

1980/7

WILLIAM BLAKE

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

HENRY FUSELI

THE THREE WITCHES OF MACBETH

AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

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WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

As poet, watercolourist and engraver, Blake was the creator of an idiosyncratic mythology. Born of a lower middle class merchant family, Blake had no academic training, but attended Henry Par's preparatory drawing school from 1767 until his apprenticeship in 1772 to James Basire, engraver to the Society of Antiquaries. At Westminster Abbey, Blake made drawings for Gough's Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain (1786), thereby immersing himself in the mediaeval tradition, with which he found a spiritual affinity.

In 1782 Blake married and moved to Leicester Fields in London, where he completed and published in 1783 his first work, Poetical Sketches. In these early years he developed lasting friendships with the painters Barry, Fuseli and Flaxman, and for a while shared Flaxman's preoccupation with classical art.

For his next major publication, Songs of Innocence, completed in 1789, Blake invented a new engraving technique whereby lyrics and linear design could be reproduced simultaneously in several stages in the copper plate. The resulting prints were then hand-coloured. This complete fusion of tint and illustration recalls mediaeval illuminated manuscripts, from which Blake derived obvious inspiration.

From 1790 until 1800 Blake lived in Lambeth and produced books, thematically characterised by energetic protest against eighteenth century morality (The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, 1790-3) and against political authority (America 1793, and The French Revolution, 1791). These works corroborate Blake's radicalism, which was demonstrated by his sympathy with Swedenborg in religion, with Mary Wollstonecraft in education, and with the Jacobins during the French Revolution. But finally, Blake was not an activist. These books are more important for Blake's emphasis on the polemical aspect of his imagery.

In the same category as the books, is a series of colour prints of biblical subjects (technically innovative but related to the monotype). The human figures are Titan-like in proportion and recall Blake's early and continuing admiration for Michelangelo. Commercial work by Blake in this period included Fertilization of Egypt after Henry Fuseli, and illustration for the first edition of Erasmus Darwin's The Botanic Garden (1791). Blake added to Fuseli's preliminary sketch a bearded patriarch with arms outstretched, which, according to Anthony Blunt derived from a Roman relief figure (see note to Illustration 10 below).

From 1800 until 1803 Blake lived at Felpham in Sussex near his new patron, the poet William Hayley, whom he met through Flaxman. Relations with Hayley eventually became insufferable and Blake returned to London, nevertheless in optimistic mood, largely owing to his study of Milton. The dark problems of the Lambeth books were resolved in a new conviction that imagination can be liberated in this world through the senses. (This concept found its final expression much later in Illustration 20 of The Book of Job). This new direction was developed in Milton (1808) and expanded on a greater scale in the more complex and obscure Jerusalem (1818).

Blake exhibited watercolours at the Royal Academy several times (as early as 1780), but these had never commanded any public attention. In 1809, Blake arranged a private exhibition of his own works, for which he wrote a Descriptive Catalogue, which clearly set forth his artistic theories. The very linear style and esoteric iconography are in accord with the spiritual and mystical purposes which motivate his art. Like Joshua Reynolds (whose theories Blake, however, opposed), Blake was responsive to a wealth of artistic images which he ingeniously transformed and adapted in his own work.

Blake spent the last years of his life working on the Illustrations of the Book of Job and the drawings for Dante's Divine Comedy. The Job theme interested him as early as 1896 (The Complaint of Job). The commission for the later engravings came from John Linnell in 1825. As he had adapted Milton and would do so with Dante, Blake intensified the biblical text by stressing the mystery of human suffering and redefining the nature of Job's sin and redemption. "Job is a rival to the Bible lesson, though it occasionally seems to complement it. Were it not for the fact that Blake is so intent upon divulging its 'real' theme, as he conceived it, his own work could be taken for a parody of the complacency with which the Bible story ends" (Alfred Kazin). These engravings are the final statement of Blake's philosophical concerns with the depths (Illustration 11) and the ecstatic heights (Illustration 14) of the human spirit. Illustration 20 celebrates his belief in the transcendental purpose of art.

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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF JOB (1823-6)

Accession number: 1980-10/1-22

Purchased by the Auckland City Council, 1980

Titlepage

Line engraving, 21.8 x 15.7 cm

1. Job in prosperity

Line engraving, 19.5 x 15.8 cm

Job 1: 1-3. Job 'the greatest of all the men of the east' with his family, the counterpart of the last design of the series; 21. Job and his Family restored to prosperity. In his own interpretation of the text, Blake shows the family as observing the forms alone of religion: They kneel, take it all from books, and leave their musical instruments unplayed on the tree. The Lord's Prayer, the opening of which is inscribed within the setting sun, is contrasted with the unqualified praise of the passages from Revelation 15:3 inscribed within the rising sun of the other design.

The Lord's Prayer and the presence of a Gothic cathedral in the background, recall the mediaeval tradition that Job foreshadowed Christ, a tradition elevated by the Swedenborgians to the belief that Job was a Christian priest of the Old Testament times. However, if he is a priest, he is at this stage only the priest of a negative religion.

2. Satan before the Throne of God

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.1cm

Job 1:6-12. The Lord boasts of Job's righteousness, whereupon Satan says that he has been specially protected and challenges the Lord to test him by letting him come to harm. The Lord puts all that Job has, but not Job himself, in Satan's power. Below can be seen Job and his family, with two guardian angels.

Blake shows the Lord in Job's image, though even more passive, on his throne with a large book on his knees. Satan by contrast, is a young, physically ideal energetic figure, recalling Orc, Blake's representations of his own revolutionary spirit.

The compartmentalisation of the composition, characteristic of several of the best of the Job designs, is typical of Blake's conceptual attitude to narrative by this date.

3. Satan destroys Job's sons and daughters

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.3cm

"The Bible says that God formed Nature perfect, but that Man perverted the order of Nature, since which time the elements are fill'd with the Prince of Evil, who has the power of the air. Natural Religion is the voice of God & not the result of reasoning on the Powers of Satan. Horrible! The Bishop is an Inquisitor. God never makes one man murder another, nor one nation. There is a vast difference between an accident brought on by a man's carelessness & a destruction from the design of another..."

William Blake; from Annotation to "An Apology for the Bible in a Series of Letters addressed to Thomas Paine by R. Watson, D.D.;F.R.S."
London 1797.

4. The Messengers tell Job of the Misfortunes that have Befallen him

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.2cm

5. Satan goes forth from the Presence of the Lord

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.2 cm

6. Satan smites Job with Sore Boils

Line engraving, 21.6 x 16.1cm

Job 2:7 Satan, having failed to provoke Job by attacking his goods and family, obtains the Lord's permission to harm Job himself, provided that his life is saved. Satan then smites Job with sore boils. In the Bible Job remains steadfast, but his affliction has been related to a passage on Plate 21 of Jerusalem in which Blake sees boils as the symptom of shame:

"The disease of Shame covers me from head to foot, I have no hope
Every boil upon my body is a separate (and) deadly Sin,
Doubt first assailed me, then Shame took possession of me
Shame divides Families..."

Blake here shows Job's wife absorbed in her own grief, separated from her husband by his shame.

7. Job's comforters

Line engraving, 21.3 x 16.4 cm

8. Job's despair

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.3cm

9. Eliphaz's Vision of God

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.4cm

Job 4:12-16 "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice..."

10. Job rebuked by his friends

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.2

In this work the figures of the three friends indicate clearly an affinity with Henry Fuseli's painting, Three Witches.

11. Job's Evil Dream of Satan worshipped as God

Line engraving, 21.3 x 16.4cm

Job 7:13-15. In the text the nature of Job's dreams is not stated but Blake took some of his imagery from elsewhere in the Book of Job (e.g. Job 30:17 and 30), from which Blake quotes in the margins of the engraving of this design. Traditionally Job's dreams were identified with a vision of Hell, but Blake adds his personal idea that such concepts as Hell are the evil products of authoritarian religion, typified by the Mosaic Tables of the Law to which the Lord points. The Lord himself is now shown as thoroughly evil, with cloven hoof and entwined by a serpent, Job's God has become Satan.

This dream is the turning point in the story. It marks Job's lowest point but also the point at which he recognises that it is his conception of God that is wrong.

12. Elihu rebukes Job and his friends

Line engraving, 21.3 x 16.2cm

13. The Lord answers Job out of the Whirlwind

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.1cm

Job 38:1. The Lord appears out of the whirlwind to answer Job and says, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). He continues with rhetorical questions such as that quoted below, "Hath the Rain a Father and who hath begotten the Drops of the Dew" (Job 38:28); the other question is from Psalm 104:3. The Whirlwind is shown in the distinct world of the marginal design outside the main picture, to be made up from images of God. Below, trees are pressed to the ground, echoing the figures of Job's friends, but they remain unbroken, just as Job remained unbroken under adversity.

In one state of the engraving Blake showed the whirlwind bursting out of the central design into the margin above, but did away with this to preserve the usual distinct frame, considerably to the loss of dramatic effect.

14. The Sons of God shout for Joy

(this illustration is also known as When the Morning Stars Sang Together)

Line engraving, 21.3 x 16.3cm

Job 38:4-7. God, having appeared to Job in a whirlwind, describes the Creation, after which the morning stars had sung together and all the Sons of God had shouted for joy. Job, his wife and his friends kneel in a distinct, cave-like Earth below. The two halves of the composition are linked by the figure of the Lord with outstretched arms, under which appear the sun-god Helios and moon goddess Selene representing day and night.

These Greek gods were probably taken from Antique gems. He thus, as in other cases, related them to an original biblical source, now lost, rather than to the debased art of the Greeks and Romans.

15. Behemoth and Leviathan

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.2cm

Job 40:15 - Job 41:34. The Lord humbles Job by enumerating the power of His creation: "Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee" (quoted below the design). In the right-hand margin Blake introduced the descriptions of the two monsters from Job 40:19 and 41:34 with his own words, "Of Behemoth (or 'Of Leviathan') he saith...". Leviathan is described in various places in the Bible as a sea-monster, while the representation of Behemoth as a hippopotamus is the traditional one, marvellously stylised in a way that parallels Dürer's famous print. Blake shows them inhabiting two distinct areas of the globe, the land and the sea. The two other texts, from Job 36:29 (above) and 37:11-12 (on the left), relate them to such natural phenomena as clouds and thunder ('the noise of his Tabernacle').

16. The Fall of Satan

Line engraving, 19.7 x 16.2cm

17. The Vision of God

Line engraving, 21.5 x 15.7cm

18. Job prays for his Friends

Line engraving, 21.3 x 16.3cm

19. Job accepts Charity

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.4cm

20. Job and his Daughters

Line engraving, 21.5 x 16.3cm

Job 42:13-15. The text contains no more than the statement that, after the Lord had 'blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning,' he had seven sons and three daughters, adding the daughters' names and concluding with the verse quoted below the design. Blake has drawn from the apocryphal Testament of Job in which Job, shortly before his death tells his daughters the story of his afflictions and his salvation. These are shown pictured on the wall. On the left is the destruction of Job's servants (Job 1:17), on the right the destruction of his ploughmen (Job 1:15), and in the centre, the Lord's answering Job out of the whirlwind, the subject of the thirteenth design in the series (Job 38:1; see illustration 13: here Job's wife bows to the ground, unseeing, like Job's friends, whereas in illustration 13 she shares the vision). The two semi-circles below contain representations of Job's wife in despair - the texts at the top and bottom are from Psalms 139 and 8 respectively, reflecting two aspects of the knowledge that Job has gained through his experiences. The marginal designs contain angels, vines representing family love, and the musical instruments that Job and his family are to take up and play in the next, final scene of the story.

21. Job and his Family restored to Prosperity

Line engraving, 21.4 x 16.3cm

The title below the main design comes from Job 42:12, while the concluding lines of the book, Job 42:16 and 17, occupy the two lower corners. The upper corners contain the full text (from the Song of Moses in Revelation 15:3):

"Great and Marvellous are thy Works Lord God Almighty
Just and true are thy Ways O though King of Saints."

Below in the middle appears an altar, as in the very similar border to the first design; the flanking ram and ox have been reversed. Whereas the altar on the first design is inscribed 'The Letter Killeth The Spirit giveth Life (2 Corinthians, 3:6) It is Spiritually Discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14)", here the altar is inscribed "In burnt offerings for Sin thou hast no pleasure" from Hebrews, 10:6; between the two they spell out Blake's abhorrence of the material observances of the Old Testament, the adherence to which had been Job's downfall.

(Notes from Martin Butlin, William Blake)

Lot and the Angels (?)

Accession number: 1887/1/44/A

Pen and ink, 184 x 298 cm

Presented by Sir George Grey

"III. From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements none could deduce a fourth or fifth."

Blake, from There is no Natural Religion, 1788

Tomory dates this work to circa 1785-6.

This drawing is intriguing, not only because of the uncertainty over its correct title, but in its asymmetrical facial expressions. The relief shifts from the flanking figures to the central 'vision' holding the goblet and suggests that Blake's awareness of antique reliefs was via printed engravings. This work is an important 'cartoon' of Blake's style at the time: left and right parts of a picture related by their connected contrast to a central figure.

Compare the top middle section of 20. Job and his daughters.

HENRY FUSELI (1741-1825)

One of the most inventive artists of the eighteenth century, Henry Fuseli explored in his paintings the violent world of nightmares, spirits, rape, murder and the like. Born in Zurich, Fuseli was the son of a portrait and landscape painter who published a history of Swiss painters when Fuseli was fourteen. The elder Fuseli was an intellectual, a friend of Klopstock and Kleist, as well as a correspondent of Mengs and Winckelmann. Raised in this intellectual and creative environment, the young Fuseli displayed an early interest in art and produced a number of satirical sketches, but his father chose the Ministry for him.

Fuseli was sent to the Collegium Carolinum where he had two teachers, J.J. Bodmer and Johann Jakob Breitinger, whose interests were to have a tremendous influence on Fuseli. Both Bodmer and Breitinger were editors of a weekly journal patterned on Addison's Spectator, and they both did research on the Minnesingers, the mediaeval courtly poets. In addition, Bodmer translated Milton's Paradise Lost, a part of Dante's Inferno and a section of the Nibelungenlied. He was also enthusiastic about Homer and Shakespeare. Both Bodmer and Breitinger stressed the importance of feeling over reason, and this emphasis became important for Fuseli's art. At the Collegium Carolinum Fuseli also met a fellow student named Johann Lavater, who would later write poems, dramas and the like, as well as a treatise on physiognomy, a work which would have a profound effect on Fuseli's art.

In 1761 Fuseli was ordained a minister, but in the following year, together with Lavater, he wrote a political pamphlet criticizing the magistrate in Zurich, which led to an invitation to leave the city. Fuseli then travelled to a number of German towns, including Berlin, where he offered advice to the Swiss writer and aesthetician, Johann Sulzer, who was working on his treatise, Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste. Fuseli tried to earn his living here through translations, but did not succeed and in 1764 travelled to London with the British Ambassador to Berlin.

In England, Fuseli worked with a number of publishers, for whom he translated German texts into English, including Winckelmann's Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks. He also tutored Lord Waldegrave's son, the Viscount Chewton, and found time to attend the theatre, particularly the plays of Shakespeare.

In 1766 he accompanied Viscount Chewton to the continent, visiting Rousseau in Paris, going on to Lyon and Tours and returning to London in November. At this time Fuseli probably met Sir Joshua Reynolds, who encouraged him to become a painter, a career Fuseli had never totally abandoned, as his illustrations to Smollett's Pererine Pickle testify.

In 1770 Fuseli decided to devote himself entirely to painting and went to Italy, where he remained for eight years. He was, like many neo-classical artists, fascinated with antique art and the work of Michelangelo, but he also studied Mannerist paintings. His choice of subject matter was largely determined by his previous literary interests, such as Shakespeare and Milton. He was also engaged in illustrating the French edition of Lavater's Physiognomische Fragmente (The book appeared in German between 1775-1778).

Upon his departure from Italy in 1778, he went to Zurich where he painted the Oath of the Rütli for the Town Hall, but an unhappily resolved love affair made him leave for London. In 1780 Fuseli exhibited at the Royal Academy works taken from a variety of literary sources including an "Italian Mediaeval

Aphrodite carrying off Paris after his battle with Menelaus (1766-69)

pen with grey and pink wash, 218 x 178 cm

Accession number: 1965/51

Parental Care (c1795-1800)

Pen and ink with grey and blue wash, 192 x 288 cm

Accession number: 1965/58

Hephaestus, Bia and Crato securing Prometheus on Mount Caucasus (1800-1810)

Pen, pencil with grey and pink wash, 359 x 302 cm

Accession number: 1965/80

Achilles crying out at the French, confusing the Trojan army (c.1815)

Pencil with mauve and grey wash, 400 x 277cm

Accession number: 1965/71

Death and Sin Bridging the 'Waste' of Chaos and met by Satan on his return from Earth (c.1819-21)

Pencil, pen and watercolour, 393 x 315 cm

Accession number: 1965/64

Satan leaving the Gates of Hell, guarded by Sin and Death (1821)

Pencil with grey, brown and yellow wash, 398 x 301 cm

Accession number: 1965/77

The Serpent Tempting Eve (Satan's First Address to Eve) 1803-4

Oil on panel, 30.2 x 23.3cm

Presented by Sir George Grey, 1887

Accession number: 1887/1/13

Fuseli painted this work for the engraver P. W. Tomkins, who published it in J. Sharpes' Works of the British Poets (London, 1805). The painting was originally in the collection of Francis J. Du Roversay. Peter Tomory has noted that The Serpent Tempting Eve may date from 1802 as it is possible that Du Roversay commissioned the painting for engraved inclusion in his 1802 edition of Milton. Gert Schiff relates the painting to its source in the 1794-6 sketch Eve at the Forbidden Tree (Kunsthaus, Zurich). Fuseli used the sketch for a Gallery in 1800. This small painting is a separate reworking of an aspect of the Adam/Eve/Snake theme not illustrated in the original Milton Gallery paintings. Fuseli alludes to the following lines from Milton's Paradise Lost:

"He boulder now, uncall'd before her stood"
(Line 523)

"His gentle dumb expression turned at length the Eye of Eve"
(Line 527)
(Book 1X, Paradise Lost)

The Finding of the Body of the

etching, 24.8 x 14.7 cm

Accession number: M1885/16/9

The Three Witches in Macbeth (after 1783)

oil on canvas, 30.5 x 40.6cm

Presented by the M.A. Serra Trust, 1980

Accession number: 1980/8

Exhibited a year after The Nightmare (1782), this is one of the three small versions of the subject. The large original version (Kunsthau, Zurich) was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783.

The scene that Fuseli illustrates from Shakespeare's Macbeth takes place on the heath.

Banquo: "...What are these,
So wither'd and wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her chopping finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: you should bewomen,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so."

(Macbeth, I,3)

It is likely that Fuseli painted this work for use by one of the three engravers who produced prints of the painting. He painted detailed small versions so that the engravers could re-copy, rather than recreate, his original sketch. ("To learn the Language of Art, 'Copy For Ever' is My Rule" William Blake). This did not hinder, however, the caricature of the more well-known of Fuseli's works. James Gillray produced a satirical print of Three Witches soon after Fuseli had completed it, and included the inscription "Weird Sisters" Ministers of Darkness: Minions of the Moon".

Fuseli, in 1783, was yet to form his close association with Blake. The fact that they were both illustrators can be contrasted with this work: The three friends of Job are the counterparts to the Three Witches of Macbeth. Both men knew Lavater's behavioural physiognomy well, which notes that a specific expression over-expressed becomes a general emotion about that situation.

ALEXANDER RUNCIMAN (1736-1785)

Born in Edinburgh; trained with Robert Norie and at Foulis Academy; Rome via London 1766; Rome 1766-1771. Returned to Edinburgh 1771; in London 1772; painted the Ossian ceiling at Penicuik 1772-1773; Painting Master at the Trusters Academy; died suddenly 1785.

(Peter Tomory)

Cormar attacking the Spirits of the Waters

etching, 7.4 x 12.6 cm

Accession number: M1885/16/1

"The episode illustrated here is described in Macpherson's Poems of Ossian, Fingal where Calmar tells Connal, of Cormar having taken a wave... by the curling head and... searched its dark womb with his steel and forced the spirit to flee."

(Peter Tomory)

The dramatic chiaroscuro treatment of the main figure re-inforces Cormar's contrast with the 'spirit' shapes on either side. Runciman here echoes some of Fuseli's treatment of similar subjects where the action is seen to happen on a quasi-stage set.

Perseus assisted by Minerva about to kill Medusa

etching, 16.2 x 25.9 cm

Accession number: M1885/16/5

Runciman's debt to classical antiquity and sixteenth century Italian painting is obvious here. The figure of Minerva is modelled after Michelangelo's Haman in the vault of the Sistine Chapel.

His contemporary, John Brown, wrote "...his defects were of such a nature as to be obvious to the most unskilled eye, whilst his beauties were of a kind which few have sufficient taste or knowledge in the art to discover, far less appreciate."

(Cunningham 1879)

The finding of Corban Cargla

etching, 24.8 x 14.7 cm

Accession number: M1885/16/9

The Finding of Corban Cargla

etching, 14.0 x 8.2 cm

Accession number: M1885/16/3

This composition, according to Peter Tomory, is a highly compressed version of the Horizontal version.

Carbon Carglass (sic) is the prisoner of her father's murderer, King Starno, the deadly enemy of Fingal: "Fingal rushed in all his arms, wide-bounding over Truthor's stream, that sent its sullen roar, by night through Gormal's misty vale. A moonbeam glittered on a rock; in the midst stood a stately form; a form with floating locks like Lochlin's white-bosomed maids. Unequal are her steps and short, she throws a broken song on wind. At times she tosses her white arms, for grief is dwelling in her soul! She calls on the spirit of her father, Torcul turned away. "Who art thou" said Fingal "Voice of Night?" She trembling turned away. "Who art thou, in thy darkness?" She shrank into the cave. The king loosed the thongs from her hands." Despite its theatrical character, the etchings, especially the horizontal version, interprets the spirit of the encounter with scrupulous sincerity.

The finding of Corban Cargla
etching, 14.0 x 8.2 cm
Accession number: M1885/16/3

RICHARD WESTALL (1765-1836)

Richard Westall was born at Hertford. He was apprenticed to an heraldic engraver who lived in London, during which time he attended the Royal Academy Schools. Boydell employed him to illustrate Milton and to paint five subjects for the Shakespeare Gallery. Westall was elected an Associate of the Academy in 1792, and an Academician in 1794; he exhibited regularly until his death.

Ceres in search of Proserpine

oil on canvas, laid on board, 69.5 x 49.5 cm

Presented by Sir George Grey

Accession number: 1887/1/40

In antique mythologies, Ceres is commonly identified as Demeter and Proserpine as Persephone.

Proserpine was hidden on the island of Sicily by Ceres her mother. Ceres' husband, Zeus, promised Hades, God of the Underworld, their daughter in marriage. Ceres, when she learnt that her daughter had been carried away to the Underworld, started an immediate search. According to one account, Ceres heard Proserpine's departing cries carrying a lighted torch, she roamed the earth for nine days and nights, finally learning from Helios, the all-seeing sun-god, that Ceres was in the Underworld.

