Body of Abel found by Adam and Eve" and "Satan smiting Job with Sore Boils" of c. 1826, are all signed "WBlake" in full. The Dante illustrations of 1824-27, when signed, bear a simple "WB" without "inv." The great exception to this rule is the first, Butts set of illustrations to the *Book of Job* in the Morgan Library, three of which are signed "WB inv" in Blake's standard monogram (but perhaps, as I suspect for stylistic reasons, these date from much earlier than is usually thought, though 1805-06 is even earlier than I would otherwise have placed them).

Absolute consistency cannot, however, always be hoped for and, even if only two of the three candidates match those at Boston in the form of their signatures, all three match them in style. As compared with the earlier series the figures in the Boston watercolors are marked by a much greater degree of finish and monumentality: their heads are larger in scale, their bodies less elongated and more firmly modeled. Exactly the same development is found between the three other large designs and their prototypes in the 1807 set. In particular, it is impossible, looking at the two watercolors of "Satan, Sin and Death" side by side in the Huntington Library,⁹ to imagine Blake painting the larger one before that from the 1807 set; in every way it is an improvement, in the opposition of the two main protagonists, in the weight of the figures, and in the compactness and power of the design as a whole. On the other hand it certainly cannot date from as late as the three illustrations to *Paradise Lost* done in 1822 for John Linnell, perhaps as the beginning of a complete set.¹⁰ These are typical of Blake's late style in their soft modeling and subtle, broken coloring, having a grace and sensuous quality completely different from Blake's works in the first decade of the century, whereas "Satan, Sin and Death" is typical of the firm modeling, restricted

coloring, and wirey outlines of the middle of that decade.

The common-sense solution, even in the case of Blake, is sometimes the best. In 1807 Blake did twelve illustrations to *Paradise Lost* for the Rev. Joseph Thomas. The next year he repeated the set (with one change, replacing "Satan spying on Adam and Raphael's Descent into Paradise" by "Adam and Eve Sleeping") for his most important patron Thomas Butts, as he was also to do in the case of his illustrations to *Comus* and *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*.¹¹ Of twelve designs similar in style and dimensions, all but two dated 1808, and all traceable to the Butts collection, three have by chance become separated from the other nine, but to disprove the obvious it needs more than an *a priori* theory about Blake dropping his illustrations to the first two books of *Paradise Lost* in order to begin his series "with the Son's offering of himself as Redeemer," thus reflecting the way that he "casts off his early Satanism as he apprehends the Christocentric character of Milton's diffuse epic."¹²

⁹ Or conveniently juxtaposed in C. H. Collins Baker and Robert R. Wark, *Catalogue of William Blake's Drawings and Paintings in the Huntington Library* (1963), pls. 2 and 3; the rest of the 1807 set is repr. pls. 1 and 4-13.

¹⁰ "Satan watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve" and "The Creation of Eve" are in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; "Michael foretelling the Crucifixion" in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. See David Bindman, *William Blake, Catalogue of the Collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (1970), pp. 44-45, the last-named repr. pl. 36.

¹¹ See Parris, my n. 2 above.

¹² Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "A Note on Blake and Fuseli" in *Blake Newsletter*, 2 (1969), 4, no. 2, and Wittreich in *Calm of Mind*, p. 101.