William Blake in Contexts:


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Summary.

Biographical discussion of William Blake (1757-1827) has long been dominated by unexamined assumptions regarding his family background, his early religious allegiance, and his supposed rejection of the publishing world of his time. This dissertation presents biographical and other discoveries relating to Blake and his milieu that challenge some long-established commonplaces.

The dissertation is shaped by a concentration on the individuals indicated in the chapter titles (Rebekah Bliss, William Muir, Alexander Tilloch, Richard Twiss, Samuel Varley, Catherine Wright). I claim priority of discovery for the date of Blake’s mother’s first marriage, the identity of her first husband (Thomas Armitage, 1722-1751), and her true maiden name (Wright). I suggest an unexpected political allegiance for Blake’s father, indicated by his vote in the 1749 Westminster by-election.

I present the identity of Blake’s first known collector (Rebekah Bliss, 1747-1819), and uncover evidence of the commercial availability of Blake’s illuminated books in the 1790s. I link Blake to contemporary book-collecting circles and in particular to those in which Richard Twiss (1747-1818) participated.

I bring to light Blake’s friendship with Alexander Tilloch (1759-1825), and show how access to Tilloch’s library would have compelling consequences for the interpretation of Blake’s work. I identify Tilloch with a character in *An Island in the Moon*, and make further suggestions for the real-life counterparts of other persons caricatured in that work.

I demonstrate how Blake’s posthumous reputation was fostered by the facsimiles produced by Tilloch’s great-great-nephew William Muir (1845-1938), and show how this contributed to Blake’s influence on art and design in the later nineteenth century.

Further discoveries relating to Blake’s mother disclosing her provincial birth, the names of her parents and siblings, and her association with the Moravian sect, conclude the study.
Acknowledgments.

Some of the material in this dissertation has already been published; other elements have been the subject of conference papers:

A paper giving for the first time the true maiden name of Blake’s mother was published in the Fall 1999 issue of *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, and forms the basis of my Chapter I. Particular thanks must go to John Sargent of the City of Westminster Archives Centre for his invaluable assistance in obtaining photographs of documents deposited with the Archives Centre. An earlier version was read to the Blake Society in December 1998. Dr. M. K. Schuchard commented usefully on the published paper.

My identification (Chapter II) of Rebekah Bliss, Blake’s earliest known collector, began as a paper delivered to the 1794/1994 Blake Conference at St. Mary’s College and is published in *Blake in the Nineties*, edited by Clark and Worrall. In 1998, at the *Blake and the Book* Conference at St. Mary’s, I presented a paper (Chapter III) on the circle of Blake collectors associated with the antiquary Richard Gough. Chapters II and III could only have been written following Joan K. Stemmier’s pioneering researches in the Douce papers. I correct Stemmier’s transcript of two Blake references and add a third which she unaccountably missed. If I appear to criticise Professor Stemmier, that can in no way lessen the debt I owe her work. My thanks are due to Professor G. E. Bentley, Jr. for drawing Stemmier’s paper to my attention and for suggesting that I might bring specific local knowledge to a Blakean conundrum. Ted Ryan helped with matters genealogical and Jennifer Claridge provided the breakthrough my research required.

An earlier version of Chapter IV with the title “Alexander Tilloch: Original and Stereotype” was read at *1798 and its Implications*, the NASSR/BARS Joint Conference held at St. Mary’s College, Strawberry Hill, 6-10 July 1998. Dr. M. K. Schuchard generously granted me access to her notes on Tilloch.

Part of Chapter V (with the title “Blake, Newton and Apocalypse”) was read at *Romantic Revelations*, the British Association for Romantic Studies 6th International Conference, Keele University, 29 July-1 August 1999, and in a revised form (“Newton and ‘Newton’”) at a Tate Britain seminar in March 2002.


My account of William Muir (Chapter VII) had its origin in an invitation from the

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Edmonton Hundred Historical Society to speak on “William Muir and the Blake Press at Edmonton” in February 1991. I am grateful to the Society and to Mr. D. O. Pam, its then chairman, for encouraging me to put my haphazard notes on Muir into a semblance of order. My particular thanks are due to Dr. E. Mairi MacArthur for her help in locating references to Muir in Scottish newspapers, and for sharing her unrivalled knowledge of Iona history. Ted Ryan was generous with assistance and advice. A first version was published in *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* in 1993. I gratefully acknowledge the help received from G. E. Bentley, Jr., who allowed me to see his essay on Muir, coincidentally written at the same time as my own, and to improve mine on the basis of his.

The discovery of Blake’s mother’s membership of the Moravian congregation (Chapter VIII) was made by M. K. Schuchard in July 2001. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Schuchard for sharing her initial discovery with me. This allowed me the opportunity to pull together several different strands of research I had already undertaken into Blake’s parentage. A paper written jointly by Dr. Schuchard and myself is forthcoming (2003).

My most heartfelt thanks must go to Dr. David Worrall for his encouragement and confidence in me, and to my brother Geoff, who read and commented on successive drafts.

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4 Keri Davies, “William Muir and the Blake Press at Edmonton with Muir’s Letters to Kerrison Preston”, *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, vol. 27 (Summer 1993), 14-25.

5 G. E. Bentley, Jr., “Blake had no Quaritch”: the Sale of William Muir’s Blake Facsimiles”, *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, vol. 27 (Summer 1993), 4-13.
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Introduction.

William Blake’s father and mother were married in St George’s chapel, Hanover Square, on 15 October 1752, as ‘James Blake and Catherine Harmitage’. An inspection of the register disclosed that the entry was undoubtedly Hermitage, and not Harmitage. … The chapel at St George’s Mayfair, was a notorious bucket-shop for marriages, and convenient for couples who did not want to tangle with the Church of England.

— THOMPSON.6

Blake … tried to produce his own work in deliberate defiance of his period’s normal avenues of publication. Blake retreated to a method of literary production which antedated even the patronage system of the eighteenth century. And as for the commercial system of his own day, this was an institution from which Blake early sought to gain his independence. His project is implicit in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, explicit in his 1793 “Prospectus.”

— McGANN.7

Blake may have hoped to reach a public market with his colour-printed illuminated books and plates. But the market that we know he found for them was essentially private, composed of friends and acquaintances who appreciated his work, who were able to pay a commensurate price for it and by doing so assist Blake.

— PHILLIPS.8

Statements about William Blake (1757-1827), his life, family, and milieu, of the above sort are still considered uncontroversial and unexceptionable accounts of his family circumstance


7Jerome J. McGann, A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism (Chicago, 1983), 44.

and artistic career. In this dissertation I shall demonstrate that the above statements are inaccurate or seriously misleading, and put forward evidence for an alternative Blake — one less beholden to a radical dissenting tradition; more part of his everyday world; more concerned for the commercial success of his work than the above writers have realised.

I situate my work within the historicist traditions in Blake studies — expanding and developing that approach in a more firmly evidence-based and empirical form. Erdman and Bentley have provided influential models for Blake criticism: Erdman for placing Blake into his times; Bentley for an emphasis on bibliographical research and biographical detail.9 Just as the archaeologist builds up a picture of a culture from the most disparate fragments (shells, animal bones, potsherds), so too I try to build up a picture of the social and intellectual world in which William Blake moved from notices of births and deaths, wills, sales catalogues, brief references in letters — all these tiny indications of family and friendships, the cultural records or obscured traces of his life and work. What I want to achieve is that broad-sweep perception that somehow derives from simply stepping back from the accumulated detail.

The biographical emphasis of this dissertation goes against a dominant tendency in literary criticism, which has long regarded biography as at best a humble adjunct and at worst an intrusive enemy of its activity. According to the New Criticism, which had its heyday from about 1935 into the 1950s, the poem is a self-contained, autonomous structure. It is cut off from the author. It may be examined for its own “tension”, “irony” and “paradoxes”. The texts which supported the New Critics and which still underlie literary theory’s desire to

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disengage the author from the text are the famous essays by Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy”. These critics sought to belittle “biographical or genetic inquiry” by saying that it was undertaken “in the spirit of a man who would settle a bet” resulting in a “confusion between the poem and its origins” such that the poem or work of art “as an object of specifically critical judgement tends to disappear”.10

As a reaction to this, the development in literary studies termed historicism is important because it denies that the opus can be autonomous. Historical contingencies in this view resonate within a literary work, which is partly brought into being by the social practices of its time even as it contributes to them. Historicism takes us through the pathway of the opus to matters outside the creator’s control and breaks down the binary hegemony of “author” and “opus”.11

Biography links human events in the way human beings experience them in an arbitrary, but biologically simple, unit of time and space. Ever since Gilchrist’s Life (1863), biographies of William Blake have taken a romantic view of the Artist as Hero. Gilchrist himself was influenced by Carlyle’s Great Man theory of history, and more recent biographical studies — if more self-conscious about narrative structure, voice and context — have largely stayed true to their roots: subjects worthy of biographies, if not necessarily


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Great Men or Heroes, are Important People. Gilchrist’s influence has been felt even by Blake’s most recent biographers, Peter Ackroyd and, arguably, G. E. Bentley, Jr. As Catherine Peters comments: “writing a biography is still thought of as the art of skewing reality so that the light may fall more brightly on one figure. The idea that the subject is the hero or heroine of the biography is seldom challenged. Both writer and reader need to be aware that this concentration on one life, to which all others must become secondary, distorts both the historical record, and, perhaps even more importantly, the central figure itself. For there is no such thing as a ‘secondary life’ in the real world.”

One of the most interesting phenomena in late twentieth-century historiography is what came to be known as “microhistory”. It started with a group of studies published in the mid 1970s by historians such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, E. P. Thompson, Carlo Ginzburg and Natalie Zemon Davis. Especially under the influence of two Italian historians, Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg, more stress was given to the methodological aspect of these studies.

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12The key text is Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History (London, 1841).


and the label "microhistory" (Italian: microstoria) gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s.  

Traditional biographers seek to profile an individual and recapitulate a life story, but microhistorians, tracing their elusive subjects through slender records, address themselves to solving small mysteries, in the process of which a microhistorian may recapitulate the subject's life story (as I do in Chapter VII for William Muir), though that is not the primary purpose. Historians of ideas have been largely interested in the outlook and influence of the most illustrious philosophers and writers, especially as they engaged in intellectual innovation. If biography is largely founded on a belief in the singularity and significance of an individual's life and his contribution to history, microhistory is founded upon almost the opposite assumption: however singular a person's life may be, the value of examining it lies not in its uniqueness, but in its exemplariness, in how that individual's life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole. Of the persons I deal with, some are still regarded as figures of intellectual consequence (e.g. Richard Gough in Chapter III), others have been forgotten (e.g. Alexander Tilloch in Chapter IV), and one is an unknown woman (Rebekah Bliss, Chapter II) whose life and legacy turns out to be of extraordinary interest to the histories of sexuality and of book-collecting. The life story, like the mystery, is merely the means to an end — and the end is always explaining the culture.

Historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis or Carlo Ginzburg have come to believe that the strange stories they tell are important, and that the obscure lives that they bring to light deserve our attention. Typically their work consists of a detailed narrative of an event in the life of an obscure or humble person who would not, until recently, have been considered an

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16 Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and Historical Method* (Baltimore, 1986), is a collection of eight essays that explain the methodological foundations of his historical analysis.
appropriate subject for serious historical study. This dissertation will establish that figures such as Bliss or Tilloch have an intrinsic interest to which Blake’s role is supplementary; indeed tending towards the displacement of literary studies into social history. These individuals not in the limelight nor in the literary canon still have the capacity to contribute to a recoverable culture by virtue of the lives they led. Their sometimes poignant microhistories evoke issues relevant to the interpretation of Blake’s work and re-situate William Blake in the intellectual life of his time.

This study examines synchronic (at a given point in time) and diachronic (over a period of time) axes of the life and career of William Blake, who will be considered in two major ways. First, as a significant original artist whose impact upon modern social-historical, art-historical and literary studies requires continual reassessment and re-narration. This forms the synchronic aspect of the thesis. Second, as a figure of supplementary significance to contemporary microcultures of late-Enlightenment England. This is the diachronic aspect of the thesis. The dissertation emphasises the role to be played by the recovery of neglected, poorly-understood and previously isolated figures.

Overall the thesis establishes that an understanding of the function and role of microcultures (the distinctive cultures of small groups of people) can contribute important qualifications to the general understanding of the poet, painter and engraver. I argue that by investigating microcultures we not only deepen our understanding of Blake’s biographical historicity but also radically transform our understanding of how those historical cultures functioned with respect to each other and with respect to Blake.

But a “microculture” also has some alterity (“otherness”) from the prevailing culture; for example, believers in astrology such as Alexander Tilloch (or John Varley for that matter)
co-existed within a rationalist scientific community, or, in the case of Tilloch, combined both such outlooks. The microculture may seek to address principally its own public sphere. Maybe William Blake is more interested in seeking that public sphere within his own microculture or those with which it intersects (Rebekah Bliss's world of polite dissent, Tilloch's Rosicrucianism), than directly addressing the dominant culture.

The term "microculture" is meant both to explain the methodology of this study (the analysis of archival documentation in personal and local histories) and to describe the application of such a methodology to history. By microculture, I mean that set of social interactions and connections among contemporary historical individuals as might be defined by relationships founded on gender, class and kinship. These are my thesis's synchronic references. The diachronic will be the extension of such microcultures across a definable set of temporal relationships which I shall term "microhistory". For example, under the heading of "microculture" might be considered matters such as frameworks of social relationships, sexuality, education, patterns of intellectual exchange both verbal and based upon the exchange or interaction of commodities, and matters of taste and aesthetics. The sources for the study of such microculture include legal documents, public records, private correspondence, publication, anecdote and the judgements of contemporary and modern scholars. "Microhistory" is the analysis of how these microcultures have functioned when included within an understanding of patterns in the assessment of history. In other words, how an appreciation of microculture impacts upon the reception of more general historical understanding. Included under the heading of the study of microhistory would be: the cultural effects of changing patterns of literary taste, the relationship between public and

17 On Tilloch, see my Chapter IV.
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private knowledge, the dissemination of intellectual property via the press, book publication, and the collection of artifacts into libraries or art galleries. For example, micropolities (as defined above) associated with the hand-crafted illuminated books of William Blake are connected to the microhistory of book publication in the late nineteenth-century as well as to a developing contemporary taste for Blake’s distinctive approach to design.

Historians have turned to microhistory in recognition of its intellectual possibilities. Studies of the otherwise obscure — autodidact millers, cat-killing apprentices, lesbian nuns — are driven by a sense that these provide fascinating windows into remote societies, and a vibrant sense of the texture of everyday life within them. Clifford Geertz has encouraged the belief that the simplest events (his classic account was of a cock-fight in Bali) are invested with the preoccupations and styles of thought of the whole culture: that objects and actions could be interpreted as if they were texts; and that the right sort of description ("thick description") would enable readers to "see" what was at issue. Another motive is the illumination that such studies provide of the broader issues of gender, of social and cultural differentiation, of the relationships between the metropolis and its peripheries, that have been at the heart of the social historian’s enterprise. Thick description of incidents or individuals must be contextualised in terms of these over-arching themes, but, in turn, it gives them a powerful humanity and presence.

The characteristic that is distinctively unique to microhistory is the deliberate reduction of the scale of observation. As Giovanni Levi puts it: "The underlying principle

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18Thus, for instance: Ginzburg, The Cheese and the Worms (Baltimore, 1980); Robert Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History (London, 1984); Judith Brown, Immodest Acts: the Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy (New York, 1986).
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of all microhistorical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved".\textsuperscript{19} Perhaps, as in Geertz's definition of ethnography, what defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in "thick description".\textsuperscript{20}

Microcultures of particular interest to this dissertation are those concerned with the collecting of books and works of art. The history of collecting is now a subject of increasing interest and study, bringing the methods of historical research to the study of the shifts and paradigms of collecting taste.\textsuperscript{21} Centuries of familiarity with art collecting had meant that this phenomenon was taken for granted. It was not seen as what it is — "a highly idiosyncratic, exceedingly complex, and in some degree, quite irrational cultural behavioural development".\textsuperscript{22} The study of collecting can illuminate, and be illuminated by, much wider aspects of historical inquiry, embracing the contents of collections, the processes which initiated their formation and the circumstances of the collectors themselves. Krzysztof Pomian has related changes in fashions in collecting to wider changes in social attitudes in the second half of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{23} The importance of collecting is not only that it is a means of reinforcing status discriminations, but that it is a cultural practice by which the collector learns what his or her culture's ethos and his or her private sensibility look like.


\textsuperscript{20}Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures} (New York, 1973), 6.

\textsuperscript{21}A \textit{Journal of the History of Collecting} began publication in 1995.

\textsuperscript{22}Joseph Alsop, \textit{The Rare Art Traditions} (London, 1982), 1.

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The subsidiary field of book-collecting (overlapping with the collecting of works of art) has also received recent scholarly attention. The serious study of private libraries, and of the lessons which can be learned from book ownership, shows up the interests and tastes of the owner, and the texts which may have influenced his or her thinking.24

A major aspect to the methodology of this study is concerned with those forms of evidence that establish the provenance of books and works of art. One of the book collections I shall discuss in Chapter III (that of Francis Douce), survives effectively intact and fully catalogued. For other collections (such as that of Blake’s friend, George Cumberland) only a library catalogue survives. For yet others (Bliss, Hayley, Tilloch), their collections were dispersed at auction and can in part be reconstructed from sale records.25

The evidence of the collections disposed of at auction should be approached with a degree of caution. Michael Suarez has commented on the practice of “salting”, or falsely supplementing the contents of the library of an eminent person with slow-moving or otherwise undesirable inventory left over from previous sales or mouldering away in the bookseller’s shop. “I believe that the judicious scholar working in this period must generally assume, unless there exists evidence to the contrary, that the inventories of books sold at


25Early sale catalogues are immensely rare. I can trace only two copies each of the sales of Mrs. Bliss and Alexander Tilloch, and just a single surviving copy of the sale of Mrs. Bliss’s nephew, S. R. Maitland. There is now a first rate guide to tracking down these resources in David Pearson’s Provenance Research in Book History: a Handbook (London, 1997).

A. N. L. Munby and Lenore Coral, British Book Sales Catalogues 1676-1800: a Union List (London, 1977), is comprehensive for the period before 1800. Most libraries containing work by Blake came on to the market years later.
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auction have been salted."\(^{26}\) Book sale catalogues should be used with considerable caution in making determinations about provenance:

In reading temporal sequences of either book auction or fixed-price catalogues by a single firm, one commonly encounters the recurrence of the same edition of the same books described in the same way. Is it not reasonable to assume that, in some cases at least, this phenomenon is not mere coincidence, but rather is the product of the systematic and routine ‘rolling over’ of unsold inventory from one sale to the next.\(^{27}\)

Fortunately, this does not appear to be the case with the Tilloch sale that I shall consider in some detail in Chapter IV. As with the sale of Mrs. Bliss’s *Bibliotheca splendidissima*, the works up for sale are consistent with the known interests of the deceased and no titles, as far as I have been able to determine, are repeated from previous sales. In any case, a Tilloch provenance, like that of Rebekah Bliss, would have added little cachet to otherwise unsaleable items. Prices were generally low throughout the sale.

Since they often are the sole record of a library, sale catalogues can hardly fail to interest biographers and critics.\(^{28}\) For instance, Suzanne Matheson draws attention to the wide selection of contemporary writing on art in Hayley’s library (and thus available to Blake during his years at Felpham).\(^{29}\) The evidence of sale catalogues may also be of value to the historian of thought or of taste — Mrs. Bliss was among a select group of advanced collectors

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seeking out illuminated manuscripts from the twelfth century and earlier. The library of William Hayley reveals Hayley's wide interests in Spanish and Portuguese literature, and in the seventeenth-century English poets. Of course, sale catalogues do not always represent the entire extent of these libraries. Many of Mrs. Bliss's books were separately willed to friends and family and only emerged onto the market decades later. William Hayley lost a portion of his library at the break-up of his second marriage when his separated spouse sent in the bailiffs to recover her marriage settlement.

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Blake's contemporary audience was larger in numbers than is generally recognised, and more diverse. Our current knowledge about early collectors of William Blake's work remains patchy or uneven in quality, and the principal works on the subject to date have focused narrowly on establishing provenance. In addition, these studies are limited in scope (Essick); confined to the paintings and drawings (Butlin); or else have now become rather dated (Bentley). More recent scholarship has brought a new awareness of the extent of the problems raised by those first owners and of the implications for modern scholarship. The emphasis of Blakean bibliographical studies, which have focused on listing his output and

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30Mrs. Bliss would have been a striking addition to the list of connoisseurs featured by A. N. L. Munby in *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures 1750-1850* (Oxford, 1972), his account of the changing attitude to Gothic illumination between the reigns of George II and Victoria.


providing short-title catalogues of critical and secondary works, is changing; the primacy of enumerative bibliography is being replaced by the broader concept of the history of Blake’s books. Stemmler (for Douce and Cumberland), and Viscomi (with regard to Romney and d’Israeli) have attempted to assess the backgrounds of collectors; their point of contact with Blake; their influence on other contemporary readers or collectors; the reasons for their purchases; the dispersal of Blake’s books after the deaths of the first collectors; or the aesthetic culture implied by ownership. Such studies have considerable significance for any biographical study of Blake.

Bentley’s Blake Books lists some sixty-one contemporary owners of Blake’s Illuminated Books and of plates from the books. These collectors have largely been treated


as isolated figures; each has a collection unique to them and this cultural activity (collecting of work by William Blake) is not seen to interact significantly with other collectors in the same field, or even with the individual’s own other collecting interests.

Anthropology supplies two opposing models (termed the phylogenetic and the reticulate) that give a historical account of cultural patterns. Phylogenetic models stress commonality of descent, and imply dispersal from common origins. Reticulate models stress the importance of continuing processes of interaction among contemporary communities. Bibliographical studies of Blake to date have followed a phylogenetic model concerned with questions of provenance and the transfer of actual objects by gift or purchase or inheritance. This dissertation shows what scope there is for a reticulate description of Blake’s collectors as a network of friends and acquaintances.\(^3^8\)

There were connections of kinship between Mrs. Bliss and the later collector William Fuller Maitland; and of teacher and pupil between Benjamin Heath Malkin and Edward Fitzgerald, both of whom owned copies of the *Songs* (Fitzgerald, the translator of Omar Khayyam, was at Bury school 1819-26, during Dr. Malkin’s headmastership). It is also important to recognise the extent to which Blake’s collectors were professionally linked through the book trade (e.g. Thomas Edwards), or were fellow artists (e.g. John Flaxman), or were radical in politics (e.g. Francis Douce).

When an influential book-collector like Douce starts collecting popular literature


(livres bleus, chapbooks, emblem books), he, in effect, refines ideas of connoisseurship among his contemporaries and those who follow; his own collecting practice serves to change taste among other book, print and painting collectors. One might say that Douce in relation to his fellow-collectors is engaged in what anthropologists term a “tournament of value”.

Bronislaw Malinowski described a form of ceremonial trade (the kula) in his *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.\(^{39}\) The idea of tournaments of value is an attempt to create a general category, following an observation by Edmund Leach comparing the kula system of Melanesia to the art world in the West.\(^{40}\) Jean Baudrillard’s analysis of the art auction in the modern West allows one to widen and sharpen this analogy. Baudrillard notes that the art auction, with its ludic, ritual, and reciprocal aspects, stands apart from the ethos of conventional economic exchange, and that it “goes well beyond” economic calculation and concerns all the processes of the transmutation of values, from one to another logic of value.\(^{41}\)

Tournaments of value are complex periodic events removed in some culturally well-defined way from the routines of economic life. Participation in them is likely to be both a privilege of those in power and an instrument of status contests among them. The currency of such tournaments is also likely to be set apart through well understood cultural diacritics. What is at issue in such tournaments is not just status, rank, fame, or reputation of actors, but

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\(^{41}\) Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, 1981).
the disposition of the central tokens of value in the society in question.\textsuperscript{42} Though such tournaments of value occur in special times and places, their forms and outcomes are always consequential for the more mundane realities of power and value in ordinary life. As in the \textit{kula}, so in such tournaments of value generally, strategic skill is culturally measured by the success with which actors attempt diversion or subversion of culturally conventionalised paths for the flow of things.\textsuperscript{43} Blake’s contemporary collectors included people like George Cumberland, and Charles and Elizabeth Aders, who were themselves pioneering collectors, establishing new collecting paradigms, for early printmakers, and for German and Flemish primitives respectively.\textsuperscript{44}

Some collectors acquired work by Blake through the book-trade (as P. H. Hanrott acquired Mrs Bliss’s copy of \textit{For Children: The Gates of Paradise}); a few by inheritance (as William Upcott inherited Ozias Humphry’s, his father’s, Blake books); but the overwhelming majority acquired them directly from Blake himself or his agents (perhaps Joseph Johnson in the 1790s, certainly John Linnell in the 1820s).\textsuperscript{45} In some instances we can postulate direct

\textsuperscript{42}Marcel Mauss, \textit{The Gift: the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies} (London, 1990), provides the classic description of social relationships, forms of circulation, and notions of the self.


\textsuperscript{44}George Cumberland owned copies of \textit{America, Book of Thel, Europe, For Children, Song of Los, Songs, Visions of the Daughters of Albion}. Cumberland’s interest in early printmaking is featured in Stemmier, “Undisturbed Above Once in a Lustre”, \textit{Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly}, vol. 26 (Summer 1992), 9-19.


\textsuperscript{45}The majority of Blake’s paintings, unlike the books, were produced for a single patron, Thomas Butts.
acquaintanceship between Blake and his collectors. This might also be a suggestive context for Blake’s comments, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, about the “Prolific” and the “Devourer”, as well as his more elaborated comments in the *Public Address* about the contemporary art market. Did Blake know the other works his collectors already owned? The Books of Hours and other medieval illuminated manuscripts in the collections of Mrs Bliss, of Thomas Edwards, and of E. V. Utterson are possible sources for Blake’s combination of text and illustration in the works in Illuminated Printing.

It would seem that Blake’s family had a connection with the Muggletonians, a radical religious group that had emerged during the period of revolution in Britain in the seventeenth century. In any case, they were clearly dissenters.

— Vaughan.

Blake’s, like most people’s, conceptions of the past owes less to the work of conventional historical scholarship than to a host of other, more ubiquitous influences among which family tradition must have played a part. It is not just simple curiosity that makes us want to know what sort of relationship he had with his father; how his mother’s death affected him; whether he knew his grandparents. We need to know what kind of people his parents and grandparents were and what stories they might have told.

Chapter I details the discovery of Blake’s true maternal ancestry. This matter is of some importance to the overall strategy of this thesis since it presents a clear example of how inaccuracies and inattention to the study of microculture have impacted upon the

46 “But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights.”

understanding of William Blake. In this instance, a simple lack of accuracy in matters of primary research by the eminent social historian E. P. Thompson, based on misunderstandings of the “microcultural” archive left by the religious sect of Muggletonians, has produced in recent years a much-publicised and widely-accepted but nevertheless distorted historical context for Blake.

The Muggletonian sect was founded by Ludowicke Muggleton (1609-98) and his cousin John Reeve (1608-58), who claimed to be the “two witnesses” of 

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3-6. They denied the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and held that during the period of the Incarnation the government of heaven was left to Elijah. They condemned prayer and preaching, believing that God would never again interfere with the world after His revelation to Muggleton and Reeve. They also taught that matter was eternal and reason the creation of the devil. Thompson attempts to align Blake’s poetic myth with Muggletonian doctrine but fails to see how completely antithetical to Blake are Muggletonian exclusivity and rejection of prayer and meditation.

Methodologically, the chapter draws on genealogical resources, public records of christenings and marriages, to establish the maiden name of Blake’s mother. Her first husband was Thomas Armitage who was born in Royston near Halifax in Yorkshire. Thompson’s spelling of his surname as Hermitage is not justified either by the Register of St. George’s Chapel (now in Westminster City Archives) nor by the officiating minister’s notebooks (now in the Public Record Office and apparently unknown to Thompson). I can confidently say that it was one Catherine Wright who married first Thomas Armitage and subsequently James Blake. Examining Thompson’s few pages about Blake’s mother,\(^48\) I

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found that I came to absolutely opposite conclusions to Thompson. There is no evidence that points to a Muggletonian connection for her family.

Philip Bliss, an antiquary, bibliographer, and a close friend of Utterson and Dawson Turner was the son of Anne Bliss, whose Songs copy P and For Children copy A were sold in 1826 to Hanrott.

— VISCOMI.

Chapter II is concerned with the identification of “Mrs Bliss”, a previously unknown female bibliophile. This chapter takes the thesis to the heart of recovering the intellectual (and even sexual) microculture of suburban Londoners and its close relationship to such an apparently remote and unconnected figure as William Blake. Mrs. Bliss was a collector of illuminated medieval manuscripts, one of a circle of dissenting intellectuals, and part of an, arguably, lesbian household. There are wider implications here for our understanding of women and sexuality in Blake’s work. Viscomi only muddies the water by wrongly identifying “Mrs. Bliss” as Anne the mother of Philip Bliss. Revealed now as Rebekah Bliss, she is perhaps the earliest identifiable owner of Blake’s works and thus of signal importance.

The 1826 sale of her Bibliotheca splendidissima does not represent anything like the totality of Rebekah’s library. Other evidence for books and manuscripts she owned may be found in her will, in the will of her life-partner Ann Whitaker, and in the sale of books


50Mrs Bliss’s copy of For Children is now with the Rosenwald Collection in the Library of Congress, while her copy of the Songs remains in a private collection. For current knowledge of “Mrs Bliss” and her Blake collection, see Bentley, Blake Books (1977), 187, 191, 384, 419, 643, 654; Blake Books Supplement (1995), 77, 133; Blake Records Supplement (1988), 85-86. Evidence about Mrs. Bliss’s Blakes was first printed by Geoffrey Keynes with the Trianon Press facsimile (1968) of Gates of Paradise.
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inherited by her relatives. It is from all these sources that one can begin to reconstruct the library of perhaps England’s finest woman bibliophile. The Bliss collection was rich in natural history books, in Persian and Moghul miniatures, and even held some Japanese colour-printed books. What is particularly striking is the number of medieval illuminated manuscripts: psalters, missals and Books of Hours, of which she had more than seventy examples.

The importance of the art of the Middle Ages in forming Blake’s style has long been recognised; many writers have commented on the resemblance between Blake’s designs and those of medieval manuscripts. Jean Hagstrum suggests that Blake probably knew James Edwards’s Pall-Mall bookshop and that there he may have seen medieval illuminated manuscripts, such as the Bedford Hours. My view is that Blake’s possible acquaintanceship with Mrs. Bliss would have opened to him a manuscript collection of remarkable scope. For the first time Blake’s work can be shown in the contemporary context of a collection of Gothic illuminated manuscripts.

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After 1790 (when Johnson had printed, but did not publish, Blake’s French Revolution) Blake was always his own printer and book-seller — not out of some Crusoe-like, do-it-yourself crankiness, but for important artistic and ideological reasons.

— CREHAN.

In Chapter III, I discuss the intricate microcultures of social and intellectual exchange and endeavour illustrated in circles and networks of acquaintance connected with Blake. The


chapter further explores the implications of the discoveries outlined in Chapter II. Richard Twiss’s correspondence with Francis Douce supplies evidence, if any were needed, of how book collecting is a social not a solitary activity — of how book-collectors are engaged in a “tournament of value”. It demonstrates how tastes for antiquarianism, books and collecting provided the intellectual context which promoted Blake’s work (by employing him or buying his works) and helped to preserve it for its later reception by a growing popular and academic community.

Twiss’s letters to Douce were carefully saved by their recipient. The earliest letter from Twiss to Douce dates from 1779 and the last from 1807 but the majority of letters preserved date from the 1790s. Biographical evidence for Blake’s life before 1820 is particularly meagre; and the references to him in the Twiss-Douce correspondence are therefore of considerable significance. Twiss’s brief note of works by Blake being on sale, or at least available for inspection in Johnson’s shop in 1794, puts paid to Crehan’s (and many other writers’), sentimental attachment to the idea of Blake as a suffering artist working entirely outside the commercial world of publisher and bookseller.

Chapters IV, V and VI use similar methodologies of recovering microcultures but this time concerning the significance of Alexander Tilloch, inventor, journalist, and religious controversialist. Tilloch’s reinvention of stereotype printing and his development of that process to print banknotes proof against forgery forms a striking parallel to Blake’s relief-etched “stereotype”, the very materiality of technology which enabled him to produce the illuminated books. Tilloch’s repeated attempts to gain recognition for his inventions, which were exploited by others, find a curious parallel with Blake’s predicament when he realised
that his relief etching process had been reinvented by W. H. Lizars.\footnote{See Bentley, \textit{Blake Records Supplement} (Oxford, 1988), 72-73, for an account of Lizars.}

Chapter IV (Alexander Tilloch) will show how intimately and intricately Tilloch’s interest in printing processes overlapped and provided a context for Blake’s skills in this area. In 1797, William Blake was one of a group of engravers (including Francesco Bartolozzi, Wilson Lowry, and William Sharp) who signed a testimonial in favour of Tilloch’s method of printing banknotes resistant to forgery. Again, the interests of this “microcultural” group have a larger significance for our understanding of the Bank of England’s attempts to contain the threat of counterfeiting during the introduction of paper money.

Because Blake’s relationship to Tilloch can be, at least at one point, established by a dated document signed by Blake, my study of the microculture brings a new proximity to an apparently otherwise incongruous friendship between the editor of the \textit{Philosophical Magazine}, one of the foremost scientific journals, and the visionary artist.

Chapters V (Isaac Newton) and VI (Samuel Varley) provide more elaborated discussions of the extraordinary cultural and intellectual context of Tilloch’s library. Blake’s own library, so far as it has been reconstructed by Bentley and by Keynes, holds no books of theology or Biblical exegesis, yet his own writings provide evidence of a profound theological thinker and an inspired exegete. From the sale catalogue of Tilloch’s possessions one can reconstruct a library that would have given Blake access to a variety of recondite sources for his imagination to transform.

Chapter V (Isaac Newton), uses Tilloch’s theological collection to offer an explication of Blake’s colour monoprint “Newton”. I argue that we can see in Blake’s view of Newton a more profound and more thought-out disagreement with Newton than Blake’s
commentators have been aware of. It is not that Newton postulated a mechanical universe — Newton's is no more mechanical than Ptolemy’s — it is the absence of the Redeemer from Newton’s universe that causes Blake to reject Newton. Newton’s Principia is a stranger work than most Blake commentators (who may not have read works by Newton) seem to realise. J. M. Keynes famously called Newton “the last of the magicians”, and indeed even his “scientific” works are saturated with religious ideas. Newton’s universe is God-given, God-centred, God-controlled, God-manifesting, but one without the possibility of redemption.

My focus on one celebrated work by Blake exemplifies how the historical microcultures I have recovered for William Blake and Alexander Tilloch can be brought to focus on new interpretive possibilities for one of Blake’s greatest images.

As well as uncovering a neglected private library (as I also do for Mrs. Bliss’s in Chapter II), these two chapters (IV and V) show how an analysis of the microcultural group of figures involved in chemistry and alchemy have a greater significance for our understanding of the more general historical role of “counter-enlightenments”, that is, they aid our understanding of how microhistory makes an important contribution to qualifying our general understanding of the connections between art and science, empiricism and “superstition”, during the Industrial Revolution and for Blake’s position relative to these movements. One can therefore place Blake as aware of and influenced by what recent writers have seen as an “alternative Enlightenment”.54

54Or “Counter-Enlightenment”, a term apparently originating in Isaiah Berlin’s essay “The Counter-Enlightenment” in his Against the Current (London, 1979), 1-24. Berlin’s ideas are further developed in his posthumously published Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder (Princeton, 2000). As evidence of the fluidity of this concept, one might note that Berlin’s exemplar, Giambattista Vico, is treated as a prototypical Enlightenment thinker in
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Blake might well have found the presence of Parker and his wife in the same house with himself and Catherine intolerable.

— King. 55

Chapter VI (Samuel Varley), uses the Tilloch collection to explore ideas about alchemy in Blake’s work and to extend my suggestion in Chapter V that Tilloch is “Tilly Lally” in An Island in the Moon, with further identification of the satirised originals as Samuel Varley, John Flaxman, and James Parker. Identifying the unmarried Parker as Suction the Epicurean, I produce evidence that puts into question James King’s guesswork (and Bentley’s data on which the King biography is based), thus challenging received ideas about Parker, as well as Blake.

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William Muir, a professional lithographer and the first systematically to reproduce Blake in facsimile, described Blake’s printing as “skilful carelessness.”

— Viscomi. 56

Chapter VII (William Muir), extends an understanding of Blake’s reception in the later nineteenth-century, long after his death. The publication of Gilchrist’s Life in 1863 triggered a significant production of facsimiles of Blake’s illuminated books. My strategy in this chapter is to recover some of the posthumous history of Blake’s reception (and to indicate how scholars have been misled about it or have simply ignored it). Chapter VII indicates how methods of facsimile-making, maintained by a network of persons interested in Blake, helped


manufacture the modern appreciation of Blake's illuminated books through facsimile publication. By focusing here on Blake's posthumous reputation, and the attempt at recovering Blake-like processes of printmaking in the late nineteenth century, my thesis provides a symmetrical structure of historical inquiry that parallels my Chapter I on Blake's ancestry. Muir, the great-great-nephew of Alexander Tilloch, was never a professional lithographer. His achievement is the product of an amateur enthusiasm applied to commonly available techniques and processes. Having situated Blake himself in a world of professional secrets accessible only after a long apprenticeship, Viscomi, it seems, felt obliged to postulate something similar for his facsimilist.

Chapter VII exemplifies in summary the more complex set of social interactions to be discussed throughout the thesis. Just as with my discussion of Alexander Tilloch, my focus is on sociable, intellectual groups and circles — in Chapters IV and VI of Blake's contemporaries, in Chapter VII of Blake followers and enthusiasts. I also return to the theme of forgery that I touched on in Chapter IV and make a tentative suggestion for the identity of the forger of a number of separate plates of "The Ancient of Days", a forgery in my opinion wrongly attributed to Muir.

The attitude the elder Blakes took toward William's education could have prevailed only in a dissenter's house.

— SCHORER.57

Finally, in Chapter VIII (Catherine Wright), I return to the question of Blake's parents and present new and striking evidence for his mother's early life, her religious affiliation

(Moravian), and Blake’s maternal grandparents. William Blake mixed archetypal and mythic references with personal preoccupations, and our understanding of his poetry is advanced by new biographical discoveries. Schorer is correct in seeing Blake’s lack of formal education as significant, wrong in linking it to a dissenting tradition. The chapter is a tribute to the percipience of William Muir, who was the first to suggest the influence of Moravian hymnody on Blake’s *Songs*.

Microcultures (and the micropolitics experienced within them) are constitutive of a contemporary culture; in the mass, they are what the general culture is comprised of. If they existed, and can be recovered, they constituted that era, are its constituents as surely as any patrician culture. It is for others to argue that Austen or Southey have more cultural leverage and influence than, say, Tilloch or Bacstrom.

As the researches previewed above will show, there is still much about Blake’s life and work which has been missed, neglected or ignored. By examining, or re-examining several archival sources, I have extended and perhaps refined our knowledge of Blake’s biography, his circles of friends and collectors, and the crucial contexts they provide for his work.
Chapter I

Catherine Armitage: the family context.

When William Blake expostulated, “Public Records as If Public Records were true” (E 617) in the margin of Richard Watson’s _Apology for the Bible_ (1796), he gave a warning that his biographers would have done well to heed. Certain themes can seduce us, because they confirm our private naïve conviction, legitimised by some apparently convincing documentary evidence. We need to view the public records concerning the Blake family in a wider context than they have hitherto been granted. Only then might a biographer extrapolate from these documents conclusions, however tentative and provisional, that can shed new light on Blake’s biography and cannot be dismissed as special pleading in support of an existing hypothesis. Thompson’s _Witness against the Beast_ has been widely acclaimed as an important contribution to Blake studies and it seems to be accepted that he “offers plausible evidence to suggest that Blake’s mother may well have come from a family with

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58 Wiktor Stoczkowski, _Anthropologie naïve, anthropologie savante: de l’origine de l’homme, de l’imagination et des idées reçues_ (Paris, 1994), 246. (If certain themes seduce us, it is often because they confirm our private naïve conviction, legitimised by means of some appearances of a scientific nature.)

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Muggletonian connections".60 I am concerned in this chapter with the biographical statements that Thompson makes and my reasons for coming, in some instances, to opposite conclusions to Thompson. What is the evidence that points to a Muggletonian connection for Blake’s mother? Why does Thompson insist that her first husband was Thomas Hermitage? He makes many such assertions:

... William Blake’s father and mother were married in St George’s chapel, Hanover Square, on 15 October 1752, as ‘James Blake and Catherine Harmitage’. An inspection of the register disclosed that the entry was undoubtedly Hermitage, and not Harmitage. ... Catherine was then about thirty and James twenty-nine.

The chapel at St George’s, Mayfair, was a notorious bucket-shop for marriages, and convenient for couples who did not want to tangle with the Church of England. No licence, publication of banns or consent of parents were required: 6,000 marriages were registered between 1749 and 1753, and a critic commented that it ‘constructed a very bishopric of revenue’ from the fees.... All that one can say is that the chapel was a place where radical dissenters, outside the Church, might obtain a quick marriage.

Catherine comes into the record out of obscurity. In fact she was the widow of Thomas Hermitage of 28 Broad Street, near Golden Square. The rates on this property had been paid by — Armitage from 1748 to 1753, and in the fiercely contested Westminster election of 1749 the poll-book shows Thomas Hermitage, of Broad Street, hosier, voting for the anti-Court candidate. (Blake’s father, James Blake of Glasshouse St, hosier, voted on the same side in the same poll.) Thomas Hermitage’s will was proved in November 1751. The marriage of Catherine with James Blake took place eleven months later. ... The newly married couple moved into Broad Street in 1753, and (if Catherine was already there and paying the rates) perhaps earlier.

Not much can be found out about the Hermitage family, despite extensive searches. Several Hermitages can be found in the parish registers of St James’s, Westminster, between 1720 and 1750. It will be recalled that a George Hermitage has two songs in the Divine Songs of the Muggletonians, probably from the 1730s or 1740s. Could George have been Thomas’s kin? George and Susannah Hermitage appear as parents of a child (Elizabeth) in the parish register in November 1742. If Muggletonians favoured endogamy, Catherine’s first husband, and herself, might have been of the faith?61

60 Roy Porter, [Review of Thompson, Witness against the Beast], English Historical Review, vol. 111 (June 1996), 743-44.

61 Thompson, Witness against the Beast (Cambridge, 1993), 120-121. Though Thompson terms his discussion of Blake’s possible Muggletonian ancestry “Appendix 2”, the account
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I shall demonstrate that many of these assertions of Thompson’s are to a greater or lesser extent tendentious, and some of them just plain wrong. Although most of Thompson’s claims will be considered in detail later, we should note at this point that he even manages to mistake the location of St. George’s Chapel. So far from being adjacent to the Church of St. George, Hanover Square, it was located in Mayfair, the part of the parish significantly furthest away from the parish church. (Bentley makes the same error.)

What then do we know about the Blake family? The Parish Registers of the Church of St. James, Piccadilly, record the baptisms of the children of James and Catherine Blake. Their eldest child James was born 10 July 1753 and christened 15 July. John was born 12 May 1755 and christened 1 June. William, born 28 November 1757, was christened 11 December. Another son John (the first of that name must have died in infancy), was born 20 March 1760 and baptised Monday, March 31st. Richard, so named in the Parish Register, was born 19 June, and christened 11 July 1762. Catherine Elizabeth, the only daughter, was born 7 January and christened 28 January 1764.

Aileen Ward, following the suggestion made many years ago by Arthur Symons, has asserted that “Richard” is a clerical error for “Robert”, Blake’s favourite and youngest

occupies pages right at the centre of a 234 page book. I take this to mean that Thompson recognises the centrality of Blake’s family history to his alleged Muggletonianism. If this falls then the argument of the whole book is suspect.


63 The Parish Records of St. James’s Church are now housed in the City of Westminster Archives Centre.
brother. She argues, to my mind convincingly, that the christening of “Richard” Blake is, most likely, of the child later known as Robert, though there may be reasons other than the carelessness of the parish clerk for the apparent error. Maybe, indeed, Blake’s parents just changed their minds.

The Registers of St. George’s Chapel in Curzon Street (“the Mayfair Chapel”) record the marriage in October 1752 of:


There can be no reasonable doubt that this records the marriage of Blake’s parents. Both Christian names are right. The date is almost exactly nine months before the birth of the first child, James, on 10 July, 1753. The + in front of the entry is unexplained.

The Registers of Bunhill Fields Burial Ground record the burial on 9th September 1792 of


The implication of these records then is that Blake’s mother was born about 1722 and was aged thirty at the time of her marriage to James Blake in 1752. Bentley comments “The identification of this Catherine Blake with the poet’s mother is a sound hypothesis based on the coincidence of names and the burial of her husband (1784) and three sons (1787, 1827,

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65 Osbert Burdett, William Blake (London, 1926), 2-3, offers the suggestion that Richard Blake was nicknamed “Bob”, and by back-formation buried as “Robert”.

66 City of Westminster Archives Centre. St. George’s Chapel, Mayfair. [Register. Vol.]: 3.

1827) in the same graveyard". H. M. Margoliouth was the first writer to recognise the entry in the Register of the Mayfair Chapel as referring to Blake’s parents. Margoliouth worked solely from the Harleian Society transcript which he took to be accurate and complete. Adequate for most purposes, the transcript regularises the form of entries and omits the mysterious marginal crosses. Margoliouth is appropriately tentative as to the conclusions to be drawn from his discovery. The name “Harmitage” he recognises as an obvious error, perhaps for “Hermitage” or maybe “Armitage”. Again, the choice of the Mayfair Chapel for the wedding is problematic since marriages there were “irregular” though entirely legal. Margoliouth comments “Convenience, cheapness, privacy, or even fashion … may have brought James and Catherine there. It is also possible that, if, as is vaguely asserted by biographers (chiefly, perhaps, on the evidence of subsequent burial at Bunhill Fields), they were dissenters, they may have preferred to avoid an episcopal licence or parochial banns.”

As building encroached along Curzon Street and Park Lane in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, a proprietary chapel was built in Curzon Street for the residents of the

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68Bentley, Blake Records (Oxford, 1969), 47. My summary of biographical data is, of course, entirely indebted to Professor Bentley’s work.


70George J. Armytage, ed., The Register of Baptisms and Marriages at St. George’s Chapel, May Fair; transcribed from the Originals now at the Church of St. George, Hanover Square, and at the Registry General at Somerset House (London, 1889).
newly fashionable district of Mayfair.\footnote{Just as the Percy Chapel, Charlotte Street, would be built in 1765 for the growing population in the east of St. Pancras Parish; its first incumbent (1766-1804) being the Rev. A. S. Mathew (d. 1824), Blake’s and Flaxman’s early patron. See the account in \textit{Survey of London. Vol. 21: Tottenham Court Road and Neighbourhood.} The Parish of St. Pancras, Part 3 (London, 1949), 21.} The rector of St. George’s, Hanover Square, within whose parish it stood, presumably gave at least tacit acceptance of the construction, since it would have relieved the pressure on pew space at the parish church. The person chosen to officiate at the Mayfair Chapel was the Rev. Alexander Keith, an Anglican clergyman. Within a short time, Keith began to marry without banns or licence, and to advertise in the papers the advantages of a wedding at May Fair. John Southerden Burn notes that “May Fair stands next to the Fleet in notoriety, and perhaps pre-eminently, so far as regards the number of fashionable clandestine marriages”\footnote{John Southerden Burn, \textit{History of the Fleet Marriages.} 2nd ed. (London, 1834), 141.} Mr. Keith’s Chapel was where the aristocracy or the well-connected would go for a wedding in a hurry.\footnote{I list just a few of the aristocratic marriages there: Sir James Dashwood, Bart., of Northbrook, married Elizabeth, the daughter and coheir of Edward Spencer, Esq., of Rendlesham in Suffolk, on the 17th of February 1738-9. 25 December 1744, “His Grace Henry Brydges, duke of Chandos, and M\textsuperscript{n} Ann Jefferys, of the Parish of St. Marylebon, co. Midd., married by me, Alex\textsuperscript{r} Keith”. 17 March 1746, “The Right Hon\textsuperscript{ble} James Stanley, Lord Viscount Strange, of St. George’s, Hanover Square, and M\textsuperscript{n} Lucy Smith, of St. George’s, Bloomsbery”. 30 June 1752. Bysshe Shelley and Mary Cath. Michell, Horsham. (Bysshe and Mary Shelley had a son, born 1757, whom they named Timothy after his paternal grandfather. This Timothy Shelley married Elizabeth Pilfold and their son, Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792.) 29 June 1753, “The Rt. Hon. George Bentinck, Esq., commonly called Lord George Bentinck, of St. James, Westminster, and Mary Davies, of Hanwell, Middlesex”. All this would have lent an air of glamour to weddings at the Mayfair Chapel.} Horace Walpole, in a letter to Horace Mann, dated Arlington Street, Feb. 27, 1752, says, “The event which has made the most noise since my last is the extemporaneous wedding of the youngest of the two Gunnings,” and describes
an assembly at Lord Chesterfield’s, where the Duke of Hamilton made love to Miss Gunning.

However, two nights afterwards, being left alone with her whilst her mother and sister were at Bedford House, he found himself so impatient that he sent for a parson. The Doctor refused to perform the ceremony without license and ring. The Duke swore he would send for the Archbishop; at last they were married with a ring of the bed-curtain, at half an hour past twelve at night, at May Fair Chapel.74

The passing of Lord Hardwicke’s Clandestine Marriage Act (26. Geo. 2. c. 33) in 1753 would put a stop to the marriages at Mayfair; but on 25th March 1754, the day before the Hardwicke Act came into force, sixty-one couples were married there. Horace Walpole, outraged by Hardwicke’s Act, wrote to Seymour Conway: “It is well that you are married. How would my lady A. have liked to be asked in a parish-church for three Sundays running? I really believe she would have worn her weeds forever, rather than have passed through so impudent a ceremony”. It is reminiscent of Lydia Languish’s despair, at the collapse of her plans for elopement and a “Scotch parson”, that she might “perhaps be cried three times in a country-church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, Spinster!”75

Couples who wanted to get married in a hurry, and without waiting for consent of parents, might choose the Mayfair Chapel in preference to the decidedly sleazier Fleet. Thompson’s description of the Mayfair Chapel as a “bucket-shop” distracts us from the fact that Mayfair marriages, though legally “clandestine”, were always performed in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England by ordained, though “unbeneficed”,

74Cited in George Clinch, Mayfair and Belgravia: being an Historical Account of the Parish of St. George, Hanover Square (London, 1892), 59.

75R. B. Sheridan, The Rivals, ACT V SCENE I.

I owe the Walpole and Sheridan citations to R. B. Outhwaite, “Age at Marriage in England from the Late Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century”, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, (1972), 55-70.
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Anglican clergy and were in some measure “fashionable”. After 1754 the only option was elopement to Scotland. Couples simply desiring privacy married by Bishop’s licence (as William Blake and Catherine Boucher did in 1782). Marriage at Mayfair is certainly no evidence of leanings towards Dissent.

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But what kind of name is Harmitage? I have endeavoured to apply to our known data the resources of FamilySearch, a set of genealogical programs and data files published by the Genealogical Society of Utah. Of most use in researching William Blake’s family history has been the International Genealogical Index (IGI), available as data files within FamilySearch.\(^76\) IGI is a file of names extracted principally from parish and other vital records. The data incorporated in IGI and now available on CD-ROM have transformed genealogical research in a way inconceivable to Margoliouth or Thompson. The main (1993) file contains 58,969,065 entries for England, of which 6,498,290 represent Greater London; the 1994 Addendum adds another 8,528,059 for England, including 290,270 for Greater London.

The International Genealogical Index records just 29 births or christenings with the surname “Harmitage” in British parish registers from 1582 to 1873. There is just one

\(^76\)International Genealogical Index, 1983 edition and 1984 addendum, as incorporated in the FamilySearch CD-ROMs published by the Genealogical Society of Utah. A further Addendum was issued in 1998. It occasions no significant changes to the evidence adduced here. FamilySearch is now available online at http://www.familysearch.org, though the CD-ROMs provide more powerful search facilities.

There are bound to be inaccuracies and omissions in the IGI transcriptions as these are made from film of the original registers and the LDS Church members who indexed the parish registers were only human so the occasional error does occur. There are sometimes problems which can only be solved by consulting the film itself or on occasions the original registers. I have endeavoured where possible so to do.
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Harmitage birth recorded in Greater London in the eighteenth century, when Mary Harmitage, daughter of John and Mary, was christened 11 October 1756 at Saint Luke, Chelsea. Twenty-nine instances out of the more than 86 million British entries in IGI is so low a figure as strongly to suggest that this is a clerical error of some kind. “Harmitage” is an impossible surname — of such rarity that Catherine, if “Harmitage” were really her maiden name, would have had no plausible parents or siblings.

According to the St. James’s Parish Rate Books, number 28 Broad Street, on the corner of Marshall Street and Broad Street (North), was occupied by a Thomas Lane from 1745 to 1747, after which someone named “Armitage” paid the rates from 1748 until 1753 when the name “Armitage” is crossed out in the Rate Book and the name “James Blake” written alongside. So James Blake’s precursor at the Broad Street premises he was to make his family home and his shop after marrying Catherine was called Armitage. The coincidence of names is such that the simplest hypothesis is that “Harmitage” should be read as “Armitage”. I think it is possible to explain “Harmitage” as the result of Catherine’s nervousness at her second wedding — the intrusive aspirate is a not untypical response to a situation where she felt out of place and stressed. Other instances of this phenomenon will be quoted later in this paper. The consequence is to remove the possibility of her in fact being really “Hermitage” and thus (as suggested by Thompson) a relation of the

77IGI’s coverage of Greater London parishes is better than 75% complete. Better than 85% for Inner London.

78Thus in John Walker, A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language (London, 1791): “A still worse habit ... prevails, chiefly among the people of London, that of sinking the h at the beginning of words where it ought to be sounded, and of sounding it, either where it is not seen, or where it ought to be sunk. Thus we not unfrequently hear, especially among children, heart pronounced art, and arm, harm.” (xiii)
Muggletonian writer George Hermitage.

28 Broad Street was a corner house with a shop frontage on Broad Street but an entrance to the family dwelling around the corner in Marshall Street. The rate books follow the route of the rate collector around Golden Square Ward and for most years the house is listed in Marshall Street, because it was on the corner of Broad and Marshall Streets, and the main domestic entrance was in Marshall Street. Here is a sample of entries from the rate books over a period of years.79

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  Marshall Street  [Corner House]  Broad Street
                    [last house]   [28 Broad Street]   (North)
[second house]
1740  Thos Worster  Wm Powell    [28 Broad Street]  Anne Rawlinson
1741  Thos Worster  Wm Powell    Empty         David Parish
1742  Thos Worster  Empty       David Parish
1744  Thos Worster  Em'         David Parish
1745  Thomas Worster  Thomas Lane  David Parish
1745  Thos Worster  Thos Lane   David Parish
1746  Thos Worster  Thos Lane   David Parish
1746  Thos Worster  Thos Lane   David Parish
1747  Thos Worster  Thos Lane   David Parish
1747  Thomas Worster  Thomas Lane  David Parish
1748  Thomas Worster  Armitage   David Parish
1748  Thos Worster  Armitage   David Parish
1752  Thos Worster  Armitage   David Parish
1753  Thomas Worster  Armitage [crossed out]  David Parish
                                      James Blake [written alongside]
1754  Widow Worster  Ja' Blake   David Parish
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Armitage itself (let alone "Harmitage") is an unusual surname in eighteenth-century London. I can trace no Catherine Armitage born in London around 1722 who would fit the bill as bride of James Blake.

"Armitage" paid rates on 28 Broad Street for four years; not a long enough period to

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79City of Westminster Archives Centre, St James's Parish Rate Books: D451 (1740), D453 (1741), D458 (1742), D466 (1744), D474 (1745), D481 (1746), D482 (1746), D488 (1747), D489 (1747), D501 (1748), D502 (1748), D58 (1752), D61 (1753), D63 (1754).
convince one that Catherine was marrying from her parental home. The most plausible hypothesis, and the one chosen by Thompson, is that Catherine was married first to Armitage (whom he calls “Hermitage”) then to James Blake. And of course, the will, located by Thompson, of “Thomas Armitage of the Parish of Saint James Westminster … haberdasher and hosier” justifies this hypothesis. Is there any evidential support for Thompson’s theory that Catherine’s first husband was really surnamed “Hermitage”?

The register for the Mayfair Chapel now in the City of Westminster Archives Centre carries the already-cited entry for 15th October 1752:

15. James Blake and Catherine Harmitage of S’ James Westminster

where there is an apparent hesitation in writing the name “Harmitage”. Thompson treats this as evidence for “Hermitage” as Catherine’s surname on marriage.

However, what Thompson ignores is that the register was not compiled contemporaneously with the marriages it lists but is a clerical compilation made by the clerk to the Chapel from the officiating ministers’ notebooks. These notebooks survive in part at the Public Record Office. In fact, the apparent hesitation in writing Catherine’s surname — the clerk has, in my opinion, begun to write “Hermitage” before he corrected himself to “Harmitage” — is not apparent in the minister’s notebook, which shows unequivocally “Harmitage”. [Plate 2.] It therefore makes most sense to search for Catherine’s marriage not to a “Thomas Hermitage” but to a “Thomas Armitage”.

Most writers on surnames regard Armitage (and its variant Hermitage) as a

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80 Thompson, Witness against the Beast (Cambridge, 1993), 120 note 4.

81 Public Record Office RG 7/248 (Mayfair marriages 6).
topographic name for someone who lived by a hermitage.\textsuperscript{82} But George Redmonds has shown that most if not all bearers of the surname Armitage and Armitage can be traced back to a family living at Hermitage Bridge in Almondbury, near Huddersfield, Yorkshire, in the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{83} The family historian Colin Rogers notes that “the rarer the surname, the greater is the probability that different persons bearing it hail from the same place”.\textsuperscript{84} The surname Armitage is still much more common in West Yorkshire than anywhere else in England.

Obviously \textit{IGI} is an excellent indicator of how common a particular surname is, or a particular spelling of that surname, or even where that surname is most commonly found. It demonstrates how unusual a surname even “Armitage” was in eighteenth-century London, confirming that no Catherine Armitage was born there in 1722, and recording just four London christenings of a “Thomas Armitage” that century. Was there any baptism of a “Catherine Armitage” in the eighteenth century? \textit{IGI} records just two: in 1721 and 1765, both in Yorkshire. Additionally, one should note that there are no entries for the baptism of a “Thomas Hermitage” in \textit{IGI} or its \textit{Addendum}.

\textbullet

Was there then a marriage of Thomas Armitage to a Catherine? One can also use the resources of \textit{FamilySearch} to search for combinations of names. I set out to search for a “Thomas Armitage” who had married a “Catherine”. I found two entries: Thomas Armitage

\textsuperscript{82}\textemdash\textsuperscript{84}E.g. Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges, \textit{A Dictionary of Surnames} (Oxford, 1988).

\textsuperscript{83}\textemdash\textsuperscript{84}See the account of the origin of the surname and its early history in George Redmonds, \textit{Yorkshire: West Riding}. English Surnames Series, 1 (Chichester, 1973), 192-193.

\textsuperscript{84}Colin D. Rogers, \textit{The Surname Detective: Investigating Surname Distribution in England 1086-Present Day} (Manchester, 1995).

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who married Katherine Murley at Pampisford, Cambridgeshire in 1699 (clearly not the marriage we are looking for), and Thomas Armitage who married Catherine Wright at the Mayfair Chapel, 14 December 1746. The coincidence, if that is what it is, is striking. This is the only marriage of a “Thomas Armitage” to a “Catherine” between 1740 and 1750 that IGI records in Greater London. If we widen the search to cover the whole British Isles, there are eight other marriages of a “Thomas Armitage”, but none to a “Catherine”. (A check of the 1994 IGI Addendum yields just one marriage of a Thomas Armitage, but not to a Catherine.) The entry transcribed from the Register of the Mayfair Chapel for December 1746 reads as follows:

+  14 Mr. Thomas Armitage & Mrs. Catherine Wright of St. George’s Hanover Square

This Catherine Wright, without a shadow of a doubt, is William Blake’s mother. [Plate 3.]

(Nothe that again there is a cross in the margin alongside the entry. In the Register of the Mayfair Chapel, some 7% of all entries are accompanied by a marginal cross + including both the marriage of Catherine Wright to Thomas Armitage and that of Catherine Harmitage to James Blake. These crosses occur both in the clerk’s Register and in the officiating ministers’ Notebooks.) As I shall demonstrate, the discovery of Catherine Wright (as the

85 Or in the printed transcript: Armytage, ed., The Register of Baptisms and Marriages at St. George’s Chapel, May Fair (London, 1889), 73.
At this date, the honorific “Mrs.” carries no indication of marital status and could be used, as here, of any unmarried woman who was not a minor and did not need parental consent to marry.

86 What significance can these marginal crosses have? The options, it seems to me, can be that the marginal cross refers to the persons being married, or it refers to some rite of the Church of England, or it refers to some extra document or payment (in other words an administrative note to the Mayfair chapel clerk).

Could the + perhaps refer to some question of the status of either of the parties to the marriage? For example, the marginal cross might imply that the bride is a widow or the groom

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true maiden name of Blake’s mother) challenges the very basis of the Muggletonian hypothesis.

Let us go on to consider the evidence of the poll book. Today, when we regard the secret ballot as the only legitimate way to test a population’s political preferences, poll books offer an extraordinary and unexpected window onto the electoral practices of our ancestors because they record the names of voters with the candidates for whom they voted. An act of 1696 (7 & 8 W. 3. c.25) made sheriffs responsible for compiling a record of the poll in county elections, and required that returning officers should make that record available to anyone wishing to have access to it. A further Act of 1711 (10 Anne c.23) confirmed the onus to maintain a record of the residence and freehold of electors, and enacted that it should be handed over to the Clerk of the Peace for permanent preservation. Printed poll books were brought out by private entrepreneurs who felt themselves to be reasonably sure of a profit. Prospective purchasers were apparently far more numerous than those directly involved in

a widower. Since there are crosses against the entries for both of Catherine’s marriages I am forced to reject that hypothesis. Or could it indicate that either party was a minor? Marriage at the Mayfair Chapel did not require parental permission which hardly applies in this case anyway — Catherine “Harmitage” for one is no longer a minor, and if my identification is correct, neither is Catherine Wright.

Could the + refer to some rite of the church such as baptism? It is a Canon Law requirement that parties to a Church of England wedding be baptised Christians. If James Blake was baptised at his wedding then this would explain why we can’t find any trace of his infant baptism. But it looks as though Thomas Armitage was baptised (if I have identified him correctly) and so too was Catherine.

Or could the + be an administrative note to the Mayfair Chapel clerk? Crosses are always transferred from the minister’s notes to the clerk’s register. The significance of the crosses is probably something relevant to that particular event not to any former status of bride or groom. Most likely, since the clerk felt obliged to transfer the marginal crosses to his register, they record some aspect of the functioning of the Chapel — fees not paid in full or extra payments for copy certificates.
local politics, and there is some evidence that businessmen were prepared to enquire into the political inclinations of prospective trading partners. The poll book of the Westminster by-election of 1749, where the Whig Viscount Trentham was challenged by the candidate of the “Westminster Independents”, Sir George Vandeput, is of considerable interest, in that both James Blake and Thomas Armitage appear in its pages, voting for the same candidate.87

At the General Election of 1747 Granville Leveson-Gower, Lord Trentham, a Whig, had been elected to represent the parliamentary borough of Westminster in the House of Commons. Two years later he was appointed to a Lordship of the Admiralty. Members of Parliament accepting office under the Crown were required to re-submit themselves to their electorate if they wished to retain their seat in the Commons. It was Lord Trentham’s wish so to do, and a by-election then took place, beginning on Wednesday, 22 November, and ending on Thursday, 8 December, 1749. The “Independent Electors of Westminster” put up

87 Surviving poll-books (both printed and manuscript) for Westminster elections are listed in Jeremy Gibson and Colin Rogers, Poll Books c1696-1872: a Directory of Holdings in Great Britain, 3rd ed. (Birmingham, 1994).

I have used the following printed poll-book for the 1749 Westminster election: A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster; Begun to be Taken at COVENT-GARDEN, upon Wednesday the Twenty-Second Day of November; and Ending on Friday the Eighth Day of December 1749. Peter Leigh, Esq; High-Bailiff. Candidates, the Right Hon. GRANVILLE LEVISON GOWER, Esq.; commonly called Lord TRENTHAM and Sir GEORGE VANDEPUT, Bart. (London, M.DCC.XLIX.). I consulted the copy in Cambridge University Library (Ddd.25.58). Printed copies of the 1749 poll book are also held at the Guildhall Library and at the City of Westminster Archives Centre.

Separate manuscript poll books exist for the parishes of St. Anne, St. George, St. James, St. Margaret & St. John the Evangelist and St. Martin-in-the-Fields. A single poll book sufficed for the parishes of St. Clement Danes and St. Mary le Strand and another for the parish of St. Paul, Covent Garden and the Liberty of St. Martin le Grand. There are, therefore, seven poll books in all. The manuscript poll-books for Westminster elections are held in the London Metropolitan Archives but are generally too fragile for use. A typescript index to the manuscript poll-book made by Osborn (1979) is held by the City of Westminster Archives Centre.
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a wealthy City financier, Sir George Vandeput, as his opponent.\textsuperscript{88}

The method of procedure at the election required the poll clerks, who were provided by the candidates, to enter the following information about each voter in the appropriate poll book: his Christian names(s) and surname; the street, square, court or alley of his residence; his status, profession or trade; and the candidate supported. As the recording procedures appear to have been based on what the voter said and thus on what the poll clerk thought the voter had said, there were numerous opportunities for mistakes. Voters in St. James’s Parish in 1749 include both a “Harmstrong” and a “Handerson” (that intrusive aspirate again!). There are indeed many instances where the parish rate-books and the poll books are in disagreement, sometimes quite markedly. Peter Lens, of Berwick Street, wrote a letter of complaint to the press when he discovered, from the printed version of the poll book, that he had been recorded by the clerk as Peter Borlence. James Ellison of Hedge Lane is the voter, while James Allison is the ratepayer. Another voter, Joseph Austen of Haymarkett, is almost certainly Joseph Forster of the rate-books.\textsuperscript{89}

According to the poll-books:

James Blake Glasshouse-str. Hosier

voted for Vandeput in St. James’s Parish, Saturday 25 November 1749\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{88}Paul Langford, A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783 (Oxford, 1989), stresses that the particular rancour of this by-election “owed much to the Tory sense of betrayal after the failure of the Broad-Bottom” (212). Langford adds that “Westminster was an exceptionally large, open constituency, a mixture of seething populism and dire corruption”.

\textsuperscript{89}G. F. Osborn, comp., Alphabetical Index of Those who went to the Poll in the Westminster By-Election 1749, followed by a Alphabetic Arrangement of Them by Their Trade & Profession (London, 1979), ii.

\textsuperscript{90}A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster (London, 1749), 167. Also on page 19 of the manuscript poll book.
and

Thomas Hermitage _Broad-street_ Hosier
also voted for Vandeput in St. James’s Parish, December 1st, 1749.\(^9\)\(^1\)

Thomas is the only “Hermitage” in the poll-book and does not appear anywhere in the rate-books. Similarly the “Armitage” of the rate-books cannot be found in the poll-book. Although the rate-books sometimes offer a variety of forms of the same name over a period of years, on balance they are likely to be consistent and thus more reliable than the forms of the poll books, based on aural interpretation and of one occasion only.

Lord Trentham gained a majority of 157 in a poll of over 9,000. The closeness of the result encouraged the defeated candidate to demand a scrutiny of the poll books to ensure that all the votes cast for the victor were genuine. Two petitions were drawn up in protest, both alluding to the High Bailiff’s (the returning officer’s), partiality towards the Court, but neither won a hearing before a hostile Commons. Instead the lower House elected to hear the High Bailiff’s complaints of intimidation by the Independents, and effectively frustrated an inquiry into his conduct. Finally, on 15 May 1750, Lord Trentham was again declared to be elected with a majority of 170.

In voting for the Tory (Thompson prefers the expression “anti-Court”) Sir George Vandeput, Thomas Armitage and James Blake voted for the losing candidate. In both 1747 and 1749 the Court party (Whig) won a solid majority in four of the nine Westminster parishes, including the fashionable suburbs of St. George Hanover Square and St. James

\(^9\)A Copy of the Poll for a Citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster (London, 1749), 196. Also on page 52 of the manuscript poll book, though the address is given there as “Brad Street”.

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Piccadilly where the Whig candidate, Trentham, gained a comfortable victory.92

What then were James Blake's politics? Nicholas Rogers, in his detailed study of the 1749 Westminster election, comments that there is little evidence of Westminster tradesmen deliberately pitting their energies against wealth, name and influence in the way Francis Place and his compatriots did in the early decades of the next century. He adds that "in a constituency such as Westminster, dominated by the gentry and conditioned by the existence of a luxury consumption economy, the web of political influence cut across trade and occupation".93 The pressures of Court and aristocratic authority, and the peculiarities of Westminster's luxury economy, perpetuated a system of social stratification where deference and dependency held sway, and emasculated the emergence of class interests in an articulate form. After Trentham's final victory, the Tories under the guise of "Westminster Independents" drifted into oblivion; the Whigs, the Court party, enjoyed two decades of undisputed superiority in Westminster politics.94


94 See also Nicholas Rogers, "The Urban Opposition to Whig Oligarchy, 1720-60" in Margaret C. Jacob and James R. Jacob, eds., The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism. Revised paperback ed. (New Jersey, 1991), 152-168. Rogers's conclusion is that the "anti-court" vote of 1749 re-emerges in the Wilkite radicalism of some twenty years later. This is not entirely borne out by Paul Monod's study (see note 95).
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The incoherence of voting patterns in the 1749 election, the lack of any clear class solidarity among voters, is such that, *pace* Thompson, no claims as to James Blake's or Thomas Armitage's political radicalism or radical sympathies are appropriate.\(^{95}\) Thompson, by disguising the Tory George Vandeput as the "anti-Court" candidate, fudges the issue of James Blake's politics and attributes to James Blake and Thomas Armitage a spurious radicalism that cannot be justified from the documentary evidence. One might add, that even though the two men voted for the same candidate, we have no cause to suppose they did so for the same reasons.

Let us now consider the evidence of the will [Plate 4]. I confess myself puzzled that Thompson did not recognise the primacy of the will of Thomas Armitage.\(^{96}\) It is the only document listing Thomas and Catherine which is derived from written documents to which they placed their signatures. The rate-book and the poll-book were both based on oral testimony as to names. But the will is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury transcript made by experienced legal clerks of an original signed by Thomas Armitage. If a man is signing his will, one would have thought he would get the spelling of his name right! The evidence

\(^{95}\)See Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People* (Cambridge, 1988). Monod investigates the "Jacobite efforts to unite the opposition in London and Westminster behind the Stuart banner, which culminated in the activities of the Independent Electors of Westminster" (84). By 1749, he asserts, the Independent Electors may have been "an exclusively Jacobite club" (230). Monod links plebeian unrest to a specifically Jacobite political culture, and, though Nicholas Rogers argues that the *independence* of Westminster tradesmen offered fertile ground for opposition politics, Monod stresses how "many Tory magnates like the Duke of Ormonde or the Grosvenors had important interests in the borough" (229). In voting for Vandeput, either Blake or Armitage could be betraying Jacobite sympathies not at all in keeping with E. P. Thompson's assumption of a shared "radicalism".

\(^{96}\)Thompson, *Witness against the Beast* (Cambridge, 1993), 120.
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for Armitage not Harmitage/Hermitage is overwhelming.

Omitting a few conventional pieties, the will reads as follows:

I Thomas Armitage of the Parish of Saint James Westminster in the County of Middlesex Haberdasher and Hosier being in health of Body and of sound and disposing mind and memory Do make and declare these Presents to stand for and as my last Will and testament in manner and form following ... I give devise and bequeath unto my dearly beloved Wife Catherine Armitage all rest residue and remainder of my Estate Real or Personal of what nature kind or quality soever or wheresoever to be by her peaceably and quietly used and enjoyed to her own use and benefit But it is my Will and mind That if my said wife Catherine Armitage shall happen to Marry Then she shall be obliged to give and pay the following sums of Money unto the several Persons hereafter mentioned (that is to say) unto my Brother William Armitage the sum Twenty Pounds for himself and the sum of Twenty Pounds for his son Thomas Armitage to be by my said Brother Placed out at Interest upon good Security for the Benefit of my said Nephew Thomas Armitage untill he shall attain the age of Twenty one Years if not at that age at the time of such Marriage at which age it is my Will the said Thomas Armitage shall receive both Principal and Interest that shall be then due To my Brothers and sisters Richard Armitage Joseph Armitage Elizabeth Fox and Grace Hattersley or to the Heirs of them that shall be then living the sum of ten Pounds to each and every of them and I do hereby ordain nominate and appoint my said wife Catherine Armitage to be sole Executrix of this my last will and testament ... 97

Thomas Armitage, “Haberdasher and Hosier”, wrote his will in July 1751, and his widow was granted probate in November that same year. The will tells us that Thomas Armitage had brothers Joseph, Richard, and William, and sisters Elizabeth and Grace. At the time the will was written, William had a son Thomas (a minor), Elizabeth had married a Mr. Fox, and Grace a Mr. Hattersley. Where then was Thomas Armitage born and where buried?

Could the Armitages have been a London family? The International Genealogical Index records just 25 London baptisms of an Armitage child in the years 1700-1750: Benjamin 1736, David 1736, Elizabeth 1713, Elizabeth 1731, Henry 1711, Hugh 1746, Joseph 1721, Joseph 1728, Joseph 1750, Mary 1733, Michael 1736, Robert 1739, Samuel

97Public Record Office PROB 11/790 (1751 November quire 298 [fol. 390v]).
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1706, Sam1 1717, Sam1 1742, Samuel 1745, Sam1 1749, Stephen 1701, Stephen 1733, Thomas 1701, William 1708, William 1709, William 1719, William 1738, William 1748. No Richard or Grace, and the only Thomas’s birth in 1701 would make him implausibly old to be Catherine’s first husband. Using IGI to locate all Thomas Armitages baptised in England between those dates, we get the expected result that nearly 90% (53 out of 60) took place in Yorkshire. The probability then is that Catherine’s husband was a Yorkshireman.

My conclusion is strengthened by the discovery that a Grace Armitage and a Joshua Hattersley were married on 11th August 1743 at Royston in Yorkshire. Could this be Thomas’s sister (the Grace Hattersley of the will)? And are Grace and Thomas the children of Richard Armitage of Cudworth, whose son Thomas was christened 21 June 1722 also at Royston? So Thomas would be much the same age as Catherine and of Yorkshire origin which suggests a wool trade connection appropriate to a haberdasher and hosier.

Where was Thomas Armitage buried? I can confirm that there are no Armitage burials at St. James’s, Piccadilly (nor of Harmitage nor Hermitage for that matter) nor in the

98 From the Bishop’s transcripts of registers for Royston or Roystone parish, Yorkshire, in Sheffield Archives, I transcribe the following entries:

[1712] William the son of Richard Armitage of Cudworth was bapt. September ye 25th
[1719] Grace daughter of Richard Armitage of Cudworth bapt. Decem. 5th
[1743] Joshua Hattersley of the Parish of Silkstone and Grace Armitage of Cudworth were married August ye 11th.

(The records were consulted on microfilm, the originals being in the Diocesan Record Office at Wakefield.)


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St. James’s Burying Ground, Hampstead Road. If he were a dissenter of some sort, could he have been buried in Bunhill Fields like Catherine and her second husband? Again the answer is negative.

It occurs to one, that with her Armitage in-laws away in Yorkshire, Catherine may have opted for a quiet Mayfair marriage to James Blake to avoid fulfilling the terms of her first husband’s will. (The will would have required her to pay £80 to the Armitages on her remarriage.)

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The register of St James’s Church, Piccadilly contains just two entries for the name Hermitage: on 7 July 1727, “Ly Hermitage” married Francis Nequier, and on 14 November 1742, Elizabeth Hermitage, the infant daughter of George and Susanna, was baptised. I can find no further trace of the mysterious aristocrat (“Lady Hermitage”?) who married there in 1727. The George Hermitage whose daughter was baptised in 1742 may well be the contributor to the Divine Songs of the Muggletonians mentioned by Thompson. But no Hermitages survived to become Muggletonian contemporaries of William Blake.

Thanks in part to the efforts of E. P. Thompson, the British Library’s Department of

99Neither are there any Armitage baptisms at St. James’s. This provides additional confirmation that there were no children of the marriage of Catherine and Thomas. (Any children would, in any case have been mentioned in the will.)

100Joseph Frost and Isaac Frost, eds., Divine Songs of the Muggletonians in Grateful Praise to the Only True God, the Lord Jesus Christ (London, 1829) contains two songs by George Hermitage. However, there are no Hermitages (nor Blakes, nor Wrights for that matter) among the subscribers to this work.

The song “Praises to my Maker’s Glory” (page 132), by George Hermitage, is set to the tune Stella Darling of the Muses from Giovanni Battista Pescetti’s opera Demetrio, revived at the King’s Theatre, London, in 1737. The date certainly fits in with the George Hermitage who lived in St James’s parish.

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Manuscripts now contains the *Muggletonian Archives*. Vol. II of the *Archive* (BL Add. 60169) contains on fols. 102-3, “A Collection of the Names of Male Friends Residing in England” dated Aug 14th 1803. These 83 names from perhaps 63 families represent the extent of the Muggletonian community in Blake’s time. Fewer than 30 families have London addresses. There are Muggletonians in Derbyshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Somerset, Surrey, and Ireland, but there is no reference to the Armitage (or Harmitage, or Hermitage) or Blake families. The only “Wright” lived in Derbyshire. There are no families listed with a Yorkshire connection which I would have expected were there to be Muggletonian Armitages. There is just no evidence whatsoever linking William Blake directly to known followers of Lodowicke Muggleton. As Thompson makes clear, without realising the import of his discovery, Blake’s mother was not born into the “Harmitage” or “Hermitage” or even “Armitage” family. Her family name, in fact, was Wright and her only connection to the Armitage family was through her first marriage. Furthermore, there is no link between the Thomas Armitage she married and the “George Hermitage” who wrote some Muggletonian hymns. In any case, there is a very great difference between being born into, and raised in, a Muggletonian family, and later marrying a man who has alleged Muggletonian connections.101

To summarise. My trawl of currently available genealogical evidence strongly suggests that Blake’s mother, Catherine’s, first husband was Thomas Armitage of Royston, Yorkshire.

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101At this point in the first publication of this chapter (*Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, Fall 1999), I made a guess at the identity of Catherine Wright’s parents based on the assumption that she was a Londoner by birth. This has proved to be incorrect and the true place of birth of Blake’s mother and the identity of his maternal grandparents will be revealed in Chapter VIII.
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The simplest explanation is the best. Catherine Wright married Thomas Armitage at the Mayfair Chapel on 14 December 1746, was widowed in 1751, and married James Blake in October 1752 — the answer was there all the time.

The evidence of an Anglican (though “irregular”) marriage ceremony and baptism of children in the parish church, but later family burials at Bunhill Fields, suggests that either the Blake family were members of the Church of England at the time of their marriage and moved toward religious dissent during William’s childhood, or they were dissenters of very mild persuasion (maybe Moravian, maybe Methodist) who perhaps objected to individual Anglican clergy (a political stance) but had no overriding theological objection to Anglican rites and ceremonies. Perhaps Thomas Wright’s claim that the Blakes attended the Moravian Church in Fetter Lane deserves further consideration. When Blake died in 1827, he was buried, like his father, mother, brothers and aunt, at Bunhill Fields, the dissenters’ burial ground. But, at his own request, the burial service followed the Anglican Prayer Book. Certainly Blake’s expressed wish to be buried at Bunhill Fields, but by the Anglican rite, does not suggest any extreme Dissenting background (a point often ignored by pursuers of the “radical Blake”).

The implication of the surviving documents is that the elder Blakes were more conventional in their religion and political beliefs than some scholars have romantically envisaged. Or at least, as shopkeepers with a clientele that included the St. James’s Parish,

102 Thomas Wright, The Life of William Blake (Olney, 1929), vol. 1, 2. I explore the Moravian hypothesis further in Chapter viii.

they found it expedient to conceal their views.\footnote{Stanley Gardner, 
*Blake’s Innocence and Experience Retraced* (London, 1986) documents the Blake family’s commercial dealings with St. James’s Parish.} Why has it been so unacceptable for Blake to have had very ordinary parents? Why can’t his politics and religious views be a conscious divergence from the parental milieu? The belief that Blake “must have” been born into a politically-radical dissenting family is now seen to have no evidential basis. The social and political implications of what we know about Blake’s parentage have to be amended in the light of these discoveries. In the following chapters I cite further archival evidence that challenges another common assumption: the “pictor ignotus” \textit{topos}, the belief that Blake had no significant contemporary audience.
Chapter II

Rebekah Bliss: a book-collecting context.

Sisters in love, a love allowed to climb,
Even on this earth, above the reach of Time!
— William Wordsworth. 105

It has been a perennial problem for Blake criticism to establish an original context of reception for his illuminated books. In this chapter I shall establish not only the identity of Blake’s earliest known collector, previously known only as “Mrs. Bliss”, but also offer a reconstruction of an early audience for Blake’s work rather different from the male radical intelligentsia with which he is customarily associated.

“Mrs. Bliss”, or at least the sale of her Blake books, was brought to the attention of Blake scholars by Geoffrey Keynes some thirty years ago, and fuller detail added by G. E. Bentley, Jr.106 These writers note little more than that BIBLIOTHECA SPLENDIDISSIMA. A CATALOGUE OF A SELECT PORTION OF THE LIBRARY OF MRS. BLISS, Deceased, Removed from her Residence at Kensington was auctioned in April 1826 in 814 lots sold over four days. 107 The Blake lots were:

105 William Wordsworth, Sonnet “To the Lady E. B. and the Hon. Miss P.”.

106 Geoffrey Keynes, “Introductory Volume” to William Blake, The Gates of Paradise (Clairvaux, 1968), 47; Bentley, Blake Books (Oxford, 1977), 654. Keynes and Bentley both quote the title of the Bliss sale (wrongly) as “Bibliotheca Splendissima” which may trip off the tongue more easily and looks like better Latin, but isn’t. The word used about the sale (and the correct Latin superlative) is “splendidissima”.

107 BIBLIOTHECA SPLENDIDISSIMA. | — | A CATALOGUE | OF | A SELECT PORTION | OF | THE LIBRARY OF MRS. BLISS, Deceased, | Removed from her Residence at Kensington; | COMPRISING | ANEXTENSIVE, RARE AND VALUABLE COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL | PERSIAN, CHINESE, TURKISH, HINDOSTAN, AND OTHER DRAWINGS, | EXQUISITELY FINISHED, REPRESENTING THE MANNERS, AMUSEMENTS, CUSTOMS, DRESSES, TRADES, ARCHITECTURE, MANUFACTURES | AND COSTUMES OF THE EASTERN NATIONS, RICHLY ILLUMINATED | MISSALS,
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10 Blake’s (W.) Gates of Paradise, 16 plates, red morocco, gilt leaves

11 — —Songs of Innocence and Experience, 2 vols, coloured engravings, red morocco, gilt leaves

... 

41 Blair’s (Robt.) Grave, a Poem, illustrated by 12 etchings, by Schiavonetti, from designs by W. Blake, calf extra, gilt leaves 1808

... 

370 Young’s (Edw.) Night Thoughts, with engravings from Blake’s designs, half bound, red morocco 1797

371 Young’s (Edw.) Night Thoughts, with engravings from Blake’s designs, coloured calf extra, marble leaves 1797.

The “Bliss Blakes”, as we might call them, were collected at dates from 1794 (For Children: the Gates of Paradise), through 1802 (the supposed date of her copy of Songs) and at least up to 1808 (Blair’s Grave). One might conjecture, from her Blake books identified by Bentley, that Mrs. Bliss acquired her Blakes directly from the poet painter himself.108 Her copy of For Children: the Gates of Paradise is a proof printing before either Blake’s or Johnson’s imprints were added to the plates. A proof copy, by its nature, is unlikely to have been on commercial sale, which lends credence to the view that she must have acquired it directly from Blake himself. Her copy of the Songs (Copy P) is also distinctive with, unusually, Innocence and Experience separately paginated in Blake’s hand, as though he knew that particular copy was to be bound in two volumes.

EXPENSIVE WORKS ON BOTANY AND NATURAL HISTORY, | THE VARIOUS GALLERIES, BOOKS OF PROCESSIONS, NATIONAL WORKS | OF ART, AND AN ASSEMBLAGE OF FINE DRAWINGS AND PRINTS. | ... the whole in the finest condition, many on large paper, with proof, and early impressions of the plates, the Works on Natural History and Botany most beautifully coloured, sumptuously and tastefully bound in morocco and Russia, by Kalthoeber, | Staggemeier, C. Lewis, Bohn, Welcher, C. Smith, Murton, and other eminent binders, | regardless of experience, and finished in their best style. | Which will be Sold by Auction, | BY SAUNDERS & HODGSON, | At their GREAT ROOM, “The POETS GALLERY,” 39, FLEET STREET. | On Wednesday, April 26th, 1826, and three following Days, at | Half-past Twelve o’Clock precisely. | = | To be Viewed, Three Days preceding, and Mornings of Sale, and | Catalogues had, (price 1s. each.).

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There is also the instance of her two copies (plain and coloured) of Young's *Night Thoughts* with the Blake designs. There are just twenty or so copies of *Night Thoughts* hand-coloured by Blake and his wife Catherine.\(^{109}\) Bentley notes the differences between Blake's engravings for Young's *Night Thoughts* and those for other illustrated literary works such as Boydell's *Shakespeare*, Macklin's *Bible*, and Bowyer's *Hume*: "Boydell's, Macklin's, and Bowyer's plates were highly finished engravings — or at least they were advertised as such — whereas Blake's were outline engravings only (though they were not advertised as such). ... A special advantage of outline rather than highly finished engravings was that they could be more easily and effectively hand coloured, and such colouring may have been part of the original intention". Bentley goes on to suggest:

Perhaps the plan was always for Blake to be given copies of the *Night Thoughts* to colour, as part of his share of the profits of the work. The colouring of these engravings, creating a luminous beauty like that of the watercolours, adds an aesthetic dimension to the *Night Thoughts* never contemplated by Boydell, Macklin, and Bowyer and makes Blake's coloured *Night Thoughts* plates rarer, more extraordinary, more valuable, and more beautiful than the works of his more expensive and famous rivals.\(^{110}\)

Thus, even in the example of Bliss's ownership of a relatively extensively produced work like *Night Thoughts*, circumstances suggest a purchase made directly from Blake. Again this brings Mrs. Bliss close to Blake and clearly of considerable significance to his biography.

Mrs. Bliss's library of illuminated manuscripts may also have had a more general aesthetic

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\(^{109}\) Mrs. Bliss's copy of a coloured copy of *Night Thoughts* is identified by Bentley as Copy D. "Coloured about 1797; bound in contemporary Brown calf over blue and reddish yellow marbled boards, rebacked with reddish brown leather" It sold for £4. 4s.

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influence on Blake. Blake himself saw a connection between Books of Hours and his
illustrated pages since he called his works “Illuminated Books.” Yeats referred to the Songs
of Innocence and The Book of Thel as “illuminated missals of song”, and several modern
scholars have detected resemblances in design between Blake and his medieval exemplars.

Anthony Blunt has stressed the importance of Blake’s apprenticeship years, exploring
and recording the monuments of Westminster Abbey: “It gave him his first contact with
medieval art, which was to remain a powerful influence and source of inspiration for the
whole of his life.” Jean Hagstrum comments on the resemblance between Blake’s designs
and those of medieval manuscripts. He calls our attention to the Books of Hours in the
collection of the bookseller James Edwards and postulates that these would have given
William Blake graphic sources of fresh inspiration in the late 1780s. In the pages of, for
instance, the Bedford Hours, Hagstrum finds several impressive sources of design, detail and
colour in Blake’s Illuminated Printing. To these possibilities must now be added the
medieval illuminated manuscripts in the library of Mrs. Bliss as further sources of influence
on Blake.

One, at least, of the manuscripts in the 1826 sale:

470 HEURES GOTHIQUE, MS. ON VELLUM, 15 miniatures, Life of Joseph,

111 W. B. Yeats, “Introduction” to The Poems of William Blake. Muses’ Library (London,
1905), xvii.

112 For example: Kenneth Clark, Blake and Visionary Art (Glasgow, 1973), 11; Anne
Kostelanetz Mellor, Blake’s Human Form Divine (Berkeley, 1974), 133.


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and Calendar, with painted capitals, red morocco, gilt edges\textsuperscript{115} can be identified as a Psalter for Franciscan usage acquired by the Bodleian Library with the Francis Douce bequest, and now MS. Douce 48; it is a manuscript of the late thirteenth century with fine miniatures, borders, historiated and other initials by a second hand. It exemplifies the superb quality of the Bliss collection.\textsuperscript{116} Could William Blake have met Mrs. Bliss, and if so, could he have seen her \textit{Bibliotheca splendidissima}? I should like to suggest the Bliss collection as a possible vector of influence on Blake’s art.

Blake criticism has found the identity of Mrs. Bliss difficult to unravel: the 1826 sale catalogue being our sole source of information. But her library is of such importance, both to Blake and to the history of book collecting in Britain that it would be appropriate to learn more about her and at least to touch upon the extent and nature of her collection.

Mrs. Bliss’s \textit{Bibliotheca splendidissima} resembles that of William Beckford in not conforming to the standard book-collecting model of the time — the Dibdinian type of the \textit{Bibliotheca Spenceriana}.\textsuperscript{117} Her library does not include long sets of Aldines or tall Elzevirs;

\textsuperscript{115}The lot sold for £14. 5s. 0d.


there is no enthusiasm for incunabula, for Wynkyn de Worde or Pynson; there are no classics in *editio princeps*. Instead there is an insistence on the beauty of individual books — of fine illustrations, particularly of natural history, and handsome bindings. Note, for instance, the works by Thomas Bewick in the 1826 sale:

9 Bewick’s (T.) History of British Birds, 2 vols, *wood cuts* Newcastle 1816

... 507 Bewick’s 25 original Drawings of Dogs, neatly mounted, with Portrait of Bewick, *red morocco, gold borders, by C. Smith*

In some respects, De Ricci’s comments on the Beckford collection could apply to Mrs. Bliss’s *Bibliotheca splendidissima*: “less a library, in the proper sense of the word, than a cabinet of bibliographical rarities and freaks, each one a gem of its kind”. 118

The question must be asked, “Is the sale catalogue an accurate record of her library, or could the sale have been ‘salted’ with miscellaneous volumes from the auctioneer’s stock?” Not only does *Bibliotheca splendidissima* seem all of a piece in the kind of book included, and in its emphasis on fine quality of condition, colouring and binding, but also it corresponds in content, as I shall show, with what we can find out about Mrs. Bliss’s library from other sources. Also, of course, “salting” is usually resorted to if it can give an undistinguished book the cachet of a notable provenance, and the Bliss collection was largely unknown. 119


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But who was this Mrs. Bliss? To begin with, I found myself pursuing some false trails. G. E. Bentley, Jr. once thought it possible that Mrs. Bliss was connected with Philip Bliss, the Oxford antiquary, but only because it was relatively easy to find information about Philip Bliss — and this does not lead us back to Mrs. Bliss or to that 1826 sale. Joseph Viscomi claimed that Mrs. Bliss was Anne Bliss the mother of Philip. Is it at all possible that the “Mrs. Bliss” whose library was sold in 1826 could be some relative of Philip’s, perhaps his wife or his mother?

Philip Bliss was born in 1787, the son of Rev. Philip Bliss, rector of Dodington and Frampton Cotterell, in Gloucestershire (born 1742, died 1 February 1803), and Anne Mitchell of Conham in present-day Bristol (born about 1751). After her husband’s death, Mrs. Anne Bliss lived at Taunton, where her son used to visit her. I have been unable to find a date of death for Anne Bliss. The younger Philip Bliss died at St. Mary Hall, Oxford, on 18 November 1857. His wife Sophia, whom he had married in 1825, survived him; they had one son and one daughter. The very wording of the title page of that 1826 catalogue with its reference to “The Library of Mrs. Bliss, Deceased, Removed from her Residence at Kensington” tells us that “Mrs. Bliss” was dead by 1826 and had resided at Kensington. This

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120 G. E. Bentley, Jr., personal communication, 12 April 1994.


122 Some verses written by her on her 64th birthday in 1825 are in British Library Add. MS 34569 (fols. 221-22).

must rule out both Philip Bliss’s wife — newly wed in 1826 — and his mother — resident in Taunton after her husband’s death in 1803.

The world of antiquarian scholarship was held together by a network of mutual acquaintanceship. Francis Douce knew Frederick Madden and John Payne Collier, and through them Philip Bliss. Furthermore Douce, as I have noted above, acquired at least one manuscript with a “Mrs. Bliss” provenance from the 1826 sale. As someone who meticulously documented his own collecting, Douce would surely have noted any connection with his friend Philip Bliss’s family.124

Douce himself was an important Blake collector, owning copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Copy B with the separate plate, “Our End is come”), and *The Book of Thel* (Copy I), plus *A Descriptive Catalogue* (Copy H), a third state of the *Canterbury Pilgrims*, and Hayley’s *Poems* (1802).125 He had begun in 1779 a correspondence with Richard Twiss, a wealthy, older fellow antiquary, traveller and miscellaneous writer. These letters are preserved with the Douce collection of books and manuscripts in the Bodleian Library.

The first scholar seriously to examine Douce’s correspondence for the light it can shed on early Blake collecting was Joan K. Stemmler in an article published in 1992.126 She comments that “in the Douce bequest, a hitherto unpublished network of relationships reveals more information about practices of selling and collecting books and prints during the late

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eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries". Stemmler’s paper was to lead me into a search for Mrs. Bliss in which her identity was revealed and which allowed me to recover more fully the importance of this remarkable woman book-collector. Unfortunately, Stemmler’s transcripts from Twiss’s letters to Douce are significantly incomplete (and, indeed, omit a crucial reference to Blake that I shall consider in my next chapter). Two letters written in September 1794 are of particular interest.

Richard Twiss wrote to Francis Douce from “Bushhill Edm” on 13 September 1794. Typically, as for much of their correspondence, the (highly compressed) substance of his first paragraph is largely concerned with books on entomology that Douce had lent to Twiss:

I rec’d Barbut & 3 tokens &c. safe last Sat’y, & am oblig’d I have sent it to Enfl to be bound, & I shall be oblig’d further to you if you will lend me your Barbut for a few days, next Saturday 20th, for me to colour the insects from which I have not got. if that day will suit you, I shall send your Mouffet &c back on the same morning; will be only one Errand for your Man: if that day does not suit, mention any day in the following week. I shall send Curtis On insects. & Mandevilles treatise on Stews, which is M’ Taylor’s (the surgeon).127

Amid this learned outpouring can be identified the writers on entomology, Jacques or James Barbut (fl. 1780-91), Thomas Moufet (1553-1604) and William Curtis (1746-99); “Mandeville” is the Dutch-born Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), whose books anatomising the hypocrisy of a prosperous society’s moral foundations were much relished by Twiss and Douce.128 The letter continues with references to “Drury the silversmith in the Strand”, “Sir Jos Banks”, and “P’ Pindar”. And then, on the second page, [Plate 5] the first of our Blake

127Letter, Richard Twiss to Francis Douce, 13 September 1794. Bodleian Library MS. Douce d.39 fol.70r. Words underlined by Twiss are italicised in these transcripts. Words underlined in red ink by Douce are underlined here.

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references:

A Lady here has just shown me a little book 'the Pleasures of memory" 5th Edn Poems. (by Mr Rogers the Banker!) 1793. Cadell. 12mo, with four beautiful plates, and two curious works of Blake No. 13 Hercules Build' Lambeth. One "the gates of Paradise", 16 etchings. 24mo the other "Songs of Innocence" prin[ted in] Colours. I suppose the man to be mad; but he draws very well have [you] any thing by him?129

This is the earliest reference to either For Children or the Songs.130 Since the letter is written from Bush Hill, Edmonton, the "Lady here" clearly lives in, or has some connection with, Edmonton.

There are only five extant copies of For Children: The Gates of Paradise and one of them belonged in 1826 to "Mrs. Bliss". The 1826 sale catalogue also indicates that she owned a copy of Songs of Innocence and of Experience. The coincidence is so striking that one must consider if the "Lady here" and Mrs. Bliss are not the same person. If Mrs. Bliss owned these works in September 1794, this makes her the earliest identifiable owner of works by Blake.

The next letter (dated "25 Sept' 94 ") continues [Plate 6] the entomological discussion:

On Saturday next, 27th any time after 12 o'Clock, if you will be so good as to send to the Black Bull Holborn, you will find there ready your Barbut, Mouffet, 3 imposteurs, Donovans insects &c. Jere. Taylor, Mandeville on Stews, & my Curtis insects & Blakes Paradise. and also a very curious Caterpillar, which will produce next May Linnaeus's Phalena Pudibunda:131 this is the large one with four brushes, on its back; black velvet rings, & near the purple brush on the tail, a hole like a nipple from whence issues green matter; no other Caterp' has this. It has been painted & described by Madam Merian & also by Sepp. It eats walnut & Lime Leaves. a small Caterpillar which feeds on Plumb leaves not in Sepp but probably in Roesel, & two more large

129'Bodleian Library MS. Douce d. 39 fol.70'.

130'There is no earlier reference to either (or, I believe, to any book by Blake) in Blake Records (1969), Blake Records Supplement (1988), or in any of the information I have collected since." G. E. Bentley, Jr, personal communication, 2 February 1995.

131'At this point Stemmler's transcript ends.
ones like the one you have these will produce the _Phalena Rubi._ (the little _Pupa_ I sent before is the _jacobaea_.) Some _Cynips_’s nests on a Rose branch, & some _Cynips_ at the undersurface of oakleaves, each of these contains a maggot, the black ones are almost ready to come out flies: should be put in a bottle with gauze. or in a box & glass: the bottle is best, as the flies can’t get out. the Larva of the Beetle is dead & rotten. Letsons b” was printed by Dilly. I have read the article about Earwigs in Valmont: there is no hole from the Ear to the Brain. See what Valmont says about Mandragora. there are no neuters in _Blattae p.102 Barbut_; those you thought so, are the _Larva_. You will see several more of Blakes books at Johnsons in St. P” Ch. y” — inclosed your Dutch MS. I shall explain it to you when we meet, ’tis dated 1286. religious nonsense, but curious for its antiquity.132

The muddle of bibliography and entomology is typical of Twiss’s letters. Note that it includes a third reference to Blake “You will see several more of Blakes books at Johnsons” — an important new discovery about the availability of Blake’s books in 1790s London. This reference was unaccountably overlooked by Stemmler. It is of such significance that I shall consider it separately in my next chapter.

Twiss’s letter of 13 September is written from Bush Hill, Edmonton with the implication that Mrs. Bliss, if she is to be the “Lady here”, must have some connection with the Edmonton neighbourhood.133 First I found myself pursuing some further false trails. For example, Robinson’s _Edmonton_ lists an Elias Bliss (1724?-1810) among “instances of longevity”.134 The same Elias Bliss is listed in one of the few surviving ratebooks for the Edmonton Parish


133Bush Hill was an estate within the ancient parish of Edmonton but adjoining the parish boundary with Enfield. The house at Bush Hill that Twiss occupied in the 1790s as a tenant of a Mr. Wilkinson was demolished during the period I was researching this chapter.

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as a resident of South Street ward in 1765.\textsuperscript{135} But was Elias Bliss still resident in South Street in 1794? And where is Mrs. Bliss in all this?

A search of the Middlesex Parish Registers included in the \textit{International Genealogical Index} for the years 1750 to 1800 discloses no Bliss marriages in Edmonton, nor in the neighbouring parishes of Tottenham, or Monken Hadley, and just one in South Mimms (Sarah Bliss to Thomas White in 1768). But when I turned to the neighbouring parish of Enfield, I found that the registers of St Andrew's Church offered evidence of a long-established family called Bliss in the Enfield area throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{136} But they were not listed in the few directories of the time either as gentry or as trades-people and on class and economic grounds seemed unlikely to have included a notable book-collector.

There are many directories of genealogical researchers and their interests and, by great

\textsuperscript{135}“South Street 1 yr Ending at Mich' 1765” (Enfield Libraries. Local History Section, M61765/1/2).

\textsuperscript{136}There were three candidates for “Mrs. Bliss”:

(1) Mary Carter, who married William Bliss in Enfield 1765 (6 children). She could be either the Mary Carter christened at Enfield in 1740 (parents Samuel and Ann) or the one christened at Enfield in 1748 (parents William and Mary). She would thus be either 25 or 17 at her wedding, 54 or 46 when owning Blake books, and 86 or 78 at her death, assuming it shortly predated the sale in 1826.

(2) Anne Crammer, who married Thomas Bliss in Enfield in 1792 (4 children). I have not traced her birth, but supposing it is circa 1770, she would be 22 on marriage, 24 in 1794, and 56 in 1826. However if her marriage was to the same Thomas Bliss recorded in my third possibility, she would have had to have died before 1814.

(3) Letice Lewis who married Thomas Bliss at St Andrew’s Parish Church in 1814 (6 children). Clearly she could not be the person who owned Blake books in 1794 nor could she be “deceased” by 1826, as her last child was born in 1830.

Thomas Bliss, husband of Letice or Letitia Lewis, could perhaps be the Thomas Bliss (son of Mary and William) born in 1770. He marries in 1792, fathering 4 children between 1792 and 1800. It is just possible for him to marry again in 1814 and have another 6 children between 1816 and 1830. He would still only be sixty. If this is the case then all Bliss christenings and marriages in the parish of St Andrew’s, Enfield are of members of one family.
good fortune, in one of these I came across the name of Mrs. Jennifer Claridge who had been engaged for some time in researching her Bliss ancestors in Enfield. Like all experienced family historians she had accumulated notes of what (for her) were genealogical “waifs and strays”. Her information proved the breakthrough I was looking for. Mention of Mrs. Bliss and her “Residence at Kensington” led Mrs. Claridge to refer me to a note she had made at Loughton Library of a burial at St. Nicholas, Loughton:

1819 ... 9 March BLISS Rebecca; Kensington; aged 70 years.

This brief record of her death was filled out slightly by an obituary notice in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1819:

[March 2] At Kensington, Mrs. Rebekah Bliss, niece of the late John Gorham.

Could this be the bibliophile Mrs. Bliss and Twiss’s “Lady here”? The age of the deceased also tallies with the “Rebecca Bliss” whose baptism on 9 March 1749 is listed in the Register of the Independent Chapel at Carey Street, New Court.

Mrs. Bliss’s social position was confirmed by the will of “Rebekah Bliss of Kensington in the Country of Middlesex Spinster” in the Public Record Office. She names her cousins Alexander and Ebenezer Maitland of Clapham as joint executors with her friend Ann Whitaker. It is clearly the will of a keen book-collector. This is a typical bequest:

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138 Loughton Burials, 1674-1830 (s.l., s.d.), 48. Typescript in Loughton Library.
140 Public Record Office RG 4/4228 (Baptisms 1707-1757).
141 Public Record Office PROB 11/1614 fols.58-61 (Will of Rebekah Bliss). All wills are quoted from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury probate copies.
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List of Books with the Parlor Book Case for M' Ebenezer Maitland to have at mine or Mrs. Whitakers decease as she shall direct a set of Gentlemans Mag from 1731 to the present time and which I have kept up purposely for him Harleian Miscellany 8 Vol Gross's Antiquities 8 Vol Rapins History of England 5 Darts Westminster Darts Canterbury Dugdale S' Pauls Evelyns Sylva Ogilvys Esop Montfaucons Antiquities 2 vol Hales Husbandry Richardsons Iconology Arthurian Oracle 3 Vol the Alcoran Roma Patria 2 vol Dictionary of all Religious to the above list I give him of my own purchasing Sir Wm Hamiltons Roman and Grecian Antiquities in 4 vol folio also a Book of Prints called incantations both which were bought by me & if there are any other Book or Books he may particularly wish to have & are not specifically devised I request that he may have them.

And another:

I also give to Mrs. Fuller Maitland's Daughters 2 vols of Les Oiseaux dorees & 2 vols of Le Vaillant's Birds as a Token though a small one of my Remembrance to them.

Mrs. Fuller Maitland's grandson was J. A. Fuller Maitland, music critic and editor. In his autobiography, he reminisces:

In Church Street there stood two beautiful old houses side by side, close to what is now Kensington Palace Gardens; I am not sure which of my forbears gave the name of Maitland House to one of them, but I know there was a connection, as one of my uncles remembered being taken as a boy to pay his respects to two cousins, old ladies, to whom it had come, who were styled 'Mrs.' Whittaker and 'Mrs.' Bliss. (The statelier designation was a survival of old custom adopted when maiden ladies attained a certain age.)

Since Rebekah Bliss died in 1819, why did it take till 1826 for Bibliotheca splendidissima to be put up for sale? Fuller Maitland's recollection of "Mrs. Whittaker" is of relevance here. The residuary legatee was the woman with whom Mrs. Bliss shared her home, Ann Whitaker. A codicil to the will makes it clear:

I give and bequeath the Use and Enjoyment of all my Library of Books Book-Cases Cabinets of Shells Minerals Pictures and all other Articles of Furniture Glasses &c. which belong to me and are standing in the House at Kensington to M's Ann Whitaker for and during her Life and after her Death I give and bequeath them as under written unless she chooses to give them in her Lifetime.

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The disposal of her personal estate takes a highly detailed form with codicils leaving named books and manuscripts to individuals, and bequests of watercolours and natural history specimens:

As my mind is so fully expressed in this paper relating to M̂s Whitaker written in the year 1816 that she may not be put to any trouble about the removal or Inconvenienced by it in any shape I leave it to the honor of the Executors that are join’d with her that they see to it that every thing is done proper & distributed after her death in the manner I intend should I not leave opportunity to write this as a proper Codicil to go with my other Wills and fully mean that my books Book Cases Pictures Minerals Shells and Cases shall be given as directed I shall not destroy this paper that my mind may be fully seen how & in what manner things contained in it I wish to be disposed of & shall sign this accordingly.  R. Bliss at Loughton Hall Octr 3rd 1818.143

Mrs. Bliss’s library was thus kept substantially intact, even though so many books are bequeathed in her will. It was the death of Ann Whitaker in 1825 that precipitated the sale, not that of Rebekah Bliss, who died in 1819. We find a relevant entry among the burial records in Loughton Library:

1825 ... 2 December WHITAKER Anne; Loughton; aged 84 years (& of Kensington)144

and another obituary note in the Gentleman’s Magazine for 1825:

[Lately] At Kensington, aged 83, Mrs. Anne Whittaker.145

We can thus be confident that the owner of the Bibliotheca splendidissima should be identified as Rebekah Bliss. But can we link Mrs. Bliss with the Enfield or Edmonton neighbourhoods as the “Lady here” referred to by Twiss? Again, her will provides the evidence. She leaves to:

143Public Record Office PROB 11/1614 fols.58-61 (Will of Rebekah Bliss).

144Loughton Burials, 1674-1830, 50.

145Gentleman’s Magazine, vol. 95, part 2 (1825), 646.
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Mrs. Bliss makes a bequest that must have been intended to meet the intellectual interests of her Southgate friends the Walkers. Southgate, in Edmonton parish, was described in the early nineteenth century as “a large and populous hamlet, ornamented with many residences of a superior description. Conspicuous among these is Arnos Grove, the seat of John Walker Esq.” John Walker was born into a wealthy Quaker family in 1765; his father Isaac bought the Arnos Grove estate in 1777. Thus Rebekah had friends on an estate close to Bush Hill, which increases the likelihood of her being the “Lady here” whom Richard Twiss met in 1794.

When Mrs. Bliss, as I presume, showed her Blake books to Richard Twiss at Bush Hill, was she visiting her friends the Walkers at the neighbouring estate of Arnos Grove? Ann Whitaker’s will in its turn names John Walker of Southgate as a Trustee of her real estate; showing us again how close the links were between the Bliss-Whitaker household and the Walkers at Arnos Grove:

I give and devise the same Manor Messuages Farms Lands Hereditaments and premises and every of them with the rights members and appurtenances unto and to the use of John Walker of Southgate in the said County of Middlesex Esquire Marmaduke Langdale the Elder of New Ormond Street in the said County of Middlesex Esquire and William Alers Hankey of Fenchurch Street in the City of London Banker and their heirs during the natural life of the said William Whitaker

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146 Public Record Office PROB 11/1614 fols.58-61 (Will of Rebekah Bliss).


148 John Walker and Richard Twiss were part of a local antiquarian circle including Richard Gough and Isaac d’Israeli which I shall discuss in my next chapter.
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Maitland upon trust to support and preserve the contingent uses and estates hereinafter limited from being defeated or destroyed and for that purpose to make duties and bring actions as occasion shall require.\(^{149}\)

Unfortunately, John Walker was to predecease Ann Whitaker, dying 9 May 1824.\(^{150}\) The remaining trustees were to administer the Whitaker estate for the ultimate benefit of Ann’s godson, William Whitaker Maitland, the son of Rebekah’s cousin John Maitland.

Not only do these dates, baptisms, deaths and wills all match up, together they provide a vivid picture of Rebekah Bliss’s life and the milieu in which she moved. She was only fourteen when her father died in 1763 and nineteen when her mother died.\(^{151}\) Her father’s will, made in the month of his death, is brief and formal. In common with many such wills written \textit{in extremis} and bearing the mark rather than signature of the dying man, it makes no attempt to itemise his estate, and makes a single nominal bequest: “Item I give to my wife Sarah Bliss the Sum of One Shilling”.\(^{152}\) The \textit{Register} of the Independent Chapel at Carey Street New Court additionally recorded the births of Anne Bliss in 1750, John Bliss in 1751, and William Bliss in 1753, but none of her siblings seem to have reached adulthood.\(^{153}\) She found herself, at an early age, not alone in the world because her uncle and cousins were part of the same Independent Chapel congregation, but perhaps with a freedom

\(^{149}\)Public Record Office PROB 11/1709 fols.172-181 (Will of Ann Whitaker).

\(^{150}\)\textit{Gentleman’s Magazine,} vol. 94, part 1 (1824), 476.

\(^{151}\)[December 1768] “14 Mrs. Sarah Bliss from Little Moorfields in a grave 00 = 13 = 6” Public Record Office RG 4/4633 (Bunhill Fields Registers. vol. 11), 99.

\(^{152}\)Public Record Office PROB 11/893, q. 498 (November 1763: Will of William Bliss). The “Sum of One Shilling” is a legal formality only. Sarah Bliss inherited the whole of her husband’s estate.

\(^{153}\)Public Record Office RG 4/4228 (Baptisms 1707-57).
to determine her own future denied to most of her female contemporaries.

Ordinarily, the pressures to marry would have been considerable, but Rebekah Bliss remained a spinster throughout her life. How did she escape what Blake condemned as “the marriage hearse”? Some time before 1780, she met another orphan heiress, Ann Whitaker, the only child of the second marriage of Alderman William Whitaker of Loughton in Essex, and the two women set up home together in Church Street, Kensington, in a house built by Rebekah’s uncle, John Gorham.

The role of John Gorham, her oldest close relative, must have been crucial in her young life and there are some striking aspects to his will. The estate is shared more or less equally among his nephews and nieces: the Maitland brothers, Robert, Ebenezer, John and Alexander, their sister Ursula Ware (the five children of Gorham’s sister Ursula), and Rebekah Bliss (the sole surviving child of his sister Sarah). All four Maitland brothers are men of business, and one, Ebenezer, is a director of the Bank of England. But John Gorham is sufficiently convinced of his niece’s abilities to make her his sole executrix: “And I do hereby nominate constitute and appoint my said Niece Rebecca Bliss Executrix of this my last Will and Testament”. He even includes clauses in the will imposing penalties on any beneficiary who might choose to challenge her judgment. When John Gorham makes fulfilment of his will dependent on the consent and decisions of Rebekah Bliss, he is, of

154 E 27, 475, 796.

155 Public Record Office PROB 11/1361, q. 528. Probate was granted for the estate of John Gorham in August 1801.

156 Public Record Office PROB 11/1361, q. 528, fols. 288'-291', (Will of John Gorham).
course, expressing his full confidence in her abilities, but he must surely have had in mind too the Biblical Rebekah, whose consent was solicited before a marriage contract could be agreed.\textsuperscript{157}

The beneficiaries are all, with one exception, relatives or servants of the deceased. The exception is Ann Whitaker, Rebekah’s partner:

Also I give to my said Niece Rebecca Bliss for her own All my Household Goods Plate Linen Books and every thing of every kind that is moveable in and about my Dwellinghouse in the Kings Road aforesaid (except my two Rose Wood Tables which I have hereby given to Mrs Ann Whitaker).\textsuperscript{158}

This is a telling example of how Ann Whitaker was adopted into the Bliss-Gorham-Maitland clan. And she in turn was to acknowledge that recognition of her status by making the Maitland family her principal heirs. And even returned to the family the gift of John Gorham:

To Alex’ Maitland Esq’ the two rose wood dining tables belonging to his late uncle John Gorham Esq’.\textsuperscript{159}

The couple were able to resist the heterosexual imperative, partly because they had no close male relatives to force them into marriage, and partly because their background

\textsuperscript{157}Genesis 24: 57-58: And they said, we will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they asked Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? and she said, I will go.

\textsuperscript{158}Public Record Office PROB 11/1361, q. 528, fols. 288’-291’.

One at least of the books that Rebekah Bliss inherited can be identified. The Will of Rebekah Bliss leaves to Ebenezer Maitland a copy of “Richardson’s Iconology”. John Gorham was an original subscriber to George Richardson, Iconology (London, 1779). Later, he subscribed to Richardson’s A Treatise on the Five Orders of Architecture (London, 1787). The sale catalogue of Bibliotheca splendidissima includes 335 Richardson’s (Geo.) Book of Ceilings, in the Style of the Antique Grotesque. 48 plates, with descriptions in Fr. and Eng. half bound 1776

This is yet another of Richardson’s collections of design motifs for the hard-pressed builder. Maybe this and other books of this sort in Rebekah Bliss’s library came from her uncle’s collection.

\textsuperscript{159}Public Record Office PROB 11/1709 fols.172-181, (Will of Ann Whitaker).
respected female autonomy. The domestic arrangements of their Kensington home were shaped according to their own inclinations.

The eighteenth century has long been recognised as the age of the bachelor and the spinster. In his pioneering study of *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Lawrence Stone comments that “as a result of the shortage of suitable males, owing to the level of low nuptiality among younger sons and to the rise in the cost of marriage portions, there developed in the eighteenth century a new and troublesome social phenomenon, the spinster lady who never married, whose numbers rose from under five per cent of all upper class girls in the sixteenth century to twenty to twenty five per cent in the eighteenth century.”

Stone begrudgingly allows a few exceptions to the empty, unfulfilled life of these women:

Only a few single women from really affluent families seem to have managed to carve out a satisfactory life for themselves in the late eighteenth century, filling their time with visits to friends and relatives in country houses and in lengthy correspondence with other spinster friends. Miss Elizabeth Iremonger and Miss Mary Heber were two who seem to have come to terms with life as spinsters, though both were buoyed up by very comfortable incomes and powerful connections. In 1786 Miss Iremonger admitted to her friend that marriage was best. On the other hand, she was ‘clearly of the opinion that to be without a companion is far preferable to being tied to a disagreeable one.’ She lived an apparently happy and interesting life by taking ‘every opportunity of forming and cultivating those sort of valuable female friendships that are the best substitute for the other sort of connection.”

Stone seems quite unable to see that maybe some of those eighteenth-century spinsters preferred it that way.

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161 Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), 386. Miss Mary Heber was the sister of Richard Heber, book collector. Miss Iremonger, too, was a book collector, and according to Bentley (*Blake Books*, 413) owned a copy of Blake’s *Songs* (Copy D).
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Lillian Faderman (in her wonderful book *Surpassing the Love of Men*) has shown that passionate friendships with other women were a crucial part of the lives of middle-class women in the eighteenth century. Through correspondence and memoirs, she has pieced together stories that corroborate how ubiquitous the ideas of romantic friendship were among literate eighteenth-century women:

Romantic friends courted each other, flirted, were anxious about the beloved's responses and about reciprocity. They believed their relationships to be eternal, and in fact the faithfulness of one often extended beyond the death of the other. The fondest dream of many romantic friends, which was not often realised, was to establish a home with the beloved. To that end they were willing to make the greatest sacrifices, and were devastated if their hopes were disappointed. There is nothing to suggest that they were self conscious about these passions or saw them as being abnormal in any way.

Adrienne Rich, in a controversial essay, suggests that there is a natural and primary bonding between women which is disrupted by the imposition of compulsory heterosexuality in all women’s lives. Rich argues against the notion that heterosexuality is somehow “natural” or innate in human beings, and suggests the possibility that it is, in fact, imposed on women, whose “natural” bonding usually occurs with other women, starting with their mothers. She suggests that lesbianism is more than sexuality, that it is the emotional and

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psychological identification of women with other women and that women have enjoyed this kind of essential bonding throughout history, regardless of the gender of their sexual partners.

It has been a common criticism of Rich that her emphasis on "woman identification" seems almost to exclude sexuality. Obviously Rebekah and Ann could not and did not identify themselves as "lesbian" and it would be an impertinence to do so; but one can see the example of their lives as asserting a sexual agency independent of men even though their close, intensely emotional bonds would be understood or asserted by the outside world to be asexual:

If men defined lesbianism as just sex between women, they could believe that they never encountered a lesbian in decent society. But what was devotion, or affection, or even an exclusive commitment between two women?, it was not, as Alfred Douglas said of male homosexuality later in the century, the love that dared not speak its name. It was the love that had no name, unless it were a sentimental one like "romantic friendship," even if the intensity of the relationship made the term "friendship" inaccurate and misleading.\(^\text{165}\)

Faderman documents the lives of several couples whose "romantic friendship" seemed to have developed into a pattern with one partner acting as the passive submissive "wife" to a "husband" active in artistic or literary pursuits. But such relations between women modeled on the pattern of heterosexual marriage have always an economic raison d'ètre. Bliss and Whitaker use their wealth to build a relationship founded on the economic autonomy of each partner. As individuals their wealth gave them access to male social privilege; as a couple they don't need to find a model for their relationship in an imitation of heterosexuality. Faderman too often ignores the possibility of agency in a couple's construction of their own identity, consciously seeking performative roles, complete with codes and symbols available for the use of anyone, regardless of biological sex.

\(^{165}\)Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (New York, 1981), 154
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Rebekah and Ann had models available to them from literature (Faderman documents the vast literature of romantic friendship) and from the Bible. From literature, the model of “sisterhood” for a female household finds expression, for example, in *As You Like It*:

... Rosalind, lack'st thou then the love
Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one?
Shall we be sundered? Shall we part, sweet girl?
No. Let my father seek another heir.
Therefore devise, with me how we may fly,
Whither to go, and what to bear with us,
And do not seek to take your change upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out.
For by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,
Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee.166

There are Biblical precedents too, for a relationship between two women and these I would suggest must have been of the greatest significance to Rebekah with her dissenting background. Ruth and Naomi, Mary and Martha provide positive images of female coupledom. In the touching story of the love between the Israelite widow Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-law, Ruth refused to be parted from Naomi saying “for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God”.167 Ann Whitaker was brought up in the Church of England. There is no known dissenting background to the Whitakers, yet she follows Rebekah into the world of the Bible Society and religious dissent (“your God, my God”).

Rebekah and Ann had been partners since the 1780s. At some time around 1800, they took

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166 Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 1, scene 3, lines 95-104. *As You Like It* is both a pastoral romance and a satire of the pastoral idea. Among other conventions of romance Shakespeare adopts that of an ideal friendship, dear to Elizabethan gentlemen. But he applies it here for the first time to two women, Rosalind and Celia.

167 RUTH 1:16.
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into their home a much younger woman, Harriet Barnes, to act as “companion”. A lady took a “companion” as a confidante and assistant; a “companion” moved into a lady’s house to escape penury and isolation. Betty Rizzo has written compassionately about the cohabitation of a woman and her companion, “a type of relationship so prevalent that it was nearly institutionalized”.168 The former could enjoy sociability without rivalry; the latter had financial security without the shame of being a mere servant. Rebekah, Ann and Harriet exemplify the best ideals of companionship — they form indeed a “true community”. Rebekah leaves Harriet generously provided for in her will:

I give and bequeath to Harriet Barnes Spinster now residing with the said Ann Whitaker an annuity of One Hundred Pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain for her life,

and later:

I give to Miss Harriet Barnes Two thousand pounds three p' Cent Consolidated Bank Annuities.169

Unlike “Mrs.” Bliss and “Mrs.” Whitaker, she was always “Miss” Barnes as befitted her dependent status. Harriet was not long to enjoy her new wealth, dying at Kensington just three years after Rebekah, in April 1823, aged 42. She was buried at Loughton alongside Rebekah, where Ann was to join them after her death in 1825, aged 84.170

From details of their bequests and other sources, it is possible to reconstruct the

168 Betty Rizzo, Companions without Vows (Athens, 1994).
170 Loughton Burials, 1674-1830, 49, 50. See also William Chapman Waller, Loughton in Essex (Epping, 1889-1900), vol. II, 48, who notes that a memorial (now lost) was raised to the three friends.
stratum of well-to-do dissent in which Rebekah and Ann moved and were prominent.\textsuperscript{171} Rebekah Bliss was a lifelong member of the congregation at Carey Street New Court and left a substantial legacy to its minister ("to the said Rev\textsuperscript{4} Dr Winter One thousand Pounds like 3 p' Cent Annuities").\textsuperscript{172} The registers of the Chapel record the births of all the Bliss children and their cousins the Maitlands. Together they form a tightly-knit clan of wealthy Dissenters. John Clayton (a dissenting minister left legacies by both Rebekah and Ann) married Mary Flower, a niece of William Fuller, the banker, and sister to the radical journalist Benjamin Flower. Rebekah’s cousin Ebenezer Maitland, a director of the Bank of England, married Mary Winter, sister of Robert Winter, the minister at Carey Street New Court. Rebekah Bliss’s cousin’s son Ebenezer Fuller Maitland married Bethia Ellis, a granddaughter of William Fuller.\textsuperscript{173} Her entire extended family adhered to this dissenting community over several generations. Like so many Christian sects, the congregation at Carey Street New Court preferred endogamy, marrying within the congregation, and following the Biblical prohibitions "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers" and "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together".\textsuperscript{174} Ann Whitaker also became part of this dissenting community,

\textsuperscript{171}In 1792, “Miss Bliss, Kensington” subscribed to John Owen, \textit{Pneumatology} (Coventry: printed for the Editor), an abridgement of a key work of Independent theology. The subscription list provides a national sample of the polite dissenting world in which Rebekah Bliss moved. Dissenting ministers were well represented among the subscribers including “Rev. John Ryland, A.M. Enfield”, and “Rev. John Clayton, London 7 books”.

\textsuperscript{172}Public Record Office PROB 11/1614 fols. 58-61 (Will of Rebekah Bliss).

\textsuperscript{173}Fuller’s unmarried daughter Sarah, Bethia Fuller Maitland’s aunt, was another inhabitant of Enfield.

\textsuperscript{174}2 \textit{Corinthians} 6: 14; \textit{Deuteronomy} 22: 10.
The 1826 sale contents of Rebekah Bliss’s library does not represent its likely totality. Evidence of other books and manuscripts she owned may be found in her will and in that of Ann Whitaker as well as in sales of the books inherited by her relatives. It is from these sources that one can piece together something of the scope of the library of England’s earliest female bibliophile. Not everything in her will can be identified with certainty, but many gifts of books are identifiable. Robert Winter was left “Magna Charta in Gold Letters a token of Remembrance in boards” identifiable as *Magna Charta Regis Johannis, xv die Juni, mcccxxv, anno regni xvii.* (London: John Whittaker, 1816), perhaps the most sumptuous book published in England during the nineteenth century and almost certainly the first to be printed in gold. It is tempting to read into the presence of this publication in her library an expression of her political sympathies that may also account for the number of works relating to Napoleon Buonaparte sold with *Bibliotheca splendidissima.* Ebenezer Maitland was left “Sir Wm Hamiltons Roman and Grecian Antiquities”, that is *Antiquités Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines. Tirées du cabinet de M. Hamilton. Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman antiquities from the Cabinet of the Honble. Wm. Hamilton* (Naples: [Francesco Morelli], 1766-7), four folios of great importance in the development of neoclassical design.

175 1 Corinthians 6:17.

176 Prematurely, De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books and Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1930), 141, awarded this title to Miss Richardson Currer (1785-1861).

177 Lots 117, 147, 319, 320, 342, 409.

178 See Francis Haskell, “The Baron d’Hancarville: an Adventurer and Art Historian in Eighteenth-Century Europe”, in his *Past and Present in Art and Taste: Selected Essays* (New
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Maitland was also bequeathed “Ld Nelsons Naval Victories atlas folio”, with illustrations by P. J. de Loutherbourg.

But the finest printed volumes in her library were natural history books, including spectacular folios:

Buffon Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux, 14 vols. LARGE PAPER; ... Storia Naturelle degli Uccelli, 5 vols; ... Sepp’s Birds, 2 vols; Scheuchzer’s Natural History, 15 vols; ... Plenck Icones Plantarum, 6 vols; Thornton’s Sexual System of Linnaeus; ... Roxburgh’s Plants of the Coast of Coromandel; ... Abbot and Smith’s Insects, 2 vols; ... Bulliard Historie des Champignons de la France, 7 vols; Vieillot Histoire Naturelle, 3 vols, LARGE PAPER; ... Brookshaw’s Pomona; ... Buchoz Historie Naturelle, 5 vols, ... &c. &c.179

This collection reflects a widespread female interest in natural philosophy which developed during the eighteenth century, Rebekah’s wealth enabling her to fill her library with the grandest publications in that field.

While Rebekah Bliss’s printed books can often be identified, few of the manuscripts, missals and Oriental books can now be traced. A small part of her collection was subsequently listed in Ann Whitaker’s will, but a remarkably informative source for the manuscripts of Bibliotheca splendidissima is a sale catalogue including items from the library of Samuel Roffey Maitland, the son of Rebekah’s cousin Alexander. The sale was held on 21 April 1842 and for three following days.180 A copy of the catalogue survives in the British

Haven, 1987).

179Title-page to Bibliotheca splendidissima.

180VALUABLE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS. | — | A CATALOGUE OF THE | Very Select and Elegant Library, Printed & Manuscript, | of a Private Gentleman, | TOGETHER WITH ANOTHER COLLECTION, | INCLUDING | The most beautiful and valuable collection of Missals, and other richly | illuminated Manuscripts, which have been offered for sale during many | years; some of the delicately and highly finished Paintings in which, have | been engraved in Dr. Dibdin’s Decameron. Also some splendidly illumi | nated Manuscripts in the Hebrew, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, Burmese, Hindostan, Sanscrit, Singalese, Japonese, Russian, Italian,
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Library Department of Manuscripts, annotated by Sir Frederic Madden:

Those MSS. to which M. is prefixed belonged to the Rev. S. R. Maitland, Librarian to the Abp. of Canterbury. He inherited them from his father, who had them from a Mrs Bliss the widow [sic] of a Collector of that name of Kensington. Those marked S. were consigned from Paris to Stewart, a bookseller, for sale. Those marked T. belong to Thorpe, the bookseller. 181

Madden marked 30 lots as originating in the Bliss collection. 182 Of these, three acquired by Madden for the British Museum illustrate the collection’s superb quality:

698 Chinese costume. A volume containing upwards of forty figures, representing the costume etc. of the Natives, with descriptions in Chinese, finely executed 183

720 HORAE BEATAE VIRGINIS, A BEAUTIFUL MANUSCRIPT UPON VELLUM, of about the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century, containing THIRTEEN LARGE PAINTINGS OF SINGULAR CHARACTER AND EXTRAORDINARY CAREFULNESS OF FINISH, (in the same style as one in the Bibliothque Royale des Manuscrits at Paris, executed for Anne of Brittany,) THIRTY ONE BORDERS OF FRUITS, FLOWERS, AND INSECTS, AND MANY HUNDRED CAPITAL LETTERS, an exquisitely finished and beautiful Manuscript, bound in crimson velvet, from Edwards’ Collection 8vo

One of the Paintings in this exquisite volume, that of our Saviour cleansing the leper, is copied in the first volume of Dr. Dibdin’s Bibliographical Decameron,

French, and English Languages, with curious specimens of Ancient Music. ... together with the Works of the most Popular Writers, in very fine condition. | Upwards of 600 Autographs of British Peers, H. B. Caricatures, | etc. etc., two very valuable Scrap Books containing many scarce | Proofs and Etchings. | Which will be Sold by Auction, by | = | MR. FLETCHER, | = | At his Great Room, 191, Piccadilly, | ON THURSDAY, APRIL 21st, 1842, AND 3 FOLLOWING DAYS, | (Sunday Excepted.) | AT TWELVE O’CLOCK. | = | To be viewed four days previous, Catalogues had at Mr. Fletcher’s Office 191, Piccadilly. | Price one shilling each.

181 British Library Department of Manuscripts P.R.2.c.14(3). Madden’s annotation is at the top of page 37.


183 MS. Egerton 1055, and now held in the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum. It sold for £9 15s.

86
(see page CLXI.) the countenance of our Saviour is exceedingly fine. 184

758 CHARLES III. KING OF SPAIN. Original grant by King Charles III. of the title of Marquis of Sobre Monte to Don Joseph de Sobremonte and his heirs 1761, in Spanish, MOST BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN UPON VELLUM WITHIN A VERY RICH BORDER MOST HIGHLY FINISHED IN GOLD AND COLOURS, signed at the end by the King and various others, bound in velvet with clasps folio

At the commencement of this beautiful volume are four highly finished paintings, the first of which is a splendid coat of arms. 185

As these catalogue entries indicate, Rebekah Bliss collected over a wide field, both geographically and temporally. The distinguishing feature of her manuscripts is their high quality, emphasised by the auctioneer’s “puffs” and confirmed by the high prices they fetched.

Where did Rebekah acquire her books? Thomas Dibdin (who illustrates it in his Bibliographical Decameron) tells us that lot 720 of the 1842 sale “was purchased at the sale of Mr. Edward’s library” and adds:

My respectable neighbour, (and indefatigable collector of ‘rich and rare’ gems, in the department of book illuminations) Mr. Bliss, is the present possessor of the volume here alluded to. ... It is a thick broad duodecimo of HOURS OF THE VIRGIN; containing 13 larger illuminations ... and thirty one borders of fruits and flowers, &c. ... The condition of this curious little volume is most desirable. It was sold for 56l. 15s. 186

Perhaps indeed, Rebekah did frequent James Edwards’s shop in Pall Mall. According to William Beloe, a contemporary commentator, James Edwards

was the first person who professedly displayed in the metropolis shelves of valuable books in splendid bindings, and having taken a large house in one of the most

184 The manuscript is now British Library MS. Egerton 1149. It sold for £45 13s. 6d.
185 Now British Library Add. 17,059. It sold for £4 14s. 6d.
frequented and fashionable streets, it soon became the resort of the gay morning loungers of both sexes. At the same time also invitation was held out to students and scholars, and persons of real taste, from the opportunity of seeing and examining the most curious and rare books, manuscripts, and missals.\textsuperscript{187}

When Dibdin refers to a manuscript from the Bliss collection, he writes of “my Friend Mr. Bliss”. Dibdin pretends to more knowledge than he had. He had presumably seen no more than the name “Bliss” against an entry in the sale record and assumed the purchaser to be male. Since few collectors, and no women, bought openly at auction, to mistake Rebekah’s sex is understandable.

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There is another member of the Bliss-Gorham-Maitland family who owned work by Blake, and that is William Fuller Maitland (1813-1876), grandson of Ebenezer and uncle of J. A. Fuller Maitland, who recalls visiting his uncle at Stanstead Hall, Essex, some time before 1872:

At Stanstead there were wonderful books and treasures of all kinds; above all, a collection of early Italian pictures, many of which are now in the National Gallery. My uncle, Margaret’s father, had gathered them together during journeys in Italy, at a time when the primitives were considered to be merely quaint. ... There was a wonderful old chest where Margaret and I were allowed to forage, containing books by Blake that would now fetch their weight in gold. There was the unique copy of \textit{Jerusalem} with the original portraits of Blake and his wife by George Richmond, and the MS. biography that has been used by the successive writers of the artist’s life. There were two copies of Young’s \textit{Night Thoughts}, and when I referred to the fact in talking about the books to my uncle, he stoutly maintained that he possessed only one. I assured him that one was coloured and the other plain, but he was so sure that I was wrong that he said he would give me the second if it was there. It was, and the book is of course doubly precious to me now.\textsuperscript{188}


\textsuperscript{188}Maitland, \textit{A Doorkeeper of Music} (London, 1929), 37-8. William Fuller Maitland must have presented J. A. F. Maitland with his plain copy of \textit{Night Thoughts} probably before 1872, which is the date mentioned on p. 40.
On 1 June 1887, Christie's sold as lots 255-256, 258, *Jerusalem* (E), *Thel* (a) and attendant prints, and coloured *Night Thoughts* (E) from the Stanstead Hall collection; presumably they were sold by William Fuller Maitland's heirs. Fuller Maitland also owned at least two Blake drawings and the large colour print "Pity" now in the Metropolitan Museum.\(^{189}\)

Can there be a connection between at least some of these Blakes and Mrs. Bliss? The only one of William Fuller Maitland’s Blakes for which we have a clear history, the coloured *Jerusalem* (Copy E) was clearly in Blake’s possession at his death — and he died after Rebekah Bliss. But it is certainly possible that Fuller Maitland’s *The Book of Thel* (Copy a) and the Blake drawings in his collection came from Mrs. Bliss. Our knowledge of the full extent of Rebekah’s collection is still incomplete.

Clearly the copy of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Copy P, c. 1802), which appeared in the 1826 sale, could not have been the book shown to Twiss in 1794. Rebekah Bliss’s cousin, Ebenezer Maitland, was one of the joint executors of her estate and by curious coincidence, his great-grandson J. A. Fuller Maitland owned some leaves of *Songs* (Copy G).\(^{190}\) It is tempting to assume that these leaves came from her library. She may thus have owned two copies (G and P) of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* to put with her two copies of *Night Thoughts*. Given that Viscomi allots copy G a date of 1794, this could have been the one Twiss saw that year. The evidence is meagre, but the implication is that

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\(^{190}\)Bentley, *Blake Books* (Oxford, 1977), 415, records copy G, perhaps bound with *Songs* (N), *The World Turned Upside Down*, and several other works in half red morocco, uncut, in 1859 and 1860, but separated by 1877. After that date the plates were probably scattered loose. Pl. 50-1 were lent by J. A. Fuller Maitland to exhibitions in Manchester (1914), no.81, and Nottingham (1914), no.124.
Bliss possessed a second, currently unidentified or lost, copy of the *Songs*.

Mrs. Bliss’s copy of the *Songs* (P) was used to create two early facsimiles. Bentley notes:

Considering that few copies of Blake’s works in Illuminated Printing were ever sold, and that there was no published collection of any of the *Songs of Innocence* or *Songs of Experience* until long after his death, it is surprising that there was any contemporary attempt to do more than copy out a few of his poems in manuscript, as Wordsworth and Crabb Robinson did. However, not only did someone make a complete facsimile in ink and water colour of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* some time after 1805, but another facsimile was made from this first one probably about 1821.\(^{191}\)

Bentley has established that the copy in the 1826 sale of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was the model for facsimile copy *Alpha*, which in turn was the model for copy *Beta*. He comments:

It is difficult to explain why a facsimile was made at all, probably at considerably greater trouble and expense than would have been involved in buying a colored copy from Blake. The commission suggests either that the commissioner of the facsimile did not know how to locate an original copy for sale, or that the facsimile maker was imitating Blake’s work as an act of love. Whatever the motives, he, or they created works of remarkable beauty which, even at a remove from Blake’s originals, display to us much that is uniquely lovely in his *Songs*.\(^{192}\)

The facsimiles would have been prepared while *Songs* (P) was still part of *Bibliotheca splendidissima*. Could the young William Fuller Maitland, the future Blake collector, perhaps have been the facsimilist?\(^{193}\)

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\(^{193}\) I assume William Fuller Maitland was the uncle of J. A. F. Maitland who remembered visiting Mrs. Bliss at Kensington (Maitland, *A Doorkeeper of Music*, London, 1929, 15).
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What overlap might there have been between Rebekah Bliss’s circle and that of Blake? Could Blake, perhaps, have been a fellow-worshipper at the Carey Street chapel? New Court is conveniently near Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Blake would have known the chapel from his apprenticeship days with Basire when he lived at Great Queen Street. Although Blake is said not to have attended public worship for the last forty years of his life (1788-1827), he could have met Rebekah Bliss through the social circle of the Carey Street chapel. Robert Winter, the minister at New Court, was born 25 March 1762 at Brewer Street, Golden Square, just around the corner from the Blake family. Blake then could have known Dr. Winter from childhood. Blake’s friend Alexander Tilloch had business premises at 1 Carey Street, at least between 1795 and 1805. It is tempting to think that Tilloch too may have attended the chapel in New Court, though Tilloch is known to have worshipped in Islington in later years.194

Rebekah Bliss is of interest in her own right as an independent woman with intellectual interests. She is a striking instance of a new model of the eighteenth-century woman — literate, educated, intelligent, sensitive, artistic, scientific — and contributing significantly to a culture then still largely patriarchal. Irrespective of her significance as an early female bibliophile, Rebekah Bliss’s milieu represents a vivid example of a contemporary homosocial society. By identifying Mrs. Bliss I have put William Blake’s work into a context and a collection. The evidence presented in this chapter and the next should compel a revision of the traditional assumption that Blake lacked any significant contemporary audience and our received ideas of the nature of that audience.

194On Tilloch, see my Chapter IV.
Chapter III

Richard Twiss: the context of a circle of connoisseurs.

In his introduction to *William Blake: The Urizen Books*, David Worrall comments that “it does a disservice to the ‘myriads of Eternity’, the lost voices of his contemporary radical culture, if we imagine that Blake’s books are the semi-private indulgences of a gifted eccentric. Lots of other people, then as now, were on Blake’s political and religious wavelength but none other had his genius for the wonderful combination of text and design.”\(^{195}\) The contemporary ownership of Blake’s work tells us about the contexts in which he wrote, painted, printed and published, and enables us to reconstruct the audience he found for his work.

In this chapter I shall present a further investigation into those contemporaries of Blake who acquired examples of his work as poet and artist; those persons sufficiently “on his wavelength” to devote part of their income to acquiring what were, even in Blake’s lifetime, quite expensive books and paintings. I shall explore the way in which a circle of book-collecting friends provide a context in which knowledge of Blake’s work could be disseminated. This chapter also incorporates an aside on papermaking — a topic of considerable relevance to any discussion of the material aspect of Blake’s work, but still largely unexplored. Whereas, in Chapter II, I used the letters written by Richard Twiss to Francis Douce to lead to Rebekah Bliss, the earliest identified purchaser of any of Blake’s works in Illuminated Printing, here I propose to use the same correspondence to reassess the whole circle of friends of Richard Twiss as possible acquaintances or patrons of William

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Blake, and to join Isaac d’Israeli, and some others, in a network of Blake collectors.

The letters and other personal papers of these early collectors enable one to reconstruct their social circle and discover links to other Blake collectors and to friends and acquaintances of William Blake himself. For example, Isaac d’Israeli was to acquire a substantial Blake collection including seven of the books in Illuminated Printing — one of the most comprehensive of its day — and it is a curious coincidence that he should have been born in the same year as and have grown up next door to another Blake collector, the city merchant Samuel Boddington. Boddington’s diary not only makes reference to his nephew Thomas Fremaux Boddington, who owned a copy of *For the Sexes*, and to Hannah Boddington, who purchased a *Songs*, but also records meetings with the banker-poet Samuel Rogers and with Blake’s friend and patron John Linnell.

Since there is little information to be found on Boddington’s early years, I first assumed that Boddington’s interest in Blake stemmed from his friendship with Linnell. So is this early acquaintanceship with d’Israeli just a coincidence? Or is it another element in the process of cultural transfer? Might both d’Israeli and Boddington have had some early knowledge of Blake’s work? Certainly d’Israeli’s early friendship with Richard Twiss (documented in this chapter) is suggestive.


Guildhall Library (London), MS. 10823/5c (Journal of Samuel Boddington, 1815-1843). Bentley, *Blake Books* (Oxford, 1977), records Samuel Boddington as owning *America* (P), *Descriptive Catalogue* (E), *For the Sexes* (C), *Songs* (C), *Jerusalem* (H), *Europe* (M), and a coloured *Night Thoughts* (T); Thomas Boddington had a copy of *For the Sexes* (D); Hannah Boddington owned *Songs* (b) and “Job”; Samuel Rogers owned *Innocence* (C).
Barfoot’s *Universal British Directory* provides us with a brief description of Enfield, Middlesex, then a sleepy market town, at the turn of the eighteenth century: “There is an ancient parish-church, lately repaired and beautified, and several dissenting meeting-houses. The circuit of the parish is, from the best account to be obtained without an actual survey, something above thirty miles, and contains many gentlemens’ seats, being, from its rural and pleasant situation and vicinity to London, an agreeable retreat from the bustle of the town.”

Our first trace of a book-collecting circle in Enfield is in a poem of circa 1788 which lightly satirises some local antiquarians:

We three at early dawn one Day,
To pass a social Hour way,
In merry mood did all repair
To Antiquario’s Castle — where,
Robb’d of his Trident, Neptune stands
And on the Dolphin’s Back commands,
But for his Ocean look below,
And see the River gently flow.

Strong iron Bars defend the place,
Which give Security and Grace.
The Cockatrice, the tusky Boar
In frightful pairs defend the Door.
Upon the Ramparts or the Leads
Large Ostriches extend their Heads.

The poem, “Poly-Hymnia or the Castle of Antiquaries”, was written by John Sherwen, an apothecary and surgeon, who came to live and practise in Enfield in about 1773. The

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199 Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. D.1624.28 (“Poly-Hymnia or the Castle of Antiquaries”).

setting is a faithful description of the situation and ornamentation of the Enfield home of Richard Gough, overlooking the New River ("his Ocean") and displaying his family crest ("the tusky Boar").\textsuperscript{201}

If the book-collector of popular imagining is a solitary figure in his lonely study, "retreating to the library" after the fashion of Robert Burton,\textsuperscript{202} the reality can be very different — here at the "Castle of Antiquaries" is a group who dined together, lent each other books, corresponded with other collectors, and shared information on what was of interest and where to obtain it. In this network of friends, of which traces survive in letters, anecdotes and casual versifying, we can find evidence for how Blake's work was received and how some works at least were distributed.

The poem's "we three" are John Sherwen, Isaac d'Israeli, and Richard Twiss. Gough, Sherwen, d'Israeli, Twiss, with John Walker (Rebekah Bliss's friend), form a network of book-collecting friends living in Edmonton and Enfield. Richard Gough at Forty Hill, John Sherwen and Isaac d'Israeli in Silver Street, Enfield, John Walker at Arnos Grove, Southgate, and Richard Twiss at Bush Hill, Edmonton, differed widely in their backgrounds and ages — Gough was fourteen years older than Sherwen, and Sherwen seventeen years older than d'Israeli — but they formed a coterie in which they exchanged ideas and exchanged news and letters with mutual acquaintances further afield. I shall briefly introduce each member of this Enfield circle and hope in establishing this cast of characters to take men whose public lives

\textsuperscript{201} The lead "ostriches" (or rather cranes) were subsequently acquired by E. A. Bowles (1865-1954) for the garden at Myddelton House.

\textsuperscript{202} "Friends and Companions get you gone, 'Tis my desire to be alone;"
are recorded in the *Dictionary of National Biography* — each isolated in its alphabetical order — and recast them as a small town’s intellectual elite, restoring some of the social context that the monumental edifice of the *DNB* conceals.

Richard Gough was a Londoner, born in 1735. His mother was a brewer’s heiress; his father had travelled in China and commanded an East Indiaman before becoming a member of Parliament. Richard Gough began to write when he was eleven or twelve; his admiring mother had his work printed for private circulation. He became the leading topographer of the eighteenth century — a man who devoted his life to travel and study, and a major contributor to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. Gough avidly collected books, papers, and prints; he died in 1809, having bequeathed his topographic collections to the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

William Blake, as an apprentice in Basire’s workshop, drew and engraved many of the plates for Gough’s *Sepulchral Monuments*, and was present in 1774 when Gough opened the tomb of Edward I in Westminster Abbey. Gough, of course, was probably unaware of the quiet youth sketching alongside him, but the experience affected Blake deeply. Benjamin

203 [David Martin], *The History of the Bible, translated from the French, by R. G., Junior*, 1746 (London, 1747). Twenty-five copies were privately printed, for distribution to family and friends. Page 612 of this work proudly declares, “Done at twelve years and a half old”. To the 612 pages of his translation, young Gough adds his own original contribution: “A Short Chronology of the Holy Scripture,” of 12 pages. This is to become the hallmark of Gough’s work as an antiquary, bringing order to historical studies through the compilation of chronologies, bibliographies, lists of all kinds.

Heath Malkin, probably paraphrasing Blake own words, noted that among “those neglected works of art, called Gothic monuments,” Blake “found a treasure, which he knew how to value. He saw the simple and plain road to the style of art at which he aimed, unentangled in the intricate windings of modern practice”.

Richard Gough lived in a mansion at the corner of Baker Street and Forty Hill, Enfield. The house, which became known as Gough Park, was demolished in 1899. John Sherwen offered a poetical description:

With painted Glass the Windows dight,
Antiquity obscures the Light,
And round the learning-lumberd Room
Displays a scientific Gloom.
Rich stores of antiquarian pelf
Are lodged upon the mantle shelf.

Old rusty Tripods, Glass
And Fragments of corinthian Brass;
All things that ancient Times produce,
So old that none can tell their use.

Behold the shelves all loaded well
With Books, black letter’d Books, that tell
What’er was done in Days of Yore,
And often times a great deal more.
Rare Manuscripts they also keep,
Both old and new a copious heap.

Gough’s father, a director of the East India Company, died in 1751, leaving him the prospect of considerable wealth. Gough commented on his younger self:

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207 Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. D.1624.28 (“Poly-hymnia or the Castle of Antiquaries by Dr. Sherwen.” Verse on Gough Park).
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One of the most prominent features in his character was, an insatiable thirst for Literature; and particularly that branch of it in which he so eminently excelled, the study of our National Antiquities. Young as he was at the time of his Father's death ... not having then attained his 16th year; an only son, with the certainty of inheriting a plentiful fortune; his attention was principally turned to the improvement of his mind, and the foundation of a noble Library. Hence the pleasurable diversions of the age to him had little charms. The well-stored shop of honest Tom Payne at the Mews Gate or the auction-rooms of the two Sams, Baker and Paterson, had beauties far transcending the alluring scenes of fashionable dissipation.208

John Thomas Smith gives us an account of Gough at auction:

Mr. Gough was a constant frequenter of book sales. This antiquary when I knew him wore a smart shining curled wig. His coat was of formal cut, his waistcoat and small clothes were from the same piece. He was mostly in boots and carried a swish-whip when he walked. His temper was not good and he seldom forgave those persons who dared to bid stoutly against him for a lot at auction.209

In July 1752 Gough went up to Cambridge, to Bene’t (now Corpus Christi) College. His tutor was the Rev. John Cott, later rector of Braxted, in Essex, “to whom,” says Gough, “I regularly repeated my lesson, without a grain of instruction on his part.”210 Gough had been brought up a Presbyterian, and the master of his Cambridge college was particularly enjoined by his mother “not to suffer him to be matriculated, by which he avoided taking the oaths, and not to let him receive the sacrament, otherwise he was to go to the college chapel as others”.211 He “was very shy and awkward, and much the joke of his fellow-collegians; and hardly ever stirred out of college but with his tutor”.

On the death of his mother in 1774, Gough came into possession of the family

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211 DNB.
mansion at Enfield. "The year 1774", he wrote, "by the death of my mother, made me completely master of myself."212 And in a letter (of 12 August 1774) to his friend George Paton in Edinburgh:

I mentioned to you in a former letter y^I was going to remove into δ country. I have been there ever since δ beginning of last month so ingaged with workmen y^I have hardly had a room to myself. The death of my last surviving parent has put me in possession of a small house at about twelve miles from London to which I have retreated as a convenient distance within call of literary & other friends. ...

When my workmen give me leave I hope in δ course of δ summer to resume my topographical pursuits, after I have arrangd my Collections of y^I kind in their proper classes.213

What Gough doesn’t think appropriate to tell Paton is that the death of his mother also released him to get married. On the 18th August 1774, to Anne Hall, daughter of Thomas Hall, of Goldings, near Ware, in Hertfordshire. He was 39, his bride 34; they had known each other for many years. Was the long delay in getting married because his mother hadn’t approved of the match, or was it that she really had full control of the purse strings — that Gough had little money of his own until both parents were dead. Only then could he spend money on the house at Enfield and get married to his sweetheart.

That year, in a manuscript poem, Gough had considered the expense of matrimony:

Since I’m about to change my life,
And take to me a loving wife
It well behoves me to attend
To what y^I wife & I shall spend.

To fill up these domestic cravings
They say one counts with all ones savings
Less than 400 £ a year
Expend upon oneself & dear,


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And live genteely if not near.\(^{214}\)

It is interesting to note that an independent scholar like Gough, leading a quiet life in the country, thought an income of £400 per annum the minimum to "live genteely".\(^{215}\) The marriage was childless. Many of the most important book-collectors of this time are either unmarried (Rebekah Bliss, Mary Frances Richardson Currer, Richard Heber)\(^{216}\) or in childless marriages (Gough, Francis Douce). Does building a library supplant any procreative urge? Or rather, does the collector know that a notable library is a more sure route to immortal fame? The collector’s spouse seldom saw it that way. Francis Douce commented acidly:

> Women hate books & collections in general, which they suppose detract from the attentions which they vainly conceive to be due to them. Thus a married man can never be happy whose object is to amuse himself rationally, unless it happen, which is rarely the case, that he meets with a woman whose taste or cultivated mind should lead her to sympathize with his own pursuits.\(^{217}\)

Gough died at Enfield on the 20th of February 1809, and is buried in Wormley, Hertfordshire. After Gough’s death, John Sherwen wrote "his noble library was open to the wants and wishes of literary men. Often I have found a book in my own house long before

\(^{214}\)Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. D.1624.21 (Gough Papers. 1774 verse on his proposed marriage).

\(^{215}\)Contrast the economic circumstances of William Blake. During the “dark profitable years”, 1790-93, Blake executed twenty-three plates a year for the booksellers. From the evidence provided by Bentley, it seems unlikely that Blake’s annual income ever exceeded £200. (See Bentley, The Stranger from Paradise, 100-160.)

\(^{216}\)Miss Richardson Currer’s library of 15,000 volumes contained just one Blake item: Blair’s The Grave, 1808. Richard Heber owned Poetical Sketches (copy F). There was talk of their marrying. Was Heber more interested in the lady or her books?

\(^{217}\)Bodleian Library, MS. Douce e.36 ("Miscellanies 1"), fol. 37".

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the fatigues of the day would permit me to open it".  

John Sherwen was a surgeon employed, as a young man, by the East India Company in India and the Far East. He was one of the first to cultivate rhubarb for medicinal purposes in this country. He set up a practice in Enfield in 1771, in the house called Silverton in Silver Street. Here, he was friendly with Richard Gough. One cannot help but wonder if it was their mutual connection with the East India Company that directed Sherwen to settle in Enfield; a place, as far as we know, with which he had no previous tie.

Sherwen is said to have been born in Cumberland in 1749. He was a pupil at St. Thomas’s Hospital, London, and passed as a surgeon. In 1769 he was at Acheen in Sumatra, and later at Calcutta and in the Bay of Bengal. Sherwen was admitted M.D. of Aberdeen University on 14 February 1798 and on 4 May 1802 he became an extra-licentiate of the College of Physicians in London. His first wife (Douglas Campbell) visited Bath for her health, and died there on 16 June 1804, when a monument to her memory was erected in Bath Abbey. A year or two later Sherwen settled permanently in Bath, occupying 18 Great Stanhope Street, and obtaining some medical practice.

The physician, Henry Julian Hunter, who knew Sherwen at Bath, provides a brief

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219 David Pam, ed., The Castle of Antiquaries (Enfield, 1980), [27]. Pam borrows his title from Sherwen, but quotes only briefly from his poem.

220 This does not imply that Sherwen was ever a student at Aberdeen. The degree of M.D. would have been awarded on the basis of his publications, acceptable references, and the payment of a small fee. The College of Physicians operated a similar practice.

221 DNB.
biographical note:

When he settled in medical practice at Enfield near London he was largely employed, and was a frequent contributor to the journals of his profession. He published on urethral diseases in 1799, on a case of puncture of the nerve in phlebotomy, on digitalis, on dermic absorption of arsenic and antimony, and a few contributions a list of which is to be found in Watt's Bibliotheca.

It was while at Enfield that he began to make public his taste and knowledge in old English literature. The opportunity has not proved a lucky one. The Rowley controversy, commenced about the year 1768, was in full swing for twenty years, and into it Mr. Sherwen must have plunged early, for in a letter of Dr. Mansel to Mr. Matthias, so long ago as 1784, we find him already considered as something of a bore. Dr. Mansel is overdone with Chatterton chatter, with "Rowley, Walpole, H. Croft, Sherwen the surgeon, Catcott, Barrett, the varlet Steevens," &c.²²²

Hunter adds that his library was not extensive. "He had, however, some curious books, such as Heywood's Hierarchy, Phayer and Douglas' Virgil, and Robinson's Reward of wickedness. In his own and even in his friends' books he would often make marginal notes."²²³

²²²Henry Julian Hunter, Old Age in Bath: Recollections of Two Remarkable Men: Dr John Sherwen and Dr Francis Cogan (Bath, 1873), 4. Sherwen published in 1809 his Introduction to an Examination of Some Part of the Internal Evidence respecting the Antiquity and Authenticity of Certain Publications, by Rowley or Chatterton. From 1808 to 1813 he was a frequent contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine, mainly on the authenticity of the "Rowley" poems, Thomas Chatterton's literary forgery, of the genuineness of which he was a keen advocate.

²²³R. C. Alston, Books with Manuscript: a Short Title Catalogue of Books with Manuscript Notes in the British Library ... (London, 1994) lists nine books annotated by John Sherwen, including one of his own authorship:

Jacob Bryant, Observations Upon the Poems of Thomas Rowley in Which the Authenticity of Those Poems is Ascertained (London, 1781) C.39.f.7.(2).

[Sir Herbert Croft], Love and Madness (London, 1780?) C.45.c.18.

John Davis, of Salisbury, The Life of Thomas Chatterton (London, 1806) C.39.c.46.(1.)

Joshua Dixon, M.D., the elder, The Literary Life of W. Brownrigg, M.D., F.R.S. (Whitehaven, 1801) 1453.g.5.


George Ruggle, Ignoramus (Dublin, 1736) 11712.aaa.14

John Sherwen, Introduction to an Examination of Some Part of the Internal Evidence, Respecting the Antiquity and Authenticity of Certain Publications (Bath, 1809) C.39.f.17.
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Hunter also casts a jaundiced eye on Sherwen’s medical career:

In 1805, Dr Sherwen now M.R.C.S. and M.R.C.P. (in which he was not quite correct) and a corresponding member of the Medical Society of London, came to live at Bath. He came to us as a graduated physician, though at Enfield I believe I must own, he sold “narcoticum, emeticum et omne quod exit in hum”.224

Though he retained his house at Bath he made frequent trips to Enfield, and died there on 2 September 1826.

Initially Jewish settlement in London was confined to the Aldgate area and the adjoining districts of the East End. By the mid-eighteenth century some Jews (mainly of Sephardic families) were sufficiently prosperous to acquire country houses on the fringe of London in such places as Stoke Newington, Highgate and Totteridge. A few Jewish names can be found in Land Tax records and rate-books from Edmonton from 1750 onwards.225 However, these settlers did not constitute a Jewish community in any real sense and there is no evidence of any organised Jewish life in the Enfield area at this time. Benjamin d’Israeli, senior, Isaac’s father, came from Italy to settle in England in 1748.226 He first figures in the Enfield Rate-Books in September 1781, though he is known to have been resident in Enfield for some years previously. The d’Israeli house was at the upper end of Baker Street between those of Robert Thorne and Benjamin Boddington, father of Samuel, beyond the brewery.227

224 Hunter, Old Age in Bath (Bath, 1873), 6.

225 For example, one Abraham Lumbrozo de Mattos was living in Fore Street in 1750 and one Jacob Diaz Fernandez was living at Millfield House in 1799. (Information from Graham Dalling, Enfield Libraries’ Local History Officer.)

226 DNB.

Benjamin, junior (Isaac’s son, the future prime minister), writes of his grandfather’s life at Enfield:

He made his fortune in the midway of life, and settled near Enfield, where he formed an Italian garden, entertained his friends, played whist with Sir Horace Mann, who was his great acquaintance, and who had known his brother at Venice as a banker, ate macaroni which was dressed by the Venetian Consul, sang canzonettas, and notwithstanding a wife who never pardoned him for his name, and a son who disappointed all his plans, and who to the last hour of his life was an enigma to him, lived till he was nearly ninety, and then died in 1817, in the full enjoyment of prolonged existence.228

Isaac d’Israeli was born at Great St. Helen’s in the City in 1766, but spent his childhood at his father’s country house at Enfield. He remained at Enfield until a bequest allowed him to move at the age of 25 to the Adelphi, nearer to his base at the British Museum. Isaac was sent to a school near Enfield kept by a Scotsman named Morison. (Peter Morison had married Peggy Sherwen, John’s sister, who was some thirteen or fourteen years older than him, on 2nd July 1774.)229 D’Israeli was then sent to study business methods in Amsterdam (before 1780), and returned from the continent in 1782 to Enfield, to live close to a famous antiquarian (Richard Gough), whom he greatly admired and a sympathetic Scots schoolmaster (Peter Morison). Not far down the road lived Sherwen (Morison’s brother-in-law), the man of whom Isaac himself wrote that he acted as his literary mentor.

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228Benjamin Disraeli, “On the Life and Writings of Mr. Disraeli. By his Son”, prefaced to Isaac d’Israeli, Curiosities of Literature (London, 1866), vol. 1, x. The reference to Sir Horace Mann is puzzling. Mann left England in 1735 and never returned. Sir Horace’s nephew Horatio Mann is probably intended.

As he grew up, Isaac determined to become a poet and man of letters. He sent verses to Dr. Johnson but they were returned unopened. D’Israeli’s first publications were two essays, “Letter from Nonsense with some account of himself and family” and “Farther account of the family of Nonsense”, in The Wit’s Magazine, in April and May 1784. The first essay won a silver medal for “the best original article in prose” — an empty success because the magazine never acquired any reputation. D’Israeli’s friend Francis Douce noted on a fly-leaf in the first of the two volumes that “this magazine, which, though the Edinburgh critics never heard of it, certainly contains, among a great deal of trash, many good things, was edited by Holcroft” — that is, Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809), author and dramatist. Isaac’s parents poured scorn on his literary aspirations, and the friendship of these three men (Gough, Sherwen, and Morison) must have been “a soothing balm to the sensitive youth”. Later, the intimate tone of d’Israeli’s letters to Douce suggests again that he found with the older man an ease lacking from his relationship to his own father.

D’Israeli’s friendship with Richard Gough was first commemorated in a long poem written in extravagant praise of Gough and printed in the St. James’s Chronicle in November 1787 under the pen name “Euterpe”:

Canst thou, neglecting for a while thy Page,
Turning thine Eye from many a darken’d Age,

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231 Bodleian Library, Douce M25. According to Gilchrist, Life of William Blake (London and Cambridge, 1863), vol. 1, 92-3, Blake had met “the formal, stoical” Holcroft at Joseph Johnson’s. Thomas Holcroft was a subscriber to Blair’s The Grave (1808).

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Suspend thy Sceptre o’er the prostrate Time,
And listen to the Muse’s idle Rhyme?

As Kings that awful on their Thrones appear,
Whose Glories please us, though beheld with Fear;
To court the splendid Pow’r glad Crowds attend,
So to thy Fame the Subject-Muses bend.
Amid the tuneful Train let me impart
A Muse. The lowliest in the lowest Art.

Yet why to Kings shall I compare thy Fame,
Or strive by them to raise thy honour’d Name.
Their’s but a Span of Time, a Point of Place,
But Gough’s and Camden’s Age an Age embrace.233

and so on. It’s not very good but it is very flattering. The poet concludes:

Proceed, illustrious Sage! and pass thy Hour
To woo coy Science to thy fav’rite Bow’r.
Enfield, a Village long unknown to Fame,
Shall borrow Lustre from thy growing Name.
Presenting thee; ’twill by her best Excuse
For the dull Crouds her vulgar Groves produce,

Renown’d for conquest in the letter’d World,
O’er the leam’d Plains thy Banners be unfurl’d,
Be thine the War, while I in polish’d Lays
Attain some Honours as I sing thy Praise.

Nov. 8, 1787. EUTERPE.

Gough responded with similar verses written under the pen name “Clio”. To which “Euterpe” (d’Israeli) in turn responded in verse spattered with printer’s errors. D’Israeli wrote to Sherwen:

At all this I am greatly mortified, for I did intend to beg you to lay before him my Britannia, But this I shall no more desire, as I will not trouble him any further with verses of mine, and as a friend let me beg you, you would not; for tho’ your friendship is to me of the most disinterested Kind, & let me say of the most generous & patient, he may think you as more concerned in their fate than you are. ... I hope

yet in Time to see some work of mine, which may repay the pains you have taken with me, & if this is not the case, Minerva, who is superior to Apollo, shall direct me, so that no imprudence of mine shall ever reveal our mutual shame, that is your too friendly Criticism & my feeble work.²³⁴

Of this period too, is the verse by John Sherwen in which he gently chides the young man for having promised to submit a manuscript poem to him for correction and having failed to do so:

E'er yet his artless muse shall take her flight
Heedless of danger in the blaze of light.²³⁵

The whole verse correspondence in the *St. James’s Chronicle* was then wound up by John Sherwen under the pen name “Melpomene”. (I do not know what significance, if any, may be attached to this use of feminine pen-names.)

D’Israeli never became a poet of importance but achieved fame as the author of the popular *Curiosities of Literature* (1791-1834). His most original work was *An Essay on the Literary Character* (1795), a discourse on original genius (very appropriately for a Blake collector). Dibdin wrote:

My friend Mr. D’Israeli possesses the largest collection of any individual of the very extraordinary drawings of Mr. Blake; and he loves his classical friends to disport with them, beneath the lighted Argand lamp of his drawing room, while soft music is heard upon the several corridors and recesses of his enchanted staircase. Meanwhile the visitor turns over the contents of the Blakean portefeuille. Angels, Devils, Giants, Dwarfs, Saints, Sinners, Senators, and Chimney Sweeps, cut equally conspicuous figures.²³⁶

²³⁴Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. D.1624.25 (Letter to Mr. John Sherwen from Isaac d’Israeli, 23 January 1788).

²³⁵Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. D.1624.24 (“To Mr d’Israeli who intended to submit his manuscript poems to my correction.” By John Sherwen M.D. of Enfield, verse).

D'Israeli's biographer James Ogden expresses the general consensus that “apart from Blake’s few close friends, D'Israeli seems to have been the earliest customer for the illuminated books” and “one of the first to discern his Genius”. He adds that

D'Israeli, then, was on the fringe of the ‘Jacobin’ circle during the Revolutionary decade. Whether he knew Godwin himself is uncertain, though they were on friendly terms later, when he helped with the preparation of Godwin’s History of the Commonwealth (1824-9). There is not enough evidence to connect him closely with any of the group that met at Joseph Johnson's bookshop, though it was here that he would be most likely to get to know the work of Blake, if not the artist himself.237

(Joseph Viscomi has questioned the assumption that d'Israeli was an early Blake patron and collector. Viscomi suggests that he probably purchased all his books late and most of them from the collection of George Romney.238 As we shall see, d'Israeli would have had opportunities to see work by Blake in the 1790s. Whether he had the economic opportunity to purchase any then is a different matter, since around 1794 Blake was experimenting with the expensive process of colour printing.)

❖

Arnos Grove was purchased in 1777 by Isaac Walker, and it remained the home of the Walker family for over one hundred and thirty years. They attended the Friends' Meeting House at Winchmore Hill. Isaac Walker died in 1804, and was buried in the Quaker burial ground there. In the cemetery there some simple headstones can still be read to the memory of “the Walkers of Southgate”.239


Isaac's son John was a partner of Robert Owen (1771-1858) in the development of New Lanark. Owen recalled that:

I ... published a pamphlet for private circulation, stating the preparation which I had made to conduct the establishment at New Lanark on principles to ensure the improvement of the conditions of the people as well as to obtain a reasonable remuneration for capital and its management. These were circulated among the best circles of the wealthy benevolent, and of those who desired with sincerity to commence active measures for the improvement of the condition of the poor and working classes; with a view of obtaining among them partners who would assist, and not retard, my intended future operations, and who would not exact from those they employed too much labour for too little wages. Such partners I found, possessing these views to a greater extent than I had anticipated, in Mr. John Walker, of Arno's Grove; Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher; Joseph Foster of Bromley; William Allen of Plough Court; Joseph Fox, dentist; and Michael Gibbs, subsequently Alderman and Lord Mayor of London — all of whom were willing to become partners with me if the establishment could be bought at a fair price at the sale.240

Owen ran his profit account down, no doubt spending heavily on his propaganda campaign. Correspondingly that of John Walker, the next major shareholder, rose — giving his family the largest financial stake and making the Walkers ultimate heirs to New Lanark.241

Robert Owen supplies a pen-portrait of his New Lanark partner:

The honourable simplicity of this gentleman's character was exemplified at our first meeting. I had previously published my first four essays entitled New View of Society. ... He had read them, and had heard that I was about to form a new partnership, of persons willing to engage to carry forward the establishment on the principle of educating the children and improving the general condition of the workpeople. Mr. Walker was a most disinterested benevolent man, highly educated, possessing great taste in the arts, himself a superior amateur artist, well versed in the sciences, and a perfect gentleman, in mind, manner, and conduct, throughout his life. He had never been in any business, and was untainted with any of its deteriorating effects. He was born of very wealthy parents, who were of the Society of Friends, but who under peculiar circumstances allowed him to go with and under the direction of

240 Robert Owen, The Life of Robert Owen (London, 1920), 123. Some of these same names will reappear in my Chapter IV.

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a superior accomplished person, a friend of the family, to finish his education from the age of twelve at Rome, where he remained several years, and made the best possible use of his time. He had been the least injured by the present false system of forming character and constructing society, of all whom I have met through my long life in this or any other country.242

Walker possessed a town house in Bedford Square, and a country house, Arno’s Grove, in Edmonton parish.243 He had greatly improved it, had accumulated a great variety of exotics in his pleasure ground, and had in his museum “probably one of the choicest collections of specimens of various objects of natural history, that any private gentleman possessed”. Over 100 of his plants, mainly tropical, were figured in Curtis’s Botanical Magazine, 1806-26.244

In Chapter II, I recorded John Walker’s friendship with Rebekah Bliss and Ann Whitaker. A commonplace book, now in Enfield Public Libraries, provides evidence of his friendship with Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Humphrey Davy, Robert Mylne, and Charles Townley, among others.245 The Gentleman’s Magazine briefly notes the death of this self-effacing man:

[May 9, 1824] John Walker, esq. F.R.S. F.S.A. of Arno’s-grove Southgate.246

An occasional visitor to Richard Gough at “Antiquario’s Castle” was Francis Douce, the


243“Arno’s Grove” was the name of the house, now “Southgate Beaumont”, a nursing home. “Arnos Grove” is a station on the Piccadilly Line and the name given to the modern neighbourhood surrounding the station.

244Ray Desmond, Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists (London, 1994).

245Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection, MS. Zc1 (Commonplace Book of John Walker of Arnos Grove, 1794-1822).

most respected antiquarian of the generation following Gough. Munby asserts:

His chief claim to our attention ... must be his position as one of the earliest of those collectors who can be studied in detail, to assemble a really representative series of illuminated manuscripts of all periods, including those least fashionable in his day. In his lifetime Douce commanded respect, and his recognition of quality in unfamiliar areas of connoisseurship commands it still; it would be hard to duplicate in many of his contemporaries.247

Francis Douce was a son of Thomas Douce, one of the Six Clerks of the Court of Chancery.248 He was first sent to a school at Richmond, conducted by a Mr. Lawton, author of a work on Egypt, and then to “a French academy, kept by a pompous and ignorant Life-Guardsman, with a view to his learning merchants’ accounts, which were his aversion”.249 On leaving school he studied for the bar, and for some time held an appointment, under his father, in the Six Clerks’ Office, but the post was not congenial to him, and from an early age he devoted himself to books and antiquities. His father, who died in 1799, bequeathed the greater part of his considerable property to his elder son, leaving just a comparatively small amount to be divided between Francis and his sisters, but in 1823 Nollekens, the sculptor, left Douce so large a fortune that at his death his property was valued at nearly £80,000.250

Singer’s obituary in the Gentleman’s Magazine gives Douce’s subjects of study as “the history of arts, manners, customs, superstitions, fictions, popular sports and games” of


248Coincidentally, the Blake collector E. V. Utterson (1776?-1856), was another of the Six Clerks. Utterson owned America (copy B) and The Book of Ahania (copy A). See Bentley, Blake Books Supplement, 54, 59.


all peoples in all ages.251 "For the systematic investigation and illustration of these and numerous other topics he organised his life and formed his collections." Method and routine in amassing and recording information helped him to become the most respected antiquarian of his day, whose knowledge and library were at the service of any serious scholar. Through Douce’s antiquarian activities he met and corresponded with a number of similarly-minded individuals, and kept up a lengthy correspondence with the Enfield antiquarians. Many letters survive among his papers from Richard Gough, Richard Twiss and Isaac d’Israeli.252 The obituarist notes that “he read with his pen in his hand”. Passages marked during reading or noted on scraps of paper were later entered into a range of appropriate indexes and commonplace-books, or on the endpapers of relevant volumes. “In the case of modern works, particularly in politics or theology, he was much given to marginal expostulation.”

The importance of Francis Douce is as a collector who documented his own collecting. Letters from other collectors were marked up and annotated; notebooks were kept detailing books purchased. He even on occasion reclaimed his own letters from his correspondents. Thus he wrote (“4th Septemb’ 1795”) to Richard Twiss from Ramsgate:

As this is a sort of journal and I have kept no other since I have been here, and as you generally burn your letters, I shall thank you to return this to me as it may be helpful to me some twenty years hence.253

Isaac d’Israeli’s earliest surviving letter to Francis Douce dates from July 1793, though there is evidence of their earlier acquaintance. He mentions members of the Enfield

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252 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce.d.39 (86 letters of Richard Twiss to Francis Douce); MS. Douce d.33 (53 letters of Isaac d’Israeli to Francis Douce).

253 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 89.
circle in many letters to Douce, as from Exeter ("30 October 1795"):  

When I left you, You had just entered into the ‘Holy of Holies’ — I mean the Council of Antiquaries. Pray are your ‘High Mightinesses’ still directed by M’ Gough? (In February 1767 Gough was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and nominated Director in 1771, which office he held till December 1797, when he quitted the Society altogether. Richard Twiss was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1774, but withdrew from it in 1794. Francis Douce was elected Fellow in 1779. John Walker was elected to membership of the Society of Antiquaries in 1793 and the following year to the Royal Society.) D’Israeli mentions other Enfield acquaintances in April 1802:

There is a mild ingenious good man & an old friend of mine, D’ Sherwen of Enfield now in Town. He is the person you walked with from Twiss’s Manufactory. He is fond of Literature, & very fond of Chatterton. His Hobby Horse, has long been to prove if possible, the Authenticity of those poems. I know you consider this a forlorn hope; but he has a mass of Materials for this purpose, ready to publish.

Douce died at his residence in Gower Street, London, on the 30th March 1834, and he left in his will two hundred pounds to Sir Anthony Carlisle “requesting him either to sever my head or extract the heart from my body, so as to prevent the possibility of the return of vitality”. This sombre directive reflects a fear of premature burial not uncommon at this

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254 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.33, fol. 14.

255 [John Nichols], "Biographical Preface" to A Catalogue of the Entire and Valuable Library... of that Eminent Antiquary, Richard Gough... (London, 1810), iii.

256 DNB.

257 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.33, fol. 24. The underlining (in red ink in the original) is Douce’s.

He bequeathed to the Bodleian Library almost all the books (including two works in illuminated printing by Blake), coins, prints and manuscripts he had collected. Jon Mee notes that Douce kept close contact with a variety of radicals from the 1790s onwards, and his interest in popular culture was clearly tied up with his republican views.

During the years 1796, 1797, 1798, 1799 (and it is just now impossible to calculate how many more will be added to the list) it was almost a crime to speak in favour of a republican form of government, as if there were something monstrous in the thing itself, because France had become a republic and nearly threatened the destruction of those monarchical governments that had wantonly & insidiously made war upon her with the sole view of restoring the ancient regime of tyranny, for the purpose of screening & supporting their own enormities.

So the Roman catholic religion and the Pope himself got into high repute, because the French subverted both; and had they warred against the Devil himself, no doubt it would have been equally fashionable to have admired & protected his infernal majesty. Mee suggests that Douce found in Blake’s prophetic books “the same challenge to the hegemony of politeness he relished in the antiquities he collected”.

Francis Douce began in 1779 a long correspondence with Richard Twiss, born at Rotterdam.

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259 Richard Gough notes (Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl. 389 D fol. 23") a newspaper account of such a burial at Enfield: a milkwomans daughter was lately buried alive here when she was going to be interred some people at the funeral thought she look’d fresh and taking a looking glass and applying it to her lips they fancied they perceived a dew on it from breath but the cruel mother threatned and reviled them and swore she should be buried, and so she was, but this came to the ears of a near relation, he got the grave dug up and the coffin opened, when she was found with her knees drawn up, and the nosegay in her hand beaten to pieces with struggling for life. a surgeon was sent for to bleed her, but it was then too late. Evening Post numb. 1614. Tuesday Jan. 14 1728/9.

John Snart, *Thesaurus of Horror; or the Charnel-House Exposed* (London, 1817) provides a compilation of such gruesome incidents.

260 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce e.36 (“Miscellanies i”), fols. 7r-8r.

on 26 April 1747, the son of an English merchant residing in Holland. Having inherited an ample fortune, Twiss devoted himself to travelling, and visited Scotland, then went on the continent, and journeyed through Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Bohemia till 1770, when he returned to England. In 1772 he went to Spain and Portugal, returning the following year.262

In 1775 he visited Ireland, and then wrote his *Tour in Ireland in 1775* (London, 1776). There were several subsequent Irish editions. In the appendix to that work he states he had taken sixteen sea voyages and travelled altogether about twenty seven thousand miles.263

This book was very unpopular in Ireland. William Beloe commented that

... every thing he undertook or did, his studies, pursuits, habits, and acquaintance, were chosen with the most extraordinary waywardness. His characteristic principle was “fari quid sentiat,” without any very nice regard to time, circumstance, or persons. This was particularly obvious in all he published, and in a neighbouring island, involved him in no trifling perplexity or disgrace. By some thoughtless expression, he offended the females of the place which he visited, and they, to mark their contempt and indignation, thought proper to call a dishonourable utensil after his name, and had a striking caricature of his person visible at bottom.264

By 1779, Twiss had rented a house at Bush Hill, Edmonton, where he became part of Richard Gough’s circle and his correspondence with Francis Douce begins.

The first letter in the correspondence (which Douce carefully saved) is dated “19 Jan’r 79”:

please to send to Mr Kemble’s house Caroline St’ Bedf’ Square No 13 in a paper

262DNB.

263DNB.

Twiss’s younger brother Francis had married Frances Kemble, sister of Mrs Siddons, so that Twiss is linked to the Kembles and the Siddonses — the dominant theatrical families of the time. It was to Richard Twiss that Douce turned in an attempt to get tickets for the notorious first night of William Henry Ireland’s Shakespeare forgery “Vortigern”. And Twiss replied (“Thursday morn8 last of March 96 half past seven”):

Mr K[emble] says he can do nothing towards assisting any person in getting into the thea[tre] to see Worty Gern: and that even I, whom he was very Desirous should see the play, cannot go. ... He says Mr Fosbrook must be applied to, & places taken and kept as usual, if they can be gotten.266

In February 1794, Twiss, who had a continuing interest in children’s books, wrote to Douce:

I have sent for the American Kalendar, the Catechism of Health, & six of the Works of Mary Wolstonecraft for Children; they are advertised in the Morn. Chron. & are very excellent — as far as I have seen.267

Mary Wollstonecraft was often invited to spend her Sundays with Francis Twiss and family, who liked to gather theatrical and literary people under their roof.268 It is conceivable she may have met Richard Twiss there one Sunday. Why else should Richard Twiss say that he has sent for six copies of “the works of Mary Wollstonecraft for children” — unless he wishes to distribute them among his friends and family because they are acquainted with the author

265 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 1.

266 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 98. Wollstonecraft’s Original Stories from Real Life, first published in 1788, were reissued by Joseph Johnson in 1791 with six plates by Blake.

267 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 55.

268 Claire Tomalin, Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft (Harmondsworth, 1977), 252.
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(and possibly by report with William Blake, their illustrator)?

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

RAGS MAKE PAPER,
PAPER MAKES MONEY,
MONEY MAKES BANKS,
BANKS MAKE LOANS,
LOANS MAKE BEGGARS,
BEGGARS MAKE RAGS. 269

In 1800, Matthias Koops set up the “Straw Paper Manufactory at Mill Bank underneath the Bridge at Westminster”. It was Europe’s first paper mill in which materials other than linen and cotton rages were extensively used. Twiss was one of a number of men who invested heavily in the venture.

Koops was born in Pomerania, the son of Matthias and Katharine Dorothea Koops. 270 Little is known of his early life, but by 1789 Koops was in England. On 12 September his marriage to Elizabeth Jane Austin took place at St. Marylebone Parish Church. His application for naturalisation was accepted on 1 April 1790. In June of that year, as a merchant of Edmonton (where he presumably made the acquaintanceship of Richard Twiss), Koops was made bankrupt. He capitalised on his knowledge of Europe by publishing in 1796 both a set of five maps of the Rhine, Meuse, and Scheldt, and a survey entitled A Developement of the Views and Designs of the French Nation, which sought to warn the English of certain French activities. In the following year Koops set up the Minerva Universal Insurance Office in Pall Mall, Westminster. This enterprise lasted less than a year.


270 DNB. Missing Persons.
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Papermakers depended on cotton and linen rags as raw materials for their industry. There was an ever-decreasing supply of linen rags and Koops became interested in the longstanding problem of making paper from materials other than linen and cotton. He appeared to have solved the problems associated with using various vegetable fibres in paper-making, and showed that paper made from straw, wood, and recycled waste paper could be produced commercially.

Initially, at the long-established Neckinger paper-mill, Bermondsey (just over a mile from Blake’s house in Lambeth), Koops was engaged in the commercial recycling of printed paper. He wrote in 1800, “I have now had the satisfaction of witnessing the manufacture of several thousand reams of perfectly clean, and white paper, since the 1st of May, made from old waste, written and printed paper”. An Act of Parliament was passed for the encouragement of the re-manufacture of paper.271 C. Suzanne Matheson has suggested that some passages from the Four Zoas allegorise the process of papermaking.272 Could Blake perhaps have seen the manufacture of paper at Koops’s Neckinger plant? Or later, at the papermill at Mill Bank, Westminster?273

In the Four Zoas, page 24, the description of “mills/where winter beats incessant” (E 314) is literally true. Paper mills operated in relation to water levels, and could be closed if the water supply fell: winter “beats incessant” because the dreary weather would ensure levels sufficient to keep the mill in operation. Again, on page 29, the “enormous warp &

271 39 & 40 Geo. 3. c. 70.


273 The Mill Bank papermill may even have been visible across the Thames from Blake’s house at Hercules Buildings, Lambeth.
woof" of the atmospheres is distributed by "strong wing'd Eagles":

They bear the woven draperies; on golden hooks they hang abroad
The universal curtains & spread out from Sun to Sun
The vehicles of light, they separate the furious particles
Into mild currents as the water mingles with the wine (E 319).

"Eagle" was the largest customary size of hand-made paper; only Whatman's "Antiquary", specially made for the publications of the Society of Antiquaries was larger. Sheets of white paper with their intended role in the diffusion of knowledge and as the means to convey ideas are surely "vehicles of light". The process of papermaking separates the "furious particles" of pulped rags from the churning water in the vat. Before 1800, according to Dard Hunter, prints illustrating papermaking appliances do not show the mechanical agitator, and the earliest mention of this form of agitation appeared in an article entitled "Sur les papeteries et fabrication de papier-paille en Angleterre" in Annales des arts et manufactures, ou Mémoires technologiques (October-November 1803). The article relates the visit of a French papermaker to the Matthias Koops papermills, Mill Bank, Westminster, England. The description reads: "The vats in nearly all the English paper mills are fitted with agitators placed near the bottom, to which is given a slow motion. This agitator, or paddle-wheel, which the English have given the name 'hog', keeps the macerated stock in the vat in constant movement and prevents it from settling to the bottom of the vat."275

In 1800 Koops took out three patents for paper-making.276 And armed with these

276A.D. 1800, April 28th — No. 2392, Matthias Koops of Queen Street, Ranelagh, in the county of Middlesex, gentleman, for a mode of extracting printing and writing ink from printed and written paper, and converting the paper from which the ink is extracted into pulp, and making thereof paper fit for writing, printing, and other purposes.
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patents he established in 1801 a joint stock company with capital of over £71,000 for the making of paper from straw, “and other vegetable substances without the admixture of rags”. The greater part of today’s paper industry is founded upon the pioneer work of Koops.277

Koops extolled his process in his book, Historical Account of the Substances which have been used to Describe Events, and to Convey Ideas, from the Earliest Date to the Invention of Paper. The first edition (1800) was “printed on the first useful paper manufactured solely from straw”. It has an Appendix of seven pages “printed on paper made from wood alone, the product of this country, without any admixture of rags, waste paper stock, bark, straw, or any other vegetable substance, from which paper might be, or has hitherto been manufactured” 278

The second edition (London, 1801) is on “paper re-made from old printed and written paper”, with a sixteen-page Appendix on paper from wood.279 The third printing was on paper made from straw.

This scholarly dissertation was part of the marketing campaign for the Straw Paper

A.D. 1800, August 2nd — No. 2433, Matthias Koops of Queen Street, Ranelagh, in the county of Middlesex, gentleman, for a method of manufacturing paper from straw, hay, thistles, waste, and refuse of hemp and flax, and different kinds of wood and bark.
A.D. 1801, February 17th — No. 2481, Matthias Koops of James Street, Westminster, gentleman, for a method of manufacturing paper from straw, hay, thistles, waste, and refuse of hemp and flax, and different kinds of wood and bark, fit for printing and other useful purposes.


278 Matthias Koops, Historical Account of the Substances which have been used to Describe Events and to Convey Ideas, from the Earliest Date to the Invention of Paper (London, 1800).

279 Matthias Koops, Historical Account of the Substances which have been used to Describe Events, and to Convey Ideas, from the Earliest Date to the Invention of Paper. Second Edition. Printed on Paper re-made from Old Printed and Written Paper by Matthias Koops, Esq. (London, 1801). There is a copy in the Douce collection (Bodleian Library. Douce K 71).

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Manufactory at Mill Bank underneath the Bridge at Westminster. The Straw Paper Manufactory was by far the largest paper-mill in England and large even among all of London's industries. The mill covered fifteen acres of the Grosvenor estate, with a factory-manager's house and the following buildings:

Elaboratory or bleaching-house, 60 by 27 feet, with lubber-boarded lanthorn at the top of the roof; a very capital drying-house, 144 by 21 feet, with ten double and single new presses by the ingenious engineer, Mr. Rennie; a preparing-room, 90 by 66 feet, with felt-rooms, etc.; a compleat steam engine of eight horse power, with two beater engines; a chaff-cutting house by Mr. Rennie; a beating-engine house with two large stuff-chests which communicate with the papermaking vats; a papermaking house, 53 by 28 feet, with two wet presses prepared to be worked by the steam-engine, four vats lined with lead, pot holes, and four hog wheels, supplied by a large lead pipe with spring and Thames water; a felt-washing house; a drying-house, 459 feet by 21 feet, two ditto 144 by 21 feet, with two large coppers of 9 and 6 barrels each, a sizing press and sizing vat; a drying-room (above) with treble rails and hair lines, sliding shutters; the centre buildings of twelve-stall stable, cart-shed, five privies; a most excellent turret clock by Twaites, Clerkenwell, four lamp-posts, irons and lamps; a drying-house, the largest and most convenient in the Kingdom, 459 feet by 21 feet; a steam engine of eighty horse power, universally acknowledged to be the most compleat and substantial that ever was made, costing six thousand pounds; a canal has been cut from the river Thames to the manufactory at an expense of seven thousand pounds.280

It is tempting here to speculate that the Manufactory would have given Blake close experience of industrial workers under the control of Urizenic forces. The manager's house incorporated an "observatory" to keep the workers under constant supervision.281

The engineer for the Straw Paper Manufactory was John Rennie (1761-1821) — one of the distinguished group of Scottish engineers whose work contributed so much to the

280 Hunter, Papermaking. 2nd ed. (London, 1947), 335 note.

281 Hunter, Papermaking. 2nd ed. (London, 1947), notes from the sale brochure issued at the time of the sale by auction of the property, dated October 27, 1804, buildings reputed to be worth "one hundred thousand pounds," including "an elegant small bow-fronted dwelling-house, three stories high, with an observatory and flat lead roof." (335 note.)

Observatory = "a place of observation" (Oxford English Dictionary [OED]).

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industrial and commercial development of Great Britain in the early nineteenth century —
and himself a keen collector of books and prints. In one of his surviving notebooks, rough
calculations for the paper-mill:

Koops & C° Engine Nov 7/1801
120: of 4 Inch Iron pipe for the well
300 feet of D° for the River Thames —
There will be wanted 27600 Cubic Inches of Thames Water p Minute
for the Steam engine & Manufactory
4922 Spring Water for D° —

30 — 2 f: Iron pipes for the Drying House
to be ¾ of an Inch thick in Metal.282

follow a page of notes on London engravers:

Mr Laurie Engraver
Upper Tichfield Street

Mr Basire Engraver
Quality Court Chancery Lane

Geo. Richardson
Engraver No 105 Tichfield
Street — Engraver in Aquatinta
— which will take off about
250 impressions.283

Another notebook includes costings for the mill on the Neckinger at Bermondsey

Neckinger Mill Contract £625. 15. 3
Repairs £580. 12. 3
D° pipes &c. 267. 16. 7
£848. 8. 10284

It also notes the names of the principal stockholders in the Straw Paper Manufactory

282National Library of Scotland, MS. 19874 (Rennie Papers), fol. 4r.
283National Library of Scotland, MS. 19874 (Rennie Papers), fol. 1r.
284National Library of Scotland, MS. 19876 (Rennie Papers) fol. 22r.
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including Richard Twiss:

Neckinger
John Agnew
John Prance — 81 [street name illegible]
John Forbes 24 [illegible]
John Hunter
Daniel Slatter 134 L.
R. Twiss No 3 Upper Titchfield Street
M. Koops
John Tricket
Bookkeeper Sheffield Street

Rennie may have found work on the Straw Paper Manufactory particularly enjoyable if it enabled him to relax with fellow antiquarians such as Richard Twiss.

The enterprise, however, was over-ambitious and under-capitalised. Koops himself was the principal shareholder in the venture and on the strength of this offered to satisfy his creditors. The failure to discharge his bankruptcy by 1802 compelled Koops’s creditors to issue a writ for seizure of the Straw Paper Manufactory’s assets. The Millbank paper-mill and its equipment were eventually offered for sale by auction in October 1804, thereby ending the possibility of England challenging the European paper industry by using more easily available materials for making paper. Koops himself, optimistic to the last, is heard from in 1805 soliciting subscriptions for his river maps. His widow died in 1815.286

It had began with high hopes. Considerable paper was made and sold, but in less than two years of activity the company went into bankruptcy with debts of £10,500; the complete assets of the company being just £3,500.287 After the loss of his fortune, Twiss wrote (“Thur"

285National Library of Scotland, MS. 19876 (Rennie Papers), fol. 18f. There is an earlier reference to Twiss on fol. 17v.

286DNB. Missing Persons.

1 Dec', [1803] 3) to Douce:

I am now very little richer than Job, after he had lost everything but his patience, (as Hor. Walpole said).288

Just as I have postulated an unidentified copy of the Songs (possibly Copy G) in Rebekah Bliss's possession in 1794, so also I shall show that it is highly probable that Richard Twiss acquired For Children: The Gates of Paradise that same year. It must have been after 1803 and the loss of his fortune, that Twiss's library was dispersed, including, as I believe, his copy of the Gates.

Richard Twiss mentions in his letters to Douce a considerable number of friends and mutual acquaintances including those from the Gough circle; thus ("30 July 89"):

Have you seen M' Gough? to know when he will be at home, & then I shall attend you to his house, which is about a mile & a half further on.289

or ("18 Ap' 92"):

I have a L' from York from the author of a book just published & which he says he has sent to me tho' I have not rec'd it, called Scrapeana, published by Baldwin, Paternoster Row: if you should see M' d'Israeli pray tell him this: he should see the book.290

There are 86 letters from Twiss preserved among the Douce papers in the Bodleian Library.291 The earliest extant letter from Twiss to Douce dates from 1779, the last is from 1807, with the majority written in the 1790s. Their correspondence covers such varied topics

288 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 104.
289 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 18.
290 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 41.
291 Bodleian Library MS. Douce d. 39
as the history of chess (the subject of one of Twiss's publications292), botany, the tuning of
harpischords, children's toys, mathematical recreations and books — bought, read, borrowed
and lost.

Twiss and Douce shared an interest in natural history and particularly in entomology.
Douce's country holidays (staying on occasion with Richard Twiss) "produced observations
on the appearance and habits of any uncommon insect he came across, while he several times
expressed gratitude for the power of that other world revealed by the microscope to divert
him from his troubles and preoccupations in this".293 Though Douce also records when
nature's power failed and he detected that the profile of the pupa of the peacock-tail butterfly
"resembles that of the execrable William Pitt, the apostate son of the great and wise
Chatham".

The Twiss-Douce correspondence also reminds us that book-collecting is largely
about shopping — its pleasures and occasional terrors. The letters are full of the names of
booksellers and auctioneers. In 1792, Twiss decided to circumvent the London booksellers
such as James Edwards who, as Dibdin says, "travelled diligently and fearlessly abroad"
importing treasures from continental libraries. Despite newspaper reports of the horrors of
the French Revolution, Twiss decided to go shopping in Paris — this was also an opportunity
to consult with the great chess master Philidor for his history of chess. He wrote ("6 Aug
92") to Douce from Paris:

Everything is quiet here as in London, our papers are all Lies. ... I have made a

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drawing of the beheading machine. 294

This was just four days before the storming of the Tuileries and the massacre of the Swiss Guard. It was the bloodiest day of the Revolution to that date. His next letter ("Sat aft 25 Aug 92") is from Canterbury:

Here I am. I landed this day at Dover & hope to be home tomorrow aftn. I left Paris the moment I got my Pass; last Sat at 2 aft — I have been 3 days wind bound at Calais. Lord Gower295 was not arriv'd at Calais yesterday at 4 afternoon: if he be allowed to quit France, the Lord have mercy on the thousand English now in Paris! His letters have all been opened & his horses are stopp'd at Amiens. For six Days together I lived in Expectation of being massacred & my head carried on a pike. Pray let me hear from you, & I shall come & give you a verbal acc' of what I have seen & heard; I can think of nothing just now but of Cannon, guns, bayonets, blood, wounds, fires, dead bodies, heads upon pikes &c &c. 296

The two most significant letters in the Twiss-Douce correspondence were discussed in my previous chapter. They demand further consideration. The first was a letter dated "Sat 13 Sep 94". On its first page is a request for the loan of a book on entomology and Twiss's offer to lend other books in return:

If you will lend me your Barbut for a few days ... I shall send Curtis on insects & Mandeville's treatise on Stews, which is M' Taylor's (the surgeon) ... your Donovan may do, tho' it [is] rather among the Class of catchpennies. 297

Then, on the next page, [Plate 5] the first reference to works by Blake:

A Lady here has just shown me ... two curious works of Blake N° 13 Hercules Build' Lambeth. One "the gates of Paradise", 16 etchings. 24mo, the other "Songs of Innocence" prin[ted in] Colours. I suppose the man to be mad, but he draws very well. have [you] any thing by him?

294 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 44.

295 This is the former Lord Trentham (see Chapter i) after he had inherited his father's title.

296 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 45.

297 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 70.
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I showed in Chapter II that the Mrs Bliss who owned Bibliotheca splendidissima with its copies of the Songs and the Gates of Paradise can be identified as Rebekah Bliss, of Kensington and Loughton. Thanks to her friendship with John and Sally Walker at Arnos Grove (and distant relationship to the Fullers at Ponders End), she had reason to visit Bush Hill and must be the “Lady here” who showed her Blake books to Richard Twiss. Note that he describes the Songs of Innocence as “printed in Colours”. Twiss to judge by his own publications is a careful scholar. Can we identify a copy of the Songs colour-printed before September 1794?298

What too can we make of Twiss’s remark: “I suppose the man to be mad, but he draws very well”. Could he have come to that conclusion just from a knowledge of Blake’s work, or perhaps because a mutual acquaintance has told him of Blake and his eccentricities? Maybe the “Lady here” herself.

Other even more striking Blake references occur in the next letter of the sequence, [Plate 6] dated 25 Sept 94:

On Saturday next, 27th any time after 12 o’clock, if you will be so good as to send to the Black Bull Holborn, you will find there ready, your Barbut, Mouffet, 3 imposteurs, Donovans insects &c. Jer’s Taylor Mandeville on Stews, & my Curtis insects & Blakes Paradise. and also a very curious Caterpillar, which will produce next May Linnaeus’s Phalena Pudibunda. ... 299

From this typical running sequence of bibliographical citations in the Twiss-Douce letters. I shall try to identify the books listed, their ownership, and significance.

“your Barbut”. Twiss is referring here to Jacques Barbut, Les genres des insectes de Linné

298] I suggested in Chapter II that Rebekah Bliss may have owned Songs copy G. From Phillips, William Blake: the Creation of the Songs from Manuscript to Illuminated Printing (London, 2000), it appears that copy G might indeed fit the bill.


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“Mouffet”. We can identify this name with Thomas Moffett, Moufet, or Muffet, (1553-1604) physician and surgeon. There are four books by Thomas Moufet in the Douce collection. The reference here is most probably to his *Insectorum sive minimorum theatrum* (London, 1636) (Douce W, subt. 52).300

“3 imposteurs”. *Les trois imposteurs* was anonymously published, c.1775. There is a copy in the Douce collection (Douce I 69). On “2 Sep' 94”, Twiss had written to Douce

If you have the little book de tribus impostoribus pray bring it also with you. I imagine tis a 24mo if you have it not, I suppose you know something about it.301

In 1239, the Emperor Frederick II reputedly claimed that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed had deceived the entire world. This may have been the source for a tradition that a work supporting this heretical statement existed. Many people supposedly had seen the “three imposters”, but no one gave a clear report of its contents. Other people almost, but not quite, purchased copies of the work. The report preceded the appearance of a text; in fact, laid the groundwork for the composition of *De tribus impostoribus*. An actual text was finally printed in 1753. Winfried Schröder has identified the text’s author as a Hamburg jurist, Johann Joachim Müller.302 Douce had acquired a French translation.

300 His little daughter has long been remembered in the literature of the *Arachnidae*. Who has not heard of the terrifying experience of Miss Muffet confronted with the spider, seated on her tuffet?

301 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fols. 68-9.

302 [Johann Joachim Müller], *De tribus impostoribus*. Ed. by Winfried Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1999). Müller’s critical attitude toward the three imposters and his support of natural religion are interesting and can be compared to the development of critical method in

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“Donovans insects”. The reference here is probably to Edward Donovan, *The Natural History of British Insects*, published in parts from 1793 to 1813. Douce did not retain his copy. (Twiss’s letter of 13 September describes Donovan as “rather among the Class of catchpennies”.)

“Jere. Taylor”. This is presumably Jeremy Taylor, Anglican bishop of Down & Connor. There are no books by Jeremy Taylor now in the Douce library.

“Mandeville on Stews”. Twiss is referring to an unidentified edition of Bernard de Mandeville, *A Modest Defence of Public Stews: or, An Essay upon Whoring as it is now Practis’d in These Kingdoms*. There is no copy in the Douce collection, but then, according to his previous letter (13 September 1794), Twiss has borrowed this from “Mr Taylor the surgeon”.

“my Curtis insects”. This must be Twiss’s copy of William Curtis, *Instructions for Collecting and Preserving Insects, particularly Moths and Butterflies* (London, 1771).

“Blakes Paradise”. Stemmler interprets the quoted lines as implying that Douce once had a copy of *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*. Surely this contradicts both the order and the grammar of the sentence?

I’ve gone through these titles in some detail to make clear the implicit sequence: listed first are books being returned to Douce (“Barbut, Mouffet, 3 imposteurs, Donovans insects”), then books borrowed from some third party (“Jere. Taylor, Mandeville on Stews”), and finally books being lent by Twiss (“my Curtis insects & Blakes Paradise”). It’s as though

natural science and philology.

3 Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 70.
Twiss is sorting them out to be parcelled up as he writes this letter — or is checking the parcel as he writes.

Did Twiss then own a copy of the *Gates*? Twiss is returning books Douce has lent him and is therefore lending some of his for Douce to see. The implication is that Twiss has arranged to show Douce a copy of Blake’s *Gates of Paradise*, and it must be a copy Twiss has obtained, presumably from Johnson’s, in the week or so since he saw a copy with “a Lady here”. The grammar of that opening sentence and the sequence in which the books are cited makes it plain that Twiss was lending his own copy of the *Gates* to Douce. As there are only five known surviving copies of *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793) there are unlikely to have been many copies ever available. There was just enough time between 13th and 25th September for Twiss to acquire his own copy.304

In the second paragraph of the page cited, we find the third Blake reference, one unaccountably missed by Stemmier: “You will see several more of Blakes books at Johnsons in St. P’s Ch. ydrn. How could Stemmier have missed this third Blake reference? It is perhaps the most significant of the three. On the basis of Blake’s letter of 9 June 1818 to Douce’s friend Dawson Turner where he writes:

> I have never been able to produce a Sufficient number for general Sale by means of a regular Publisher. It is therefore necessary to me that any Person wishing to have any or all of them should send me their Order to Print them on the above terms305 we have thought that Blake’s publications were always a cottage industry. It has been

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305 To Dawson Turner Esq*, Yarmouth Norfolk 9 June 1818; (E 771).
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assumed that Blake had no means of marketing or distributing his work in Illuminated Printing other than by word of mouth. The implication of Twiss's letter is that Johnson is selling (or at least displaying for interested purchasers), Blake's books. And that Twiss saw "several more of Blakes books" when he purchased his copy of For Children: The Gates of Paradise. This discovery turns the accepted ideas about how Blake marketed his work quite upside down. Of course it is true that For Children says on its title page "1793 Published by W. Blake No 13 Hercules Buildings Lambeth and J. Johnson St Paul's Church Yard" but that has largely been dismissed as wishful thinking. Even if Johnson really did sell this little work, there was no evidence previously that other works written by Blake were sold by him.

If by "Blakes books" we were to take Twiss to mean books with illustrations by Blake, such as those for Mary Wollstonecraft, Stedman and others published by Johnson, this might account for it — and Blake was chiefly known as an engraver and designer. The letter of 13 September says "he draws very well" and For Children is essentially a picture book. In contradiction one can point to the letter of "9 Feby 94" I cited earlier:

I have sent for ... six of the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft for Children; they are advertised in the Morn. Chron. & are very excellent — as far as I have seen.\textsuperscript{306}

If Twiss were interested in Blake's commercial work why doesn't he mention it here? The implication is surely that Johnson was displaying "samples" of Blake's works in Illuminated Printing to attract orders. Twiss's "several more" implies that they were different titles. We can now see that when Blake inscribed the Gates as "Published by ... Blake ... and ... Johnson" the imprint has a real meaning — that Johnson had some involvement in the distribution of Blake's work.

\textsuperscript{306}Bodleian Library, MS. Douce d.39, fol. 55.

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Richard Twiss’s letter also provides a crucial context for Blake’s “Prospectus” To the Public of 10 October 1793. It now makes sense as a flyer left at Johnson’s to advertise Blake’s work. It establishes a precedent that Blake may have followed with the flyers advertising his Exhibition of Paintings in Fresco and Descriptive Catalogue. These too must have been used in a similar way — left on the counter of some friendly bookseller or print-dealer for customers to pick up. In, as I see it, leaving sample copies of his work with a bookseller, accompanied by a flyer, probably the 1793 “Prospectus”, Blake was establishing a pattern in marketing his work that he returned to from time to time.

Blake is, of course, not alone in using this means to bring his work to the attention of potential customers. Matthias Koops, for example, issued a flyer for his map publications:

> Proposals for Printing and Publishing by Subscription, Correct Maps of the Rivers Rhine, Maese, and Scheldt ... The whole taken and surveyed by Matthias Koops, Esq. who for several Years served in different distinguished Military Characters, under the late Emperor of Germany, and King of Prussia

but also advertised elsewhere that “Subscriptions are continued to be received by Messrs. HAMMERSLEY and Co. Pall Mall, where a set of these Maps lie for inspection”.

Since copies of Blake’s work in Illuminated printing were displayed at Johnson’s in

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307 No copy is extant but Gilchrist, Life of William Blake (London and Cambridge, 1863), vol. II, 263, provides a transcript. See also Bentley, Blake Books, 450.

308 Bentley, Blake Books, 164 and 133 respectively.

309 (s.l.: s.n., 1796). There is a copy in the British Library at pressmark 1605/748.

310 [Matthias Koops], A Developement of the Views and Designs of the French Nation, and the Advantages which will Derive to Them, If They should be Able, by a Peace, or Otherwise, to Secure to Themselves the Free Navigation of the Rivers Rhine, Maese, and Scheldt ... 2nd ed. (London, 1798). Advertising leaves at end.
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1794, Blake was not, as Jerome McGann suggests, deliberately cutting himself off from the normal avenues of publication. Johnson was supporting publication of the *Gates* by lending his name to the imprint as well as showing samples of other work. Blake’s letter to Dawson Turner of 9 June 1818 reflects his decision, only in the final period of his life, to accept what McGann has mistakenly termed “a fatality imposed upon him from the start, and by the very nature of his artistic productions”\(^{311}\). There are clear parallels between the lost flyer of 10 October 1793, Blake’s marketing strategy in 1794 (the display at Johnson’s), and the advertisements for his Exhibition in 1809.

Chapter IV

Alexander Tilloch: the context of printing technology.

The upright Art of Alchimie ... liketh mee very well, and indeed, it is the Philosophie of the antient, I like it not onely for the profits sake which it bringeth in melting of Metalls, in excociting, preparing and extracting, also in distilling herbs, Roots, and in subliming. But also, I like it for the sake of the Allegorie and secret signification, which is surpassing fair; namely, touching the Resurrection of the dead at the last daie.

— M A T I N L U T H E R. 3 1 2

An unregarded social aspect of Blake’s life as a professional engraver emerged in 1797, when he, with other engravers, signed a testimonial in support of an invention by the Scottish journalist Alexander Tilloch. Blake’s former business partner James Parker was one of the founders of the Society of Engravers, but Blake seems to have held aloof. Only on this single occasion in 1797 do we find Blake acting in concert with fellow professionals. I shall endeavour in this chapter to enlarge on the context of this unique event, and to explore some of the parallels between Tilloch’s printing inventions and Blake’s developments in print-making. Specifically, Tilloch’s reinvention of stereotype printing has parallels with and possibly interacts with Blake’s own invention of relief etching. 3 1 3

According to DNB, Alexander Tilloch “rediscovered stereotyping (1784); son of John

312 Martin Luther, D° Martini Lutheri colloquia mensalia: or, Dr. Martin Luther’s Divine Discourses at his Table, &c. (London, 1652).

313 Blake’s invention of relief etching should be seen in the context of a flurry of inventions, few of them successful, of new reprographic processes in the late eighteenth century. Thomas Hodgson, Essay on the Origin and Progress of Stereotype Printing (Newcastle, 1820), discusses the contributions of Tilloch in Glasgow and Didot in Paris, and many others, including a bizarre process, devised by Benjamin Franklin, that used ink loaded with iron filings.
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Tulloch; changed his name to Tilloch after 1787; editor of the _Star_, 1789-1821; established the _Philosophical Magazine_, 1797; joined the Sandemanians and wrote on scriptural prophecy.\(^\text{314}\) The _DNB_ account is inaccurate in its detail and partial in its coverage. Tilloch's achievements were more varied and more considerable than is generally known. I shall establish in this and succeeding chapters that Tilloch is crucial to several strands of unorthodox religion, occultism, publishing history, and political and scientific culture. Tilloch's links to small Christian groups such as the Sandemanians are those of mutual respect rather than a sectarian commitment. Tilloch created for himself a working library of extraordinary interest in its own right, and particularly noteworthy if we think of it as available to his friend William Blake.

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The last decade of the eighteenth century was remarkable for the publication of twenty-five new scientific periodicals, including thirteen German, three French and five English. The English journals included the _Repertory of Arts and Manufactures_, first published in London in 1794, and Nicholson's _Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts_, which first appeared in 1797 and continued until 1813. The most notable journal to appear in this decade was, however, Tilloch's _Philosophical Magazine_, the first number of which was published in London in June 1798.\(^\text{315}\) A first series of forty-two volumes was published between 1798 and 1813, since which date, with many amalgamations and minor changes of

\(^{314}\)Concise _DNB_.


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title, it has regularly appeared. As the decades passed the Philosophical Magazine tended more and more to become a journal of research. It absorbed two other journals — the Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts, commonly known as “Nicholson’s Journal”, in 1814, and Thomas Thomson’s monthly scientific journal the Annals of Philosophy in 1827.316

To achieve more than 200 years of publication is itself exceptional and the history of the Philosophical Magazine is of great distinction.317 From Faraday to Lord Kelvin, all the great names in nineteenth-century physics contributed important papers to its pages and its twentieth-century history, during which its editors included Lawrence Bragg (editor, 1941-47) and Nevill Mott (editor, 1968-1977), was equally distinguished.318

Alexander Tilloch was founder and first editor of the Philosophical Magazine, “comprehending the various branches of science, the liberal and fine arts, agriculture, manufactures and commerce”. Tilloch remained sole editor to 1814 when the magazine absorbed Nicholson’s Journal of Natural Philosophy and took on William Nicholson as joint-editor.319 The Philosophical Magazine began as a miscellany of scientific information and research, and its aims were set out in characteristic language in the preface to the first collected volume. Its “grand Object” was “to diffuse Philosophical [i.e., scientific]

316 Allan Ferguson and John Ferguson, “The Philosophical Magazine”, Philosophical Magazine, Commemoration Number to Mark the 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the Philosophical Magazine in 1798 (July 1948), 3-4.


318 Sir Lawrence Bragg (1890-1971), Nobel Prize for Physics, 1915; Sir Nevill Mott (1905-1996), Nobel Prize for Physics, 1977.

319 New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature (NCBEL) 3.1841

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Knowledge among every Class of Society, and to give the Public as early an Account as
possible of everything new or curious in the scientific World, both at Home and on the
Continent”.

From the beginning, the *Philosophical Magazine* published original research and
accounts of discoveries, often translated from the publications of foreign scientific societies.
Tilloch actively sought out original work. When he reprinted material it was commonly
papers from foreign journals that he had had translated expressly for the *Philosophical
Magazine*. As if to allay any doubts of its extensive brief, the first number, dated June 1798,
carried in its 112 octavo pages articles ranging from “an account of two singular Meteors
lately seen in France” to hints on testing the purity of wine, experiments on a new formula
for fireproof paper, and an account of the Dutch embassy to the court of Peking. Papers such
as “Method of preparing a cheap Substitute for Oil Paint” or “Some curious Circumstances
respecting the two Elephants moved to Paris from the Hague” perhaps would not find
themselves accepted for publication in the *Philosophical Magazine* today.

The *Magazine* also contained digests of the meetings of learned institutions on the
continent, such as the National Institute in Rome and the re-established Académie des
Sciences in Paris. Most of the readership was at a wide social remove from the culture of
foreign institutions, and they relied entirely on such information as journals such as the
*Philosophical Magazine* could supply.320

A rummage among the early volumes discloses much that is both “new or curious”.

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320See Richard Hamblyn, *The Invention of Clouds: How an Amateur Meteorologist
Forged the Language of the Skies* (New York, 2001), 157. Hamblyn’s biography of the pioneer
meteorologist Luke Howard makes much of his association with Tilloch through the Askesian
Society, of which they both were members, and Tilloch’s pivotal role in publishing Howard’s
work in the *Philosophical Magazine*. 137
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Vol. IX, for example, contains an article on "A Singular Case of Dropsy" and recounts the story of an unfortunate boy of twelve who was tapped twice and on each occasion "7-8 quarts of milky fragrant chyle" were withdrawn. Vol. XI contains a dissertation on the problem "Whether mixed metals can be distinguished by the smell", and vol. XIV has a paper on a "New Theory of the Constitution of Mixed Gases elucidated by J. Dalton, Esq." Vols. XVI and XVII contained an essay "On the Modifications of Clouds" by Luke Howard (1772-1864). The remarkable thing about the early years of the *Philosophical Magazine* is often how serious it still reads to us today.

The *Philosophical Magazine* had one notable advantage over its competitors — the quality of its illustrations. Wilson Lowry (1762-1824), principal engraver to the *Magazine*, had long been employed in forwarding plates by James Heath, William Sharp, and William Byrne, the landscape engraver. But it was as an engraver of drawings for architecture and machinery that he became best known, setting new standards for technical illustration and contributing greatly to the success of the *Magazine*. He and his son Joseph Wilson Lowry (1803-79) worked not just for the *Philosophical Magazine* but also for Tilloch’s later venture the *Mechanic’s Oracle*.

The few exceptions to the reliance on Wilson Lowry for illustrations in the early

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321 An amateur meteorologist, Howard was catapulted to fame in December 1802 when he named the clouds, a defining point in natural history and meteorology. Howard’s essay “On the Modifications of Clouds” (in today’s English a better word is Classifications) was an entirely new and independent study in which the terms (all in Latin), were applied with such excellent judgment that this system remains as the broad basis of that in use today. He named three primary types of clouds: Cirrus, Cumulus and Stratus. He also proposed four additional compound forms: cirro-cumulus, cirro-stratus, cumulo-stratus, and cumulo-cirro-stratus (otherwise Nimbus). Howard’s scheme was universally adopted.
volumes of the *Philosophical Magazine* are a portrait frontispiece of Lavoisier engraved by Atkinson, and some simple engravings by Wilson Lowry’s second wife Rebekah. Their daughter Delvalle was to marry Blake’s friend John Varley, the painter and astrologer, in 1825.\textsuperscript{322} It is worth recalling that Wilson Lowry’s portrait by John Linnell was engraved with the assistance of William Blake.\textsuperscript{323}

In the first few years, while the *Magazine* established itself, Tilloch appears to have called upon a circle of favoured contributors. Contributors to that first volume (and many subsequent volumes) included Samuel Varley (1746?-1823), watchmaker, jeweller, and maker of scientific instruments, John’s uncle. In vol. I (1798) Mr. S. Varley wrote “On the Irregularity in the rate of going of time pieces occasioned by the influence of magnetism.” Vol. II (1798) saw Mr. S. Varley contribute a paper “On the choice of steel …” and to vol. IV (1799) articles on telescopes.

Vol. VII features a letter to Tilloch dated 15 September 1800 from C. H. Tatham, architect (and well-known as a friend of Blake): “Account of the grand Bacchanalian Vase … now at Woburn Abbey”. It includes a drawing of the vase by Tatham, engraved by Lowry. To vol. XV (1803) Tatham contributes “A short account of the Improvement in circular architecture made by Colonel Tatham”. Again there are engravings by Lowry. And in vol. XXVII (1807) another Varley, this time Cornelius, writes “On Atmosphaeric Phaenomena”.

This last contributor, Cornelius Varley, was not only a noted water-colourist but he was equally concerned with scientific and technological developments. A member of the

\textsuperscript{322}Delvalle (Lowry) Varley was the author of *Conversations on Mineralogy* (London, 1822; 2nd ed. enlarged, 1826), and *Rudimentary Treatise on Mineralogy: for the Use of Beginners* (London, 1849).

Royal Institution, he contributed a number of electrical and optical inventions and was awarded the Isis medal of the Society of Arts for improvements to optical instruments, and a medal at the 1851 Exhibition for inventing the graphic telescope.\(^{324}\) His religious experiences were equally diverse, for he was briefly a Sandemanian.\(^{325}\) Cornelius was only in formal membership for a little over two years (1844-1847), though both his family and his wife's appear to have had long-term connections with the church.

John Varley was born at the Old Blue Post Tavern, Hackney, on 17 August 1778, and his brother Cornelius in 1781. Their early childhood was spent in easy circumstances in a large house, on Mare Street, Hackney, next to the churchyard. Their father, Richard Varley, was born at Epworth in Lincolnshire, and settled in London after the death of his first wife in Yorkshire. We have no knowledge of his profession. Cornelius was an artist as gifted as John himself, though his career as a painter was much shorter. After his father's death, he was looked after by his uncle Samuel, Richard Varley's elder brother, from whom Cornelius derived his own scientific interests.\(^{326}\)

Blake's friend John Linnell provides further evidence of Cornelius Varley's life-long intellectual interests and his religious beliefs. In 1811 he records borrowing from him volumes of Plato, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and William Paley's *View of the Evidences of*


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Christianity, and at the same time he was introduced by him to the Baptist Chapel in Keppel Street, of which Cornelius was at that time a member.\(^{327}\)

The Varleys, Tatham, Lowry, Linnell — even without the evidence I shall introduce later in this chapter, it is clear that the social circles of Tilloch and Blake intersect and overlap interestingly.

Alexander Tilloch was born in Glasgow on 28 February 1759, the second and eldest-surviving son of John Tilloch, a tobacco merchant. In the eighteenth century, Glasgow, an old cathedral town and provincial market centre, was transformed into an entrepôt of international standing with a sophisticated financial and commercial system and a vigorous urban culture. Several influences coalesced to produce this revolution, but of primary importance was the importation and sale, mainly in European markets, of tobacco grown in the British colonies of North America.\(^{328}\) Tilloch matriculated at Glasgow University in 1771 and on leaving university entered the tobacco business with his brother and brother-in-law. Over half Britain’s tobacco imports and two-thirds of its re-exports went through Greenock and Glasgow amounting to £4.6 million in 1775. With the outbreak of the War of American Independence this fell to £295,000. A few families were ruined when the colonies abrogated a million pounds of debts to Glasgow city merchants.

Alexander Tilloch was admitted Burgess and Guild Brother of Glasgow 29 August 1776 as eldest living son to John Tilloch merchant. In 1780 he married Margaret Simson.


They had a daughter, Elizabeth, born in 1781. A son was still-born in March 1783; Margaret Simson Tilloch died soon after. His younger brother George was admitted Burgess 2 February 1781. Tait’s Glasgow Directory for 1783 records “George and Alexander Tilloch tobacconists, High Street”. By 1787, the firm is “George Tilloch, tobacconist, West side High-street facing the well”. The firm is not in the directory for 1789.

The DNB is responsible for the story that the family name was originally “Tulloch” and that Alexander changed his name when he came to London in 1787. I am unclear where this story originated, but I have traced the family in the Glasgow parish registers and the surname is consistently Tilloch over several generations. The family also appears in the burgh records of Glasgow. His grandfather John Tilloch was water baillie in 1731 and his father (also John) appears several times in the burgh records of 1754.

From tobacconist, Tilloch turned his attention to printing, and, either singly, or in partnership, carried on this trade for some time in Glasgow. Alex. Tilloch and Company appear as the printers in the imprint of the eighth edition of Salomon Gessner’s The Death of Abel (Glasgow, 1784). The British Songster was printed for him and for other booksellers in 1786, and he is selling John Fleming’s A New and Compleat System of Astronomy, (Glasgow Mercury 6 July 1786).

329 John Tait’s Business Directory for the City of Glasgow, Villages of Anderston, Calton and Gorbals, also for the Towns of Paisley, Greenock, Port-Glasgow and Kilmarnock, from the 15th May 1783 to the 15th May 1784 (Glasgow, 1783).


331 Data from Scottish Book Trade Index, http://www.nls.ac.uk/catalogues/sbti.
The history of printing in Glasgow is dominated by the Foulis family. In 1741 Robert Foulis had opened a bookshop at the University of Glasgow. It was not long before he began to publish books. At first they were printed by other firms, but Foulis had his own press in 1742. The following year he was appointed the University’s printer. He soon gained a reputation for high quality works which were mainly classical and literary. His brother Andrew joined him, and the Foulis Press became renowned for books such as Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1756-58), which were awarded silver medals by the Edinburgh Select Society. Robert’s son Andrew (born 1755) later joined the firm.

The Foulis Press provided the predominant Scottish contribution to the art of printing, even if its connection with the University of Glasgow edged its output towards immediate requirements, such as classical texts, dissertations, and lecture notes, and perhaps also towards established literary works, rather than the great works of contemporary thought that were emerging from the Scottish Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the aesthetic and technical quality of its printing confirms the Press in itself as a substantial feature of the Scottish Enlightenment.332

In this printing context, Tilloch is remembered as one of the inventors (or rather, reinventors) of stereotype printing. About 1779, he began his experiments in making relief plates from pages set in type. Tilloch contributed an account of the invention of what would later be termed stereotype to vol. x of the *Philosophical Magazine*:

I communicated my ideas upon this subject to Mr. Foulis [Andrew Foulis, the younger], printer to the University of Glasgow, my native city, and where I then

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resided, who furnished me with a page of types ready set up, or composed, for my first experiment. ...

If I had seen some of the advantages which such a plan promised, Mr Foulis saw and pointed out many more, of such a nature as could only present themselves to a regular bred practical printer. — We agreed to prosecute the business together, and, if possible, to bring it to perfection, and in pursuance of this resolution performed ... innumerable experiments, till we at last overcame every difficulty, and were able to produce plates, the impressions from which could not be distinguished from those taken from the types, from which they were cast.333

Alexander Tilloch and Andrew Foulis patented in 1784 their process for making “plates for letterpress printing” from plaster of Paris moulds:

A method of making plates for the purpose of printing, by or with plates instead of the movable types commonly used, and for vending and disposing of the said printing plates, and the books or other publications therewith printed, whereby a much greater degree of accuracy, correctness, and elegance will be introduced into the publication of the works both of the ancient and modern authors than had been hitherto obtained.

The invention is declared to be performed by making a plate or plates for their page or pages of any book or other publication, and in printing off such book or other publication at the press. The plates of the pages to be arranged in their proper order, and the number of copies wanted thrown off, instead of throwing the impressions wanted from movable types locked together in the common method; and such plates are made either by forming moulds or matrices for the page or pages of the books or other publications to be printed by or with plates, and filling the moulds or matrices with metal or with clay, or with a mixture of clay and earth, or by stamping or striking with these moulds or matrices the metal clay, earth, or mixture of clay and earth.334

The process received patent protection in both Scotland and in England, but never achieved commercial success in their hands.335 Several books were actually set, stereotyped and issued, according to Tilloch’s own account:

333 *Philosophical Magazine*, vol. x (1801), 267-77.


335 Scottish patent 19 April 1784 — N° 266 (Scottish Record Office C. 3/20).
... several small volumes were actually printed from plates made by myself and Mr. Foulis, and the editions were sold to the trade without any intimation of their being printed out of the common way! We had heard whispers that our work could not possibly be such as would pass for common printing! The trade knew what we were at, and would take care of any thing done in the new-fangled way! The first essays, therefore, were in the lowest sense of the word common: one or two histories, [note "* A kind of books technically so called, such as The Seven Champions of Christendom; The Twelve Caesars; The History of Valentine and Orson; The French Convert; and such scientific and classical performances, of which great numbers are annually exported to America."] and a cheap edition of the Economy of Human Life. We had also printed a Greek volume, Xenophon's Anabasis, 1783, and had plates for several small volumes of the English Poets almost finished, but the latter were never put to press.336

The technical achievement of the Tilloch and Foulis stereotype was not mentioned in the patent. It's not making a cast from type that produces the greatest difficulty — it's producing a positive for printing. The secret is getting right the alloy of the stereotype metal. Stereo metal is an alloy of tin, antimony, and lead. Lead is the main ingredient, about 80%. Tin makes the alloy tough and improves the sharpness of the cast. Antimony gives further hardness and counteracts contraction in solidifying, so that the plate is as faithful a casting of the matrix as possible. Antimony by itself expands when it solidifies, whereas the other two metals contract. Correctly constituted stereo metal remains stable when solidifying.337

That's why Tilloch's chemical and metallurgical knowledge was so important.

His final venture as printer and publisher in Glasgow was The British Songster, being a Select Collection of Favourite Scots and English Songs, Catches, &c. (Glasgow: printed for A. Tilloch, J. Duncan, Dunlop and Wilson, J. and W. Shaws, J. Gillies, J. and M. Robertson, and J. Macnair, 1786). As is often the case with a popular publication of this sort,

only one known copy survives. This may be the last of the Tilloch and Foulis stereotyped productions.

In 1787, with the death of his brother George enabling him to dispose of the family tobacco business, Tilloch finally wound up his father’s estate and moved to London. His unmarried sister Margaret followed, to look after his young daughter and to keep house for him in Barnaby Street, Islington.

His obituarist comments:

Whether the printing business in Glasgow defeated his expectations, or the prospects in London held out a more tempting invitation, we have not the means of knowing with accuracy; but in the year 1787 he came to the British metropolis, where he spent the remainder of his days.

The documented link between Tilloch and Blake dates from 1797, but it’s my guess that it was some time in 1787 that Tilloch made the acquaintance of William Blake. I claim that Alexander Tilloch is caricatured in An Island in the Moon under the name “Tilly Lally, the Siptipidist”, and that discussions with Tilloch are behind Blake’s invention of

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339 The few stereotype plates that Tilloch retained from the collapse of the venture were borrowed by Hodgson for use in his Essay on the Origin and Progress of Stereotype Printing (Newcastle, 1820).

340 “Memoir of Alexander Tilloch”, The Mechanic’s Oracle, and Artisan’s Laboratory & Workshop; Explaining, in an Easy and Familiar Manner, the General and Particular Application of Practical Knowledge, in the Different Departments of Science and Art. By Alexander Tilloch, LL.D. (London, 1825), 221.

341 Bentley, Blake Records (Oxford, 1969), 58: “In the spring of 1797 Blake was one of nineteen engravers who signed a testimonial for a device invented by Alexander Tilloch to prevent banknote forgeries”. The testimonial was published by Ruthven Todd, “The Two Blakes”, Times Literary Supplement (10 February 1945), 72.
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relief etching. My reasons for this identification are as follows:

Tilly Lally seems an obvious play on the name Alexander Tilloch, particularly if one notes that “Lally” is established as a pet form for Alexander (rarer than Sandy, or Alex, or Eck, but a known form nonetheless).

As to the “Siptippidist”, his obituary in the Mechanic’s Oracle refers to Tilloch “in his religious views” as “of the Sandemanian kind”. I suggest that the term “Siptippidist” refers to two distinctive practices of the Sandemanians: sipping at the love-feast or agape that followed their main Lord’s Day service; dipping their feet into water in the foot-washing ritual that they also observed.

The action of An Island in the Moon involves Tilly Lally in scientific experiments:

While Tilly Lally & Scopprell were pumping at the air pump Smack went the glass —. Hang said Tilly Lally. (E 462)

He sings:

Here nobody could sing any longer, till Tilly Lally pluckd up a spirit & he sung. (E 463)

Tilloch had published The British Songster in 1786.

Last, but not least, like a stereotype Scotsman, Tilly Lally says “Oh, aye”.

O ay said Tilly Lally. (E 459)

His obituarist notes that he never lost his native accent.

If my identification is correct, then An Island in the Moon should be dated 1787 or later rather than the 1784 usually put forward. Moving the date of An Island forward to 1787

342”Memoir of Alexander Tilloch”, Mechanic’s Oracle (1825), 221.

343”Memoir of Alexander Tilloch”, Mechanic’s Oracle, (1825), 223: “Though the greater part of his time was passed in the British metropolis, his accent was broadly national”.
or 1788 has the advantage of putting the discussion of printing procedures in *An Island* closer in time to Blake’s demonstration of his method in *All Religions are One* and *There is No Natural Religion* (both 1788) and brings the first appearance of some of the Songs closer to their eventual publication. (Seemingly by accident Blake dropped among the nonsensical doggerel of *An Island in the Moon* the first draft of “Holy Thursday”, later one of the Songs of Innocence, a sudden revelation of a new lyrical poet of extraordinary promise.)

Tilloch’s interest in new printing processes continued after his move to London. In October 1790, Tilloch wrote to Evan Nepean (1751-1822), Under-Secretary of State, enclosing an “Outline of a plan to prevent the forgery of circulating Notes or Bank bills as far as it can be explained without describing the mode of process”. Towards the close of the eighteenth century, the practice of forging Bank of England notes was common. Tilloch wrote:

> The common mode of printing them from Copper plates is so universally known and the Artists in that line are so numerous that it is no wonder many forgeries are attempted and often with great success. It is therefore proposed to reject a process so generally known and to print them from a particular kind of block by means of the common letter-press.³⁴⁴

In other words, he proposed to print banknotes by means of a relief-etched plate. He went on to note that

> ...a part of the plan consists in constructing the blocks in such a manner that the impressions printed from them shall exhibit in different places white lines with black interstices — an effect which cannot possibly be produced by a copper plate.

The illustrations that he included in this “plan” were intended to indicate the differences between cross-hatched white lines on a relief plate and hatched black lines on an intaglio etching. [Plate 7.] Tilloch proposed to incorporate both in one image.

³⁴⁴Public Record Office H.O. 42/17 [1790 Sept-Dec], fols. 68-69.
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It is impossible to give any accurate description of the variety and disposition of lines that might be exhibited with the assistance of a regular bred artist instructed by the person who makes this proposal — either straight or curved they may be crossed two, three, four or even five ways thus [illustration] or in any other form, curves, or angles that may be required — and agreeable to some regular design.

... It is necessary further to add, that the two effects described, that is black lines with white interstices, and white lines with black interstices shall be produced by these blocks so complete, and their combination with each other of such a nature, that it shall admit of demonstration that a similar effect cannot be produced by two processes of printing, the one for the black lines the other for the white ones.

One “regular bred artist” who produced effects very close to those required by Tilloch was, of course, William Blake, in the plates of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience.

[Plate 8.] Joseph Viscomi comments

In “The Divine Image” ... the figures were executed with the tip of a fine brush, while the swirling, flamelike leaves were painted initially as a solid form with a broad brush. By scratching or “working into” the leaves with a needle, Blake created fine parallel white lines with strong black interstices, thereby reshaping the initial brush marks and producing the fine — and visually dominant — black lines. ... The manipulation of white and black line is most obvious in the vine, which is positive outside the broad leaf and negative when crossing it. Without the thin white parallel line, the vine would in fact disappear during its crossing, since both vine and leaf were drawn in the same brown varnish and would have been the same height after etching, which means they would have printed as one interlocking shape.345

Relief etching sounds in so many ways a simpler process than intaglio — there should be less time spent in preparing the plate and no need to acquire the negative-to-positive reversing skills of an engraver — “But thou readst black where I read white” (E 524). Relief etching was not in common use before William Blake because it was found to be too slow and too uncertain in outcome. The secret of relief etching is getting the etching agent right — not too fast or it will start to undercut the relief — not too slow or you’ll be there all night. When Ruthven Todd, Stanley Hayter and Joan Miró attempted to duplicate Blake’s relief

etching process, it took nine hours to etch one plate. The etching agent must cut vertically into the plate and not sideways which will undercut the image. Alexander Tilloch is the man with the chemical expertise.

Blake saw his new process of relief etching as a way of combining illustration and text and of freeing the artist from publishing middlemen:

Then said he I would have all the writing Engraved instead of Printed & at every other leaf a high finishd print all in three Volumes folio, & sell them a hundred pounds a piece (E 465).

Tilloch saw his etching process as a means of producing unique printing effects that no conventional engraving procedures could reproduce.

Like Quid in *An Island in the Moon*, Tilloch was enraptured by the possibilities of his new way of printing:

... the publication of his secret will be of immense advantage to the Arts and Manufactures of Great Britain; that it will tend in a high degree to improve the national Taste by diffusing among the public the works of great Masters and good Artists at a much lower price, and in infinitely greater profusion than can be accomplished by any other method. These facts, the terms being previously settled, shall be established to his conviction of select number of our most eminent Painters, engraver, Book and Callicoe Printers, and other Artists to whose particular manufactures this Art is peculiarly applicable.

But Tilloch’s accompanying letter to Nepean also included a veiled threat:

nothing but that sense of duty which should lead every man to allow his own country the first opportunity of profiting by any discovery prevented me from offering [it] to France for the security of their Assignats.

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347Most scholars follow Erdman in identifying Quid the Cynic with Blake himself.

348Public Record Office H.O. 42/17 [1790 Sept'-Dec'], fol. 75

349Public Record Office H.O. 42/17 [1790 Sept'-Dec'], fol. 70.
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Receiving no encouragement, Tilloch did indeed bring his process before the notice of the Commission d'Assignats at Paris, the members of which were anxious to adopt it, but he was hindered by the outbreak of the war and the passing of the Treasonable Correspondence Bill.\(^{350}\) (Assignats were a form of interest-bearing paper currency, issued in France 1789-1796. Assignats were vulnerable to Royalist forgeries, causing depreciation of value and inflation. Tilloch was presumably unaware that the British government and the Bank of England were themselves engaged in the forgery of assignats in pursuing economic warfare against revolutionary France.\(^{351}\))

Tilloch’s chief activity in his first years in London was in setting up a newspaper, the *Star and Evening Advertiser*, which began publication 3 May 1788 and continued, with minor changes of name to 1831, when it was incorporated in the *Albion and Star*. Tilloch was joint-editor with Andrew Macdonald, John Mayne, and Rowland Nash, and joint-proprietor.\(^{352}\)

The *Star* was the first afternoon daily paper. The original twelve proprietors, with Tilloch, most of them connected with publishing, had included John Mac Murray, William Lane, John Hall (engraver), T. Preston, and Peter Stuart. In February, 1789, Stuart, who had also printed and edited the paper, had been replaced in all his capacities by the poet-journalist, John Mayne. Otherwise the proprietary seems to have persisted, for, on 15 November, 1792, the paper stated that it was then in the hands of the “same Persons by whom

\(^{350}\) *DNB*.


\(^{352}\) *NCBEL* 2.1337; 3.1792.

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it has been conducted for more than three years". Although its political position was usually moderately liberal, it was given to fluctuations, for all the proprietors played an active role in the management, and some of them, notably Mac Murray, Lane, and Hall, were friends of the Government.353

How did the Star under Tilloch’s editorship record the political events of the period? Throughout 1793, The Star reported all the major sedition trials in great detail, and with a clear sympathy with the accused. Reporting the trial of William Frend it defends him in his struggle against “the inquisitorial spirit of the prosecutors”.354 It refers to Palmer, convicted of sedition in Edinburgh, and sentenced to be transported for seven years as “a man of spotless character, and exemplary life”.355 The Star for 30 June 1793 warns against informers:

Every honest Englishman that conceives he has a right to speak his mind in a coffee-house, ought previously to recollect Mr. Foote’s lines:

‘But stay, before I speak aloud,
Is there no fly informer in the crowd,
With art laconic marking all that’s said,
Malice at heart, indictment in his head?’

*Mouchard* is the French word for an Informer, which comes from the word *Mouche*, a fly in the same language, because this insect will buzz around you, sip in your glass, feed off your plate, sting you, and suck your blood the first opportunity.

I have now to introduce into the story the figure of Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom, one of the most important scholars of alchemy at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Little is known of his life, except that he was probably of Scandinavian extraction,

354 Star, (1 June, 1793).
355 Star, (20 September 1793).
and that he spent part of his early life travelling around the world as a ship’s surgeon. Vol. IV of the *Philosophical Magazine* includes an “Account of a Voyage to Spitzbergen in the year 1780”. By S. Bacstrom, M.D. Later he was to settle in London and gather around him a small circle of contacts among whom he circulated his own translations of alchemical texts from Latin, German and French into English.356

There is a widespread perception that “esoteric” or “occultist” traditions like alchemy are inherently anti-modern, since they espouse “mystical” or “irrational” attitudes considered incompatible with rationality and science. There is an idea that such traditions are static and conservative, in contrast to the dynamic and progressive nature of modernity. Rather, during all the phases of the emergence of modernity one finds a complex involvement of Western esoteric currents with mainstream developments that are seen both as reflections of, and as contributing to, the modern world (for example, the relation between the Hermetic revival and Renaissance humanism, alchemy and the scientific revolution, esoteric Freemasonry and the Enlightenment, spiritualism and nineteenth-century positivism, Mesmerism and the rise of psychology). Mircea Eliade has linked alchemy to the very idea of “progress” in Western thought.357

In every culture where alchemy has flourished, it has always been intimately related to an esoteric or “mystical” tradition. The alchemists were not interested — or only subsidiarily — in the scientific study of nature. On 12th September 1794, Dr. Sigismund Bacstrom was initiated into a Societas Roseae+Crucis by Louis, Comte de Chazal, on the

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356 The Getty Research Institute, in Los Angeles, holds eighteen volumes of these translations.

From a letter, dated 16th March 1804, that Bacstrom wrote to Alexander Tilloch, we learn that the Comte de Chazal “had obtained the Lapis Philosophorum and the Pierre Animale (animal stone). By the first he acquired what he possessed and by the second, he had preserved his health to the age of 97”. Bacstrom explained that Louis de Chazal was initiated into a Rosicrucian Lodge in Paris in 1740, possibly by the Comte de Saint-Germain himself.

Bacstrom in turn initiated Tilloch into his Rosicrucian Society in 1797. Tilloch’s own copy of his admission document, signed by Bacstrom, survives in the Ferguson Collection at Glasgow University Library.

In testimony that I have initiated and received Alexander Tilloch Esq. in quality of Practical Member and Brother, a degree above a Member Apprentice, on account of his practical knowledge and philosophical acquirements, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, Sigismund Bacstrom M.D. London April 5. 1797.

This initiation document consists of fourteen promises or obligations, most of which are quite straightforward. One important item is the fourth obligation, which has a long concluding paragraph on the equal status of women in regard to membership of the Societas Roseae Crucis.

And as there is no distinction of sexes in the Spiritual world, neither amongst the blessed Angels nor among the rational immortal spirits of the Human race; and as we have had a Semiramis, queen of Egypt, a Myriam, the prophetess, a Peronella, the wife of Flamel, and lately a Leona Constantia, abbess of Clermont, who was actually received as a Practical Member and Master into our Society in the year 1736, which women are believed to have been all possessors of the Great Work, consequently Sorores Roseae Crucis and members of our Society by possession, as the possession

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360 University of Glasgow, Special Collections, MS. Ferguson 22.
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of this our art is the key to the most hidden knowledge: And moreover as redemption was manifested to mankind by means of a woman (the blessed Virgin) and as salvation, which is of infinitely more value than our whole Art, is granted to the female sex as well as to the male, our Society does not exclude a worthy woman from being initiated, God himself not having excluded women from partaking of every spiritual felicity in the next life, we will not hesitate to receive a worthy woman into our Society as a member apprentice, (and even as a practical member or master if she does possess our work practically and has herself accomplished it) provided she is found, like Peronella, Flamels wife, to be sober, pious, discreet, prudent, not loquacious, but reserved, of an upright mind and blameless conduct, and with all desirous of knowledge.

This seems to indicate that Bacstrom’s Rosy Cross remained a separate stream from the Freemasons, who were quite strongly patriarchal and would not allow women as members.

The 8th obligation is one of political quietism:

I do moreover solemnly promise ... that I will not, on the one hand, assist, aid, or support with Gold or Silver, any Government, King, or Sovereign whatever, except by paying taxes, nor, on the other, any populace, or particular set of men, to enable them to revolt against their Government. I will leave public affairs and arrangements to the Government of God, who will bring about the events foretold in the Revelations of St. John, which are fast accomplishing. I will not interfere with affairs of Government.

The Star had mentioned on 7 November 1792 that moderate reform was no longer in its opinion a party issue, for certain “abuses ... are admitted [by all parties] to have crept into our happy Constitution,” and these “abuses” ought to be “eradicated.” On 15 November the Star angrily denied that it was controlled by the Friends of the People. It was owned, it told its readers, by the “same Persons by whom it has been conducted for more than three years,” the “rumour” to the contrary was “malicious,” and it would pay 100 guineas for the name of the “perpetrator.” It simply believed in the cause of moderate reform.361 In a letter to Lord Liverpool, 18 July 1820, Tilloch was to write:

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I have my Lord been upwards of thirty years Editor of a Daily News-paper, The Star, a Journal the character of which has never been tarnished by any prosecution. In the whole of that time I have advocated the interests of the Country, and, generally, though not invariably, supported the measures of Government.362

Appended to Tilloch’s document of admission is a collection of Rosicrucian Aphorisms and Process.363 These “Aphorisms” are in the tradition of earlier alchemical texts in concealing their prima materia yet explaining all the subsequent stages in great detail, now using the exact chemical terminology of the eighteenth century. Thus, for example, there are precise measurements of temperature for the stages of the process, using Fahrenheit’s thermometer, and precise measurements of quantities. Yet this work, written at the end of the eighteenth century, still remains in the same archetypal mould as works of some three centuries earlier. It details an alchemical process of the red and white stones through the nigredo, putrefaction and peacock’s tail stages, with the final potentisation through multiplication of the tincture.

Aphorisms 3. and 4. deal with the prima materia:

3 Our Magnet to attract it (although every subject in Nature is Magnetical) is Man, and principally חדמה [Hebrew: hadamah] (the Dust or red earth of Man), which in the months of March, April and May, the Sun in [Aries] and [Taurus] is abundantly found in כומד [Hebrew: dom, the blood] of a healthy man; the Spirit of the Universe during this season residing therein most abundantly, universally and unspecified.

The Universal Fire is truly Nature.

4 The happy success depends on the subject being good, from a young man, if possible of a Jovial Temper or Choleric, in good health, collected in a proper season, which is in March, April and, at farthest, in May, while the Sun is in [Aries]
and [Taurus]: best after Northerly winds have prevailed.

Alchemists were masters of metaphor. They dressed up their instructions in parables and allegories, veiled them in symbols, delighted in enigmas, and preferred to call a substance by any name other than its common one. Alchemy was as much a spiritual process as a physical one, and the obscurity of alchemical language reflects its religious orientation.

Blake on his Laocoön group wrote that God made Adam (the natural man) “of the Female, the Adamah” (E 273); and he evidently meant the “Adamic earth” of the alchemists.

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell he wrote

Roses are planted where thorns grow.
And on the barren heath
Sing the honey bees.

Then the perilous path was planted:
And a river, and a spring
On every cliff and tomb;
And on the bleached bones
Red clay brought forth. (E 33)

“Red clay brought forth” is linked by Blake to the passage from ISAIAH that describes how “the wilderness ... shall blossom as the rose”. Blake is here thinking in alchemical terms. The work of alchemy is, in essence, the bringing forth out of the matrix of earth the divine riches inherent in her, a process that takes place in nature, but can be imitated and hastened by the Art.

Tilloch, like his friends the Varleys, was someone whose activities manage to comprehend the occult, a deep interest in eschatological Christianity, and also in mainstream

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364ISAIAH 35: 1-2, “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God”.

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science. The triumph of experimental science did not abolish the dreams and ideals of the alchemist; on the contrary, the new ideology of the nineteenth century crystallised around the myth of "progress". It is their conception of man as an imaginative and inexhaustibly creative being, that explains the survival of the alchemists' ideals in nineteenth-century ideology. Boosted by the development of the experimental sciences and the progress of industrialisation, this ideology took up and carried forward the millenarian dream of the alchemist.

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In 1793 the Bank of England had issued £5 notes to protect gold reserves and to help the economy in fighting the war with revolutionary France. The Bank Restriction Act became law on 3 May 1797 under which the Bank was forbidden to pay cash for sums of 20 shillings or more to any creditor or use cash for any payment except to the Army or Navy, or Ordnance on a Privy Council order. It was, however, stated that payment in the Bank's notes might be "legal tender by consent" — that is if they were freely offered and accepted as such. The Act of 1797 was intended to be a temporary measure. In the event the Bank did not resume full cash payments until 1 May 1821.365

The Bank had issued £1 and £2 notes at the Restriction by the hurried expedient of re-engraving worn-out £5 copper-plates. The bank let it be known, that, to counter the problem being caused by the substantial increase in forgery arising from the new notes, it was open to suggestions for improvements in their design.366 Tilloch saw this as an opportunity

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to bring forward again his scheme for preventing forgery.

This time Tilloch took the precaution of supporting his proposal with testimonials from working engravers. William Blake was one of a group of nineteen who signed a testimonial stating that they “could not make a copy of it,” and that they did not “believe that it could by copied by any of the known arts of engraving”:

London, 5th April 1797.

Mr. ALEXANDER TILLOCH, of Carey-street, London, having, submitted to our inspection a Specimen of an Art invented by him, for the purpose of producing Checks to prevent the Forgery of Bank Notes, Bills of Exchange, Drafts, &c. &c. &c., we have examined the same with care and attention, and we DECLARE, each of us for ourselves, that we could not make a copy of it, nor do we believe that it can be copied by any of the known arts of Engraving. It therefore appears to us to be highly deserving of the notice of the Bank of England and private Bankers, as an Art of great merit and ingenuity, calculated, not merely to DETECT, but to PREVENT the possibility of forging Bank and other circulating Bills.

FRANCIS BARTOLOZZI, R.A. Engraver to His Majesty, &c. &c.
JAMES HEATH, Engraver to His Majesty and to the Prince of Wales.
JAMES FITTLER, Engraver to His Majesty.
J. LANDSEER, Engraver to His Majesty.
J. R. SMITH, Engraver to the Prince of Wales.
FRANCIS HAWARD, Engraver to the Prince of Wales.
JAMES BASIRE, Engraver to the Royal Society and to the Society of Antiquarians.
WILLIAM SHARP.
WILLIAM BYRNE.
THOMAS HOLLOWAY.
W. S. BLAKE, (Writing Engraver.)
JOHN PUKE, (Writing Engraver.)
WILLIAM BLAKE.
WILLIAM SKELTON.
MARIANO BOVI.
ROBERT DUNKARTON.
WILSON LOWRY.
JOHN ANDERSON, (Engraver on Wood.)
RICHARD AUSTIN, (Steel Letter Cutter and Engraver on Wood.)

Most of the signatories are engravers better known among their contemporaries and

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367 Tilloch reprinted this testimonial, together with signed statements by other engravers, when the topic came again to the fore in 1820: *Philosophical Magazine*, (July 1820), 63.
much more prominent in their profession than Blake. If my discussion of the friendship between Tilloch and Blake has so far been speculative, here is incontrovertible evidence of their acquaintance. It is inconceivable that Blake could have signed a testimonial in favour of a process of relief etching, at first sight very similar to his own, unless he was either aware of the differences or maybe even felt an obligation to Tilloch. If William Blake felt that Alexander Tilloch had stolen his ideas then he obviously wouldn't have signed.

Of course it didn't work out. The Treasury Committee minutes of the Bank of England tell some of the story:

4th July 1797
The Governor and Deputy Governor, being engaged to be with Mr Pitt at Twelve O'Clock, with the Gentlemen who proposed to become Bidders for the Lottery for the present Year requested Mr Bosanquet to meet Mr Tilloch and Mr Terry, who were appointed to Attend the Committee of Treasury this day. Accordingly Mr Terry presented to Mr Bosanquet and some Gentlemen of the Direction, Two Copies of Mr Tilloch's Specimen of a Plan, to prevent the forgery of Bank Notes, and Mr Tilloch attended to inspect the same.
After Examination, the Gentlemen of the Direction were of Opinion, that Mr Terry had produced so near an imitation of Mr Tilloch's Engraving, that, tho an Artist might detect a variation between the Plan and the Copy, yet that no difference could be perceived by the Public. And on this Account, they Agreed, that the adoption of Mr Tilloch's Plan, would not be of Service to the Bank, for preventing the forging of Bank Notes. 368

When Tilloch had offered this new method of printing banknotes to the Bank of England, he was responding to a general public concern that forgery of Bank of England notes had reached epidemic proportions. One early response came from the studio of Thomas Bewick, who submitted for consideration a wood-engraving which had been executed by him in the end grain, using engraving tools. As with Tilloch, and unfortunately for Bewick, the Bank's engraver, Garnet Terry, convinced the Bank that he could copy

368 Bank of England Archive: Committee of Treasury Minute Book (entry for 4th July 1797).
Bewick’s design using copper plates. One wonders what hold Garnet Terry had over the Bank’s directors — his notes were easy to forge and remained so throughout his period as engraver to the Bank. If it is hard to believe that Terry could by intaglio engraving copy convincingly Tilloch’s relief-printed notes, it seems impossible that he could duplicate Thomas Bewick’s 1802 design. Any one who has seen Bewick’s notes engraved for provincial banks will know them for virtuoso demonstrations of the wood-engraver’s art. Nevertheless Terry claimed to have duplicated Bewick’s design in copper-engraving and the Bank accepted his assertion. Although lip service was paid to the search for inimitability, no steps were taken that would affect Garnet Terry’s position within the Bank.

Tilloch gave his own version of events 23 years later in a petition to the House of Commons dated 13th July 1820:

... the Bank Engraver (then a Mr. Terry) said he could copy it, and in about three months thereafter did produce what he called a copy, but which was, in fact, very unlike the original.
That on the 4th of July, 1797, the said pretended copy was examined before a Committee of the Bank Directors, by Messrs. Heath, Byrne, Sharp, Fittler, Landseer, and Lowry, all Engravers of the first eminence, who all declared that the pretended copy was any thing like a correct resemblance of the original, not even executed in the same manner, your Petitioner’s Specimen being executed on, and printed from, a block in the manner of letter-press, but the copy executed on, and printed from, a copper-plate in the common rolling-press; and the said Engravers signed certificates to that effect, and gave the same to your Petitioner; and that other Engravers, who were not at the Bank when the examination was made, afterwards compared the pretended copy; and gave your Petitioner a certificate similar to the last-mentioned — all agreeing that the copy was no more like the original, than a brass counter is like a guinea.

The Bank’s refusal to countenance his invention continued to grate with Tilloch for the rest

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370 “Memoir of Alexander Tilloch”, *Mechanic’s Oracle*, (1825), 221. The text quoted here is considerably fuller than that in a version of the petition now held in the Bank of England Archives (Freshfields Papers F8/51).
of his life.

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The informal scientific meetings and laboratory demonstrations satirised in *An Island in the Moon* took a more formal turn in 1799 when Tilloch was elected to the Askesian Society.\(^{371}\) In the *Philosophical Magazine* for 1800, he noted that it consisted of "a select number of gentlemen, associated for their mutual improvement in the different branches of natural philosophy. It was initiated in March 1796, and the regular meetings are held every other week during the winter".

The Askesian Society brought together the scientific interests of such men as William Allen, Richard Phillips, George Fordyce, Astley Cooper, Arthur Aikin and Humphry Davy at key points in their intellectual and social careers. The active life of the Society spanned the years from 1796 to 1807, when it merged with the newly formed Geological Society of London.

The overall range of scientific interest in the Askesian Society was quite considerable. Samual Woods lectured before members on "St. Pierre's theory of the Tides" and "Franklin's Theory of Electricity", R. Colman of the Royal Mills upon "The Manufacture and Analysis of Gunpowder", William Phillips on "The Divining Rod", Luke Howard on "Fulminating Mercury", and "Rain and Huttonian Theory", Alexander Tilloch on "Inventions to Prevent Fire on Ships", Wilson Lowry on "Malleable Zinc", and William Allen (in whose Plough Court laboratory the Society met) on general chemistry and mechanics. Members frequently combined in their research activities. Luke Howard received assistance from the son of

Wilson Lowry, and made his experiments on mercury in the laboratory of George Pearson. W. H. Pepys, Tilloch and Thomas Gill together published new inventions and manufacturing processes through the medium of the *Philosophical Magazine*. When Tilloch delivered his lecture entitled "A brief Examination of the received doctrines respecting Heat or Caloric" in December 1799, the experiments had been set up by Cornelius Varley, the official "experimenter" of the London Philosophical Society.

Askesians were not involved in radical politics. Only the Aikins, Lowry, and Tilloch had radical sympathies and Tilloch, in accordance with his Rosicrucian obligations, kept his well hidden. The Quakers William Allen, Joseph Fox (of Guy's), and William Phillips were especially active as organisers of charitable schemes in Spitalfields, and other Askesians subscribed to such schemes. But while the Quaker humanitarian ethic aroused the philanthropic potential of science, it often curbed explicit political activity. Allen admired Wilberforce and Pitt, leading opponents of radicalism. Quaker prominence in manufacturing and commerce was defended by philanthropy and extended by science. The Spitalfields Soup Society, which dispensed soup made according to the scientific calculations of Rumford, required their personal attendance. Scientific theory also provided the attraction of devising cheap and efficient forms of charity like soup kitchens: botanical and chemical experiments even suggested water was nutritious. Allen and Fox, with Rebekah Bliss's friend John Walker, were among the partners of Robert Owen in the New Lanark project. Jeremy Bentham had to counter Fox's insistence that the Bible was to be the basis of all educational instruction at New Lanark, and Allen was to insist that Owen retain the use of the

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Scriptures. Such confrontations were intended to show that science could be a means of countering radicalism.

Between 1800 and 1802, Charles Mahon, third Earl Stanhope, the versatile amateur scientist and mathematician, with Tilloch’s approval took up the Tilloch-Foulis stereotype process. Aided by a London printer, Andrew Wilson and with Andrew Foulis in personal attendance, Stanhope improved it and made it commercially viable. The perfected process offered many obvious advantages where books were being constantly reprinted, such as Bibles, Prayer Books, school books and the like. It greatly reduced the wear of type and the expense of keeping it standing for future use. Furthermore, a stereo plate did not fall to pieces as a forme of type often did.

Stereotyping soon became an established practice in book-printing houses, and by 1820 there were at least twelve establishments in London for the casting of stereotype plates. So successful was the new process that in 1818, Augustus Applegath was granted a patent for “Certain improvements in the art of casting stereotypes or other plates for printing, and in the construction of plates for printing bank or banker’s notes, or other printed

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373 Owen, *The Life of Robert Owen* (London, 1920), 195: “William Allen, a man of great pretensions in his sect, a very busy, bustling, meddling character, making great professions of friendship to me, yet underhandedly doing all in his power to undermine my views and authority in conducting the new forming of the character of the children and of the population at New Lanark”.


impressions where difficulty of imitation is a desideratum".  

Tilloch regarded Applegath’s patent as virtually his own process of 1797, and in a letter of 18 July 1820, to the Earl of Liverpool, wrote  

M’ Applegath, the new Bank Printer has taken out a patent for the plan adopted by the Bank, and by this glaring indicator has laid it open to the practices of the fraudulent. I have therefore only to refer to published specifications of his Patent in order to shew that the plan as far as it goes is mine, and to prove by evidence that it was taken from mine.  

The Directors of the Bank of England had continued to be under attack since the issue of small denomination notes (£1 and £2) had led to an increase in forgery, which was a capital offence, as was the uttering of a forged note. The Bank’s directors seemed particularly impervious to criticism and had shut their minds to reasoned suggestion and argument. The Black Dwarf periodical, in a bitter attack, referred to the Directors as “priests of Moloch’s blood-stained altar” and as “grand purveyors to the gibbet”. In an anonymous letter to the Monthly Magazine, a correspondent said that “... No fewer than 10 people were convicted at the late Lancaster assizes; the majority of whom are left for execution ... these persons may be said to suffer from the obstinacy of the directors of the Bank. ... the involvement of the Solicitor, and Bank Engraver, is deemed of more consequence than the lives and morals of these unfortunate wretches, who are tempted to the commission of crime, by the facility of the operation ... any engraver’s apprentice who had served two years, is fully competent to the execution of any plate issued by the Bank; and with regard to the water-mark, the mutilated state of the notes, frequently renders a critical or minute examination

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377 British Library, Department of Manuscripts: Add. 38286, fol. 136.
impracticable".378

Between 1805 and 1818, five hundred and one convictions and two hundred and seven executions resulted from the Bank bringing people to court. The Bank of England, however, still claimed it was trying to produce an unforgeable note.379 In 1809 the Society of Arts brought out a report on the prevention of forgery and in 1818 a Royal Commission reported back on the same subject. This caused the Bank to be inundated with "inimitable notes" by many famous designers and engravers but none were implemented. The Bank instead decided to withdraw the £1 and £2 notes as the economic situation no longer warranted their need.

A Scots exile in London, Tillock would often extend hospitality to his fellow-countrymen. One of them was John Galt, novelist of Scottish manners, who was born at Irvine, Ayrshire, in 1779. As early as 1805 Galt had contributed to the *Philosophical Magazine*, vol. xxiii, an essay on "Commercial Policy"; and later, in 1807, when the return from Canada of an old schoolfellow and relative, William Gilkison, gave Galt an opportunity for close questioning on the subject of the American Colonies, the results of those inquiries were embodied in "A Statistical Account of Canada" (published in the *Philosophical Magazine* in vol. xxiv, 1807). This is the first evidence of that particular interest in Canada which was ultimately to mean so much to Galt.380

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For a time Galt edited the Political Review and in 1812 he published his experiences abroad in a volume entitled Voyages and Travels in the Years 1809, 1810, and 1811. While the proofs were going through the press Galt accepted Tilloch’s invitation to stay in his house and have the benefit of his help. He had now also entered upon a separate course of reading for his projected Life of Wolsey. His researches were conducted mainly in the British Museum, and it is said that Tilloch lent him many rare and curious books. The Life of Wolsey (with Tilloch in the background), was prepared with more care and labour than any other work of Galt’s. It was published in a handsome heavy quarto style, with an engraving of Wolsey as frontispiece; the price was two guineas, large-paper copies three.

Jennie W. Aberdein — the critic who in her John Galt (1941) did more than most to restore Scottish interest in Galt — suggests that he had come back from his travels in a state of deep despondency and morbid sensitivity. Galt was in his thirty-fourth year, without definite hopes and prospects. He had an access of self-pity, and perhaps in some such mood of despair he won the heart of Elizabeth Tilloch, the daughter of his friend.

Elizabeth, Tilloch’s only child, married John Galt on 20 April 1813, and had three sons, John jun. (born 13 August 1814), Thomas (born 12 August 1815) and Alexander Tilloch (born 6 September 1817). No description has been discovered of Elizabeth Tilloch; the tradition in the family is that she was tall and fair, very clever and well educated and a


382 Aberdein, John Galt (London, 1941), 64-65.


384 Aberdein, John Galt (London, 1941), 78.
good Latin scholar. To her husband she was “Bess”, and there is evidence in his letters that she was his trusted confidant. Galt went to Canada as secretary of the Canada Company, but his fiery and stubborn character got him into trouble, and he returned to London and to literary hack work. That hack work including editing (and perhaps ghost-writing) Lady Charlotte Bury’s diary — with its touching anecdote of William Blake at Lady Caroline Lamb’s.385

John Galt is said to have put Tilloch into one of his novels: Bogle Corbet, a narrative of Scottish emigration.386 In the character of Mr. Ascomy (i.e. ask o’ me), “a philosopher of no ordinary calibre”, and father-in-law of the hero, Galt provides a pen-portrait of his own father-in-law:

He had been evidently an extensive reader, but loose and desultory in his reflections on every subject of which I had any knowledge; he could speak amusingly, for, without regard to the utility of what he had learned, he had picked out some fact or anecdote which profounder students would have overlooked, but to which he curiously ascribed an infinitude of consequence, illustrating his opinion with arguments possessed of every ingredient of erudition and ingenuity but common sense. In this respect he was equally singular and interesting, and the deference which he received or exacted from his daughters, confirmed him in the notion he had formed of himself — a philosopher of no ordinary calibre.387

1819 saw the publication of a collection of Tilloch’s theological writing: Dissertations on the Opening of the Sealed Book. The “Preface” to the work states:


386Suggested by Hamblyn, The Invention of Clouds (New York, 2001), 327.

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With some exceptions of small moment, the following work was given to the public, in the LONDON STAR, during the years 1808 to 1809, in thirty-three Numbers, each signed BIBLICUS.388

It appears from Tilloch's introduction to these dissertations that it was his intention to go through the whole Book of Revelation, while the letters communicated to the Star and reprinted in 1819 carry his subject no further than the opening of the seals, and the sounding of the first five trumpets.

Geoffrey Cantor notes that while Tilloch's theological writings were acceptable to some Sandemanians and he was clearly influenced by Glas and Sandeman, he did not belong to the London Sandemanian meeting house but worshipped at his own neighbouring independent chapel.389 His obituarist gives an account of the "Goswell street Christians":

The few with whom he associated assume other name than that of Christian Dissenters. They are "slaves to no sect," and can scarcely be said to make an avowal of any theological creed. They profess to conduct themselves according to the directions of scripture; and for the government of their little body, appoint two elders, who are elected to their office, but who have no other remuneration than the affection and respect of a grateful people. The qualifications for the duties of this station, which Dr. Tilloch was called to fill, he possessed in an eminent degree; nor was he more liberal in dispensing the riches of his cultivated mind, and in expatiating on the love of the Redeemer, than in imparting to the needy the contents of his purse. ... Their place of worship is a room in a house in Goswell-street-road, where they meet every Lord's Day, sing, pray, read the scriptures, and offer praise to God, when one of the elders, or some other brother under his direction, gives an exhortation, generally from some passage of scripture that has been read. The sacrament is also regularly administered every week.390

388 Dissertations on the Opening of the Sealed Book; Illustrating the Prophetic Signs Used in Daniel and the Revelation. Printed from a Transcript of the Papers signed Biblicus, published in the London Star with Additional Notes (Arbroath, 1819), iii. It is unclear to what extent this publication was authorised by Tilloch. There is just a single copy in the Tilloch sale (1825). A 2nd edition was published (Perth, 1852).


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In 1823, followed a second theological Work: *Dissertations Introductory to the Study and Right Understanding of the Language, Structure, and Contents of the Apocalypse*. This work was “for a class of readers much more circumscribed than the other”; and in the preface to it Tilloch alluded to a larger work “devoted to the elucidation of the Apocalypse,” which he “feared he may not live to finish”. He wrote:

About forty years have elapsed since the attention of the Author of these Dissertations was first turned to the Revelation; and the contents of this wonderful book have, ever since, much occupied his thoughts.

There are seven dissertations. The first dissertation (“On the opinions delivered by Ecclesiastical writers respecting the date of the Apocalypse.”) quotes repeatedly from the discussion of this topic by Sir Isaac Newton — as scholar of matters eschatological. Tilloch’s occult circle was well aware of Newton’s interest in astrology and alchemy, as Robert Cross Smith (“Merlinus Anglicus, Junior”) made clear:

As it is not generally known that the father of English astronomers and mathematicians, Sir Isaac Newton, was indebted for his transcendant knowledge to Jacob Behmen (who was certainly the prince of occult philosophers and astrologers), I beg to refer all who are disposed to “The Gentleman’s Magazine” for July, 1782, where they will see an article very explicit on this point, written by a fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge.

Tilloch’s *Dissertations* was no best-seller, for at the house-clearance sale following his death

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391 Cited in J. Mc., “Dr. Alex Tilloch”, *Notes and Queries*, 5th series, vol. 7 (March 1877), 206-7.


393 *The Astrologer of the Nineteenth Century . . . By the Members of the Mercurii; Raphael, the Metropolitan Astrologer; the Editor of the Prophetic Almanack; and Other Sidereal Artists of First-Rate Eminence*. The Seventh Edition, Supervised and Corrected, with Numerous Additions, by Merlinus Anglicus, Junior, Gent. (London, 1825), 241, *note*.
there were still left 355 copies in boards and quires (i.e. unbound),

lot 878 TILLOCH’S DISSERTATIONS INTRODUCTORY TO THE STUDY OF THE APOCALYPSE, 355 copies (102 bds. 253 qrs.) and waste

which were disposed of for just one guinea.

On 11 April 1824, Tilloch (cited as Editor of the Philosophical Magazine. Author of Dissertations on the Apocalypse, 1823, etc.) was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws by Marischal College, Aberdeen. He was recommended for the degree by Olinthus Gregory (Mathematical Master at the Greenwich academy), Charles Hutton (Professor of Mathematics at Woolwich), and by the astronomer William Pearson.\(^3\)\(^9\)\(^4\) As one might expect, Tilloch’s sponsors had all been contributors to the Philosophical Magazine. Tilloch was a member of many learned societies at home and on the continent, including the Scottish Society of Antiquaries, and the Regia Academia Scientiarum at Munich.\(^3\)\(^9\)\(^5\) One honour escaped him: membership of the Royal Society. His obituarist explained why:

About twenty years since, he was proposed by the late Dr. Gouthshore, at whose conversationes I have met him, as a member of the Royal Society; but it was intimated from some other question, that he would be black-balled, should he persist in the ballot. The reason assigned was, not his want of talent, genius, science, or moral excellencies, but his being a proprietor of a newspaper, and the editor of a periodical publication.\(^3\)\(^9\)\(^6\)

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In July 1820, the Bank of England had sponsored a parliamentary Bill, ostensibly “for the further Prevention of forging and counterfeiting of Bank Notes”. Tilloch, with Galt’s

\(^{3\)94}Fasti Acadamiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis: Selections from the Records of the Marischal College and University MDXCIII-MDCCCLX. Edited by Peter John Anderson. Volume II: Officers, Graduates, and Alumni (Aberdeen, 1897), 104.

\(^{3\)95}DNB.

\(^{3\)96}“Memoir of Alexander Tilloch”, Mechanic’s Oracle (1825), 224.
encouragement and involvement, petitioned Parliament against the Bill. The “humble Petition of Alexander Tilloch of Islington, Gentleman” was concerned that the Bank was using features of the proposal he had put before them in 1797 and that the Bill was drafted so as not just to prohibit forgery but to make illegal the use of the technical processes whereby bank-notes were printed. He wrote:

That Your Petitioner has seen a Bill now before Your Right Honourable House entitled “A Bill for the further prevention of Forging and Counterfeiting of Bank Notes,” in which there are various Causes calculated, and as Your Petitioner believes and humbly submits, intended to prevent him from exercising the Art of which he was the Original Inventor, and which he humbly submits is an Act of great injustice. That to prohibit the exercise of any mode of Engraving on the pretext of preventing Forgery, stands as much opposed to the progress and improvement of the Arts, and is consequently as impolitic as it would be to prohibit Die-sinking for Medals .. on pretext of hindering the Current Coin from being Counterfeited.397

He also noted:

That the Bank rejected the Plan offered by your Petitioner, followed their old Plan for upwards of Twenty Years longer to the great corruption of Public Morals and sacrifice of human life, and never made Your Petitioner any remuneration.

Tilloch is not the only person worried by the Bank’s proposals. James Fergusson “of Newman Street Oxford Street in the County of Middlesex, Stereotyper and Printer” also petitioned Parliament.398 He wrote:

... that some of the essential features of the new Notes about to be issued by the Bank of England are founded upon Your Petitioners Plan, of which the following words in the preambles of the Bill are a tolerable correct description viz: “The Groundwork of each Bank Note will be black or coloured, or black and coloured linework and the words “Bank of England” will be placed at the top of each Note, in white Letters upon a black sable or dark ground, such Ground containing white lines intersecting


398 Fergusson was a friend and neighbour of Samuel Varley’s in New Oxford Street, and in 1822 executor and residuary legatee of Varley’s will (Public Record Office PROB 11/1657, fols. 291-92).
Again, Fergusson is worried that the Bank, by, as he sees it, arrogating to its sole use his invention, prevents him from exploiting it commercially.

Are these the sort of worries, then, that prompt William Blake into deliberately misdating *Milton* and *Jerusalem*? The title-page of *Milton* [Plate 10] is dated 1804. Viscomi asserts that it was “probably first printed in 1811.” *Jerusalem* is also dated 1804 on its title-page. Viscomi argues that the first copies were not printed until 1820. The proposed bill would not have been retrospective, but the image-ground ambiguity that the Bank of England sought to make a unique feature of its banknotes (achieved by Applegath’s offset process) is precisely the source of Blake’s finest effects in *Jerusalem*. (In both cases one asks oneself, is the image formed by black lines on a white background or by white lines on a black background?)

Forgery, forging, and fraud are terms of considerable importance to Blake. Gilchrist records a youthful encounter of some significance:

At the age of fourteen, the drawing-school of Mr. Pars in the Strand, was exchanged for the shop of engraver Basire in Great Queen Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields. There had been an intention of apprenticing Blake to Ryland, a more famous man than Basire; an artist of genuine talent and even genius, who had been well educated in his craft; had been a pupil of Ravenet, and after that (among others) of Boucher, whose stipple manner he was the first to introduce into England. With the view of securing the teaching and example of so skilled a hand, Blake was taken by his father to Ryland; but the negotiation failed. The boy himself raised an unexpected scruple. ... ‘Father,’ said the strange boy, after the two had left Ryland’s studio, ‘I do not like the man’s face: it looks as if he will live to be hanged!’ Appearances were at that time utterly against the probability of such an event. Ryland was then at the zenith of his

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399 Freshfield Papers: F8/51.


reputation. ... But, twelve years after this interview, the unfortunate artist will have
got into embarrassments, will commit a forgery on the East India Company—and the
prophecy will be fulfilled.\footnote{Gilchrist, \textit{Life of William Blake} (London and Cambridge, 1863), vol. 1, 13.}

The boundary between true and false was a matter of importance to Tilloch, as well
as to Blake, and a matter of proof, not simply as evidence of authenticity but as surety against
reproduction. Both men too are concerned with issues of priority of invention. The colophon
to \textit{The Ghost of Abel:}

1822 W Blakes Original Stereotype was 1788 (\textit{E 272})

is apparently a response to the claim of William Home Lizars, in 1820, to have invented relief
etching.\footnote{W. H. Lizars, “Account of a new style of engraving on copper in \textit{alto relievo}, invented
by W. Lizars”, \textit{Edinburgh Philosophical Journal}, II (April 1820), 19-23.} But 1820 had also seen the publication of Thomas Hodgson’s history of
stereotyping.\footnote{Hodgson, \textit{An Essay on the Origin and Progress of Stereotype Printing} (Newcastle, 1820).} Hodgson acknowledges Tilloch’s assistance, and lists William Ged and even
Benjamin Franklin as precursors. If Blake knew the work, the omission of his own
contribution would surely have irked.

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Tilloch’s interest in engineering and applied science also bore fruit in some improvements
to steam engines in which he was long associated with the engineer Arthur Woolf (1766-
1837).\footnote{On Woolf see R. Jenkins, “A Cornish engineer, Arthur Woolf, 1766-1837”, \textit{Newcomen Society. Transactions}, vol. 13 (1932-33), 75-88.} He seems to have acted as the London agent of Woolf in Cornwall, as in this letter
to the Cornish MP (and mine-owner) Davies Giddy:

\begin{itemize}
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\end{itemize}
I am deeply interested in the success of Mr Woolf’s Engine, on which much money has been expended, without any adequate return as yet either for the money, or the time, anxiety & trouble which it has cost to bring the invention to the present state of perfection — partly owing to opposition & prejudice which it has met with from interested individuals, & partly from the impediments & difficulties which every invention has to overcome before it can be rendered fully effective. Of the value of the invention I need say nothing to you as I know no person who can better appreciate it. By Mr Lean’s Report for June Woolf’s engine at Wh1 Vor was doing 50 Millions; and by his Report for July (Received this morning) the work of the same Engine is state at 46,277,662; & a note is added stating that during July this engine had not had a fair average of coal, some of the round having been gathered out for a steam stamping Mill which required extra fuel. By the same report Woolf’s Engine at Wh1 Abraham (though working at a disadvantage being loaded lb 16.3 Sq’ inch in cylinder) did 46,232,836 in July.

The benefits which must eventually result to the Miners & proprietors of the Soil from such and improvement you can appreciate better than I can. Nor do we think that we have yet reached our maximum.

On 20 August 1808 Tilloch was granted a patent (No. 3161) for “Apparatus to be employed as a moving-power to drive machinery and mill-work”.

The year 1825 had begun with the grant on the 11th of January of a patent (No. 5066) for a “Steam-engine or apparatus connected therewith”. But he was already a dying man. Tilloch’s last project was a venture into popular science: The Mechanic’s Oracle, and Artisan’s Laboratory & Workshop. It commenced publication on 16 July 1824, issuing twenty-eight weekly parts until it was discontinued after his death. Contributions to the Mechanic’s Oracle included some posthumous papers of Samuel Varley. The plates were chiefly the work of J. W. Lowry, Wilson Lowry’s son. The last issue bore an obituary “Memoir of Alexander Tilloch” reprinted from the Imperial Magazine, and a portrait of Tilloch, engraved by James Thomson from a painting by Frazer.

The Mechanic’s Oracle concludes

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406 National Library of Scotland. MS 19989, fol. 36 (Letter of Alexander Tilloch to Davies Giddy [later Gilbert], 16 August 1815, concerning Arthur Woolf’s engine).
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The place of his abode was with his sister in Barnaby-street, Islington, where, during several months, he was almost exclusively confined to his house. The approaches of death, however, were not alarmingly observable, until within a few weeks preceding his death. It was then evident that his useful life was drawing to a close. In this state he lingered until about three-quarters before one, on the morning of Wednesday, January 26th, 1825, when the weary wheels of life stood still. 407

Most of his life’s ambitions had been achieved in his 64 years, apart from his failure to patent a design for the first unforgeable banknote. “He had exercised a profound influence on scientific publishing in Britain, transforming its fortunes by launching a journal — the Philosophical Magazine — that would outlive him for another two centuries, and that flourishes still to this day.” 408

A sale by Saunders of Tilloch’s books, household effects and laboratory equipment was held in London at the Great Room (“The Poet’s Gallery”) at 39 Fleet Street, from 10 to 17 May, 1825, commencing each day, according to the sale catalogue, at “12.30 precisely.” 409 It included 1,201 lots of printed books and manuscripts, and 340 lots of coins, medals, paintings, prints, laboratory equipment and household goods. Many lots consisted of several volumes of printed books or manuscripts not separately identified, and any attempt to count the books in various categories must therefore be only approximate.

408 Hamblyn, The Invention of Clouds (New York, 2001), 327.
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Tilloch’s books range all the way from Davy, Beddoes, and new science back to the occult and sympathetic healing. It shows how a “proper” inventor/scientific author of that period could accommodate supernatural world-views into his work. The Conjuror’s Magazine is in there with works on animal magnetism and Davy’s safety lamp. Not only is the library big and varied but from the sale catalogue one can mentally reconstruct the appearance of his house with its Dutch paintings and prints, laboratory equipment and scientific instruments, furnaces, and concave mirrors.

The Tilloch library reflects its owner’s very particular interests — in astrology, chemistry, alchemy, theology and language. The sale also incorporated material Tilloch himself produced — including many issues of the Philosophical Magazine in every form from printed quires to bound volumes. The sale catalogue documents Tilloch’s varied intellectual interests and shows us what sort of library a man of quite modest means could put together in the late eighteenth century.

Astrologers believed that events in the macrocosm of the natural world were reflected in the human microcosm, and vice versa. Thus, under the proper astrological influences, a “perfection”, or “healing” of lead into gold might occur, just as the human soul could achieve as perfect state in heaven. The artisan in his laboratory could perhaps hasten this process by careful nurture and long heating, by “killing” the metal and then “reviving” it in a finer form. Tilloch’s obituarist noted that

Ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, and sanguine in his expectations, the occult sciences, in early life, at one time attracted much of his attention; and when animal magnetism was introduced into this country, its novelty and charms were not without their influence on his youthful mind. The magic, however, of this delusive science soon ceased to operate, yet judicial astrology he was never disposed to treat with
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sovereign contempt. 410

And Robert Cross Smith refers to

the late learned DR. TILLOCH, late editor of that established scientific periodical, "The Philosophical Magazine," who was a secret admirer and firm advocate of judicial astrology, with several others that we could mention, no less distinguished for soaring above the heads of their scientific competitors, and who were an honour to their day and generation. 411

The Tilloch sale included more than 50 lots of books on astrology. They included

lot 22 Gadbury’s Astrological Treasury, and Worsdale’s Genethliacal Astrology 1798 [John Gadbury, Thesaurus astrologiae: or, an astrological treasury, containing the choicest mysteries of that curious, but abstruse learning, relating to physic, Being the collections and experiments of a learned physician and astrologer deceased, whose name is not known... (London: Printed for Thomas Passenger... , 1674)
John Worsdale, Genethliacal astrology.: Comprehending an enquiry into, and defence of the celestial science:... To which is added, an appendix, ... The second edition (Newark: printed and sold for the author by Messrs. Ridge; sold also by Messrs. Robinson, London; Drury, Lincoln; Hurst, Grantham; Thomill, Sleaford, 1798)]

The two books sold for 17s. 6d.

167 Pezelii Præcepta Genethliaca, 1607, and 1 other
[Christoph Pezel (1539-1604), D. Christophori Pezelii Præcepta genethliaca, sive de prognosticandis hominum nativitatis commentarius eruditissimus, in quo non solum astrologiae præcepta & certa istius fundamenta demonstrantur, verum etiam varii casus, historiae, eventus & exempla lepidissima propomuntur. Omnibus et singulis, cuiuscumque facultatis studiis lectu iucundus & scitu necessarius (Francoforti: Typis Wolfgangi Richteri, impensis Iohan. Theobaldi Schonveteri & Cunradi Meulii consurnum, 1607)]

A rare and important early astrological treatise, it sold for 3 shillings.

283 Summa Anglicaæ de Astrologiæ 1489
[Joannes Eschuid (fl. 1350), Summa astrologiae iudicialis. De accidentibus mundi quæ anglicana uulgo nuncupater Ioannis Eschuidei [sic] niri [i.e. uiri] anglici

410 "Memoir of Alexander Tilloch", Mechanic’s Oracle, (1825), 220.

411 The Astrologer of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1825). A note adds: "His horoscope, as given by himself a short time before his death to Mr. John Varley, is in the possession of the Mercurii."
Sold for 3s. 6d. One of only eight incunabula in the Tilloch sale. Joannes Eschuid, otherwise John of Ashenden or John of Eschenden, was the first English astrologer of note. Tilloch’s was very much a working library and even these rare books reflect his interests in astrology and theology.

Perhaps a few items were for show or private delectation: books of hours, missals, a Koran — in all some 28 medieval and Oriental manuscripts. Noteworthy is the following item:

860 The Loves of Joseph and Zoleikha, (the Wife of Potiphar) in Turkish verse, elegantly translated from the Persian of Jami.

††† This MS. affords a complete specimen of the minute elegance with which the people of Asia adorn their favourite compositions. It is written on the finest Oriental Paper, in a most exquisite Taleek character. The pages are sprinkled with Gold, and the whole is adorned with several highly-finished pictures and illuminations.

It fetched 11 guineas.

And the earliest manuscript in his collection:


Codex in Pergam. Sec. XI. Scriptus.

This eleventh-century collection of sermons, written on vellum, sold for 9 guineas.

Tilloch’s involvement with the printing industry was represented by some 15 lots on bibliography and printing, including:

542 Sallustius, morocco Edinb. Ged, 1744

[Sallust, C. Crispi Sallustii Belli Catilinarii et Jugurthini historiae (Edinburgi: Gulielmus Ged, aurifaber Edinensis, no typis mobilibus, ut vulgo fieri solet, sed tabellis seu laminis fusis, excudebat, 1744)]

The Edinburgh goldsmith William Ged (d. 1749) invented a stereotype process that preceded
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Tilloch’s. As early as 1725 William Ged had obtained a privilege for printing from plates rather than moveable type, but was prevented from establishing his invention by trade jealousy.\(^{412}\) His stereotyped edition of *Sallust* (1739) was reprinted from the same plates in 1744. Both editions are now exceedingly rare. Ged’s *Sallust* sold for 7 shillings.

582 Hodgson’s Essay on Stereotype Printing, LARGE PAPER 1820

[Thomas Hodgson, *An essay on the origin and progress of stereotype printing; including a description of the various processes*. Typographical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne. Publications; 11 (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed by and for S. Hodgson and sold by E. Charnley, 1820)]

One of 306 copies printed. Hodgson acknowledges the assistance he has received from Tilloch and incorporates pages printed from Tilloch’s surviving stereotypes. It sold for 5 shillings.

❖

Tilloch’s theological interests dominate the sale. There are dozens of Bibles and Bible commentaries in several languages. Here are just a sample:

1153 Geddes’s Prospectus for a Translation of the Bible 1786

[Alexander Geddes, *Prospectus of a new translation of the Holy Bible from corrected texts of the originals, compared with the ancient versions. With various readings, explanatory notes, and critical observations* (Glasgow: printed for the author, and sold by R. Faulder, London; C. Eliot, Edinburgh; and - Cross, Dublin, 1786)]

This must be a souvenir of Tilloch’s bookselling days in Glasgow when the prospectus of a new translation of the Bible was “to be had at the shop of A. Tilloch, bookseller, Glasgow”.\(^{413}\) In 1786, the Catholic scholar Alexander Geddes put forth his “Proposals for publishing a New translation of the Holy Bible”; in 1792 the first volume appeared followed


\(^{413}\)Advertisement in *Glasgow Mercury* (29 December 1785).
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by another volume in 1797. Apparently no further portions of his translation were printed; the project was abandoned apparently because Geddes' radical approach to textual criticism provoked hostility from both orthodox Catholics and Protestants. The Prospectus sold for 4 shillings.

665 Biblia Hebraica, cura Simonis, 2 vols Hal. 1767

This second edition of Simonis' Hebrew Bible sold for 13s. 6d.

872 The Newe Testament, (Tyndale's 2nd edition) LITT. GOTHE. morocco. gilt leaves Anwerp 1534
[The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke by Willyam Tindale: and fyneshed in the yere of oure Lorde God A.M.D. &. xxxiiij. in the moneth of Nouember (Imprinted at Anwerp [sic]: By Marten Emperowr, 1534)]

A revised edition of Tyndale's New Testament of 1525 (of which only a single copy remains, now in the British Library) and itself of great rarity. It fetched £9.

894 The Newe Testament, with the Notes and Expositions of the Darke Places therein, BLACK LETTER, cuts Imprinted at London, in Powles Churchyarde, by R. Jugge 1552
[The newe Testament of our Sauiour Jesu Christe: Faythfully translated out of the Greke. Wyth the notes and expositions of the darke places therein (London: Imprynted by Rycharde Jugge, 1552)]

Early English Bibles made good prices. This sold for 6 guineas.

924 Holie Bible, 3 vols. rough calf Douay 1609
[The Holie Bible faithfully translated into English, out of the authentical Latin, diligenty conferred with the Hebrew, Greeke, and other editions in divers languages, with arguments of the bookes, and chapters: annotations. tables: and other helpes,

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for better understanding of the text: for discoverie of corruptions in some late translations: and for clearing controversies in religion by the English College of Doway (Printed at Doway: by Laurence Kellam, at the signe of the holie Lambe, 1609)]

The first complete edition of the Roman Catholic version of the Bible in English. It sold for £2.

952 The Byble in Englyshe, (Cranmer’s first edition) 1539
[The Byble in Englyshe: that is to saye the content of all the holy scrypture, bothe of y° olde and newe testament ([London]: Prynted by Rychard Grafton & Edward Whitchurch, 1539)]

The printing was originally begun by F. Regnault at Paris but was stopped by the French authorities. Holbein’s title-page border shows King Henry viii, Cranmer, and Cromwell distributing copies of the Bible. It sold for £6.

959 Erasmus’s Paraphrase on the Newe Testament, 2 vols in 1, BLACK LETTER 1548
[Desiderius Erasmus, The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the Newe Testamente (London: Edwarde Whitchurche, 1548)]

Sold for 19 shillings.

963 Tindal’s Bible, revised by Matthews, 2 vols, BLACK LETTER. 1551
[The Byble: that is to say, al the holy Scripture conteined in the olde & new Testament, faythfully set furth according to ye copy of Thomas Mathewes trau[n]slacio[n], wherunto are added certaine learned prologes, annotacio[n]s for the better understandinge of many hard places thorowout the whole Byble (Imprinted at London: By Ihon Day dwellyng ouer Aldersgate. Cum gratia et priuilegio ad- [sic] imprimendum solum, 1551)]

The Old Testament and the Apocrypha are the “Matthew” Bible version (i.e. the translation of William Tyndale edited by John Rogers), revised by Richard Taverner, further revised by Edmund Becke, who edited the whole. The New Testament is in the Tyndale translation. It sold for £3. Blake famously engraved on his Laocoön print:

The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art. (E 274)
Tannenbaum and other writers have considered the impact on Blake of the new Bible translations appearing in his day.\textsuperscript{415} The comparatively high prices obtained for early versions reflect a contemporary interest in the origins of the English Bible that has been neglected by Blake scholars.

Tilloch had a fine array of dictionaries (more than 15 Greek and Hebrew) to assist his Bible studies. Noteworthy are:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
800 & Parkhurst's Hebrew and English Lexicon \ldots \hspace{2cm} 1799
& [John Parkhurst, \textit{An Hebrew and English Lexicon, without Points}. 4th ed. (London, 1799)]
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The most widely read and respected Hebrew lexicon of the time, which went through four editions and several reprintings, it sold for 11 shillings. Leslie Tannenbaum points out that Parkhurst's \textit{Lexicon} was not a conventional Hebrew dictionary: Parkhurst was a member of the Hutchinsonians, a sect that shared Blake's dislike of Isaac Newton, and the Lexicon contains Hutchinsonian doctrine.\textsuperscript{416} Hutchinson considered that the Bible, in its original Hebrew text, contained the true, pure word of God. However, during its subsequent history the text had become corrupted by the addition, for example, of the Masoretic signs which represent vowel sounds. By removing these intrusions, Hutchinson considered that he had returned the text to its original form from which he could decode the hidden meanings of the Hebrew words with the aid of some apparently rather arbitrary rules to interrelate words with similar Hebrew forms. Moreover, he claimed that the text contained two parallel meanings, one referring to the physical, the other to the spiritual, realm.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
877 & A MANUSCRIPT HEBREW AND ENGLISH LEXICON AND
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{415} Tannenbaum, \textit{Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies} (Princeton, 1982), 9, 287.

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CONCORDANCE of the authorized Version of the Old Testament

It occupies 34 vols foolscap 8vo, (in two boxes) written in a good hand, with
great neatness and care; supposed to be the work of the Rev. Robert Smyth of
Southwick, near Plymouth. It was written about the same time that Taylor’s Hebrew
Lexicon was published.

[Vide Draft of Letter from Mr. Tilloch to a Nobleman.]

This sold for 15 guineas.

The last two days of the sale witnessed the final dispersal of an extraordinary life’s
collection. Alongside paintings (attributed to Carracci, Rubens, Veronese, Egbert van
Heemskerck among others), drawings, prints, coins, earthenware, silverware, and the usual
congregation of household collectibles, an astonishing array of mathematical and
philosophical instruments was sold. Among the items of the Tilloch hoard were a 15-inch
concave mirror in a black frame; a 10-inch-diameter plano-convex burning-glass; a two-and-
a-half-foot achromatic telescope complete with brass stand and eyepieces; a Culpepper’s
microscope in a wainscot box; a “RAMSDEN’S OPTICAL, by JONES”; a small microscope in
a fish-skin case; a self-registering horizontal day-and-night thermometer; a copper air
fountain with stopcock, pipe, and jet; an iron chemical furnace with tubes and a conducting
pipe; a blunderbuss with two brass rings; a Davy’s safety lamp; twelve globe receivers with
long necks; three boxes of minerals; about 2 pounds of quicksilver in a bottle; an elliptical
tracing frame; a japan kaleidoscope; a wooden magic lantern; and an ivory-mounted opera
glass. “Here was a life of philosophical pursuits in 340 lots, broken up over the course of a

417 Those lots sold in the last two days are also listed in a separate catalogue: Catalogue
of Cabinet and Other Esteemed Paintings, Prints, Coins, Medals, Philosophical and
Mathematical Instruments, Stained Glass, Curious Chinese Furniture, Large Ornamental Jars,
&c &c. of Alexander Tilloch Esq. ... Editor of the Philosophical Magazine, &c &c. Deceased
couple of afternoons. By the time the hammer came down on the final bid (for a cluster of imitation fruit housed in a glass dome), the worldly goods of Alexander Tilloch had been dispersed to every corner of the thriving capital, as was only fitting for a man whose life was devoted to the circulation of ideas amid the growth of the scientific marketplace. He was a skeptic, an innovator, and a far-reaching publisher, and his readers and contributors were going to miss him, challenging and combative though he was.418

In 1832 at his house at Old Brompton, Galt suffered a stroke, which was followed by other attacks. All three of his sons had departed for Canada, and in 1834 Galt and his wife went back to Scotland. From this time his illness steadily increased, and at last, on the 11th of April 1839, about half-past five in the morning, John Galt died. He was buried beside his father and mother in the Greenock Cemetery in Inverking Street.419 Elizabeth Tilloch Galt went out to Canada to join her three sons. Margaret Tilloch, Alexander’s unmarried sister, moved back to Glasgow to live with her twice-widowed sister, Robina Niven and her niece Christina in Clyde Terrace.

When Gilchrist began his biographical research on Blake, interviewing every one of Blake’s friends and acquaintances he could trace, Tilloch was long dead and his family either in Glasgow or across the Atlantic. Thus Tilloch and his connection to Blake was lost to the poet’s biographers.

Alexander Tilloch is an exceptionally interesting figure for the reason that he

418Hamblyn, The Invention of Clouds (New York, 2001), 328-29. Lot 340 (“A cluster of imitation fruit, and glass shades”) sold for 3s. 6d.

419Aberdein, John Galt (London, 1941), 192.
combines the roles of theologian and scientist: an inventor, journalist, Biblical controversialist and Rosicrucian; one whose life, in a curious irony for the inventor of stereotyping, resists and contradicts social and historical stereotypes: an alchemist who published the researches of the best chemists of his time, a believer in astrology who promoted scientific rationalism, a Rosicrucian who adhered to the narrowest sectarianism. He was, as we have seen, founder-editor of the *Philosophical Magazine* — a publication in the tradition of such Enlightenment productions as the *Journal des scéavans* — and combined a distinguished career as scientific journalist with presiding over his own Christian sect. His career demonstrates the permeability of the boundaries between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment and the religious rather than political basis of much eighteenth-century thought. A simple contrast is often made between Enlightenment values (scientific) and those of a Counter Enlightenment (irrational). Alexander Tilloc managed to combine these opposing ideologies in one person.
Chapter v

Isaac Newton: the context of a private library.

The problem facing all those who have claimed alchemical ideas lie behind William Blake’s poems and prints has always been the sheer implausibility of someone like Blake, a member of the artisanal classes, a commercial engraver (born a shopkeeper’s son in 1757), conceivably having access to some of the rarest productions of German presses of the early seventeenth century. Friendship with Tilloc and acquaintanceship with Tilloc’s library provides that plausible access. From this, I shall show how a single library (Tilloc’s) can in turn provide Blake’s readers with multiple points of access in explicating his work.

Tilloc’s library includes what may be the largest alchemical collection of its time (87 volumes of alchemical manuscripts, and more than one hundred printed books). I list just a few of the titles in the Tilloc sale.

lot 133 Goode Leeuw ofden Asijn der Wysen, 2 vols, neat 1676
[Goosen van Vreeswyck, De goude leeuw, of den asijn der wysen. Waer in ontallyke heerlyke konsten en nutte verborgenheten ontekt worden: als de Anima uit alle metalen en mineralen te trekken; vele ongemene medicynen, shcilder-gout, brandewynen uit koorn sonder viese smaeck, uitstekend blancketsel, kostelyke gesteenten, etc., te maken. 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge for the author, 1675)]

This important Dutch alchemical emblem book has an added engraved title page, dated

Translation: “The Golden Lion, or the Vinegar of the Wise. Wherein countless excellent arts and useful secrets are uncovered: how the Anima is to be extracted from all metals and minerals; many uncommon medicines, painters’ gold, spirituous liquors made from grain without an ill taste, excellent whitewash for the skin, precious stones, &c. may be made. All wrought with his own hands, and made public with many copperplates, by Goossen van Vreeswijk, master miner”.
1676. It failed to find a buyer.

180 Ripley’s Compound of Alchymy, in verse, 1591, and Majeri Tractatus de Septem Montibus Planetarum, 1618, and 2 others, in 1 vol
[George Ripley, The compound of alchymy. Or the ancient hidden art of archemie: containing the right and perfectest means to make the philosophers stone ... Divided into twelve gates ... Whereunto is adiöyned his epistle to the king, his vision, his wheele, and other his workes ... Set foorth by Raph Rabbards (London: Thomas Orwin, 1591)
Michael Maier, Michaelis Majeri Viatorium, hoc est, De montibus planetarum septem seu metallorum; tractatus tam utilis, quam perspicuus, quo, ut indice Mercuriali in triviis, vel Ariadnëo filo in labyrinthe, seu Cynosurâ in Oceano chymicorum errorum immenso, quilibet rationalis, veritatis amans, ad illum, qui inmontibus sese abdidit de Rubea-Petra Alexicacum, omnibus medicis desideratum, investigandum, uti poterit (Oppenheim: ex typographia Heieronymi Galleri, 1618)]

The lot sold for 4s. 6d. Maier’s alchemical and Rosicrucian writings were of particular significance to Tilloch.

216 Barchusen (I. C.) Elementa Chemicæ, plates ... Lugd. Bat. 1718
[Johann Conrad Barchusen, Johannis Conradi Barchusen Elementa chemice: quibus subjuncta est confectura lapidis philosophici imaginibus repraesentata (Luduni Batavorum: Apud Theodorum Haak, 1718)]

Sold for just 1 shilling. Published long after the heyday of alchemical publishing, this work includes an engraved version of the emblem sequence known as Coronatio Naturae. (Tilloch also owned at least two manuscript versions of the same work.)

219 Majeri Emblemata Nova de Secretis Naturæ Chymica, plates 1618
[Michael Maier, Atalanta fugiens, hoc est emblemata nova de secretis naturae chymica. Accomodata partim oculis & intellectui, figuris cupro incisis, adjectisque sententis, epigrammatis & notis, partim auribus & recreationi animi plus minus 50 fugis musicalibus trium vocum, quarum duæ ad unam simplicem melodiam distichis


422 Translation: “The Wayfarer’s Guide; that is, Of the Mountains of the seven planets or metals, a treatise as useful as it is clear, which, like the finger of Mercury at a fork in the road, or the thread of Ariadne in the Labyrinth, or the Pole Star over the vast ocean of chymical wanderings, any rational lover of truth may use to investigate the Prophylactic Medicine of the Red Stone which has hidden itself in mountains and which is desired by all physicians".

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Sold for 3s. 6d. Michael Maier’s alchemical emblem book *Atalanta fugiens* was first published in Latin in 1617. It consists of a series of fifty emblems (pictorial allegories) with accompanying epigrams and discourses, but extends the concept of an emblem book by adding fifty pieces of music: “fugues” or rather, canons. (Only Blake’s *Songs* can rival it, and for these the music is lost.) Maier uses these diverse media in a masterful exposition of alchemical doctrine; his hermeneutic relies heavily on the symbolism of classical mythology, presented as an ancient repository of fundamental “chemical truths”.

A reprint of Maier’s 1618 *Atalanta fugiens* with the engravings by Theodor de Bry but omitting the music. It sold for 1 shilling. As well as these two printed versions of *Atalanta fugiens*, Tilloch also possessed a eighteenth-century English manuscript translation of the text.\footnote{424}{Translation: “Fleeing Atalanta, that is, New Chemical emblems of the Secrets of Nature, adapted partly for the eyes and intellect in figures engraved on copper, with legends, epigrams and notes attached; partly for the ears and the soul’s recreation with about 50 musical fugues in three voices, of which two are set to a simple melody suitable for singing in couplets; to be looked at, read, meditated, understood, weighed, sung and listened to, not without a certain pleasure.”}

\footnote{423}{Translation: “canendis peraptam, correspondeant (Oppenheimii: ex typographia Hieronymi Galleri, sumptibus Joh. Theodori de Bry, 1618)”}

\footnote{424}{Atalanta running, that is, New Chymicall Emblems relating to the Secrets of Nature Accomodated partly to the Eyes and Understanding, with figurers cutt in Copper, and Sentences, Epigrams, and notes added, partly to the Ears and recreation of the Mind, with 50. Musicall flights of three Voyces, whereof two may correspond to one Single melody. appropriated with distichs to be Sung: to be Seen, read, meditated understood distinguished, Sung and heard not without Singl¹ Delectation. The Author. Michael Majerius Count of the Imperiall Consistory}
Agricola, whose real name was Georg Bauer, was a physician living among the mining people of Saxony and Bohemia and his systematic study of mining and metallurgical processes marked the beginnings of modern science.

Humphrey Newton, Sir Isaac Newton’s amanuensis, noted that

About six weeks at spring, and six in the fall, the fire in the elaboratory scarcely went out, which was well furnished with chemical materials as bodies, receivers, heads, crucibles, etc., which was made very little use of, the crucibles excepted, in which he fused his metals: he would sometimes, tho’ seldom, look into an old mouldy book which lay in his elaboratory, I think it was titled Agricola de metallis, the transmuting of metals being his chief design.

Agricola’s De re metallica is one of the cornerstones of science: a book that has earned its place in history as a masterpiece of Renaissance technical writing and technical illustration.

The lot sold for 2s. 6d.

Tilloch’s 87 alchemical manuscripts were sold in eighteen lots; few of the works included can be identified from descriptions of this sort:

Doctor of Physicke, Knight of &. Oppenheim. Printed by Hieronymous Gallerius, att the Charge of John Theodore de Bry. 1618. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Rare Book and Special Collections Library.)

Ink manuscript on paper; occasional pencil annotations by Alexander Tilloch. Listed in Sandra Sider with Barbara Obrist, eds., Bibliography of Emblematic Manuscripts (Montreal, 1997), 94; and described by Thomas McGeary, “Manuscript Emblem Books at the University of Illinois,” Emblematica, vol. 2 (1987), 367-370. Another English translation is British Library MS. Sloane 3645. This may be the same translation as Mellon MS. 48 at Yale.
Alchemy. An extensive Collection of Manuscript Alchemy, very neatly written, with many fine drawings, 17 vols, half bound russia, marble leaves

Manuscripts generally made better prices than printed books. This lot fetched 13 guineas.

I shall demonstrate how the resources of Tilloch’s library can locate formulas used by Blake for design and for poetic composition, and can provide for him a figure’s pose, an emblematic device, a verbal expression, sequences and constellations of words, for his intellectual ideas, for his sources of imagery and of verbal expression, and for the names he gives his private mythology. It is not that Blake was any kind of alchemist, or a believer in Neoplatonism, Rosicrucianism, and the perennial philosophy. Alchemy, Swedenborgianism, Behmenism, are the materials he used in constructing his personal vision. From alchemy he took ideas of process and transformation, pictorial devices, aphorisms; it provided a scaffolding to help build the Blakean system: “I must Create a System or be enslav’d by another Mans” (E 153). Blake’s was the true imagination which transforms what it finds and I am concerned in this chapter with what Blake may have found in the library of his friend Alexander Tilloch and how it worked on his transforming imagination.

Consider first an example of how a book in Tilloch’s library can source verbal expression in Blake and suggest a name in his mythology. [Plate 9.] Tilloch’s extensive theological collection included Richard Parry’s study of Daniel’s Seventy Weeks:


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425 Lot 787 in the Tilloch sale. The “seventy weeks” are those of DANIEL 9: 24-27.
This provincial publication is a work so obscure that few would accept that Blake could have seen it but for its presence in Tilloch’s library. The “Advertisement” facing the title-page addresses itself to the Jews, the Christians and the Deists:

The following DISSERTATION is published with a view to its being serviceable to the JEW, the DEIST, and the CHRISTIAN. The former acknowledges the authority of the Scriptures which foretell the MESSIAH. The latter confesses also the accomplishment of those Scriptures in the person of JESUS. The other believes neither. To each of these Daniel’s prediction of the WEEKS, if rationally explained, and impartially attended to, may perhaps be of use. The JEW may from thence be convinced that JESUS, notwithstanding his sufferings, was the MESSIAH. The Christian will be confirmed in this faith. And the Deist, if open to conviction, may be led to acknowledge, that THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHESY.

Did this suggest to William Blake how he, too, should separately address the readers of Jerusalem (“To the Public.” “To the Jews.” “To the Deists.” “To the Christians”)?

In the apocalyptic literature, redemption is not a matter for theoretical speculation but a process that has already begun, whose culmination is imminent and whose timing can be calculated. Richard Parry was but one of many writers who turned the apocalypse of Daniel into a precise chronology:

1. These weeks are to be reckoned in a continued series, without any interruption. The whole chain reaches through seventy successive weeks; and its several parts, according to the angel’s division, are seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week.
2. By weeks are here to be understood, agreeably to the prophetic style, weeks of years. The whole sum then of seventy weeks will be 490 years; and the separate parts will be 49 years, 434 years, and 7 years.
3. The prophecy speaks of one, and but one, Messiah throughout. The most holy to be anointed is afterwards called the anointed prince, the anointed who is to be cut off, the covenanter with all nations, the prince that shall come, whose people shall

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426 On Richard Parry, 1722-1780, see DNB. Such is the rarity of this book, that it does not appear in the DNB’s list of his publications. Cluer Dicey (fl. 1763-1780), the printer of this work, had premises both in London and Northampton. Dicey is best known as a map publisher, and as the printer and publisher of broadsides, popular prints, and chapbooks. The Northampton shop seems to have handled a wider range of printing, including books, as here.
overthrow the city and the sanctuary, cause the temple-service to cease, and make the
land itself an utter desolation.
4. The end of Jerusalem is the end of the weeks.427

Parry’s title-page incorporates a quotation from Josephus.428 The printer has
emphasised the KAIPON ΩΠΙΖΕΝ, the fixed or determinate time; could this have suggested
the name of Blake’s tyrant Urizen? Since 1929, most Blake scholars have agreed with
Dorothy Plowman that the name Urizen derives from the Greek οὐρίζειν, meaning “to
bound” or “limit”, from which we get our English “horizon”.429 But the resemblance between
Blake’s white-bearded Urizen and traditional personifications of time (Chronos) is striking.
Thus, instead of thinking about Urizen as fixing the limits of space (the horizon), this
quotation from Josephus tells us that we could think of Urizen as fixing the end of time. On
an everyday level, for the working engraver William Blake, maybe Urizen is, quite simply,
the publisher’s dead-line.

Tilloch’s library in many respects parallels Sir Isaac Newton’s known interests in science,
theology and alchemy, for alchemical manuscripts and books were an important part too of

427Richard Parry, A Dissertation on Daniel’s Prophesy of the Seventy Weeks
(Northampton, 1762), 3-4.

428Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, X. 267:
οὐ γὰρ τὰ μέλλοντα μόνον προφητεύων διετέλει, καθάπερ καὶ οἱ ἡλικοὶ
προφήται, ἀλλὰ καὶ καιρὸν ὄριζεν εἰς ὅν ταῦτα ἀποβήσεται.
(For he [Daniel] was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets,
but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass.)

429Concluding “Note” to her facsimile of The Book of Urizen (London, 1929), 17. Sheila
Spector, “The Reasons for ‘Urizen’”, Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, vol. 21 (Spring 1988), 147-
49, provides an alternative (or additional) Hebrew source for the name.
CHAPTER V

Isaac Newton’s personal library. For example, Newton seems to have been particularly interested in the alchemical writings of Michael Maier, copying out long extracts from his works, and Tilloch owned several of Maier’s works.

Newton’s studies in astronomy, optics and mathematics only occupied a small portion of his time. Humphrey Newton had found him absorbed in the possibility of transmuting metals in 1685, and still later in life he carried on a correspondence about it with Locke and Boyle. As a deeply religious man, Newton was profoundly preoccupied by the search for One, for the One God, and for the divine Unity revealed in nature. Newton’s marvellous physical and mathematical explorations of nature had not entirely satisfied him. He may have entertained, or half-entertained, a hope that a “Rosicrucian” alchemical way through nature might lead him even higher. Frances Yates suggests that “it would thus not be historically fantastic to entertain as a hypothesis basis for further study, the possibility that a ‘Rosicrucian’ element, in some revised or changed form no doubt, might enter into Newton’s

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431 The sale catalogue of Tilloch’s library lists:

lot 2 Maieri Penetarum, et Testamentum Raymundi Lulli [Unidentified] 1573
180 Ripley’s Compound of Alchymy, in verse, 1591, and Majeri Tractatus de Septem Montibus Planetarum, 1618, and 2 others, in 1 vol [Viatorium, 1618]
219 Majeri Emblemata Nova de Secretis Naturæ Chymica, plates [Atalanta fugiens, 1618] 1618
232 Majeri Secreta Naturæ Chymica, plates, ....... 1687 [Scrutinium chymicum, 1687, a posthumously published abridgement of Atalanta fugiens].

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interest in alchemy”.\textsuperscript{432}

Count Michael Maier (1569-1622), whose works were collected by both Newton and Tilloch, was a prominent alchemist and Rosicrucian apologist who worked amid the political tumult of the Holy Roman Empire in the early seventeenth century. In 1611 Maier journeyed to England, where he fraternised with the court of James I and spent his time translating English alchemical works into Latin. Frances Yates has interpreted Maier’s travels and meetings throughout Europe in the wider context of Protestant efforts to build a political alliance against the forces of the Counter-Reformation.\textsuperscript{433} It seems Maier was involved in the gathering of political intelligence in the early stages of the Thirty Years War; it is likely he died at the hands of the forces of the Counter-Reformation during the destruction of Magdeburg in 1622.

Maier was the author of numerous alchemical and Rosicrucian works, many illustrated with symbolic engravings of great beauty. \textit{Atalanta fugiens} (1617) is arguably Maier’s finest creation. Its style and content are exemplary of the Hermetic tradition as it stood in the early seventeenth century, a revitalised movement lying at the cusp of Renaissance esotericism and enlightenment science. The greatest honour done to Maier came late in the century. Isaac Newton studied his writings, leaving eighty-eight respectful pages of notes.\textsuperscript{434}

We can find reminiscences of the emblems in Maier’s \textit{Atalanta fugiens} (1617) in many of Blake’s works. The resemblance has been noted before by leading Blake scholars.


\textsuperscript{433}Yates, \textit{The Rosicrucian Enlightenment} (London, 1986), \textit{passim}.

CHAPTER V

Nelson Hilton has remarked the strong resemblance between the title-page of Blake’s *Milton* and Emblem 1 (“Wind Carried him in his belly”) of Michael Maier’s *Atalanta fugiens*. In Maier, a pregnant man stands, his hands and head emitting currents of wind, cloud or smoke. Within his belly we see a child beginning to form. [Plate 10.] Blake shows another nude man in currents of cloud or smoke. For Hilton, Plate 1 of *Milton* presents a vision of entering the vortex, here “a vortex of billowing smoke” that “emanates from the figure’s left palm and, to a lesser extent, from his right wrist; indeed the entire figure can be seen as a compaction of the lines making up the vortex”. Maier’s wind (or *anima*, or *spiritus*), notes Hilton, “carries its potential for dynamic expression to term, as the Word bears its vortex”.

This first emblem, appropriately enough for a work of symbolic alchemy, alludes to the Emerald Table of Hermes. Maier, in his “Discourse” on this emblem wrote

Hermes, the most industrious searcher into all the secrets of Nature, doth in his Smaragdine Table exquisitely thus succinctly describe the Natural Work when he says: “Wind carried Him in his belly,” as if he should have said that He whose father

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is Sol & mother is Luna must, before he can be brought forth into the light, be carried by windy fumes, even as a Bird is carried in the Air when it flies.\textsuperscript{437}

If evidence were needed of Blake's knowledge of alchemical literature there is his explicit citation of this key text in this line from Jerusalem:

Repeating the Smaragdine Table of Hermes to draw Los down (E 251).

There are other resemblances between Blake's designs and the emblematic images of Atalanta fugiens besides that spotted by Nelson Hilton.

The title derives from the Greek myth of Atalanta and Hippomenes. As it had been prophesied that marriage would be her ruin, Atalanta challenged her suitors to race her; although her love was the prize of the contest, the penalty of failure was death. Such was her speed that none could defeat her, until Aphrodite granted Hippomenes three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperides; when the race seemed lost, he distracted Atalanta by dropping the fruit one at a time, so winning her hand in marriage. The emblematic designs that surround the title include a figure of Atalanta picking up the golden apples. [Plate 11.]
This, I assert, was borrowed by Blake for the woman plucking mandrake children from the earth in Gates of Paradise.\textsuperscript{438}

Emblem xxi of Atalanta fugiens has the title: "Make for ye Man & ye Woman a Circle, of that a quadre-angle, of this a Triangle, of ye Same Circle, & you will have

\textsuperscript{437}The titles to Maier's emblems are cited in the English translation of a manuscript which once belonged to Tilloch, and is now in the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Quotations from Maier's "discourses" derive from Adam McLean's comprehensive alchemy website (http://www.levity.com/alchemy).

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Philosophers Stone”. A philosopher or geometrician stands in front of a wall upon which he is drawing a circle with a large pair of compasses. He is constructing this using some geometric rules from a circle within a square within a triangle. Within the central circle are a naked man and woman. On the ground in front of him are a protractor, a set square and a tablet with geometric diagrams. He may be attempting to square the circle. [Plate 12.]

For the alchemists there was nothing strange about the squaring of the circle, wrote Maier. They use the square that comes from the circle to demonstrate “that from every simple body the four elements must be separated ... By the transformation of the square into a triangle they teach that one should bring forth spirit, body and soul, which then appear in three brief colours before the redness”. The body is assigned saturnine blackness, the spirit the lunar-watery whiteness and the soul the airy, citric colour. “If the triangle has now attained its highest perfection, it must be brought back into a circle, that is, an immutable redness. Through which operation the woman returns into the man, and from their legs a single one is formed.” The man and the woman are Sulphur and Mercury, the Principles of the Work, and the triangle is finally converted into the macrocosmic greater sphere which is the Philosophers’ Stone. Blake’s colour print of Newton [Plate 16] shows a figure marking out with compasses a geometric design like Maier’s.

Blake portrays Newton as a naked youth, and Tilloch’s library provides another source for a nude young man with compasses or dividers. Lot 275 of his sale is “Albert Dureri Opera 1538”. When Dürer returned from Venice in 1507, it was his intention to write a manual of the art of painting. Soon, however, his attention was concentrated on the proportions of the human figure. By 1513 Dürer’s research was complete and was incorporated in the first book of his treatise on proportion: Hierinn sind begriffen vier Bücher
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von menschlicher Proportion (Nuremberg, 1528). We find in the Vier Bücher von menschlicher Proportion just such a nude young man with a pair of dividers.

Emblem xxxi of Atalanta fugiens is “The King Swimming in the Sea Cryes out with a Loud Voyce, he that will deliver mee shall have great reward.” A crowned King swims far out from the land, on a wide sea or lake. [Plate 13.] The emblem illustrates the injunction, attributed to Hermes, to save the vile Subject of the Wise from its miserable condition. Although unrecognized by the ignorant, the Stone of the Philosophers is a King, who, if saved and taken care of, will bestow rich rewards upon his saviour. In another sense the King, desperate to be rescued, is also Sulphur, which after the Dissolution, floats upon the “crystalline” waters of the Philosophick Sea. If one fetches the king from the red sea (Mercurial water), says Maier, one should be careful that one does not lose his crown, for with its stones one could heal illnesses. Compare Blake’s swimming figures in the emblem “HELP! HELP!” from the Gates of Paradise (1793) and from the Book of Urizen, Plate 11 showing King Urizen sinking into the “sulphureous fluid [of] his fantasies”, from which he created the “old body”, the realm of matter as the “upper water of nature” (Jacob Boehme).

Emblem xxxiii of Atalanta fugiens carries an epigraph that translates as “The Hermaphrodite Lying Like a Dead man in Darknesse, wants fire.” At night under a crescent moon, a naked hermaphrodite, male on the right side and female on the left, lies in a ravine beneath crags and rocks, on a plate being heated over a fierce fire. [Plate 14.] The philosophers called the cold and moist matter, woman (moon), the hot and dry, man (sun). The androgynous being is all four qualities at once. After Adam had fallen from celestial androgyneity into the death-sleep of materiality, Christ followed him down into this “unreality” in order, by creating Eve, to give him the possibility of redemption. Boehme
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wrote: “Christ turned Adam in his sleep from vanity ... back to the image of the angel”, while he created Eve “from his essence, from the female part”. “She is Adam’s matrix of celestial essence (Sophia).” Blake called these female parts “emanation” and the male parts the shadowy spectre. The central task of earthly existence was the redemption of the “emanation” and the unification of the two parts. On plate 35 of Jerusalem, Christ creates Eve from Adam’s rib against a background of flame.

Emblem L of Atalanta fugiens is titled “The Dragon kills y’ Woman & Shee him & are both bloody Allover.” In a landscape of ruined buildings a woman lies in a fresh cut grave, a winged snake or serpent-dragon coiling round her, its mouth against hers. [Plate 15.] The dragon that dwells in the narrow crevasses embodies the elements of earth and fire, the woman water and air, according to Maier. Earth refers on the one hand to the physical sediment of distillation, and on the other to the “virgin earth” of the philosophers, at the centre of which is hidden the great dragon blaze, the secret fire. Here the two, of which “one is white (Mercury) and the other red (Sulphur)”, nestle united in a deep grave, the putrefaction.

The human figure wound about by a serpent is an emblem of great significance to Blake and occurs throughout his art.439 This final image from Maier’s Atalanta fugiens was again taken up by Blake. The resemblance to Blake’s colour print “Satan triumphing over Eve” which shows a woman wound about by a serpent is striking. The woman is Jerusalem or the spiritual emanation of the fallen England/Albion in the strangling grip of materialistic powers.

439 On plate 6 (7) of The First Book of Urizen (1794), a bound god wreathed with serpents and his two companions is hurled head-down from heaven. About 1820, Blake reworked the ancient sculptural group of the serpent-wreathed Laocoön into a personal credo.

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Let us turn back to Blake’s colour print “Newton”. The twelve large colour prints are among the most problematic of Blake’s visual works. David Bindman asks “Are they a coherent series forming a kind of Prophetic Book without text, or are they simply a selection of powerful images which in the end did not find a place in the Illuminated Books?” The subjects, as Bindman notes, “span human history from the Creation of Man to Newton, whose advent in Europe heralds the Last Judgment…”:

A mighty spirit leap’d from the land of Albion,
Nam’d Newton; he siez’d the Trump, & blow’d the enormous blast!
Yellow as leaves of autumn, the myriads of Angelic hosts
Fell thro’ the wintry skies, seeking their graves,
Rattling their hollow bones in howling and lamentation. (E 65)

This passage, comments Harold Bloom, is one of the most surprising, and most satiric, in all Blake’s poetry. “Sir Isaac Newton, who with Bacon and Locke is one of Blake’s unholy
trinity, ushers in the Last Judgement. ... Newton prepares for apocalypse by bringing about
the triumph and self-revelation of error, in the sense that his genius reveals the cosmos of
Deism in its full horror, from Blake’s point of view, or full sublimity, from a Deist’s. When
Newton blows the trump, that is, explains the universe, the Angelic hosts are revealed as
dying leaves, as creatures with hollow bones overready for their graves.443

It is the “mighty Spirit ... from the land of Albion, nam’d Newton” who alone has the
power to blow “the Trump of the last doom” and “awake the dead to Judgment” (E 188).

The innumerable Chariots of the almighty appeard in Heaven
And Bacon & Newton & Locke, & Milton & Shakspear & Chaucer
A Sun of blood red wrath surrounding heaven on all sides around. (E 257)

In the final apocalypse, Bacon and Newton and Locke appear in the heavens as the greatest
representatives of science, among the innumerable chariots of the Divine, counterbalancing
Milton and Shakespeare and Chaucer, the greatest representatives of Art; in Harold Bloom’s
words, “a vision of contraries prepared for the mental wars of the restored state”.

What does it mean to call this print “Newton”?444 The advice of Pseudo-Dionysius
the Areopagite that symbols should not cleave too closely to their referents found its Counter-
Reformation fulfilment in the “dissimilar symbols” so characteristic of emblem books.445

The relationship between some of Blake’s titles — such as “Newton” — and the image they


444The print is signed “1795 WB inv [in monogram]” bottom right, and inscribed
“Newton” below the design.

445Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Names and
the Mystical Theology (London, 1920). For the influence of the Dionysian texts on the
development of Christian symbolism, see the concluding essay by W. J. Sparrow-Simpson (209-
19).
accompany is very much that of the emblem tradition. This emblem of "Newton", I believe, sets out a whole series of attributes that insert Isaac Newton into an eschatological narrative.

Certain hermeneutic rules apply to the following discussion. The quest for meaning cannot ignore the concepts of genre, decorum and intentionality. I suggest that the images represented by the colour prints are emblematic in intent and as such all their elements are significant. The approach I shall take is capable of extension to all twelve. Nothing is included just as decoration and any explanation of an image’s meaning should seek to include all the elements of the image. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authorities I cite would all have been found in Tilloch’s library and thus, I argue, were plausibly available to Blake. The explanation I proffer for “Newton” is congruent with the lines from Europe quoted above.

Who is this young man, who is naked and has cast off a linen robe or mantle, engaged in measuring a geometric design on a scroll? It is clearly not intended as in any sense a depiction of the historical Isaac Newton. We can dismiss the theory that it portrays the historical John Newton, slaver and hymnodist. Possibly the image is a “Spiritual Form of

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446 Tilloch’s books would have been mostly at his home in Barnaby Street, Islington, though maybe some were kept at The Star offices in Carey Street. Neither location would have been inaccessible to as determined a walker as William Blake.


Through his friendship with William Hayley, Blake would have learnt a great deal about John Newton’s biography and spiritual history. He would have known, which Simpson apparently does not, that Newton continued as captain of a slave ship even after his “conversion”. He would have known too of the deleterious effect of Newton’s Calvinism on the vulnerable William Cowper. I cannot reconcile the sinister and hypocritical John Newton with the figure portrayed by Blake.

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Newton" analogous to Blake’s tempera-paintings of Pitt and Nelson. These, like the lost “Spiritual Form of Napoleon” form a sort of private political commentary on public events. Blake is seeing in apocalyptic terms the wars of his own time, for which he viewed Pitt at least as responsible as Napoleon: “he is that Angel who, pleased to perform the Almighty’s orders, rides on the whirlwind, directing the storms of war: He is ordering the Reaper to reap the Vine of the Earth and the Plowman to plow up the Cities and Towers” (E 530). Pitt is Daniel’s angel (a “man clothed with linen”); Nelson the angel of Revelation. In both paintings a contemporary political or military figure is turned into an Angel of Destruction. Were then Pitt, Nelson and Newton three English “heroes” who became for Blake three angels of God’s wrath?

The young man’s body is set in an extremely uncomfortable position, his back stretching forward as he completes his measurements. Donald Ault, in his account, stresses the tight geometry of the figure and contrasts it with the rest of the design. “There is an ambiguity”, he writes, “a kind of optical illusory quality to the incredible detail of the background. It is extremely difficult to determine the spatial context of the action. Is the figure sitting under water on a rock?”

The rock, covered with multicoloured growth, harbours two tentacled creatures at its base. Essick points out that “The oft repeated contention that ‘Newton’ is an underwater scene is as difficult to substantiate beyond reasonable doubt as it is hard to dismiss. The eerie blues and greens of the background, the growths on the rock, and the polyps with their


tentacles streaming from them as if pushed by a current all suggest an aquatic environment.\textsuperscript{450}

Blunt insists, like many other commentators, that “the figure of Newton is shown seated at the bottom of the sea and holding the compasses, both details which relate the figure to Urizen, one to his appearance on the frontispiece to Europe, the other to the plate in Urizen which shows him submerged in the waters of materialism.”\textsuperscript{451}

“Newton” is dated 1795 in Blake’s hand, but the version in the Tate Gallery is executed on paper watermarked 1804, and was one of four large colour prints which Blake’s patron Thomas Butts bought from the artist on 7 September 1805 for one guinea each.\textsuperscript{452} Could Blake have seen examples of underwater life in 1795? I can find no reference to aquariums or similar underwater displays in eighteenth-century London. The London Zoo added fish and mollusca to its collection as late as 1853.\textsuperscript{453} Or is the setting a reminiscence of the rock pools of Felpham after 1800? Does the 1795 date refer to Blake’s initial conception of this emblem and the “underwater” aspect of the completed work point to a much later date of execution?

Throughout his life Newton was highly interested in theological, chronological, and alchemical studies. It is estimated that he wrote some two million words on these subjects,


\textsuperscript{452} Butlin, The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake (New Haven, 1981), no. 306. The Butts copy now in Tate Britain is probably the first pull. The second pull (Lutheran Church in America, on loan to the Philadelphia Museum) has “less mottled pigment and less detailed finish. Newton’s diagram shows only the beginning of the base of the triangle and there are no distinct plants on the rocks on which he is sitting” (no. 307). No third pull survives.

a total far surpassing that of his writings in mathematics and physics. Newton himself hinted
that his real interest lay in the wide and comprehensive knowledge that he hoped to acquire
through alchemy and theology, and that he viewed his scientific studies only as amusing
diversions. Since he could never be accused of excessive humility, we may have to
understand in another light a well-known remark he made toward the end of his life: “I do
not know what I may appear to the world,” he said to his nephew, “but to myself I seem to
have been only like a boy, playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then
finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of Truth lay
all undiscovered before me.” In this sea-shore view Blake satirises the mock-modesty of the
great scientist:

The Atoms of Democritus
And Newtons Particles of light
Are sands upon the Red sea shore. (E 478)

In his interpretations of mystical and prophetic writers, Newton sought to verify their vague
statements by intricate chronological tables, and to support their philosophy by mathematical
analysis. The young man of the print holds a pair of dividers. These are not compasses —
not a drawing instrument — but dividers which are used for measuring. I identify the
dividers with the reed of REVELATION 11: 1, 2 that is used to measure the Temple:

And there was given unto me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise,
and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the
court, which is without the temple, leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto
the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

John James Bachmair, in his The Revelation of St. John Historically Explained comments:

Whenever we measure any edifice or place, the intention must be either, first, simply
to know its extent; or, secondly, to serve as a plan for erecting a similar edifice; or,
thirdly, that the space thus measured should be separated and reserved for some particular purpose, or for persons, who, excluding all others, should occupy the same, and appropriate it to themselves. The things to be measured here were, the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship before the altar in the temple. This is truly the meaning of the text.454

Just as science and alchemy offered shelter and solace from a world which, at the root of his being, he did not much care for, Newton also found a home within religion. He believed wholeheartedly in the notion that God created the world and controlled events with a divine hand, but he did not like the outcome — principally because, to him, humankind had the habit of constantly tarnishing Creation. Aside from his desire to affirm his own unique nature, by retreating into the scriptures he could identify a purer universe and could delight in predicting when the whole ugly edifice of the contemporary world would fall. The clearest manifestation of this desire is the enormous effort he poured into his reconstruction of the plan of the Temple of Solomon, seeing this as a paradigm for the entire future of the world.455

"There could scarcely be a clearer demonstration of the significance of the Temple and other Biblical themes to the pursuit of natural knowledge in the seventeenth century than that provided by its most famous proponent, Newton."456 In his Chronology of the Ancient Kingdoms Amended (1728) and between his account of the empires of the Babylonians and the Medes, and that of the Persians, Newton inserts "A Description of the Temple of Solomon", offering no further justification than the observation that, since the Temple was


455 Michael White, Isaac Newton: the Last Sorcerer (London, 1997), 158.

456 Jim Bennett and Scott Mandelbrote, The Garden, the Ark, the Tower, the Temple: Biblical Metaphors of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe (Oxford, 1998), 155.
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destroyed by the Babylonians, a description “may not be thought amiss”.\textsuperscript{457} In fact he adds little to the subject, but his interest is worth acknowledging, if for no other reason than to illustrate the currency of such questions even among some of the leading mathematicians of the seventeenth century:

In Christmas 1725, upon a visit I [William Stukeley] made him, we had some discourse about Solomon’s temple: a matter I had study’d with attention, and made very many drawings about it, which I had communicated to my Lord Pembroke (Thomas), to Mr Folkes and more of my friends. I found Sir Isaac had made some drawings of it, and had consider’d the thing. Indeed he had study’d every thing. We did not enter into any particular detail, but we both agreed in this, that the architecture was not like any design or descriptions yet publick. No authors have an adequate notion of antient and original architecture. Sir Isaac rightly judged it was older than any other of the great temples mention’d in history; and was indeed the original model which they followed. He added that Sesostris in Rehoboams time, took the workmen from Jerusalem, who built his Egyptian temples, in imitation of it, one in every Nomos, and that from thence the Greeks borrow’d thir architecture, as they had a good deal of thir religious rites, thir sculpture and other arts.\textsuperscript{458}

Here Blake would have been much in agreement with Sir Isaac:

They stole them from the Temple of the Lord (E 501)

Just as Blake’s colour print of “Nebuchadnezzar”, an illustration to DANIEL 4: 31-33, is an emblem of the destroyer of the Temple and of the eschatological vision of the Book of Daniel, so too “Newton” must signify both the historic figure who included a plan of the Temple in his book on Biblical chronology and a harbinger of forthcoming Apocalypse inscribing on the unravelling scroll the plan of a new Temple announced in DANIEL 9: 25

\textsuperscript{457}Sir Isaac Newton, The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended. To which is Prefix’d a Short Chronicle from the First Memory of Things in Europe, to the Conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great (London, 1728), 332. Chap. v (pages 332-346) is “A Description of the Temple of Solomon” with three folding plates with plans of the Temple. Lot 704 in the Tilloch sale.

\textsuperscript{458}William Stukeley, Memoirs of Sir Isaac Newton’s Life 1752; edited by A. Hastings White (London, 1936), 17-18. The original manuscript is preserved in the Royal Society.
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Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Newton’s interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and of the Apocalypse brings out even more clearly his mystical tendencies, and his love of practical details, than does his Chronology. William Law stated that Newton “did but reduce to mathematical form the central principles of nature revealed in Behmen”. Henry More thought he was misled in his interpretation of Daniel by his mathematical genius. And there is also the anecdote of his anger when Bentley accused him of expounding the prophecies, as he would demonstrate a mathematical proposition.459

What significance has the linen mantle? John the Baptist wears animal skins: that seems to be very important. MARK 1: 6-8 records:

And John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

When Jesus is mocked and tortured he is made to wear a purple emperor’s robe, to satirise what they think are his pretensions to being a ruler. Otherwise he wears linen. Angels wear linen; animals have not been slaughtered to make it. Thus in the prophecy of DANIEL 10: 5, 6:

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and

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the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

At the tomb on Easter morning, the women see linen, flashing white, pure. The Gospel writers record the adolescent naked except for a piece of linen in the arrest, the angel at the tomb at Easter. Linen represents purity. Fine linen was used to wrap Christ’s body (MARK 15:46). Linen also stands for destiny: a man dressed in linen, with an ink-horn, went through Jerusalem to mark the righteous for protection (EZEKIEL 9).

What significance has the whiteness of the robe or mantle? REVELATIONS 15:6 refers to

angels clothed in pure and white linen

And Blake in a line from the Four Zoas that he repeats verbatim in Jerusalem

Of living gold, pure, perfect, holy; in white linen he hover’d. (E 191; E 327)

According to Charles Daubuz, A Perpetual Commentary of the Revelation of St. John (1730):

COLOUR which is outwardly seen of the Habit of the Body, is symbolically us’d to denote the true State of the Person, or Subject to which it is applied, according to the Nature of it. …

WHITE — The Symbol of Beauty, Comeliness, Joy, and Riches.

White — is the Colour of Garments not spotted with any Uncleanness: And therefore white Garments were the Attire of such as offer’d Sacrifice; to shew the Holiness of their Lives, and the Purity of their Conscience; their being free from Pollution, and their being in God’s Favour.460

Daubuz also commented that

460 Charles Daubuz, A Perpetual Commentary on the Revelation of St. John; with A Preliminary Discourse Concerning the Principles Upon Which the Said Revelation is to be Understood. New modell’d, abridg’d, and render’d plain to the meanest capacity by Peter Lancaster (London, 1730), 35, 47. Lot 1131 in the Tilloch sale.

Pages 21-143 consist of “A Symbolical Alphabetical Dictionary. In which, agreeably to the Nature and Principles of the Symbolical Character and Language of the Eastern Nations in the First Ages of the World, the General Signification of the Symbols Used in the Revelation of St. John, is laid down and prov’d from the most Ancient Authorities Sacred and Profane.”

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Bysse is a Plant of which was made the finest and most shining white Linen. It grew chiefly in Egypt and Palestine: and the Linen Garments of the Jewish Priests were made of it. Bysse Garments were also worn by the Egyptian Priests.

And

Hence a white Bysse Garment, as being the most valuable, denotes symbolically, the highest and most perfect Holiness and Prosperity.461

And in an earlier edition of his Perpetual Commentary (1720):

Again, it is said, that these Confessors wore white Robes, or Stoles; and that this signifies an Honour, Freedom, Immunities, and a publick Consecration of the Persons wearing it to God’s Service.462

Why is the young man naked? And what does it symbolise? We so commonly take nudity to be heroic that it comes as a surprise to read in Daubuz that

Nakedness signifies Sin or Folly.

Thus in Gen. iii. 7. it is taken for Sin in general; and in Exod. xxxii. 25. Ezek. xvi. 36. and 2 Chron. xxviii. 19. for Idolatry. And so elsewhere in the Scriptures — all kind of Vice, more or less, but in the highest Sense, Idolatry — the main Act of Rebellion and Apostasy against God — and all the Degrees and Acts of it, or dependant and consequent upon it, come under the Notion of Filthiness or Nakedness or Sores: And therefore to be in the highest Degree naked, is to be guilty of Idolatry. This Sin, and that of Fornication, which is often in Holy Writ modestly called the uncovering of the Shame or Nakedness, are a-kin; the idolatrous Rites of the ancient Times being performed with not only Fornication, but all the lascivious Postures imaginable, and shewing what Modesty requires to be hidden.

§ Nakedness signifies also Guilt, Shame, Poverty, or Misery any way, as being the Consequence and Punishment of Sin and of Idolatry in particular — a Crime which God never leaves unpunished.463

But this is not Blake’s view, rather:

To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration


Finally, why this constellation of youth and nakedness and linen? I should like to propose that the naked young man of “Newton” is linked to two of the most enigmatic passages of the passion and resurrection narratives in Mark’s Gospel, the flight of the naked young man in 14: 51-2 and his reappearance in the Marcan ending (16: 5). At the moment of Jesus’ arrest, say the Gospel writers, all the disciples forsook him and fled. His captors then led him to the high priest. But Mark inserts another incident:

Καὶ νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ. καὶ κρατατοῦσιν αὐτόν, ὦ δὲ καταλιπῶν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυεν.

And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked (MARK 14: 51, 52).

These two verses are unique to Mark’s account.

A parallel with the Joseph story in GENESIS 39: 12 has been observed (Potiphar’s wife “caught him by his garment ... but he left his garment in her hands, and fled. ...”). Mark may also be looking back to AMOS 2: 16, where the prophet describes a day of judgment so terrible that “he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day”. The arrest of Jesus invites the crushing judgment announced by Amos, and not even the valiant shall be able to withstand that day.

Mark uses the word νεανίσκος (not the most usual word for a young man) only for the young man who fled, and for the young man (an angelic messenger, perhaps) who, at the end the Gospel, greets the women at Jesus’s empty tomb. This term, neaniskos, occurs also
in the Septuagint and in Josephus, where the term designates young men who are exceptional in some way.

The young man sheds his garment (σινδῶν) at the moment of failure. Jesus dies alone, and it is he who is wrapped in a “linen cloth” (sindōn) in Mark 15:46. We may link the story of Mark 14:51-2 with the other young man (here too a neaniskos) dressed in a white garment who announces Jesus’s resurrection in Mark 16:5:

καὶ εἰσελθοῦσα εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθῆμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολήν λευκήν, καὶ ἔξεσαμβῆθησαν.

And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

The youth (neaniskos) who flees in his linen cloth (sindōn) forms a parallel with the youth (also neaniskos), the women find in the tomb. The first youth deserted Jesus; the second has evidently been with him since he rose from the dead. Furthermore, the linen in which Joseph of Arimathea wraps the body is called a sindōn, so there seems to be an intricate relationship between the neaniskos in his sindōn and the body in the tomb, now risen. In this reading, the young man of Mark 14:51-2 is an angel, who later appears to instruct the women.

 Angels act as intermediaries between the heavenly and earthly realms and take a decisive share in the temptation of man to transgress the decrees of God. The figure in Mark 14:51 and that in 16:5 are both described in the same threefold way — a young man (neaniskos), wearing (peribebleménos), and the description of the garment worn. But a transformation has taken place. The figure who failed abysmally in the face of death is now restored as the messenger of resurrection. In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:
the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes. (E 34)

Benjamin Camfield, in his *Theological Discourse of Angels and Their Ministries* (1678), presented a firmly Protestant theology of guardian angels, when he wrote:

When God asked of Satan, that had been walking his rounds, and compassing the Earth to and fro, whether he had consider’d of his servant *Job*, upright and good *Job*, he readily replies, as to him, upon it, *Hast thou not made an hedg about him, and about his house, and about all he hath on every side?* Job 1.10. which Hedg is conceived by Expositors to be the Guard of Angels, as hath been said before. And Satan can do nothing against *Job*, or other good men, so long as this Hedg remains, the Angels of God encamping round about them, and taking charge of them to keep and defend them.464

Is the young man of MARK 14: 51 then Jesus’s angel? Is “Newton” the angel who abandoned Jesus? At that terrible moment even His guardian angel runs away. The young man’s desertion stands for all who desert Jesus, all those who by baptism have been reborn and received into the Kingdom and nevertheless flee in terror. The young man’s failure to accept the Passion contrasts with Jesus’s willingness so to do. Mark equates fear and unbelief.

This exegesis depends in part on a recognition that Mark’s account uses distinctive Greek expressions. Blake’s knowledge of Greek arguably dates from his years in Felpham. He writes in a letter to his brother James in 1803:

I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin; am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy; am now learning my Hebrew שָׁם. I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master: astonishing indeed is the English Translation, it is almost word for word, & if the Hebrew Bible is as well translated, which I do not doubt it is, we need not doubt of

464Benjamin Camfield, *A Theological Discourse of Angels and Their Ministries* (London, 1678), 129.

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its being translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost.\textsuperscript{465}

As with the underwater setting, if my interpretation of “Newton” is correct, this suggests a date of execution of the print much later than the 1795 written against Blake’s monogram on the print. Or else Blake had picked up a certain amount of Greek from browsing in Tilloch’s library, long before his lessons with Hayley.

Even in those of Blake’s works where the Bible is not explicitly cited, resonances with appropriate Biblical passages can be detected. To select any particular Biblical passage as relevant and to suggest that Blake had that passage in mind necessarily calls for speculation. The warrant for searching for such resonances is provided by Blake’s firm commitment to the Bible and his intimate knowledge of its text. The implied Biblical texts can be brought together in variously ambiguous ways. Blake combines various Biblical incidents in one image to make an exegetical point. Blake’s image recontextualises the Biblical citations and dispels what would have been ambiguous without it. It is my contention therefore, that the colour-print that bears the title “Newton” brings together a Biblical grouping of youth, nakedness, and white linen, and that such a constellation can be derived from Old Testament apocalyptic texts, is echoed in the Revelation of St. John, but is found in complete form only in the Gospel of Mark. This emblematic image sets out a whole series of attributes that insert Isaac Newton into an eschatological narrative.

Christopher Burdon notes that there is little place for Jesus in Newton’s understanding of prophecy and fulfilment.\textsuperscript{466} Newton’s \textit{Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and


\textsuperscript{466}Christopher Burdon, \textit{The Apocalypse in England} (Basingstoke, 1997), 61.
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the Apocalypse of St. John made only passing reference to Jesus as Messiah. It is arguable, says Burdon, that in Newton’s world-chronology and theology of revelation the place of Jesus was inferior to that of Noah. For Blake, Sir Isaac Newton crouches naked as an emblem of unbelief. Or as Sir Isaac himself wrote:

When a man is taken in a mystical sense, his qualities are often signified by his actions, and by the circumstances of things about him. So a Ruler is signified by his riding on a beast; a Warrior and Conqueror, by his having a sword and bow; a potent man, by his gigantic stature; … righteousness, by white and clean robes; wickedness, by spotted and filthy garments; affliction, mourning, and humiliation, by clothing in sackcloth; dishonour, shame, and want of good works, by nakedness; …

Blake has turned Newton’s words back on him. Blake equates Newtonian natural religion with unbelief and Deism.

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The Synagogue of Satan therefore uniting against Mystery Satan divided against Satan resolvd in open Sanhedrim To bum Mystery with fire & form another from her ashes For God put it into their heart to fulfill all his will The Ashes of Mystery began to animate they calld it Deism And Natural Religion as of old so now anew began Babylon again in Infancy Calld Natural Religion

—WILLIAM BLAKE.

Tilloch’s working library served his aspirations both as practical alchemist and as published theologian. Geoffrey Cantor notes that Tilloch’s theological writings were acceptable to the Sandemanians and he was clearly influenced by John Glas and Robert Sandeman, the founders of the sect. Sandemanians dismissed unmitigated natural theology as unscriptural

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468 E 386.

and indicative of man’s pride. They based their religion firmly on revelation. Of particular concern were questions concerning the interrelation between God and the world — between Creator and created.

Natural theology is traditionally that knowledge about God and the divine order which man’s reason can acquire without the aid of revelation. Reason can assure us that God is and can infer by analogy certain truths about Him; but only divine revelation could acquaint us with the truths of revealed theology, e.g. the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, etc. The word “natural” in this connection reflects the ancient Platonic and Stoic conception of the natural as the rational; natural theology is rational reflection on the question of divine existence.

Many of those who attempted to develop a natural theology in the eighteenth century concentrated on \textit{a posteriori} arguments. In Tilloch’s library, we find, for example:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{lot 768} Derham’s Astro-Theology 1721
\end{itemize}

Derham held that if there were no other evidence than that of the five senses in “Sensitive creatures”, it would be “abundantly sufficient to evince” the admirable character of the Creator. He adduces such evidence as the sagacity of birds and insects in knowing where to place their eggs and “the great Variety throughout the World of Mens Faces, Voices, and Handwriting” which prevents mistaken identity and fraud.

A different use of “natural theology” is to refer to attempts to discern the basic character of reality through examining the natural order, with the intention of deriving principles of conduct whereby human beings will be able to worship, think and act in
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satisfying harmony with the ultimate and all-embracing character of what is. An example of this form of “natural theology” may be seen in

lot 690  Wollaston’s Religion of Nature, portrait, and a Volume of Tracts 1721, &c.

[William Wollaston, The religion of nature delineated ([London?]: printed in the year 1722).]

According to Wollaston, the “religion of nature” seeks to conform to the will of “the author” of humankind through “the pursuit of happiness by the practice of reason and truth”.

But there was another scriptural tradition that requires discussion — a tradition that Geoffrey Cantor terms “scriptural physics”. There were many incompatible strands within this tradition, but one writer stands out above all others because the scriptural physics he enunciated gained an extensive following in the eighteenth century. This was John Hutchinson whose anti-Newtonian theories, it has been suggested, attracted Blake.470

Tilloch’s library included a number of works by Hutchinson:

lot 309  Palfreyman’s Morrall Philosophie, and Abstract from Hutchinson’s Works 1753

[Thomas Palfreyman, A treatise of morrall philosophie: wherein is contained the worthy sayings of philosophers ... (London: pr. by T. Snodham, 1620).

The abstract is attributed to Robert Spearman or to George Horne.]

595  Hutchinson’s Philosophy, by Maxwell 1822

[Alexander Stopford Catcott, The antient principles of the true and sacred philosophy, as lately explained by John Hutchinson ... Translated, with additional notes and a preliminary discussion on the character and writings of Moses, by Alexander Maxwell (London: A. Maxwell, 1822).]

832  Hutchinson’s (John) Philosophical and Theological Works, 12 vols, calf gilt

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Preface in vol. 1 signed Robert Spearman and Julius Bate. Vol. 1 incorporates Moses’s principia.]

1036 Hutchinson’s Moses’s Principia ...

[John Hutchinson, Moses’s Principia. Of the invisible parts of matter; of motion; of visible forms; and of their dissolution, and reformation. By J. H. With notes. 2 vols. (1727).]

The strikingly-named Moses’s principia (first published 1724) contains Hutchinson’s commentary on the opening verses of Genesis, according to which the physical system was completed by the end of the sixth day. The finished system is a perfectly operating machine consisting of particles of matter in motion but no void space. Blake, like Hutchinson, also rejected the Newtonian vacuum:

What demon
Hath forg’d this abominable Void,
This soul-shudd’ring Vacuum? (E 70)

(The principle of plentitude has Biblical roots and many writers often cited DEUTERONOMY 33:16 and ISAIAH 6:3 to justify their contention that the world was full of matter with no room for void space.) It should be noted that for Hutchinson both matter and motion are conserved and thus God’s creation is a perfect machine. Moreover, Hutchinson conceived that three forms of ether correspond to the three persons in the Trinity: fire, light and air (or spirit) corresponding respectively, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Hutchinson dismisses earlier translations of the Bible in propounding his own approach to the Hebrew text:

Our Translators ought to have great Allowances; they were just emerg’d out of a vast
Abyss of Darkness and Ignorance; they had a great Work upon their Hands to reform Divinity, or the Christian Religion. The new Testament was what they set their Hearts chiefly upon. They had very little Light, and few Helps in our own Tongue; and had no over-abundant Knowledge of the Hebrew Language. What Helps they had, were about Christianity, and scarce any about the Nature, or Actions of Matter. And they who did not understand the things, nor their Actions, could not possibly translate them. They durst not put in many of the Words which the Hebrew implied in the Text, because they could not reconcile them to their Conceptions of Things and Accidents, but put them in the Margin; and Laymen, who perhaps might have more Opportunity to observe, were not included or assisting. And all the Collections of the Sentiments of Expositors upon the sacred Physicks that I have seen, which have been made here since, have been out of such Books as do not directly contradict our Translations. Whether the rest, which speak plain Truth, have been rejected in Complaisance to our Translators, or because their authors had erred in Points of Religion, I am not certain; but I suspect for either. Christianity is now reform'd, and I, with Submission, think, 'tis time to reform the Laws of Nature, which stand like so many Mistakes of the Divine Penmen; because it may be easily inferr'd, if the divine Penmen were mistaken in natural things, they might be so in spiritual things.471

Blake, as I have already cited, did not doubt that the Authorised Version was true to the Hebrew original. In “Night the Eighth” of The Four Zoas, a night that culminates in the Crucifixion, Blake describes the re-creation of Natural Religion out of Mosaic law.472 He sees a misreading of the Hebrew Bible as leading to Natural Religion which he equates with Deism.

Sandeman argued that Hutchinson was so preoccupied with “the amusement of accommodating Hebrew words to his scheme of philosophy”, that he both underrated the importance of the New Testament and also failed to acknowledge that the true moral message of the Bible was perfectly comprehensible in translation. Sandeman chastised Hutchinson for opposing “the apostolic doctrine concerning the divine sovereignty, the person of Christ,
and the doctrine of acceptance with God. In particular he was repelled by Hutchinson’s portrayal of Christ as a mere human but possessing divine qualities to an inordinate degree. Sandeman found Hutchinson morally objectionable, since he was so lacking in Christian love. John Glas had likewise attacked Hutchinson’s hermeneutics as unscriptural and naïve.

Sandemanians, like many other theologians of revelation, drew considerable attention to the Biblical conception of God as all powerful. For the Sandemanians the strands of power run from God through all aspects of our lives and through the physical world that He had created. They therefore rejected the natural theologians’ conception of God as a skilled artisan or craftsman. Instead of fashioning the world at the Creation, as a sculptor fashions a statue from a piece of stone, God spoke the physical world into existence. The universe was a universe of power, and that power was of divine origin. Romans 1:20 reminds us that in understanding the “things that are made” we can perceive not only His power in the Creation but also “his eternal power”. In the moral sphere the Bible and the life of Christbespeak God’s immense power. In Romans 1:16 it is stated that Christ’s Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”. Moreover, the Book of Revelations predicts that there will be voices, earthquakes, thunders and lightnings at the time of the apocalypse.

Sandemanians were strongly represented both in the arts and the sciences. Men such


as William Godwin, Cornelius Varley and Michael Faraday were associated with the sect. For Faraday, a life-long Sandemanian, physical nature was not constituted by atoms of inert matter moving in a void, since such a universe was incompatible with his belief that the physical world manifested God's power; indeed, his antipathy to mechanical conceptions of the physical world was rooted in his theology of nature. The views of James Joule, who subscribed to latitudinarian principles and natural theology, contrast starkly with those of the Sandemanian Michael Faraday. "Joule could speak of 'the wisdom and beneficence of the Great Architect of nature' and of 'the entire machinery' of the universe working 'smoothly and harmoniously' — terms from natural theology that connote God as the designer of a mechanical universe. By contrast, as a Sandemanian, Faraday interpreted the Bible in a more literal manner and portrayed the God of Genesis as the source of power, which is conserved. The powers we observe in matter are ultimately derived from that power but they are not reducible to mathematics or mechanics. Faraday's God was no artificer or engineer."\textsuperscript{475}

Blake and Tilloch, like Faraday, placed revelation far above reason. Unlike Newton, they did not consider mathematics to be the language of nature.

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One last image from \textit{Atalanta fugiens}, Emblem xiv: "This is the Dragon which Devours his taile" merits consideration. Among the ruins of a building a winged snake or serpent-dragon seizes its own tail to form the Ouroboros. [Plate 17.] The ancients, Maier wrote, saw the Ouroboros ring both as "the change and turn of the year" and as the beginning of the Work in which the poisonous, moist dragon's tail is consumed. When the dragon has completely sloughed its skin, like the snake, the supreme medicine has risen from its poison.


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The circular Ouroboros is the usual emblem of eternity. Two symbolic aspects are combined in this traditional image: the circle as the perfect curve, signifying the divine and the serpent, signifying the rejuvenation of cyclical nature. The Ouroboros is consistently associated with various related concepts of time, eternity, the universe, or the year. Thus it is closely related to the themes of cyclical time and Newtonian physics in Blake’s Europe. As Dorrbecker comments, Blake’s energetic beast on the title-page of Europe is both reminiscent as well as the contrary of the tail-biting snake. “Here, in Blake’s title-page, the serpent breaks the spell of natural philosophy’s law-enforcement, first opening up into spiral movement and then about to break away, dynamically stretching its body upward as a sign of the imminent apocalypse which will put an end to cyclical time.”476 This too, is in the very spirit of the Book of Revelation, a self-destabilising text that was further destabilised by those who read it most sympathetically and most imaginatively.

Just as Rebekah Bliss’s library could have provided Blake with a visual language of Gothic design, so Alexander Tilloch’s library could have introduced him both to theological ideas and to alchemical imagery. I argue that through his friendship with Tilloch, Blake not only had access to a remarkable theological library (more than fifty commentaries on the Apocalypse!), but, perhaps more critically, had the opportunity of conversation with a man (Tilloch) of considerable theological learning whose publications on the Revelations of St. John were well-received.477 If Blake can be seen to be using a recognised religious


477Tilloch’s Dissertations on the Opening of the Sealed Book (Arbroath, 1819) was reprinted (Montreal, 1848). An extract from his Dissertations Introductory to the Study of the Apocalypse (London, 1823) achieved Swiss publication as Christ est Dieu. Recherche sur la combinaison des mots Ὁ Θεὸς et Κυρίος avec des noms propres, dans le texte des Épitres des
symbolism as part of his quarrel with Isaac Newton’s approach to Biblical exegesis, sources both pro and contra such exegesis can be located in the theological learning of Alexander Tilloch and in the special nature of Tilloch’s library.

Apôtres (Genève, 1828).
Chapter VI

Samuel Varley: the context of (al)chemical science.

On the morning of 24th November 1797, Alexander Tilloch, editor since 1788 of The Star, a London evening newspaper, found on the front page of a rival paper, the Morning Herald, among the usual small ads for pills, potions, and fashionable chintzes, two advertisements of particular interest. [Plate 18.] The first offered for sale “A Valuable original Manuscript containing Sixty Seven Hieroglyphic paintings showing the Separation and Conjunction of the Elements, like the diversified colours in the approach to perfection of the Grand Philosophical Arcanum”. I shall discuss this first advertisement later in this chapter. The second advertisement publicised:

CHEMISTRY. | A COURSE of TWELVE LECTURES and EXPERIMENTS on the FIRST PRINCIPLES of CHEMISTRY, will commence at Hatton-House, on Wednesday the 22d inst at eight in the evening; and at the Mermaid, Hackney, on Thursday the 23d, at Seven in the evening; and at Hatton-House, on Friday the 24th, at eight in the evening, a Course of Twelve Lectures on Pneumatic Chemistry, or the production, medicinal use, and application of Factitious Air; with new Experiments and Observations, in addition to those of last year, particularly on Animal Respiration, and the effects of Factitious Airs on Asthma and other disorders of the body, by S. VARLEY, No. 16, Cross-Street, Hatton-Garden; where Tickets and Syllabus may be had. Twelve transferable tickets, one guinea, single do. 2s. 6d. | N.B. Apparatus for making Machines for breathing, or other application of Factitious Air, and Vital or other Airs, at a short notice.

“Factitious air” was a term established by the eminent chemist Henry Cavendish, who defined it as “in general any kind of air which is contained in other bodies in an unelastic state, and is produced from thence by art”. In other words, “factitious air” is any gas

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478 The Morning Herald, no. 828 (Friday, November 24, 1797), p. 1, col. 3.

479 Henry Cavendish, “Three Papers, containing Experiments on Factitious Airs”, Philosophical Transactions, vol. 56 (1766), 141-84. These three papers were read to the Royal Society on 29 May, 6 November, and 13 November 1766. Part 1 dealt with inflammable air

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produced from a chemical reaction.

The lecturer is Samuel Varley, uncle of Blake’s friend John Varley, and founder of the Chemical and Philosophical Society in Hatton House, the forerunner of the Royal Institution. His obituary called him:

a man of extraordinary talent, very extensive acquirements, and sound judgment. Born in humble life, and brought up at a village in Yorkshire, he there distinguished himself by his scientific pursuits, and was actually driven thence by the vulgar, under the opprobrious character of a conjurer. In London (his retreat) he became a public lecturer on Natural and Experimental Philosophy, in which capacity the decorum and simplicity of his demonstrations gained him the attention of many, who have since moved in the higher walks of science. For many years he was the scientific associate of the late Earl Stanhope, and has through life maintained the deserved character of a philosopher and a christian.480

As I noted in Chapter IV, Samuel Varley was an active contributor to the early volumes of Tilloch’s Philosophical Magazine.481 Charles, third Earl Stanhope (1753-1816), who had taken over and exploited Tilloch’s stereotype process, left, in his will, all his scientific tools and apparatus to Samuel Varley.482

In 1782, William Blake married Catherine Boucher, who became his devoted wife. In 1784 (hydrogen), part 2 with fixed air (CO2), and part 3 with “air produced by fermentation and putrefaction”. A part 4 was written but not published.


481 Samuel Varley contributed a paper “On the Irregularity in the Rate of Going of Time-Pieces Occasioned by the Influence of Magnetism” to the very first issue of The Philosophical Magazine, (vol. 1, no. 1, June 1798, 16-21).

they set up a print-sellers' shop with James Parker and Blake's brother, Robert, who died in 1787. During this period, John Flaxman introduced Blake to a circle of literary friends including the Rev. A. S. and Mrs. Mathew, who financed the publication of his first volume, *Poetical Sketches* (1783).

Sometime in the 1780s, Blake started an extended work in prose — though all that now survives is a 17-page fragment, known from its opening words as "An Island in the Moon":

In the Moon, is a certain Island near by a mighty continent, which small island seems to have some affinity to England. & what is more extraordinary the people are so much alike & their language so much the same that you would think you was among your friends. (E 449)

The invitation to see the real England in the moon and hear the voices of real people is unmistakeable. Stanley Gardner comments that "almost everything related to the Islanders sounds first-hand".483

It used to be said that *An Island in the Moon* represented Blake's angry turning away from the bluestocking salon of Mrs. Mathew at 27 Rathbone Place. As J. T. Smith remarked, "it happened, unfortunately, soon after this period, that in consequence of his unbending deportment, or what his adherents are pleased to call his manly firmness of opinion, which certainly was not at all times considered pleasing by every one, his visits were not so frequent".484 Upon this foundation Ellis and Yeats observe that we are being taken "behind the scenes at many of the literary evenings in Mr. Mathew's [sic] drawing-room"; indeed,

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"Blake can hardly have any other intention than to satirise the amateur compositions of his literary friends of Rathbone Place".485 John Sampson accepts this surmise, cautiously adding, "if so, the originals of the portraits are not now to be identified, though Quid the Cynic may possibly stand for Blake himself".486 Guesswork has managed to populate Mrs. Mathew’s drawing-room but not with suitable originals for Blake’s caricature — nor is the satire upon bluestockings. This is no bluestocking salon but the home of the central figure, Quid, who has been recognised as "an extravagant self-portrait of Blake himself".487

Some commentators have seen An Island as a satire on more public figures. In 1924, S. Foster Damon argued that Blake must be “satirizing far more important people” than would have been included in the Mathew circle. On this assumption he identifies Sipsop the Pythagorean as Thomas Taylor the Platonist, who had been “taken up by Flaxman, at whose house he delivered twelve lectures on Plato”. Inflammable Gass the Windfinder represents Dr. Joseph Priestley, “Socinian, materialist, and revolutionist, whose experiments in ‘different kinds of air’ were rewarded with the discovery of a ‘dephlogisticated air’ — since renamed oxygen”, with Gibble Gabble representing Priestley’s wife, Mary.488


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More recently, Stanley Gardner has insisted that *An Island in the Moon* makes most sense if viewed as a friendly caricature of the young men (and a couple of young women) in Blake’s own immediate circle. Identities aside, the talk still takes us vividly into their company: adult, young, pestered, opinionated, burdened with regret, and cocky Cockney. “All of them — Obtuse Angle, Miss Gittipin, Sipsop, Arodobo, Young Scoprell, Tilly Lally, Joe Bradley — all of them drift across the Island in the Moon as clouds of recollection: the neighbours Blake knew. Through them he implicitly speaks his preoccupation in the 1780s.”

I should like to make a few suggestions, with varying degrees of conviction, which of Blake’s friends are pictured within. The identifications I shall make are of persons whose lives and social circles we know to interact and overlap with Tilloch’s and Blake’s.

I claimed in Chapter IV that Alexander Tilloch is caricatured in *An Island in the Moon* under the name “Tilly Lally, the Siptippidist”. The manuscript of *An Island in the Moon* cannot be dated with certainty. Erdman’s suggestion is of a date about 1784, following the private printing of *Poetical Sketches* in 1783, and immediately reflecting Blake’s professional, social, and domestic milieu. This putative dating is based chiefly on Blake’s reference to “balloon hats”, an ephemeral fashion response to Lunardi’s balloon ascent of that year:

> she goes out in her coaches & her footman & her maids & Stormonts & Balloon hats & a pair of Gloves every day (E 457)

Blake was no fashion maven. The balloon-hats of 1784 provide merely a *terminus post quern*

For a summary of guesses as to the identities of the Islanders, see Michael Phillips’s notes to William Blake, *An Island in the Moon* (Cambridge, 1987).

489 Gardner, *The Tyger, the Lamb and the Terrible Desart* (London, 1998), 90.

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for dating *An Island*.

A slightly later date than Erdman’s has been suggested, since the subject of another topical allusion in the same passage, a performing monkey known as General Jacko, first appeared in England at Philip Astley’s Westminster Bridge Circus in April 1785. The most recent study, that of Stanley Gardner, on different grounds dates *An Island in the Moon* to around 1788. If Tilloch appears in *An Island*, then it must indeed date from after 1787, when Tilloch moved from Glasgow to London.

♦

Etruscan Column, the Antiquarian, I take to be the sculptor John Flaxman — a friend throughout Blake’s life. Flaxman’s livelihood in the 1780s was largely provided by sculpting wax cameos for Josiah Wedgwood’s pots and chimney panels. As Michael Phillips points out, the phrase “Etruscan Column” conflates two distinct contemporary fashions in the arts.

“The Tuscan order was a feature of the new primitive republican severity in architecture (Tuscan columns being prominent, for example, in Jacques Louis David’s painting *The Oath of the Horatii*, 1784) and the style *étrusque* in decoration, derived from what were thought to be Etruscan remains in the newly discovered city of Herculaneum (which from the mid-1770s found their definitive English form in Robert Adam’s Etruscan rooms at Osterley, Apsley House, and elsewhere). As Josiah Wedgwood put on the first pots to be made at his Etruria factory in 1769: *Artes Etruriae renascuntur*”. Flaxman made “Etruscan” designs

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for Wedgwood at Etruria from 1775 and is called “Column” to mock him as a hunchback. This may seem rather cruel of Blake, but in his “Notebook” he mocks the sexual failure of Hayley’s marriage equally cruelly.494

Erdman’s suggestion that Steelyard the Lawgiver is Flaxman (because Flaxman was a watchrate collector) just doesn’t ring true. A Parish Official like a watchrate collector is a “taxgatherer” not a “lawgiver”. The Biblical resonance would not have been lost on Blake. Like St. Matthew, John Flaxman was a “publican”; a lawgiver would have been a scribe or a Pharisee.

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Erdman presents the evidence for the likelihood of Blake’s knowledge of Priestley, and makes further analysis of An Island in the Moon in order to discover the identity of the characters from among Blake’s acquaintances.495 But no evidence has been found to show the Priestleys lived in London at the time, which would have provided the opportunity for Blake to become personally acquainted with them.496

With the case for Joseph Priestley acknowledged to be less likely, other candidates for the identity of Inflammable Gass the Windfinder were forthcoming. There was the conjuror and quack lecturer of Piccadilly, the celebrated Gustavus Katterfelto, followed by Dr. George Fordyce and Henry Cavendish, and by William Nicholson, who was of Blake’s age and could have been introduced through John Flaxman or Thomas Holcroft, the latter

494 Of H s birth this was the happy lot
His Mother on his Father him begot (E 506).


496 See An Island in the Moon (Cambridge, 1987), 8. The Priestleys were resident in Birmingham from 1780 to 1791.

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sharing rooms with Nicholson in the early 1780s. All these men were known for their experiments, serious and otherwise, with inflammable gas, with which Fordyce, for example, supplied Vincenzo Lunardi for the first balloon ascent in England (15 September 1784 from the Artillery Ground in Moorfields). All of them, like Inflammable Gass, made use of air pumps, "glasses, & brass tubes, & magic pictures" (E 462). The identification of Inflammable Gass as Priestley or as the popular lecturer Gustavus Katterfelto is implausible because the setting is domestic; the experiments are shown to just a few friends. Rodney Baine suggested William Nicholson, "a failed schoolmaster who was fated to live his entire life in financially difficult circumstances". He founded a Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts in 1797, one year before Tilloch’s Philosophical Magazine, but it soon felt the effects of the rise of the newer publication. As I noted in Chapter IV, in 1813 Tilloch bought out his rival’s publication.

But Inflammable Gass, the Wind Finder, I would suggest, is most likely Samuel Varley. Nine years older than Blake, in the 1780s Varley was yet to begin his career as public lecturer and would fit nicely into the role of the accident-prone demonstrator of An Island in the Moon. Varley fits well on grounds of age, and, as part of the Tilloch circle, possible acquaintance with William Blake. In the current biographical account John Varley comes from nowhere into William Blake’s life — bringing William Blake and Samuel Varley

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together in the 1780s makes Blake’s later friendship with John Varley more understandable.  

Gibble Gabble, the wife of Inflammable Gass and Miss Gittipin’s “cousin”, has defeated all my genealogical research. But we know Varley had a spouse since Earl Stanhope bequeathed his scientific apparatus, if Varley were to predecease him, to Varley’s daughters, Miss L. Varley and Jane Varley.

The action takes place at the home of the central figure, Quid the Cynic, who has been conjectured to represent William Blake himself. *Quid* is Latin for “what”, “anything”, “something”. The term is also slang for a sovereign, a guinea (*OED*, from 1688); appropriately enough for someone whose younger brother was known as “Bob”, a shilling. A *quidnunc* (from the Latin *quid nunc*: “What now?” or “What’s the news?”) is one who is curious to know everything that passes; one who knows, or at least pretends to know, all that is going on.

What does Blake mean by calling himself a Cynic? I suggest that the descriptions, “Cynic”, “Epicurean”, “Pythagorean” applied to some of the Islanders, have a more specific contemporary resonance than just adherence to ancient schools of philosophy.

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500 Bentley, *The Stranger from Paradise* (New Haven, 2001), 367, quotes Linnell as claiming to have introduced Varley to Blake.


502 A play, “THE QUIDNUNCS. Moral Interlude. 4to. 1779.” is listed in *Biographica Dramatica, or, a Companion to the Playhouse . . . originally compiled, to the year 1764, by David Erskine Baker, continued thence to 1782 by Isaac Reed and brought down to the End of November 1811 . . . by Stephen Jones*. Vol. 3 (London, 1812), 191: “No. 27. . . . The title-page adds, intended to have been represented at one of the theatres, but for particular reasons suppressed. The whole of it is reprinted in *The London Review, January 1779*”.

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Diogenes Laërtius tells the story of Hipparchia, who fell in love with Crates the Cynic philosopher. Crates was everything to her. It went so far that she threatened her parents with suicide if she could not be married to him. Her parents begged him to make her see reason, and Crates did everything he could. Finally when he was unable to convince her, he rose from his seat and threw off his clothes right in front of her. “Here,” he announced, “is your husband-to-be, and this is all he owns: base your decision on this!” He wanted her to know that she would not be his partner unless she shared his way of life.503

Crates was once called down by the Athenian police for going about wearing only a *sindôn*. He offered to show them the philosopher Theophrastus similarly attired. When they found this incredible, he took them to a barber shop and showed them Theophrastus in a *sindôn* having his hair cut.504 The Cynics believed that living a virtuous life, which they identified with living according to nature, is necessary and sufficient for attaining happiness. Society, they believed, puts value on many things that have no value, such as wealth, beauty, social status, and silly notions of propriety.

Blake is Quid the Cynic not just for his rejection of wealth and social status, but specifically because of his penchant for nude sunbathing. Alexander Gilchrist tells how Thomas Butts, Blake’s friend and patron,

calling one day found Mr. and Mrs. Blake sitting in this summerhouse, freed from ‘those troublesome disguises’ which have prevailed since the Fall. ‘Come in!’ cried Blake ‘it’s only Adam and Eve, you know!’ Husband and wife had been reciting passages from *Paradise Lost*, in character, and the garden of Hercules Buildings had to represent the Garden of Eden: a little to the scandal of wondering neighbours, on more than one occasion. However, they knew sufficient of the single-minded artist not wholly to misconstrue such phenomena.’ For my reader not to do so, but frankly


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to enter into the full simplicity and naïveté of Blake’s character, calls for the exercise of a little imagination on his part. He must go out of himself for a moment, if he would take such eccentricities for what they are worth, and not draw false conclusions. If he or I—close-tethered as we are to the matter-of-fact world—were on a sudden to wander in so bizarre a fashion from the prescriptive proprieties of life, it would be time for our friends to call in a doctor, or apply for a commission de lunatico. But Blake lived in a world of Ideas; Ideas to him were more real than the actual external world. On this matter, as on all others, he had his own peculiar views. He thought that the Gymnosophists of India, the ancient Britons, and others of whom History tells, who went naked, were, in this, wiser than the rest of mankind—pure and wise,—and that it would be well if the world could be as they.  

When Adam and Eve fell, they “knew that they were naked”. The implication of sexual sin is rooted in the mere consciousness of nakedness. The angel of the divine presence is identified by Blake in his watercolour of 1803 with Jehovah, in the Old Testament the creator of heaven and earth. But in Blake’s system he is more particularly the creator of the material universe. The angel is therefore Satanic, for he creates man’s material existence, which is a fall from the eternal state. The act of clothing Adam and Eve emphasises their fall and is seen as part of the Satanic design to separate man from the Divine light, expressed in the enfolding gesture of the angel and the enclosing arbour in which they stand. Blake rejected “those troublesome disguises” when he wrote in the Everlasting Gospel:


506 *Genesis* 3: 7.


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That they may call a shame & Sin
Loves Temple that God dwelleth in
And hide in secret hidden Shrine
The Naked Human form divine
And render that a Lawless thing
On which the Soul Expands its wing. (E 522)

♦

Sipsop, the Pythagorean, is, I believe, the engraver Wilson Lowry — a former medical student. Sipsop, too, is a medical student, and confides his misgivings about the cruelties of surgery:

when I think of Surgery — I dont know I do it because I like it. My father does what he likes & so do I. I think some how I leave it off there was a woman having her cancer cut & she shrieked so, that I was quite sick. (E 455)

Lowry was born at Whitehaven, Cumbria, on the 24th of January, 1762.510 Tillock, we are told, was one of his earliest and most intimate friends.511

When he arrived in London, he met Alderman Boydell who became his patron as he learned engraving.512 Soon after his introduction to Alderman Boydell, Mr. Blizard, later Sir William Blizard, one of the most eminent surgeons of his day, having inquired of the Alderman for some young artist to make a drawing for him of Lunardi’s balloon ascents in 1784, was advised to employ Wilson Lowry,513 and hence, I presume, the mention by Miss Gittipin of the fashionable “Balloon-hat” (E 457).

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511 “Memoir of Wilson Lowry, F.R.S., etc.”, Imperial Magazine (Liverpool) vol. 7 (February 1825), 123.

512 “Memoir of Wilson Lowry, F.R.S., etc.”, Imperial Magazine, vol. 7 (February 1825), 115.


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William Blizard encouraged Lowry to practise surgery, and for four years he attended lectures and walked the hospitals during his spare hours, but the plan was not pursued. The designation "Pythagorean" denotes his rejection of the cruelty of surgery and surgical experiment on animals. Like many engravers, his politics were radical:

when the blaze of revolution burst forth in France, he hailed it as the dawn of that era which should usher into existence the reign of universal freedom, and establish a political millennium throughout the world.

His obituary noted Lowry's technical innovations in engraving and etching and that he was also the first person to etch effectively in steel. It seems possible that he may have had some assistance from the chemical expertise of Alexander Tilloch with whom he shared tastes for both scientific investigation and occult matters. Tilloch's obituary notice in the Gentleman's Magazine referred to the engravers William Sharp and Wilson Lowry as his good friends. Blake is not mentioned there, but then he never attained the commercial success and public notice of Sharp and Lowry.

An alternative notion that Sipsop is Thomas Taylor the Platonist has some plausibility; Taylor may have given Blake some lessons in Euclid but a Pythagorean, in the late eighteenth-century, is not someone who teaches Pythagoras's Theorem, but someone

\[514\text{DNB.}\]
\[515\text{"Memoir of Wilson Lowry, F.R.S., etc."}, \text{ Imperial Magazine}, \text{ vol. 7 (February 1825), 126.}\]
\[516\text{The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1825. Vol. IX (London, 1825), 97.}\]
\[517\text{See for instance [Wilson Lowry], "The Mosaic Account of the Creation", \text{ Imperial Magazine}, \text{ vol. 2 (1820), 414-25, where Lowry recorded that he had seen in the possession of "the intelligent Count de Caylus, constellation rings of gold, or Egyptian talismans ..." (422).}\]
\[518\text{Gentleman's Magazine, vol. 1 (1825), 276-81.}\]
who adheres to a Pythagorean diet, that is, a vegetarian. Taylor translated Porphyry on abstinence from animal flesh, but not until 1823. Other prominent adherents to a Pythagorean diet and contemporary with Blake were Joseph Ritson and Sir Richard Phillips.

Suction, the Epicurean, lives in Quid’s house and shares his thoughts. Could he be James Parker, Blake’s business partner at 27 Broad Street? Blake and Parker had been fellow apprentices at Basire’s. They went on a sailing expedition with Thomas Stothard about 1780 and were arrested as spies; they lived in the same house at 27 Broad Street and shared a print-selling business in 1784-85; they made engravings for some of the same works; and in the last year of Parker’s life Blake was still consulting him about professional matters. Theirs was clearly a life-long and close professional friendship. “Epicurean” should not be taken as having the modern meaning of someone who enjoys the good things of life, rather it means someone who says that this life is all there is. Carpe diem. The implication then

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520 Thomas Taylor, translator, Select Works of Porphyry: containing his Four Books on Abstinence from Animal Food; his Treatise on the Homeric Cave of the Nymphs; and his Auxiliaries to the Perception of Intelligible Natures (London, 1823).


is that Suction the Epicurean is an atheist, or at least rejects all notion of an afterlife.\(^{523}\) Parker is buried in Bunhill Fields, as was the known atheist Joseph Ritson — burial there was by no means restricted to Christian Dissenters.

According to Diogenes Laërtius

Epicureans do not suffer the wise man to fall in love; ... according to them love does not come by divine inspiration. ... No one is the better for sexual indulgence, and it is well if he be not the worse.

Nor again, will the wise man marry and rear a family.\(^{524}\)

James Parker was a confirmed bachelor and never married.\(^{525}\) But Epicureans did not retreat from the world and Parker was among the founders of the Society of Engravers in 1802.\(^{526}\)

Raimbach in his Memoirs gives James Parker’s age when he died in 1805:

James Parker, a fellow pupil of the insane genius Blake, at Basire’s — not very distinguished as an artist, but greatly respected for his amiable disposition, integrity, and good sense. He died after a short illness, aged about forty-five.\(^{527}\)

Bentley thinks Raimbach must be wrong and corrects this to fifty-five.\(^{528}\) Since Parker became an apprentice with Basire the year after Blake, Bentley’s account implies that Parker

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\(^{523}\)Robert Burton wrote of “a lascivious rout of Atheistical Epicures” (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, part 1, sect. 2, memb. 3, subs. 15).

\(^{524}\)Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers*.

\(^{525}\)Bentley’s allegation that Parker married one Ann Sergeantson in 1782 derives from confusion with another James Parker, a law stationer who carried on a partnership with William Cookesley in Chancery Lane. The partnership was dissolved 29 September 1797 (*London Gazette*, 14 April 1798).


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would have been twenty five when he entered his apprenticeship. I think that 1760 as the date of Parker’s birth makes more sense; the 50 guinea apprenticeship fee is paid by James Parker’s father — as is appropriate if he is a minor but not, I would suggest, if he is a 25-year old mature student. The marriage to Ann Serjeantson in 1782 cited by Bentley is of “James Parker, Stationer”. Parker, like Blake, did not become a freeman of the Stationers’ Company when he completed his apprenticeship, so it is unlikely that he would have called himself “Stationer”. Note too that his posthumous sale catalogue also calls him “James Parker, Engraver”.

His brief obituary in Gentleman’s Magazine makes no mention of a widow; Parker’s will and probate documents explicitly refer to him as a bachelor living with his sister.

Michael Phillips conjectures that Suction represents Robert Blake, William’s beloved younger brother and pupil. In late 1784 William and Catherine moved from 23 Green Street to 27 Broad Street, next to the family home. It is likely that Robert lived with them there, and possibly at the earlier residence. But if an Epicurean is an atheist then Suction cannot possibly be Robert Blake whose death as recounted by Gilchrist is so clearly that of a Christian believer:

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529 A Catalogue of a Collection of Prints, Comprising a Numerous Assemblage of Proofs & Etchings, after Westall, Smirke, Stodhart, and Others, Several ditto by Old Masters; Drawings, by Morland, Town, &c. Books, Books of Prints, and Several Curious Miscellaneous Articles. Together with a Valuable Collection of Coins and Medals, Chiefly Silver, in a High State of Preservation, Many of Them Very Rare and Curious late the Property of Mr. James Parker, Engraver, Deceased (London, 1807). The only copy recorded is that in the British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals.

530 Family Records Centre. PROB 11/1433 (Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Probate copies of wills): 1805 November, quire 790 [fols. 342-343], Will of James Parker.

531 An Island in the Moon (Cambridge, 1987), 69.
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The mean room of sickness had been to the spiritual man, as to him most scenes were, a place of vision and of revelation; for Heaven lay about him still, in manhood, as in Infancy it 'lies about us' all. At the last solemn moment, the visionary eyes beheld the released spirit ascend heavenward through the matter-of-fact ceiling, 'clapping its hands for joy'—a truly Blake-like detail. No wonder he could paint such scenes! With him they were work'y-day experiences.  

Returning to the Morning Herald of 24 November 1797, cited at the opening of this chapter, and that first advertisement:

A Valuable Original Manuscript, containing Sixty-seven Hieroglyphical Paintings, shewing the separation and conjunction of the Elements; likewise the diversified colours in the approach to perfection of the grand Philosophical Arcanum; to be disposed of for Two Hundred Guineas, pecuniary embarrassment rendering it indispensable to the present possessor, who, with the deepest concern, is thus necessitated to expose to public view that which for ages has been kept secret; yet, to prevent as much as possible the intrusion of idle curiosity, Half-a-Guinea will be demanded before the Manuscript will be shewn. Please to enquire at No. 26, King-street, Gloucester-place, Portman-square.

Though puzzling at first glance, to the alchemical initiate the reference in the advertisement to “Sixty-seven Hieroglyphical Paintings” announces that a copy of Coronatio Naturae or “Crowning of Nature” is offered for sale. The emblems of the Crowning of Nature circulated widely in manuscript (forty-one survive) though it was never printed in complete form. This advertisement is evidence then that in the 1790s, alchemy was not something forgotten and buried in libraries but that there was an active economy trading in alchemical manuscripts.

The extraordinary price asked, if seriously intended, illustrates the economic value placed on alchemical knowledge. Can the price be believed? James Edwards purchased the

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533 The Morning Herald (Friday, November 24, 1797), 1. The "Rates for the relief of the Poor, Paving, Repairing, Cleaning, Lighting, Watching and Highways 1797" for the Parish of Saint Mary-le-Bone, now held in the City of Westminster Archives Centre, recorded one Laurence Collins as paying the rates for 26 King Street. Collins was still there in 1798.
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Bedford Hours in 1786 for £213 and sold it in the last year of his life (1815) for £687 15s.  

At the Tilloch sale in 1825, the highest price realised was for:

lot 967 Chronicle of England, MS. ON VELLUM, bound in crimson velvet.

It sold for £36 15s. The highest priced realised by an alchemical manuscript was £13 13s. for:

146 ALCHEMY. An extensive Collection of Ms. Alchemy, very neatly written, with many fine drawings, 17 vols, half bound russia, marble leaves.

Whatever the intention behind the advertisement, it provides us with evidence of the continuing interest in alchemical ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lingering among scientists like Humphry Davy as well as writers such as Goethe and Novalis.

We know that Alexander Tilloch saw this advertisement and was intrigued by it, since he pasted cuttings of this very advertisement from the Morning Herald into his own copies of the Crowning of Nature. Tilloch’s library contained two (possibly three) manuscripts of this work, which are now part of the Ferguson Collection of the University of Glasgow:

MS. Ferguson 245.


535Thus, on Davy, Charlotte Fell Smith, John Dee (London, 1909), comments that “we cannot forget that even that great chemist, Sir Humphry Davy, reverenced the possibility, and refused to say that the alchemist’s belief in the power to make gold was erroneous”. On Goethe see, for instance, Terry Reilly, “Alchemy, Chemistry, and Literary Form in Goethe’s ‘Elective Affinities’”, Cauda Pavonis, vol. 16, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 1-9. On Novalis and Shelley: Timothy Levi Biel, Natural Magic and Modern Science in the Poetic works of Novalis and Shelley (Washington State University Ph.D., 1986). On some other nineteenth-century writers, see Donald Hasse, “Gérard de Nerval’s Magnum Opus: Alchemy in Literature and Life”, Kentucky Romance Quarterly, vol. 29, no. 3 (1982), 27-33, and Arthur Versluis, The Esoteric Origins of the American Renaissance (New York, 2000), which shows Hawthorne, for example, as indebted to alchemy.
ii + 68 fols. 325×210mm. 17th Century. In Latin.
Coronatio naturae, sive doctrina de summa medicina 67 hieroglyphicis explicata per
anonymum. Quibus accesserunt totidem earum explicationes in usum filiorum artis
summo studio elaboratae per Anonymum eundem Cabala. Natura naturans naturat
omnia Naturatum, Sol numen, Productrix foetus mirabilitatis Franciscus Steuart.

(Latin text accompanies the drawings up to no. 41. A copy of the advertisement from
the Morning Herald 24th November 1797 for a manuscript of this description, priced 200
gns, is inserted between folios i and ii, with fragments of the printed original on verso of folio
ii. There are some notes in the handwriting of Alexander Tilloch.)

MS. Ferguson 253.

viii + 57 + ii fols. 241×175mm. 17th Century. In English.
Emblemata seu hieroglyphica chymica enigmatica.

(Sixty seven pen and watercolour drawings, with English text accompanying the first
two drawings, and an introduction. Drawings 1-40 are on single leaves and have titles;
drawings 41-67 occur two to a page, except for the last, and have no titles. A note on the
verso of the title page refers to an advertisement for a manuscript with this title in the
Morning Herald of 24th of November 1797, priced at 200 guineas. Further notes on the
same page identify the handwriting of Ann Denley and of Alexander Tilloch.)

MS. Ferguson 8.

67 fols. 220×185mm. 17th Century. In English.
Angelorum opus Auctore Hermete Ph[ilosop]ho perito.

(Sixty seven pen and watercolour drawings. Illustrations only with no text. The
drawings have prickholes along all lines to facilitate copying. The titles to the illustrations
are chiefly in English. There are brief pencil notes in an eighteenth-century hand that is
possibly Tilloch’s.)

536 Ann Denley was the widow of the occult bookseller John Denley who in the 1820s had
a shop in Catherine Street, just across the Strand from the Blakes at Fountain Court.
The various manuscripts of the *Crowning of Nature* belong mostly to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. The *Crowning of Nature* manuscript circulated under a number of titles: *Coronatio naturae, Sapientia veterum philosophorum sive doctrina eorumdem de summa et universalis medicina, Opus angelorum*, and *La Sagesse des anciens*.\(^{537}\) Some manuscripts of the *Crowning of Nature* are reputed to be as late as the eighteenth century, which indicates that the work had kept its reputation for many generations of alchemists. It consists of a series of 67 figures, divided into two parts, 1-40 and 41-67. Many of the manuscripts, particularly the eighteenth-century French copies, show only the first 40 images.

The *Crowning of Nature* is one of the most complex and detailed symbolic descriptions of the transformative processes in alchemy. It uses a simple set of archetypal symbols, which we follow through the sequence, simultaneously to describe a physical and a spiritual process. The *Crowning of Nature* can be seen as a formative work of the transition between purely physical alchemy, emphasised in sixteenth-century publications, and the “soul-making” aspect of the subject, which remained more esoteric and hidden until the early seventeenth century, when writings of a theosophical orientation appeared, such as those of Michael Maier, Robert Fludd, and Thomas Vaughan.

Not every version of the *Crowning of Nature* manuscript has the text, and even when

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present the text does not discuss many facets of the symbolism unfolded in the figures. We should see the text as a commentary on a work which primarily communicates through its symbolism.

The first group of seven emblems of *Coronatio naturae* takes the form of circular spaces, but the remaining 60 are flasks within which the transformative process is shown taking place through an elaborately worked out series of processes. The first part of the process involves cycles of spiritualisation and materialisation, or making the work alternatively subtle and gross, shown by a bird rising up and then descending in the flask. This links with the Emerald Table of Hermes: "It ascends from earth to heaven and again descends to earth, to accomplish the miracle of the one thing".

The second part of the process is divided into three groups of seven flasks. In each of these sequences within the larger sequence, a snake or dragon enters the flask, unites itself with the material and is transformed and gradually spiritualised, until in the final figure perfection is achieved in the appearance of the image of a crowned and winged angel.

Tilloch noted on one of his copies: "This M.S.S. is very sound Hermetical Philosophy ... but no light can be obtained from it for Practice."

Two lines from the text that accompanies the "Crowning of Nature" emblems could almost be Proverbs of Hell:

Incredulity is given to the World as a Punishment

Hee that knoweth not what he seeketh, shall not know what he shall find.\(^{538}\)

\[\diamond\]

In the Autumn of 1790, the Blakes moved to 13 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth where he began

\(^{538}\text{MS. Ferguson 253, fol. 4'}.\)
work on *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The conception of a “marriage” of heaven and hell is one that Blake like Swedenborg undoubtedly owes to the tradition of alchemy. What is often regarded as his most original contribution to thought is precisely this conception of a single existing principle operating through “contraries”. Blake would have found Jacob Boehme’s alchemical vocabulary useful to express ideas of hidden and apparent values, and the use of the serpent as the symbol of unenlightened materialism he may also have found in Boehme. Boehme, like Swedenborg, supplied Blake with symbols that he suited to his own purposes, and with sanctions rather than with ideas. Their service to him, finally, was not unlike the service of Law and Fox and Boehme to Coleridge: they “acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death”.539

Or as Blake put it, more succinctly:

I must Create a System or be enslav’d by another Mans (*E* 153).

Blake equated heaven and hell with good and evil. The result of their marriage would be an holistic state transcending them. As Boehme put it: “He [*God*] himself is All Being. He is evil and Good; Heaven and Hell; Light and Darkness; Eternity and time. Where His Love is hid in anything, there His anger is manifest.” The creative tension between heaven and hell is that “energy and eternal delight” which can produce that Hermetic “one thing”.

In his verse letter to John Flaxman, Blake mentions that “Paracelsus and Behmen appeard to me. terrors appeard in the Heavens above and in Hell beneath” (*E* 707) linking these two names explicitly with *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake’s illustrations


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throb with linear, writhing, twining forms akin to alchemical images, as substances merge, meet, give birth, age and die. In this respect, Blake’s work mirrors the “Putrefactio” from the celebrated seventeenth-century French alchemical text *Praetiosissimum Donum Dei* where death brings forth new life through the combination of opposites portrayed as male and female.⁵⁴⁰

Blake liked to draw metaphors from his own activity as printmaker, as in these lines from the *Everlasting Gospel*

Both read the Bible day & night
But thou readst black where I read white (*E* 524)

When the engraver’s burin cuts a bright line into the blackened plate, Blake literally reads white what will print black. The first step in the process of transmuting primal matter into the philosopher’s stone is to blacken it by burning. The plate to be etched was blackened with candle-smoke. As with descriptions of alchemical process, there is a literal inversion of the right to left, white to black, as well as the spiritual and ethical inversion implied in the text. Just as alchemists have this bi-focal vision of alchemy as chemical process and spiritual transformation, so here Blake provides a description of his Bible of Hell in describing how the bright cut lines on the engraved copper print in black.

Blake’s alchemical sources are not displayed blatantly. Refusing to be “enslav’d” by others systems, he constructed his own — often contradictorily. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is an allegory or allegorical journey derived from its own etching. Satire, prophecy, humour, poetry, and philosophy are mingled in a way that has few parallels. Writing in terse,⁵⁴⁰The *Pretiosissimum donum dei*, “the most precious gift of God”, is an important early alchemical work, with a famous series of 12 illustrations. Tilloc’h’s sale included a copy of J. D. Mylius’ *Anatomia Auri* (Francofurti, 1628), which includes engravings of the *Donum dei* sequence.
sinewy prose, Blake defines the ideal use of sensuality: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite" (E 39). Like alchemical journeys, it is a meditation on process. Blake the etcher meditates on the action of acid on copper as the alchemist on the chemical process.

For relief etching, the copper plate was bitten flat — the sides of the plate were embedded in wax to hold nitric acid, which was poured on the face of the plate about a quarter-inch deep. Blake had no choice but to keep acid lying on the plate for hours, given the amount of metal that had to be etched away. Nitric acid is ideal for large areas of open biting, but needs buffering salts to be added if it is not to coarsen and even undercut fine lines — which is termed foulbiting. The more metal the acid bites, the hotter and more active it becomes and thus the greater the chance of foulbiting. Gas bubbles which block the action of the acid were removed with feathers.

The “Printing House in Hell” passage from the Marriage reads as an allegory of the etching process using the language of the alchemical journey:

I was in a Printing house in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation.
In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a caves mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave,
In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold silver and precious stones.
In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air, he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite, around were numbers of Eagle like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs.
In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire raging around & melting the metals into living fluids.
In the fifth chamber were Unnam’d forms, which cast the metals into the expanse. (E 40)

This symbolic account implies that Blake used nitric acid that required feathering. The bite
would have been very active, given the amount of metal exposed, but if it grew too active it would have emitted nitric oxide, “which in Hell” may be “salutary and medicinal,” but on earth is harmful. Blake is alluding to such fiery biting when he asserts that “melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid” characterised “printing in the infernal method” (E 39). There is an analogy here to Blake’s hero Michelangelo for whom the work of the sculptor was to reveal the image already hidden in the stone.

Blake’s “corrosive,” or “corroding fire,” lay on the walled-in plate, turned to blue copper nitrate, and bubbled along the varnished lines. This prevented the plate “from being seen”. The “infinite” appears to be the dark drawing on the plate, hidden only when the acid began to turn deep blue and gas bubbles covered the exposed metal. That the drawing may have been momentarily obscured until passed over with a feather is also suggested by Rintrah’s “Hungry clouds” that “swag on the deep”.

Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep (E 33)

Rintrah anticipates the devil “folded in black clouds” writing “with corroding fires” about how every burin-like “Bird that cuts the airy way” may be “an immense world of delight” if perceived imaginatively.541

Etching and engraving is a slow solitary activity. For instance, Wilson Lowry’s obituary noted

On the celebrated plate of John Hunter, from the painting of Sir Joshua Reynolds, he was employed for several months. The back-ground was entirely the work of Mr. Lowry’s hand; and it will ever do him the greatest credit, especially when it is

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541This account is indebted to Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton, 1993), 81.
recollected that it was executed with the common parallel ruler.\footnote{The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1825. Vol. IX (London, 1825), 96. In a letter to William Hayley (31 March 1804), William Blake writes of “Engravers hurry which is the worst & most unprofitable of hurries” (E 745).}

If engraving can take “several months” to complete just the background to one plate, alchemy is also characterised by its long duration. It may take weeks or even months to complete one stage — encouraging the meditative performance of process.

From alchemy Blake took ideas of process and transformation, pictorial devices, aphorisms; it provided a scaffolding to help build the Blakean system. Blake took the meditative techniques of the alchemists — the meditation on the alchemical process, the meditation on emblems, and assigned them to the chemical process he knew best — the chemistry of etching. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake took the alchemical tradition of describing the pursuit of the “Grand Philosophical Arcanum” as an allegorical journey, and allegorised his own journey through the process of print-making.

The coincidence of two advertisements from the *Morning Herald* brings into proximity the different imaginative worlds of *An Island in the Moon* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.\footnote{It may be worth noting that the *Morning Herald* was also chosen for the publication (2 November 1786) of Cagliostro’s call: To all true Masons. In the name of Jehovah. The time is at length arrived for the construction of the New Temple of Jerusalem. The advertiser invites all true Masons to meet him on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} inst., at nine o’clock, at Reilly’s Tavern, Great Queen Street, to form a plan for levelling the footstone of the true and only Temple in the visible world. Was perhaps this newspaper especially favoured by London occultists, for whatever reason?} It suggests indeed that Samuel Varley and the other friends satirised within *An Island* were a vector of introduction into Blake’s life of friendship with Alexander Tilloch and into his work of the symbolic resources of alchemy.
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The upsurge of interest in William Blake following the publication of Gilchrist's *Life* (1863) led to a significant nineteenth-century outpouring of facsimile editions. The fullest and arguably the best of these reproductions were the hand-coloured facsimiles of Blake's Prophetic Books issued by William Muir (1845-1938) and his collaborators at "The Blake Press at Edmonton". Bentley notes that

Twelve works in Illuminated Printing were issued between 1884 and 1890, printed and coloured by hand at great trouble and with considerable success. These works have, on occasion, been accidentally sold as originals. The size of the editions was small, but their influence was appreciable, and their scope has only been equalled in recent times by the facsimiles of the Blake Trust.

Muir's facsimiles are esteemed nowadays not for their accuracy of reproduction — but for preserving the hand-crafted feel of the originals. They maintain a truth to Blake’s processes, if not always to his images, by continuing the basic combination of a printed monochrome image with hand colouring. "Muir’s productions capture something of the spirit of the originals, their various textures and hand-made craftsmanship, better than any photographic

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544 Deborah Dorfman, *Blake in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1969), is the best guide to this material.


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reproductions." Muir was also responsible for the publications of the “Iona Press” — little lithographed pamphlets with hand-coloured designs. In one of the most successful of these publications, Ossian’s Address to the Sun, an Ossianic fragment was turned into something approaching a Blakean Illuminated Book. [Plate 19.]

Muir’s obituary in the Oban Times was subtitled “a man of ability and resource”. In the course of his long life, Muir had been a quarry manager on the Ross of Mull, a journalist in Aberdeen, a businessman in London; an author, printer, publisher, and inventor. He was a Blake scholar and collector; and the friend of crofters and Princes.

Robert Essick suggests that Muir may have been responsible for the facsimiles of the frontispiece to Europe (“The Ancient of Days”) mistakenly included in the 1978 William Blake exhibition at the Tate Gallery. What was immediately apparent in 1978 was that the Goyder and Keynes copies of the “Ancient of Days” showed the compasses (or dividers) opening to a greater angle than in the late separate print (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester) or in those instances where it serves as frontispiece to Europe. This led Butlin to propose that the Goyder, Keynes and two or three other copies were from a “first-state” of the plate.

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548 Alex Gartshore, “The Late Mr William Muir: a Man of Ability and Resource” Oban Times, (19 October 1940), 3 col. 4. Biographical statements not otherwise supported are derived from this account.


550 Martin Butlin, William Blake: Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Tate Gallery 9th March-21st May 1978 (London, 1978), 52-53. The disputed prints were items 66 and 67 in the catalogue. The Whitworth copy was number 68. There is an error in the first printing of the catalogue whereby the entry for 67 is repeated under 68.
If this were so, then Blake must have originally intended the image to stand alone and only later incorporated it into *Europe* (none of the “wider compasses” states are associated with a copy of *Europe*). This would have considerable implication for any interpretation of the meaning and significance of the image.

No sooner was the richly-coloured loose impression from the Whitworth hanging side by side with the Keynes and the Goyder versions of “The Ancient of Days” than Butlin, Essick, and others realised that this just wouldn’t do. The differences even within Butlin’s “first state” meant that the three pulls would have had to be printed from three different relief-etched plates, and this didn’t make any sense from a printmaker’s point of view. But it was Robert N. Essick who first noted that some of the lines in the cross-hatching of the clouds show a much cruder pattern in the Keynes and Goyder versions than in any copy of *Europe* and appear to have been applied on top of other colours. This, of course, is technically impossible if a pull from an etched plate is being hand-coloured or colour-printed. Essick pointed out that some of the cross-hatching appeared, in fact, to be painted rather than printed. Why would Blake do this? Butlin was forced by the pressures of publication to include the Goyder and Keynes prints as genuine works in his *Paintings and Drawings* but his added note makes clear the suspicion in which they should be held.551

When, in 1993, I came to write about William Muir, I accepted Essick’s contention that the disputed prints were Muir’s facsimiles.552 Thinking about it some years later, I find


552 Davies, “William Muir and the Blake Press at Edmonton”, *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, vol. 27 (Summer 1993), 14-25.
myself hesitating over that easy assumption. Muir’s facsimile of Europe is true to the original and has printed rather than painted cross-hatching.\(^5^5^3\) If the dubious prints shown at the Tate Gallery in 1978 were Muir facsimiles, the variation between these various “first-state” impressions was quite unlike Muir’s usual practice. Muir, in every other instance, tried to be as faithful as he could to Blake’s vision — but the “first state” prints do not correspond to a Blakean original — or if they do, they’re to lost originals. They are free copies, introducing wide variation in colouring and detail. With his facsimiles, Muir attempted to reproduce an individual printing by Blake as faithfully as possible with the means at his disposal.

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William Muir was born on 7 May 1845 at 20 Clyde Terrace, Gorbals, Glasgow. He was the eldest child of George Walker Muir and his wife Christina Penman. His father’s family came from Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, and G. W. Muir is listed in directories of the time as a “commission merchant”. His mother was a native Glaswegian; William was born in the tenement where his mother’s family had lived for many years.\(^5^5^4\)

By the time of the 1851 Census, William had been joined by a brother (Andrew) and two sisters (Christina and Hannah).\(^5^5^5\) The fifth child, George Walker Muir junior, was born in November. By 1851, William’s father had given up his job as “commission merchant” and

\[^5^5^3\]William Blake, Europe (Edmonton: Blake Press, 1887).

\[^5^5^4\]Principal sources for our knowledge of Muir’s childhood and family circumstances are Post-Office Annual Glasgow Directory 1844-45 to 1846-47; Old Parish Registers: Gorbals Parish [Microfilm and typescript indexes in Mitchell Library, Glasgow]; Glasgow Register of Electors 1846-55.

\[^5^5^5\]Census 1851, Enumerators’ Returns for Glasgow, Gorbals. (Microfilm ref. 613-9).
enrolled as a student of Law at Glasgow University.\textsuperscript{556} He never took his degree. In fact, he changed his occupation again in 1855 when he was granted the first of four patents.

Invention will be a recurring topic in this brief history of Muir and his family. George Walker Muir’s patents were granted over the years 1855 to 1858 and are all concerned with heating and ventilating.\textsuperscript{557} They have in fact a rather modern concern with energy efficiency. In 1855, G. W. Muir moved with his family to Manchester, where he set up as a freelance heating engineer.\textsuperscript{558}

Around 1860, William Muir was apprenticed in a stockbroker’s office in Glasgow, where he was to remain for some years. But 1860 also saw the death of his brother Andrew Penman Muir, aged just fourteen. This death seems to have affected Muir deeply. It was not until 1917 that he was in a position to arrange for an inscription on his brother’s tomb. “Grief endures,” it says.\textsuperscript{559}

Gilchrist’s \textit{Life of William Blake, ‘Pictor Ignotus’} was published in 1863. One can only speculate about the impact it would have made on the eighteen year-old Muir, but I am tempted to suggest that he would have reacted particularly strongly. Blake too had lost a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{556} W. Innes Addison, \textit{The Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow from 1728 to 1858} (Glasgow, 1913).
\item \textsuperscript{557} UK Patents nos. 25 “Warming & ventilating,” 1173 “Furnaces,” 2912 “Steam-boilers” (1855); and no. 52 “Warming & ventilating” (1858).
\item \textsuperscript{558} Slater’s \textit{General and Classified Directory and Street Register of Manchester and Salford} 1855-58.
\item \textsuperscript{559} Niven lair, Glasgow Cathedral. Grave-slab reads: THE PROPERTY OF DAVID NIVEN | BOOKSELLER OF GLASGOW | ANDREW PENMAN MUIR | (SECOND SON OF G. W. MUIR) | BORN 4TH SEPT. 1846 | DIED 16TH JULY 1860 | AT ASCOG, BUTE | CHRISTINA PENMAN | (GRAND DAUGHTER OF D. NIVEN | AND WIFE OF G. W. MUIR | BORN 4TH SEPT 1818 | DIED | 14TH NOVR 1869 | Grief endures. W M MUIR 1917
\end{itemize}

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younger brother and as with Muir the loss of his brother was an enduring grief.

There is another possible reason for Muir's interest in Blake. Muir was great-great-nephew of Alexander Tilloch, the subject of my Chapter IV. Could some family tradition have led Muir towards Blake? Tilloch's sisters Rabina and Margaret were residents of Clyde Terrace in 1841 with Muir's mother and grandmother. Margaret Tilloch (she never married) had kept house in London for Alexander Tilloch after his wife's death in 1783, and could conceivably have met Blake. Rabina Niven, Muir's great-grandmother, married twice. First to John Penman, by whom she had children Andrew and Christina. Second to David Niven, publisher and bookseller (there were no children from this second marriage). Andrew Penman became a partner in his step-father's bookselling business. Christina adopted the name Niven, and married a Penman cousin. It was her daughter, also Christina, who married George Walker Muir. The family retained proud memories of its connection with the inventor Tilloch and the writer Galt. Hannah, William's younger sister, was given the middle name Tilloch. When, in 1912, William Muir moved from Edmonton to Forest Gate, he became a regular worshipper at Ilford Presbyterian Church. There are other Presbyterian churches nearer his new home, but, coincidentally, the minister at Ilford is a Mr Galt, perhaps a relative. Muir's interests and career parallel that of Alexander Tilloch, sharing his great-great-uncle's interests in invention, printing, and religion.

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In August 1867, when just 22, Muir moved from Glasgow to the Inner Hebrides to become the quarry manager at the Tormor Quarry on the Ross of Mull just across the Sound from

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560 Census 1841, Enumerators' Returns for Glasgow, Gorbals (Microfilm ref. 6442-47)

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The quarry at that time was operated by G. & J. Fenning. Following the Fenning’s bankruptcy, the quarry was taken over by the Shap Granite & Concrete Co.

He lived at Fionnphort where the ferry now sails for Iona (his sister Hannah kept house for him); and there he made the acquaintance of the MacCormick family. Their father Neil MacCormick was quarry foreman and of his eight sons, two also worked in the quarry. The family preserve to this day memories of Muir’s friendship.

Muir left his post as quarry manager in 1875. He seems to have spent a year or so in Manchester before moving to London. He left his foreman, Neil MacCormick, as quarry manager. The 1881 Census shows Muir at 9 Angel Row, Edmonton (now 191 Fore Street, London N9). His sister Hannah joined him in Edmonton a couple of years later.

The 1881 census gives Muir’s occupation as “granite agent”. Ross of Mull granite had been used in a number of engineering projects of the 1860s and 1870s, such as the piers of Blackfriars Bridge, docks in New York, parts of the Thames Embankment, and bridges in Glasgow. In later years the decorative qualities of the granite (it has a distinctive pink colour) were exploited by architects and sculptors. It was presumably as supplier of granite that Muir

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561 "Memories of Oban in the Sixties" Oban Times, (5 May 1934).

562 For a history of the quarry at Tormor, see Joan Faithfull, The Ross of Mull Granite Quarries (Iona, 1995).

563 Personal communication from Neil MacCormick’s granddaughter, Miss Margaret Harper-Nelson, October 1990.

564 Oban Times, 13 February 1875. The Oban Times obituary of 1940 refers to a period spent in Aberdeen as editor of an agricultural newspaper but I have so far been unable to verify this.

565 Census 1881, Enumerator’s Returns for Middlesex, Edmonton (Microfilm ref. ED4 Edmonton Schedule 242).
made the acquaintanceship of Count Gleichen.

His Serene Highness Prince Victor Ferdinand Franz Eugen Gustaf Adolph Constantin Friedrich of Hohenlohe-Langenburg was better known in England as Count Gleichen and as Queen Victoria’s nephew. He was sent to school at Dresden; but at the age of fourteen he “conceived ideas not to be bounded within the confines of the small life of a German principality”. So he ran away to go to sea, and his aunt the Queen of England being informed of the fact, proposed to her sister to let her adventurous nephew become naturalised as an Englishman and enter the English Navy. This was accordingly done, and Prince Victor, as he was then called, was appointed to the Powerful, on the Mediterranean Station, in 1848.566

Prince Victor had a successful naval career, seeing service in the Baltic, the Crimea, and in China, but retired from the Navy in 1866 because of ill-health and devoted himself to an artistic career, taking up sculpture as a serious profession. Queen Victoria granted him a suite of apartments at St. James’s Palace where he set up his studio.567 His best known work is a colossal statue of Alfred the Great in the market square at Wantage in Oxfordshire.568

At Woolwich, just off the Repository Road and not far from the Rotunda, stands the Afghan and Zulu Wars Memorial by Count Gleichen.569 It consists of six blocks of pink

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566 *Vanity Fair*. Caption to the print: PRINCES. No. 8.

567 *DNB*.


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granite assembled to form a simulacrum of a giant boulder. The granite was supplied by the Shap Granite Company. Also at Woolwich, Gleichen’s statue of Louis Bonaparte, the Prince Imperial, was unveiled in January 1883. It too had a pink granite plinth. Muir may have been the agent for the granite used in these works.

Muir remained associated with the granite trade to the end of the century, but friendship with Count Gleichen would have encouraged his own artistic ambitions, and in 1884 he began the work for which he is now remembered: the production of hand-coloured facsimiles of the Prophetic Books of William Blake published by the “Blake Press at Edmonton”.

The Athenæum welcomed the first facsimiles with enthusiasm:

... we can hardly expect to see finer transcripts of the plates in any published form. Only a draughtsman of very choice skill would furnish a better copy of the whole work than that before us. The reproduction of the outlines is simply perfect; the colours are repeated with vigour and delicacy, and lack only some of the purity of Blake’s own handiwork. The process of colouring such copies by hand is the only one which promises fortunate results. Mr. Pearson has been so well served by these who coloured these plates that the names of those persons ought to have been given with each copy of the reproduction. Only fifty copies are, it is stated, to be issued. “If it meets with the encouragement it deserves,” says the publisher, “Blake’s other works shall follow,” and while we write another has reached us.

Muir’s facsimiles were dedicated to Count Gleichen, whom he terms his “Patron”.

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570 Contemporary accounts of the two monuments at Woolwich can be found in The Times, (5 October 1882), 7, and (15 January 1883), 10. Confusingly, the reporter manages to ascribe the distinctive pink granite of cairn and plinth both to Cumberland and to Aberdeenshire. I have been unable to locate the present whereabouts of the monument to the Prince Imperial.

571 The Edition of reproductions of Blake’s Prophetic Books by William Muir, issued by the Blake Press at Edmonton, initially consisted of 3 vols. folio, 9 vols. quarto and 2 single sheets (Edmonton, 1884-94) and were limited to 50 copies of each. The more popular titles were reissued at later date with colouring after other copies.

572 The Athenæum, no. 2964 (16 August 1884), 216.
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For example, the Preface to Muir’s facsimile of *Thel* is dedicated

> To his serene highness, Prince Victor Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Count Gleichen &c.

Your Serene Highness and my kind Patron ... I have to thank your highness for the interest that you have been pleased to take in this enterprise. Blake is pre-eminently an Artist’s artist. He has created for himself a realm of pure imagination in which he works alone, and his results are most stimulating to the imaginations of those who study them. I am your Highness Humble servant, Wm Muir, Edmonton 1885.

In a “Programme” attached to that same facsimile, he spells out the intentions behind his edition:

My desire and intention is to reproduce ALL the important works by Wm Blake that exist in book form and also some of his finest designs and this by methods of working as nearly the same as Blake himself used as the need of maintaining fidelity to his results will allow. I will not use either photography or chromolithography. All outlines are drawn and all the colouring is by hand. I produce fifty copies only of each book and each of them in numbered.

The bookseller John Pearson, who sold the first of Muir’s facsimiles, retired from business in 1885.

Mr Pearson sold the first twelve copies of the Songs of Innocence facsimile between Jany and May 1885. Then he retired from business “Because he had made £20,000 and was content” — He introduced me to Mr Bernard Quaritch who continued the work. He received and sold the remaining 38 copies between May 1885 and August 1886. So completing the Edition.

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574 His library was sold many years later: *Catalogue of the Valuable and Interesting Library formed during the Past 40 years by Mr. John Pearson (Sold in Consequence ofDeclining Health). The Third Portion, Tues. 7 Nov. 1916 and following Day* (London, 1916).

Pearson owned the former Flaxman copy of *Songs of Innocence*, copy D, from which Muir’s facsimile was produced in 1884. He also owned a copy of *Poetical Sketches* and a rather dubious-sounding water colour showing “a number of Nude figures being led captive by a Devil, and others following; the great head of a marine monster, in the mouth of which are several figures, etc.” (nos. 40, 41, 42).

575 Muir’s note in his master copy for the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile, now in John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

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The firm of Bernard Quaritch remained Muir’s agent for the Blake Press facsimiles for the next 50 years. Prices for Blake Press titles ranged from one guinea for the single sheets to 8 guineas for a lengthy work such as *Milton*.\(^{576}\) Quaritch’s commission was the usual one-third of published price.

Blake had printed his prophetic books from etched copper plates and the printed image was then decorated in colour. Muir had first to reverse this process. Working from an original lent him by Pearson or Quaritch, he had to reconstruct the printed image that lay under the painted decoration. His careful outline drawing was then transferred to a zinc plate.\(^{577}\) The zinc plate in turn was used directly as a lithographic printing plate (as with the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile) or etched in relief (for the facsimile of *There is No Natural Religion*) or even etched in intaglio (for the *Gates of Paradise*). Multiple copies of each page of these outlines would then be printed in ink matching as closely as possible the ink of the original. One of these printed copies would serve as the basis for a fully hand-coloured copy made after the original; this was Muir’s master copy from which his assistants would work. “Fidelity … is obtained by each of my friends working on every copy, thereby obliterating each other’s mannerisms.”\(^{578}\)

The final title in the series as originally planned appeared in 1889. As always it was warmly welcomed by the anonymous reviewer for *The Athenaeum*:

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\(^{576}\) Price list included in Muir’s facsimile of *The Song of Los* (Edmonton, 1890).

\(^{577}\) A discussion of the various processes available for the lithographic printing of facsimiles can be found in Michael Twyman, *Early Lithographed Books* (London, 1990). The period covered precedes Muir, of course, but nevertheless indicates the technical possibilities available to the capable amateur.

\(^{578}\) Prospectus bound with Muir’s master copy for the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile.

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The Gates of Paradise. By W. Blake. (Quaritch.) — This is the latest instalment of an admirable series of facsimiles. The fine, but relatively unambitious work itself was, on May 17th, 1793, published by Blake at his modest house, No. 13, Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. 'The Gates of Paradise' comprises some of the most charming, poetic, and sincere of his minor designs, such as the well-known 'Alas!' the boy who has already slain a Psyche seeking to kill the soul as a butterfly; 'Help! Help!' the man drowning in the dark sea; and the still more famous 'Death's Door,' the old man entering the tomb, an invention which Blake developed grandly on another occasion. Except the magnificent 'Sons of the Morning,' no design of his is better known or more characteristic of Blake's genius. On the other hand, 'The Gates of Paradise' comprises several instances of a bathos so profound and a simplicity so thorough that it would be hard to match them anywhere. This little book thus illustrates the best and the worst of Blake. The facsimiles were made by Miss Mary Hughes and Mr. William Muir. Their verisimilitude is absolute, and yet, quite rightly, they have not been intended to deceive by passing for the originals.579

Muir was in full-time employment as "granite agent" until at least 1902. It appears that the work on the facsimiles was done by Muir and his collaborators on an occasional basis. I assume that he and his friends gathered together on just one or two evenings each week to work on the facsimiles. From his letters to Quaritch, it appears, too, that just a sufficient number of copies of each title were hand-coloured to keep ahead of demand.580 Also, that Muir had printed monochrome outlines in excess of the stated limitation to allow for any wastage in the colouring process.581 Some modification of his methods was required in later years when he had fewer collaborators or did not have an original at hand. Each copy then took some six or eight weeks to complete.582 It is clear that production of the facsimiles extended over a much

579 The Athenæum, no. 3203 (16 March 1889), 351-52.
580 Bentley, "Blake had no Quaritch": the Sale of William Muir's Blake Facsimiles", Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, vol. 27 (Summer 1993), 4-13.
581 Hence he is able to supply Kerrison Preston with uncoloured copies for Mrs. Preston to colour (Muir's letters to Kerrison Preston, 28 July and 23 August 1916).
582 Muir's letter to Kerrison Preston, 28 July 1916.
longer period than their printed dates would indicate. A facsimile of *America* was completed as late as 1929 despite bearing a publication date of 1887.\(^{583}\) Muir’s increasing age and infirmity would supply ample reason of the noticeable variation between copies.

Muir’s principal collaborators were his sister Hannah and Emily Druitt, daughter of Jabez Druitt, a monumental mason in East London, and thus a granite trade connection. Emily was a watercolourist of considerable accomplishment and shared Muir’s enthusiasm for Blake. Emily was just nineteen when she began work on the facsimiles. In 1886 he married her elder sister Sophia (born 1858). After her marriage, Sophia too joined the Blake Press team.

During the 1880s a number of artists were exploring the possibilities of new expressive means in the graphic arts — what would eventually be termed *Art nouveau*. Combining both the symbolism of the Pre-Raphaelites and a wish to reform design, the first designer who could be said to have converted his sense of style to the new objectives of symbolic patterning, curvilinear motif and structural simplicity was Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo. Architect, designer, and socio-economic theorist, Mackmurdo was an extraordinarily complex man whose life spans over ninety years. He was born at Hyde Side, Edmonton on 12 December 1851, the son of Edward Mackmurdo and his wife Anne (formerly Jones). His father, who was an independent-thinking Scot, owned and ran a company manufacturing and supplying chemicals.

It was in the early eighties that Mackmurdo established contact with the Aesthetic Movement through his cousin Richard D’Oyly Carte. He met Whistler, its leading light, and

\(^{583}\)Muir’s letter to Quaritch, 17 February 1936.

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Herbert Horne joined Mackmurdo's practice as an apprentice. Horne had received occasional instruction before joining him as a pupil in 1882, and subsequently became a junior partner by an agreement dated 2nd June 1883. Designers such as Mackmurdo and Horne tried to incorporate in their own work some of the vitality and expressiveness they found in Blake.\(^{584}\) There is in the *Songs of Innocence* for example, not only the smoothly flowing line, but also a comprehension of the page: the interrelationship of typography and ornament foreshadows much that was to become characteristic of *Art nouveau* design and book illustration.\(^{585}\) It was Mackmurdo, the admirer of Blake, who first produced work which combined all the characteristics of *Art nouveau*: the chair with fretwork back designed in 1881, and the title-page of *Wren's City Churches*, published in 1883.\(^{586}\) [Plate 20.] These sinuous forms owe nothing to Wren, the subject of the book, and prefigure the whiplash line — usually described as originating in Victor Horta's Brussels house of ten years later — of *l'art nouveau*.

It was in 1882 that Mackmurdo and a group of friends founded the Century Guild — an idealistic Morrisian association of designers — that produced *Art nouveau* fabrics and book designs. The members of the Century Guild were aesthetes, in the sense in which the word is especially associated with the eighteen-eighties — when the writings of Walter Pater or Matthew Arnold were at their most influential. Beauty was cultivated as a substitute for


\(^{586}\)A. H. Mackmurdo, *Wren's City Churches* (Orpington, 1883).
The declared aim of the Century Guild was "... to render all branches of art the sphere no longer of the tradesman but of the artist. It would restore building, decoration, glass-painting, pottery, wood carving and metal to their right place beside painting and sculpture". Mackmurdo’s chief interest was always in detail, and he was particularly taken by the notion that all the contents, furnishings and décor of a building should be of a piece. The Century Guild was to be a society where craftsmen in all of the relevant skills could come together and work jointly. In friendly competition with the Morris Company, the Century Guild pursued similar aims, though its forms owed much less to the Gothic Style.

Although the pioneering spirit of Morris was behind the activities of the Century Guild, and Morris’s designs were admired, his social strictures were found irksome:

As an art craftsman he is our master; but we hesitate to follow him in his endeavour to agitate for state intervention as a possible panacea of poverty; or to accept his belief in parliament as apportioner of poverty. Poverty, injustice and crime are to us the natural result of class character, and class character like individual character acts automatically according to its bulk of higher human elements; which bulk cannot be increased artificially.\textsuperscript{587}

These are traditional Victorian sentiments but they did not prevent the work of the Century Guild from following the Morris pattern reasonably closely, for in addition to the products of their workshops, the members of the Century Guild made a determined effort to redefine contemporary art and its function in society.

In April 1884 the first issue of the \textit{Century Guild Hobby Horse} was published: an elaborately designed and finely printed magazine of which the original purpose was that it should exemplify and illustrate Mackmurdo’s hobby horse — that architecture and internal

\textsuperscript{587}\textit{The Century Guild Hobby Horse}. [Edited by A. H. Mackmurdo.] No.1 April 1884 (Orpington, 1884), “Preface”.

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design and furnishing should be considered together. But he was also fumbling towards the
notion that all the arts were one, and that literature, too, should in some way fit into this
all-embracing structure. The *Hobby Horse* was to run till 1892, changing to a larger format
in 1886. In its freshness of approach to typography, its use of original illustrative material,
and in the combination of stories, drawings by new artists, advanced poetry, and essays on
music and other cultural aspects catching the fancy of the editors, it was the first of a
succession of artistic and literary magazines which were to be the most striking manifestation
of the English decadent school in the 1890s.

The *Century Guild Hobby Horse* was the first magazine to become self-conscious,
and to see itself as a work of art. So the design of the typeface itself, and its distribution on
the page, the size of the margins, the relationship of illustration to typeface, the texture of the
paper on which all this appeared — all of these became matters of the first importance. The
magazine not only aspired to present art in all its forms, but became a work of art in its own
right. It is said that William Morris was inspired to set up his Kelmscott Press after
countering the elegant and urbane *Hobby Horse*.

The January 1886 number of the *Hobby Horse* carried an enthusiastic article on Blake
by Herbert H. Gilchrist, son of Blake’s biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, and a reproduction
of Blake’s illustrated broadsheet, *Little Tom the Sailor*, made by the firm of Walker &
Boutall. Gilchrist wrote: “What a marvellous sample of typewriting is the Ballad written out

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588 That first issue of 1884 was followed by a new series: *The Century Guild Hobby Horse.*

589 For studies of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* see Lorraine Lively Hunt, *The Century
Guild Hobby Horse: a Study of a Magazine* (University of North Carolina Ph.D., 1965) and Peter

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with a brush ... while as legible as ordinary types, every letter has naïve expression, capital letters flaunt capriciously down the page each giving a defiant little kick of its own. With all the charm of decorative fitness the print answers directly its purpose as a broadsheet”.

The volume for 1886 lists “the names of those workers in art whose aim seems to us most nearly to accord with the chief aim of this magazine”; the names include “Mr Muir, The Blake Press, Edmonton”.

An emphasis on the work of William Blake was to become a dominant theme of the Hobby Horse. The 1887 numbers contained a photogravure of the life-mask of William Blake, a facsimile of Blake’s Sibylline Leaf on Homer and Virgil, essays by Herbert Horne on the life-mask and the Sibylline Leaf, and the “Marriage of Heaven and Hell, now first printed from the engraved original”.

There were significant links between the Mackmurdo circle, with his family home in Bush Hill Park, Enfield, and William Muir, just a mile or so away in Edmonton. Muir and Herbert Horne planned a working collaboration. A note in the Century Guild Hobby Horse for 1886 stated: “During the new year, Mr Muir hopes to publish engraved work from the designs of Mr Herbert P. Horne”. Nothing seems to have come of that project.

Muir had assured purchasers that neither photography nor chromolithography would

590 Herbert H. Gilchrist, “Nescio quae nugarm no. iii: The Ballad of Little Tom the Sailor,” Century Guild Hobby Horse, 1 (October 1886), 159-60. The facsimile is bound as frontispiece to this issue, facing page 121.

591 See for example Century Guild Hobby Horse, January 1889, (unnumbered pages following page 40).

592 But among a collection of drawings by Christopher Whall in the William Morris Gallery are single sheets from Muir’s Songs of Innocence (1885) and Gates of Paradise (1888) facsimiles, the former marked up to suggest Muir may also have planned a collaboration with Whall.
be used in his facsimiles.\textsuperscript{593} He broke this promise with his facsimile of Little Tom. This required a larger printing plate than he could handle, so he bought in a stock of prints from Walker & Boutall and incorporated the *Hobby Horse* reproduction into his Blake Press edition.\textsuperscript{594} However, he eschewed making use of the other *Hobby Horse* facsimile, the so-called “Sibylline leaf,” *On Homers Poetry; On Virgil* and prepared his own outline for printing.\textsuperscript{595}

Mackmurdo, as we have seen, was acquainted with the Gilchrist family (widow and children of Blake’s biographer). His partner, Herbert Horne, collected drawings and prints by Blake and his followers.\textsuperscript{596} And in his design work, Herbert Horne used elongated Blake-like figures in his “Angel with the Trumpet” fabric. [Plate 21.] We find reminiscences of Blake in bindings and designs by Heywood Sumner and other associates of the Century Guild.

In 1883 Mackmurdo established a craft workshop in Enfield. The following year he organised an Arts and Crafts Exhibition there:

To interest people in the art of their own neighbourhood as the starting point of a wider interest in art, I organised an Art and Crafts Exhibition at Enfield, in 1883 [sic], one year before the formation of the Art Workers’ Guild. I chose Enfield because I

\textsuperscript{593}Proposal for the publication of the Prophetic Books and the Songs of Innocence and of Experience by W. Blake* (London: J. Pearson, 1884).

\textsuperscript{594}I have modified the interpretation given by Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies*. 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1971), 105-10.

\textsuperscript{595}Here I disagree with Bentley, *Blake Books* (Oxford, 1977), 335, 488, 836. Muir’s facsimile and that printed with Herbert R. Horne, “Blake’s Sibylline Leaf on Homer and Virgil” *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, 2 (1887), 115-16, differ in many respects and are unlikely to derive from the same lithographic plate.

was living there, and had workshops there. I hoped that by showing what was being
done here, it might stimulate local effort and encourage some at least among residents
to make beautiful things for their own homes. In this exhibition each exhibit had to
be either the design or the work of a person resident within the parish, and the names
of designer and executant were to be bracketed as authors of the exhibit. 597

Herbert Gilchrist lent the Exhibition Blake prints and drawings from the family collection:

Miss H. Gilchrist’s loan collection included a singular work in oil colour “The
Descent to the Grave”, by Blake; engravings, “Southwark Fair”, and “The Distressed
Poet”, (by Hogarth) also an oil colour, “The Translation of Enoch”, by Blake; and a
charcoal “Study”, by D. G. Rossetti. 598

Mackmurdo’s collaborators included Christopher Whall, the stained glass designer,
whose mother had lived at Hyde Side in Edmonton (Whall was a great admirer of Blake’s
art); Benjamin Creswick the sculptor, who lived at Holly Place, Enfield; and Charles
Winstanley, a gifted worker in wrought-iron who maintained a forge at his home in
Wellington Road. Clement Heaton specialised in cloisonné; Heywood Sumner in stencilled
decoration; George Esling in copper, brass and pewter work.

Mackmurdo inherited enough on his father’s death to enable him to indulge his
personal whims throughout at least the first half of his life. “He maintained a large house in
Fitzroy Street in which he accommodated most of the inner circle of the Century Guild as
well other artistic strays.” 599 Mackmurdo’s house at 20 Fitzroy Street, Soho, became the
meeting place for a whole group of artists. Selwyn Image, Henry Carte and his son Geoffrey,

597 A. H. Mackmurdo, “Autobiographical Notes” (Typescript in William Morris Gallery)

598 “Enfield Local Art Exhibition”, Meyer’s Observer and Local and General Advertiser,
(14 June 1884), 6, cols. 4, 5, 6, and 7, cols. 1, 2. “Miss H. Gilchrist” can only be a misreading
of a handwritten “Mr. H. H. Gilchrist”. The works by Blake displayed were, I believe, “The
Descent into the Vale of Death” (1805; Butlin no. 638) and “God Judging Adam” (1795; Butlin
no. 295).

599 Peter Frost, “The Century Guild Hobby Horse and its Founders”, The Book Collector,
(1978), 348-60.
and Albert Rothenstein all lived there at various times. Herbert Horne had a room there, as did the painter T. Hope McLachlan, the poet Lionel Johnson, and Arthur Galton, essayist and critic. Laurence Binyon and W. B. Yeats, both of whom would make important contributions to Blake studies, were frequent visitors. Mackmurdo discovered and encouraged the painter Frank Brangwyn and offered him a studio. C. F. A. Voysey, in the early eighties, worked there under Mackmurdo’s direction.

When, in 1880, a new edition of *Gilchrist* was needed, Frederick Shields, who later worked with Mackmurdo, designed the binding. [Plate 21.] On the one hand, this binding clearly imitates Blake; on the other hand, it satisfies the demands of *Art nouveau* even in the ambiguous relationship of the gold design to its purple ground, or of the purple design to its gold ground. This motif itself may perhaps have an origin in Blake’s exploitation of the ambiguities of white-line engraving.

It was into this milieu with its passionate interest in the art of Blake that William Muir introduced the facsimiles of the Blake Press. Muir’s facsimiles not only made Blake’s works in “Illuminated Printing” accessible for the first time in reliable copies and helped establish Blake’s reputation as visual artist alongside his reputation as poet, but also would have contributed to the most advanced ideas in English art of the 1880s. Mackmurdo and Horne helped create the artistic climate in which the Blake Press could flourish. Muir through his Blake facsimiles provided a design resource on which the artists of the 1880s and 1890s could draw.

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With the Blake Press underway, Muir began a second publishing venture: the Iona Press — producing small lithographic editions of Gaelic poetry in the design of which the style of Blake's prophetic books was followed closely.\footnote{This brief account of the Iona Press draws largely on Mairi MacArthur, “Pages from Iona’s Past”, Scotsman Magazine, (December 1987), 29.}

\[Plate 19.\] Muir in Edmonton was proprietor, manager, editor; John MacCormick (son of the quarry foreman at Tormor) at Fionnphort initially worked the press and bound the booklets issued.\footnote{John MacCormick (born 1860) is known as a Gaelic writer chiefly of plays and humorous sketches. The Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue (Edinburgh, 1984) lists 13 titles by MacCormick published between 1908 and 1931.}

The designs in the “Iona Press” publications were painted by girls on the island, under the instruction of Muir and Miss Flora Ritchie, whose father was proprietor of the St. Columba Temperance Hotel on Iona.

Between 1887 and 1893 around a dozen small booklets were produced on a lithographic press shipped from Edmonton and housed in a bothy (now the Iona Bookshop) opposite the St. Columba Hotel. Muir and MacCormick stated that their aim was to give tourists to Iona “an opportunity of carrying back with them literary as well as geological mementoes of the sacred isle”.\footnote{“Prospectus of the Iona Press”, quoted in E. Mairi MacArthur, Iona: the Living Memory of a Crofting Community (Edinburgh, 1990).}

A travel book of the time carried the following account of the press:

A special feature of Iona is its printing press, which was commenced in 1887 by Mr William Muir, Mr John M'Cormick, Miss Muir, and Miss Ritchie, and stands within a few hundred yards of Reilig Odhrain and the Cathedral. The Iona Press is quite a unique and interesting little establishment, superintended personally by Miss Muir, a clever, active, intelligent maiden lady, assisted by a tall, handsome, dark-eyed, native damsel hardly out of her teens, whom I have seen with her well-formed arms...
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working hard at the press.604

By the end of the century, production of the books had ceased, although postcards were printed under the name of the Press and sold in a souvenir shop run until the 1920s by Hannah Muir.

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If the 1880s had been the decade of Muir’s activity as publisher, the following decade found him devoting much of his energy to chemical experiment. In 1892 he was granted a patent for a process for extracting tin from slag.605 And then in 1902 a patent described as “Improvements in or relating to Igniting Material for Matches, Cartridge Fuses and the like”.606 The patent describes how matches may be made using the red allotropic form in place of the highly dangerous white phosphorus. He sold his rights in the patent for £900 to R. Bell & Co., who had a match factory at Bromley by Bow.607

In 1901, Muir and his wife had left Angel Place and had moved to 97 Church Street, Edmonton.608 In October of that year he issued a short religious tract: The Greatest of All Visions — a brief commentary on some verses from the Apocalypse of St. John.609 Like the Iona Press titles it consists of the lithographic reproduction of a hand-written text. Though

604 Malcolm Ferguson, A Visit to Staffa and Iona (Dundee and Edinburgh, 1894).
605 UK Patent No. 1907 (1892) “Extracting tin &c from slag.”
606 UK Patent No. 11,503 (1902) “Matches &c.”
609 William Muir, The Greatest of All Visions, being the Text of Part of The Book of Revelation C4 V1 to C6 V2, with a Commentary Interpreting It (Edmonton, 1901).

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with the printing-press now with his sister on Iona, he had to make use of a commercial lithographer. One hundred copies were printed.

In 1907 the Muirs moved again — to 153 Church Street, Edmonton. And again in 1908 to Claremont, Bury Street; always to surprisingly large houses considering there was just himself, Sophia, and a servant. He and his wife would move four times in 10 years. Perhaps his neighbours complained about the chemical experiments.

Finally, in 1912, and after 30 years in Edmonton, the Muirs moved for the last time, to Romford Road, Forest Gate.

The inaugural meeting of the Blake Society took place in 1912. Muir, along with Mrs. Muir, and his sister-in-law, Emily Druitt, were active members. In 1917 he gave a paper to the society on an appropriately Scottish theme: “Blake’s view of Wallace”.

In April 1920 the annual meeting of the Blake Society was held at the Hampstead home of Thomas J. Wise. Muir was chairman at that meeting. In 1920, his host, Wise, was at the height of his reputation as bibliographer, collector and scholar. It was many years later that Wise was to be exposed as a forger and a thief.

The copies/forgeries of the frontispiece to Europe appear to have emerged onto the

610 Blake Society, The First Meeting of the Blake Society: Papers Read before the Blake Society at the First Annual Meeting, 12th August 1912 (Olney, [1913?]). Some documents of the Blake Society survive in the Thomas Wright collection in Buckinghamshire County Record Office (now the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies), Aylesbury.

611 The reference is presumably to Blake’s Visionary Heads of “Edward I, and William Wallace” (two on one sheet) formerly in John Linnell’s collection, and now in the collection of Robert N. Essick.

market in the 1920s, when indeed Thomas G. Wise was active in Blake-collecting circles. It is tempting to speculate if Wise or his accomplice Harry Buxton Forman had a hand in any Blake forgeries, but no evidence is forthcoming. Muir by all accounts — and it’s certainly the impression that emerges from his letters — was a totally honest man. He could not conceivably have been a party to forgery and would surely have denounced any attempt to pass off his copies as original Blakes. But if not Muir, who?

Wise used other booksellers to promote indirect sales of his forgeries of nineteenth-century pamphlets. One he regretted using was W. T. Spencer, who had an enormous bookshop on Oxford Street and a shady country house in the Isle of Wight where indentured young ladies were said to improve plate books with modern colour and engage in other doubtful bibliographical sophistications.

Wise and Spencer being birds of a feather (though differently disguised) came to hate each other. There was little Spencer did not turn his hand to: bogus provenance (Dr. Johnson’s teapot; Dickens’s chair); books imperfect or made up with facsimiles; modern colouring; facsimile wrappers for his favourite Dickens in parts; and so on. He must have guessed what Wise was up to and he decided to take a hand in the profitable game himself. Wise and Forman produced a creative forgery of Swinburne’s *Dead Love* in about 1890; and in about 1904 W. T. Spencer copied it.613

W. T. Spencer is the source for a number of dubious Blakes: for the spurious Blake memorabilia illustrated in Thomas Wright’s biography, and the book by Godwin with an irrelevant marginal illustration attributed to Fuseli, but probably fake.614 A copy of *America* with spurious colouring has a Spencer provenance.615 Bentley notes that a monochrome copy of *Europe* (L) was coloured later “with fraudulent intent by the now-notorious dealer Walter


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T. Spencer”.616 Could Spencer be the source for the Keynes and Goyder versions of the “Ancient of Days”, wrongly (as I believe) attributed to Muir?

In 1920, Muir produced a new facsimile of The Book of Thel (32 copies completed), and in 1927 (the centenary of Blake’s death), new facsimiles of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience (100 copies planned; 55 completed). In 1928 he began work on a new Visions of the Daughters of Albion (50 copies planned; 11 completed).617 His collaborators in these last facsimiles included Frederick Hollyer, the portrait photographer.618 Forty years earlier, Hollyer like Muir had been listed in the Century Guild Hobby Horse among “the names of those workers in art whose aim seems to us most nearly to accord with the chief aim of this magazine”.

Thomas Wright summed up Muir’s career in his Life of William Blake:

Numerous and important have been the services to Blake students rendered by Mr William Muir. It was in 1884 that he began his admirable series of reproductions of Blake’s books. Copies of the British Museum Thel, the Flaxman Songs of Innocence, and the Beckford Songs of Experience done by him then, now command prices comparable with those paid sixty years ago for the original Blakes. The Milton, Europe, America, Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, and all the others have maintained the high standard of the enterprise, and the Beaconsfield Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience now being executed show no falling off in love and fidelity. For any one to find himself in Mr Muir’s company,

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617Numbers planned derive from a letter “To the Reviewer” [1928?] once inserted in Muir’s Visions of the Daughters of Albion (2nd ed.) and now in the collection of the late Raymond Lister. Numbers completed derive from Muir’s letter to Quaritch, 17 February 1936.

618Bentley, Blake Books (Oxford, 1977), 489. Hollyer was himself responsible for a facsimile of All Religions Are One (London, 1926).
and to hear him talk about Blake, is a liberal education.619

Not until 1935, when he was 90 years old, did failing eyesight cause him to give up work on Blake facsimiles. It may have been at this time that he disposed of the master copies of four of his facsimiles to the John Rylands Library, Manchester.620 The lithographed outlines have been coloured with great care and occasional marginal drawings of details have been added as a help to Muir's assistants. [Plate 22.] Other master copies have recently been discovered in the West Sussex Record Office at Chichester.621

William Muir died on 2 January 1938, aged 92. He is buried alongside his in-laws in the City and East London Cemetery. Sophia survived her husband another five years. She died on 30 January 1943 at Helston in Cornwall, at the home of her niece Winifred Catling.622 Many years later Kerrison Preston recalled that

... there was a remarkable refinement about him, such as I imagine one might have noticed about Blake himself.623

Muir long outlived the Victorian world in which he grew up; he seems to us today


620 America (1887), The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1885), The Songs of Innocence (1885), and The Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1885) were accessioned in September 1939 but are likely to have been in the possession of the Library for some time before then. (Personal communication from David W. Riley, Keeper of Printed Books, John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 17 October 1990.)


622 Probate register (England and Wales), 1943. I include this apparently supererogatory information to make clear how persons associated with the nineteenth century and the very beginnings of Blake scholarship are almost within our reach. In 1990 I wrote to Margaret Harper-Nelson who, as a young girl in the 1920s, had met William Muir. Maybe on a visit to Cornwall one might yet meet someone who had known Sophia Muir in her last years.


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very typical of that world — typical in his enthusiasm, his energy, his confidence and his piety.

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The work of Erdman (Blake: Prophet against Empire) and Frye (Fearful Symmetry) set up the polarities of Blake study for the 1950s and the decades that followed — decades in which students, whatever their allegiance, focused on the text of the Illuminated Books, and treated the designs as a kind of irritating punctuation. But, more recently, some influential books have emphasised the importance of Blake’s poetry within the context of an artistic process and the cultural conditions that shaped its appearance.

When Robert Essick published William Blake, Printmaker in 1983, he set in motion a trend that viewed Blake’s work in a context of the restraints on artistic production — the interpenetration of creativity and the market place — that was to culminate in Viscomi’s masterly Blake and the Idea of the Book. The work of Essick and Viscomi brought a revived material focus to Blake studies. Developments in the 1990s, such as the Blake Trust facsimiles or the on-line Blake Archive would have been very different without their work and signal a new integrated approach to the emblematics of Blake’s work.

The recovery of bibliographic as distinct from linguistic codes casts a new light on the consideration of authorial intention. Early and late copies of illuminated books — Songs of Innocence and of Experience is a paradigm — are printed in different colours and illuminated in different styles, leading to very different responses. Jerome McGann has

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commented that "The scholar's edition ... produces the work in a bibliographical form that departs more or less drastically from the work as originally produced. The more elaborate and successful the scholarly edition — for instance, Erdman's edition of Blake ... — the more sharply it is likely to depart from the original authoritative texts; and the departure will be drastic no matter which of the originary texts one chooses to take as 'copy-text'". He argues that the Erdman edition of Blake "translates" Blake's illuminated books into ordinary typography and hence cannot represent the "physique of Blake's work, so crucial to the original 'intentions'". To read Blake in an original (illuminated) book or good facsimile is to be told that "author's intentions" dominate the bibliographic signifiers in the same way that they dominate the linguistic signifiers. This aspect of Blake's book production process was clearly recognised by William Muir who helped create the modern appreciation of Blake's illuminated books through facsimile publication.

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627 A different argument might be that Muir, in bringing the Illuminated Books to the fore through his facsimiles, created that attitude to Blake's poetry that we find in Erdman's edition, which by its arrangement privileges the works in Illuminated Printing over the work issued in conventional typography or left by Blake in manuscript.
Chapter VIII

Catherine Wright: the religious context.

Tell me the Acts, O historian, and leave me to reason upon them as I please; away with your reasoning and your rubbish ... Tell me the What; I do not want you tell me the Why, and the How; I can find that out myself, as well as you can, and I will not be fooled by you into opinions, that you please to impose, to disbelieve what you think improbable or impossible.

— William Blake.

Biographical discussion of William Blake has long been dominated by unexamined commonplaces regarding his family background, his early religious allegiance, and his supposed rejection of the publishing world of his time. For too long Blake scholars have largely accepted, with little interrogation, erroneous assumptions. Three persistent topoi dominate the nearly two hundred years of biographical writing about Blake. First, present even in Malkin’s A Father’s Memoirs of his Child (1806), is the question of Blake’s sanity (what Malkin calls “the hue and cry of madness”).

Second, there is the belief that Blake had no contemporary audience, and thus we in posterity are Blake’s true disciples. And third, the most misleading, because the least examined, the insistence that he came from a radical dissenting family.

A recent example of the madness topos appeared during the great Tate Britain exhibition of 2000-2001. Thomas Stuttaford, the Times medical correspondent, devoted his

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628 William Blake, Descriptive Catalogue, pages 44-45. (E 544)


630 The assumption, on next to no evidence, is that the Blake family belonged to some group that rejected Anglican teaching; isolated and exclusive, doctrinally eccentric, somewhat like the Muggletonians.
column to a diagnosis of Blake’s “schizophrenia”. He wrote that “although he was obsessively hard-working, Blake was also fascinated by the mystical from an early age, which is another symptom displayed by those suffering from schizophreniform troubles”. But as Harold Bruce wittily commented many years ago:

To say confidently that Blake suffered from mythomania, or from automatism, or from occasional hyper-aesthesia, or from manic-depressive tendencies, or that he did not tend “towards a definite schizophrenia,” is to add polysyllables rather than illumination to the discussion of his state.

The second topos is that indicated by Alexander Gilchrist in the subtitle to his biography of 1863: *pictor ignotus* — the unknown painter — and with it the idea that Blake had no contemporary audience. But there is plentiful evidence of that contemporary audience. In 1794, Joseph Johnson, one of the foremost progressive publishers of the decade, was displaying Blake’s books for prospective customers. Bentley’s *Blake Books* lists sixty-one persons who bought copies of the Illuminated Books in Blake’s lifetime or shortly after. Blair’s *Grave* (1808) with Blake’s illustrations had no fewer than 578 subscribers.

The third assumption, the dissenting topos, first appears in Crabb Robinson’s essay “William Blake, Künstler, Dichter und religiöser Schwärmer” of 1811. There Robinson notes that Blake belonged “von Geburt zu einer dissentirenden Gemeinde” — from birth to a dissenting sect. It seems, however, that this not what Robinson actually wrote but a
translation into German by Dr. Niklaus Heinrich Julius. There’s some doubt whether Crabb Robinson ever saw the article that bore his name; his English original is lost. All this was written before Crabb Robinson ever met Blake. In the later account of Blake in Robinson’s diary, there is no further indication that he belonged “zu einer dissentirenden Gemeinde”. The diary account was written after Robinson had met Blake and become genuinely interested in him; Robinson records his conversations with Blake after they met in 1825 but never again does he call Blake a Dissenter.

Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life* (1863) remains our only source for much of what we know of Blake’s biography. Gilchrist worked on his biography in the late 1850s when a number of people who knew Blake were still alive. It’s this first or second-hand information from people who knew Blake in his later years that gives Gilchrist’s *Life* its continuing authority. Gilchrist collected information from many people who had been intimate friends of Blake, and consequently almost everything he says may be based on an oral authority which cannot now be recovered. Gilchrist gives no source notes, and makes very little use of documentary sources or public records. This means that his biography is weakest for Blake’s life before he met Palmer and Linnell, Gilchrist’s chief informants, and for any information about his family.

It was not until 1906 that Arthur Symons looked at the parish registers of St. James’s Piccadilly, to establish the dates of birth of William’s brothers and sister.635 It took until 1947 for H. M. Margoliouth to locate the marriage of James and Catherine, William’s parents.636

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James Blake married Catherine "Harmitage" at the Mayfair Chapel 15 October 1751. The marriage, without reading of banns or bishop’s licence was technically “clandestine”.637

Bentley’s Blake Records (1969) spreads the known information about Blake’s life over 418 pages.638 But the years 1757 to 1800, half Blake’s life, occupy just the first 61 pages. Bentley adds very little to Gilchrist about Blake’s childhood and parentage.

E. P. Thompson’s Witness against the Beast (1993) is a recent example of the persistence of unexamined and unverified ideas in Blake studies. Thompson is wrong in practically every assertion he makes in this book with one exception. The exception, the single unassailable fact, is the extraordinarily important discovery that Catherine, Blake’s mother, was married twice, first to Thomas Armitage (whom Thompson calls Hermitage) and then to James Blake.

I examined Thompson’s arguments in Chapter I. There I established that Blake’s mother Catherine’s maiden name was Wright. Thomas Armitage, her first husband was born in Royston, Yorkshire in 1722, the son of Richard Armitage of Cudworth. I can confidently say that Catherine Wright married Thomas Armitage on 14 December 1746, was widowed in 1751, and married James Blake in October 1752. Both marriages took place at the Mayfair Chapel, following the Church of England service, and performed by ordained, though unbenefticed, Anglican clergy.

In my essay “William Blake’s mother: a new identification” (1999), I suggested that Blake’s mother was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Wright of the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Assuming Catherine Wright to be a Londoner seemed the simplest explanation,
the one that gave the best fit with the known data. I was misled. I had unthinkingly accepted a fourth topos. One given fullest elaboration by Peter Ackroyd: that of Blake the “cockney visionary” who I assumed must have had a cockney mother. Of course, the modification I shall make in this chapter of my own published work (itself corrective of previous scholarship) is an important indicator of how much inaccurate or incomplete information abounds about even the most basic details of Blake’s life.

I concluded in 1999 by stressing how the surviving evidence not only does not support Thompson’s claims of a Muggletonian background to the Blake family, but, in fact does not even support the conventional view of the Blakes as Dissenters. In his recent The Stranger from Paradise, which purports to consist of just the unmediated evidence for Blake’s life, Bentley incorporates my discoveries in the form of genealogical tables. I don’t think he has fully absorbed their implications, because Bentley, too, cannot resist the dissenting topos. This final chapter is a response to a suggestion of William Muir’s regarding Blake’s early religious affiliation that warranted further investigation.

In 1828 John Thomas Smith reported that William Blake had not attended “any place of Divine Worship” for the last forty years of his life. Nancy Bogen suggests that “it seems reasonable to suppose that he was connected with a religious organization prior to that time, that is, before 1787. Indeed, Blake must have received some sort of religious training as a

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639 See Peter Ackroyd, Blake (London, 1995), passim.
640 Bentley, The Stranger from Paradise (New Haven, 2001), xix, xxi.
CHAPTER VIII

youth — but of what denomination remains to be seen."William Blake was baptised in 1757 into the Church of England, but that may have been as much or more to do with economic and legal pressures than that his parents were practising Anglicans.

One way of resolving this problem of Blake’s early religion is suggested by an item in his deathbed conversation. It seems that during the course of discussing his last wishes, he had expressed a preference for burial in Bunhill Fields, the Dissenters’ burial ground, and Mrs. Blake offered him a choice as to funeral arrangements; that is, “either he would have the Dissenting Minister, or the Clergyman of the Church of England, to read the service”. It’s as though Catherine, his own wife, did not know where his preferences lay. Blake, in this account, chose the Church of England. The possibility then raised by Nancy Bogen is that Blake and his family were Anglicans and at the same time maintained a connection with the Moravian Church. The position of this body in England during the eighteenth century was quite unusual. While it was recognised by an Act of Parliament as an episcopal church and therefore a sister to the Church of England, its members were still required to have their places of worship licensed as Dissenting chapels. In other words, they were and then again were not Dissenters. Also, having been more intent on evangelising than proselytising, the Moravians encouraged those who joined their congregation not to sever their tie with whatever denomination they had been born into. The Moravians were only too pleased when they could lead their adherents back to the local parish church for the ministration of the

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Accordingly, one could be an Anglican and a Moravian at the same time — and it turns out that a majority of the English brethren were and remained loyal members of the Church of England.

This theory of Blake’s Moravian connection was first advanced by Thomas Wright and later enlarged upon by Margaret Ruth Lowery, their informal source of information having been William Muir. It deserves a fair hearing because Muir was explicit; that is, according to him, Blake’s parents “attended the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane” — and such a chapel did exist, having been established around 1738. However, Bogen goes on to justify the Moravian theory with the comment that “Muir ... was a near contemporary of several people who had been personally acquainted with Blake”. Bogen is citing Sir Geoffrey Keynes who advised her that “Muir was nearly ninety years old when they met before 1914”. This is entirely incorrect. Muir was in his sixties when he first met Keynes. Keynes and Muir were both present at the inaugural meeting of Thomas Wright’s Blake Society in 1912, when Muir was sixty-seven. They may have met before then. Keynes “discovered” Blake when a student at Cambridge in 1907.

Moravian is the name in common use for a church which is the direct continuation of the Bohemian Brethren after their “renewal” under Nikolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf. The Moravian Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum, traced their origin to the followers of Jan Hus in the

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fifteenth century. The Church was largely destroyed in the Thirty Years War. In 1722 the surviving remnant sought refuge at Herrnhut in Saxony, on the estate of Count Zinzendorf. He took over the Moravian Brethren and transformed them into a missionary group, a Pilgrim Church. Zinzendorf used the revived Church as the vehicle for his theological speculations. From then on there was a strong Pietist element in the community; and they also became closely linked to the Lutheran Church, in which they considered themselves a group (ecclesiola). In theology the Moravians have always distrusted doctrinal formulae. In general they have stood for a simple and unworldly Christianity. Of the Moravians, Ronald Knox asserts: “Few among the Christianities have remained so small in numbers; few have been so influential”. They were ardent missionaries and in 1749 the English Parliament recognised them as “an ancient Protestant episcopal church”.

In 1738 the Moravian missionary Peter Böhler established a “religious society” at Fetter Lane, London, where he exercised a deep influence on John Wesley. The “Fetter Lane Society” was one of a number of independent religious societies of its day, with membership from the Established Church as well as Dissenters. It first met for worship and spiritual edification in the house of James Hutton, bookseller, at the “Bible and Sun,” west of Temple Bar, London. When Hutton’s house was found too small for their meetings, they rented the chapel, No. 32 Fetter Lane.

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Such, furthermore, was the influence that Boehler brought to bear upon this meeting by his plainness of speech in expounding the doctrine of salvation, that its members agreed to conduct their proceedings hereafter in accordance with, and to strive to be actuated by the spirit of certain regulations proposed by him, and adopted on the 12th of May, 1738. They were styled "Orders of a Religious Society meeting in Fetter Lane."652

This first London (Moravian) congregation, including men like James Hutton, William Holland and John Gambold, rejected any suggestion that their new alignment implied separation; they were eager to evangelise, reluctant to proselytise; they appealed to Anglican clergy to undertake the spiritual charge of their converts.653 The Wesley brothers and their Methodist adherents were members of this Society until July 1740.

Moravianism is essentially neither a doctrine nor a discipline, but a spirituality. Like Jansenism, like Wesleyanism, it is in part a reaction against the Deistic thought of the day, which offered to the human soul a barren nourishment of Christianity without Christ.654 The Moravian spirituality was Christocentric, focusing on Christ's blood and wounds, particularly the side-wound, and, in line with Zinzendorf's "marriage religion", on Christ as the husband. From the Count's return to Europe from America in 1734 to about 1750 this reached a peak retrospectively referred to as "the Sifting Time". Moravians aimed at becoming ever more childlike and simple, playing games and developing a secret language laced with diminutive terms of endearment. William Hurd noted

652 Abraham Reincke, A Register of Members of the Moravian Church and of Persons Attached to Said Church in this Country and Abroad between 1727 and 1754. Transcribed from a MS. in the Handwriting of the Rev. Abraham Reincke to be found in the Archives of the Moravian Church at Bethlehem, P.A. and Illustrated with Historical Annotations by W. C. Reichel (Nazareth, 1873), 292-93. I am grateful to Dr. M. K. Schuchard for this reference.


They have a great devotion for the five red wounds of the crucifixion, but that which Christ received in his side is extolled above all the rest. This is their favorite wound, "the very dear little opening, the precious and thousand times pretty little side." They kiss this wound, they kiss the spear that made it, and would kiss the soldier whose hand had conducted the spear; they thank him for it. It is in this opening that the faithful reposes himself; there he breathes, there he sports, there he lays down sometimes lengthwise, sometimes cross-wise: there is his country, his house, his hall, his little bed, his little table: there he eats, there he drinks, there he lives, there he praises the dear little Lamb.655

In the 1740s, the spiritual light the Moravians emitted was brilliant, and the part they played in the Evangelical Revival then taking shape was cardinal. The leading Evangelicals, the Wesleys, George Whitefield, Howel Harris, Philip Doddridge, Lady Huntingdon, were drawn in like moths. Count Zinzendorf when they met him was irresistible. Of course, the Moravians stepped into a situation already prepared. The Anglican Religious Societies, the Oxford Holy Club, the Pietists at court (centred on the Lutheran chaplain), together with supporters of relief for persecuted Continental Protestants ("the most popular charity of the 1730s"), the philanthropist James Oglethorpe’s Trust for Establishing a Colony in Georgia (in North America), the SPCK and Thomas Bray’s Associates for Supporting Negro Schools formed "a complex network of relationships", often further excited by the millenarian enthusiasm of the French Prophets, themselves a network with which Zinzendorf was in touch.656

The happy childlike detachment of the Moravians came like a revelation from heaven, while their strange devotional language and foreign ways of worship, with the Count’s grandeur and the almost Messianic position accorded him, added excitement. Though noted


for their missions to distant parts — Doddridge joined their Society for the Furtherance of
the Gospel — they had no designs on the English, with whose language some of their leaders
were unacquainted. They were not in the British Isles to proselytise; for them the land was
a staging-post on the way to Georgia. When individuals were received or a congregation was
established, it was often half reluctantly, in response to others’ initiative. Zinzendorf had a
keen sense of what might benefit his movement internationally and tried to win the support
for it of the English episcopate.

In 1743 the names “Mr. and Mrs. Blake” appeared on the register of the Fetter Lane Society,
at a time when seventy-two members formed “The Congregation of the Lamb”, a society
“within the Church of England in union with the Moravian Brethren”:

MEMBERS OF “THE FETTER LANE SOCIETY,” IN LONDON.
1743.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Married Men</th>
<th>Married Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELL, WILLIAM.</td>
<td>BELL, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BENNETT, —</td>
<td>BENNETT, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLAKE, —</td>
<td>BLAKE, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>BULLY, —</td>
<td>BULLY, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAMDEN, —</td>
<td>ALTERS, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>EWSTERS, —</td>
<td>EWSTERS, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>FARMER, —</td>
<td>ASHBURN, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD, —</td>
<td>BROWN, (on Swan Alley).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIBBS, —</td>
<td>GIBBS, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLADMAN, THOMAS</td>
<td>BURTON, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLENDENNING, —</td>
<td>DAY, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAY, —</td>
<td>GRAY, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>HARRISON, —</td>
<td>DELAMOTTE, —</td>
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<td>HASLIP, —</td>
<td>HASLIP, —</td>
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<td>HUGGINS, —</td>
<td>FISH, —</td>
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<td>HUGHES, —</td>
<td>HUGHES, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAMES, —</td>
<td>FOOT, —</td>
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<tr>
<td>JONES, OWEN —</td>
<td>FOXWELL, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEWIS, —</td>
<td>FROGNALL, —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAN, —</td>
<td>MAN, —</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Blake couple were perhaps William's grandparents, James Blake's parents. And is it even possible that the Mr. and Mrs. Parker on the 1743 list were the parents of Blake's later business partner, James Parker? When William Muir wrote to Margaret Ruth Lowery in 1936, claiming that Blake's parents attended the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane, he may have seen the above list transcribed by Abraham Reincke and published in 1873. On the other hand, Muir may just possibly have been drawing on some family tradition that originated with his great-great-uncle Alexander Tilloch, or his great-great-aunt Margaret Tilloch.

The Moravians placed special emphasis on hymn singing, and Zinzendorf compiled a hymnbook just for children. Such emphasis, suggests Bogen, could help account for Blake's early musical ability — the ability alluded to in one contemporary biography of him and substantiated to a certain extent in An Island in the Moon, in which the characters, including Blake's caricature of himself alternately sing and talk nonsense. Many too of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience are hymn-like and are believed to have been sung by Blake, either to existing melodies or to tunes of his own invention. William Muir was

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657 Reincke, A Register of Members of the Moravian Church and of Persons Attached to Said Church in this Country and Abroad between 1727 and 1754 (Nazareth, 1873), 294-96.

responsible for a suggestion that the Moravian hymn-book was a particular influence.  

“If you want to hear pure psalmody”, said Wesley “go to Fulneck and hear them sing ‘Think of thy Son’s so bitter death’”660. The Moravian hymnody, which so impressed Wesley on his voyage to America, was brought from Herrnhut to England by Moravian missionaries about 1735. Following his return from Georgia, John Wesley associated himself for a while with this small group of Moravians in London and became more closely acquainted with their hymns and tunes. A small collection of English translations of the Herrnhut hymns was published in London in 1742.661 The lack of literary skill on the part of the Moravian translators, and their insistence upon fitting the English versions to the unusual metres of the Herrnhut melodies, often resulted in awkwardness and illiterate expression.

The childlike (sometimes childish) aspect of some Moravian hymnody is apparent:

Chicken blessed,
And caressed,
Little Bee on Jesu’s Breast,
From the Hurry
And the Flurry,
Of the Earth thou’rt now at rest.
From our Care in lower Regions,
Thou art taken to the Legions,
Who ’bove human Griefs are rais’d,
There thou’rt kept, the Lamb be prais’d!
Chicken blessed!
Be caressed,

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659 Wright, The Life of William Blake (Olney, 1929), vol. 1, 2.


661 A Collection of Hymns, with Several Translations from the Hymn-Book of the Moravian Brethren (London, 1742).
Thou that sleep'st on Jesu's Breast.\textsuperscript{662}

It could easily be held up to mockery, and was. James Hutton felt obliged to make a kind of apology on the last leaf of the 1748 Hymnal:

My Heart is not ashamed of the Sentiments, and I can excuse every other Defect for the Sake of these.\textsuperscript{663}

The Moravian hymns refer repeatedly to the Lamb, a key emblem of their spirituality:

1 \textbf{HOLY Lamb, and Prince of Peace,}
   Hear my Soul implore Thy Grace,
   Let it thro' Thy Pow'r divine,
   In Thy Lamb-like Meekness shine.

2 \textbf{Grant, that faithfully I may}
   As a Lamb Thy Voice obey,
   Soul and Body brought with Price,
   Be Thy living Sacrifice.

3 \textbf{Valiant, stedfast may my Love}
   In the hardest Tryals prove;
   And in all Adversity,
   Both a Lamb and Lion be.

4 \textbf{Keep Thou me a feeble Child,}
   Sober, watchful, undefil'd;
   That where'er Thy Steps I see,
   Simply I may follow Thee.

5 \textbf{Thou the great victorious Lamb,}
   Who all Hosts of Hell o'ercame;
   Grant, that in Thy Blood I may
   Conqu'ror be till Thy great Day.

6 \textbf{When Thou shalt on Sion stand,}
   I shall be at Thy Right-Hand;
   In Thy God-like Glory bright,

\textsuperscript{662}Hymns Composed for the Use of the Brethren. By the Right Reverend, and Most Illustrious C. Z. (Published for the Benefit of all Mankind. In the Year 1749), [3-4] ("HYMN 33."). This is a compilation of some of the more inept Moravian hymns, published as part of a concerted attack on the sect in 1749 and 1750.

\textsuperscript{663}A Collection of Hymns: Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the German. Part III. 2nd ed. (London, 1748), [6].
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Thou my Temple, Thou my Light.\textsuperscript{664}

Like Blake’s “The Lamb” (\textit{E} 8-9) from the \textit{Songs of Innocence}, the hymn treats of the Christian paradox of the “great, victorious Lamb”.

\begin{center}\textbullet\end{center}

In June 2001, Dr. M. K. Schuchard decided to take William Muir’s claims about the Moravians seriously, and together we began to explore the resources of the Moravian Church Archive. The results have proved to be of the first importance for an understanding of Blake’s biography and will have serious implications for the study of his works.

There are a number of references in the archive to members of a Blake family. Thus, in November 1749: “Sister Blake an old member of the Society went to our Saviour”.\textsuperscript{665} Or this in 1742: “Blake is a poor vexed man, a Slave”\textsuperscript{666}. There is even a petition for membership in the Congregation of the Lamb addressed by one John Blake “For Brother Beoler”\textsuperscript{667}:

Dear Brother Beoler I have a Desire to write to you and to our Saviour’s Dear Congregation that I may come in a Closer connexont with them, that I may injoy those privilidged with our Dear Saviour as his Congregation have. I made bold to Rite to you to Let you know how it stands with my hart I am a poor missarable unhappy Creature. but for such I know the Saviour Shed his Blood for. may that blood which me Clense and make me one of those that can Rejoyce in hiss wounds, and may his Death and Suffring be the only thing, the one thing neefull for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{A Collection of Hymns, with Several Translations from the Hymn-Book of the Moravian Brethren}. The second edition (London, 1743), 49-50 (“XXXVIII. \textit{From the German. N° 781.”}).
\item Moravian Archive: Congregation Diary, vol. I (11 November 1741-23 November 1742).
\item That is, Peter Böehler, German-born leader of the Fetter Lane community.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
me, to make me happy, I know I am a Sinnor and for Sutch the saviour shed his
blood. O may I become a happy Sinnor from this moment and to all Eternity. O take
me by the hand and hart. and Promise me to our Saviour as one as his purchase, as
one he paid So great a price for as one that cost him many Tears Smarts and pain, O
Lamb of God grant that I may be a memb’ of thy Congregation, and may be quite
happy, from your Brother

John Blake

O take me by the hand and
hart. ec. 668

Conceivably, this could be the John Blake, perhaps James Blake’s uncle, resident like him
at 5 Glasshouse Street in 1743. 669 The letter is typical of such requests for membership in the
congregation; its stress on the blood and wounds of Christ is fully in accord with
contemporary Moravian spirituality.

All this, of course, is speculation, but of much the greatest importance are the
references to a Moravian Church member called Thomas Armitage (already established as
the name of Blake’s mother’s first husband). Thus, in the Congregation Diary for 1751
[Plate 23]:

Sat. Sept. 28, 1751. Br. Armitage, being sick, and having long desired it, had the H.
Communion administered to him privately. At 1:00 was Sabb[ath] L[ove] F[east] at
Bloomsbury. 670

Can this is be Catherine Blake’s first husband? Confirmatory data can be found in the
Church Book of “The Congregation of the Lamb ... as Settled Octr 30 1742. in London”,
which contains a tabulated list of members. Thus, we find an entry for

668 Moravian Archive: MS. C/36/2/168, (undated). A number of these letters conclude,
as here, with a line or lines from a Moravian hymn.

669 Bentley, Blake Records, 551. John Blake moved into 5 Glasshouse Street, south-west
of Golden Square, Westminster, in 1743. James Blake, the poet’s father, was resident in
Glasshouse Street when he voted in the 1749 by-election. The evidence that John was related
to James consists simply in that they lived in the same house.

670 Moravian Archive: Congregation Diary, vol. v (1751), 61.
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Thomas Armitage Hosier Ch: of Eng M[arried] B[rother] | [born] at Cudworth in the Parish of Royson in Yorkshire in May 1723 | [received into the Congregation] 1750 Nov. 26. | [first admitted to the Sacrament] on his sick Bed Sep: 28\textsuperscript{th} 1751 | Departed this Life Nov: 19 1751\textsuperscript{671}

and a few pages later (male and female sequences are kept quite separate) [Plate 24]:

Catherine Armitage M[arried] S[ister] | [born] Walkingham Nottinghamshire Nov: 21\textsuperscript{st} 1725 | [received into the Congregation] 1750 Nov. 26 | became a Widow & left the Congregation.\textsuperscript{672}

We thus see that, in 1751, the Moravian congregation at Fetter Lane included a young couple, Thomas and Catherine Armitage, and Thomas has the place and approximate date of birth (Royston, Yorkshire, 1723 for 1722), the profession (hosier), the death in November 1751, already established for Catherine Blake’s first husband. What is more, the Archive includes documents from their hands. Persons wishing to participate fully in the Congregation of the Lamb were encouraged to make letters of application, formerly read in public at the Fetter Lane Letter Days, but after 1748 reserved for the private perusal of the Congregation’s elders. There survive in the Moravian Archive letters from both Thomas and Catherine Armitage.

First, a letter [Plate 25] from Thomas Armitage “For Bro: West” to apply to the Congregation of the Lamb.

My Dear Brethren

My Dear Saviour has maid me Love you in Such a degree, as I never did Experience before to any Set of of People; and I believe it is his will that I should come amongst you; because he has done it himself, for I could not bear the Doctrine of his Bloody Corps, till; very lately, till non but my D’ Saviour could show me;

\textsuperscript{671}Moravian Archive: MS. C/36/5/1, Church Book of the Brethren: Congregation in London, 36.

\textsuperscript{672}Moravian Archive: MS. C/36/5/1, Church Book of the Brethren: Congregation in London, 45.

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perfectly, & he over came me so sweetly that I shall never forget, when I only went out of curiosity to hear Bro' Cennick, which was to be the last Time I thought I wod care in hearing any of the Brethren; & my Jesus Show'd me that I had been seeking something else besides him, nor could I then bear the thought of hearing anything Else; but of him being Crucified & of his Bleeding wounds, which I Experienced very Sweet & the only food for my Soul then; I am but very poor in my Self & weak and find my Love very cool sometime toward him, for all hes done for me so much, but when my Loving Saviour comes again and kindles that Spark, then I feel I can love him dearly; so he makes me love him or Else I should not love him at all —; & I can feel my Saviour, forgive me all my base acctions from time to time; for all that my D' Lords Love is such, as bad as I am I know he Loves me with that ever lasting Love, that nothing shall separate us, as St Paul sais, from Your Unworthy Brother in the Suffering Jesus

Tho6 Armitage673

The following month, the Congregation Diary [Plate 23] records the death of Thomas Armitage:

23 Nov. 1751. Sabb. L.F. was at Westminster. Today was buried in Bloomsbury Ground the Body of Thomas Armitage a married Br. He was born in the Parish of Royson in Yorkshire, in May 1723, married at London, & was by trade a Hosier. He was receiv'd into the Congregation, Nov. 26 1750, and partook of the H. covenant on his sick bed, Sept. 28 1751. His sickness was a slow Consumption, of which he died last Tuesday Morning. Towards the latter end a little Fretfulness clouded his Love, which he always bore to his nearest Hearts; but the Night before he departed, he desired they would forgive him this, & took a cordial Leave afterwards of his Wife.674

What trauma and anguish lay behind the words “a little Fretfulness clouded his Love” we can but speculate.

The Moravian Church Archive also contains a letter of application from Catherine Armitage [Plate 26], expressing the same intense “Blood and Wounds” Moravian spirituality.

My Dear Bretheren & Sistors


674Moravian Archive: Congregation Diary, vol. v (1751), 80.
I have very littell to say of my self for I am a pore crature and full of wants but my Dear Saviour will satisfy them all I should be glad if I could allways lay at the Cross full as I do know thanks be to him last friday at the love feast Our Savour was pleased to make me Suck his wounds and hug the Cross more then Ever and I trust will more and more till my fraile nature can hould no more at your request I have rit but I am not worthy of the blessing it is desird for I do not Love our Dear Savour halfe enough but if it is will to bring me among his hapy flock in closer conection I shall be very thankful I would tell you more of my self but itt is nothing thats good so now I will rite of my Savour that is all Love Here let me drink for ever drink nor never once depart for what I tast makes me to cry fix at this Spring My heart Dear Savour thou has seen how oft I've turnd away from thee O let thy work renewd to day Remain eternally

Catherine Armitage

The letter, we see, ends with a quotation from a Moravian hymn. Here is irrefutable evidence of Blake’s mother’s religious convictions, her literacy (perhaps showing where her son got his eccentric spelling from), and the intimacy with Moravian hymns that Muir drew our attention to.

The “Walkingham” of the Moravian Church Book where Catherine Wright was born in 1725, is the little Nottinghamshire village of Walkeringham, some twenty-four miles from Cudworth, Yorkshire, where her first husband, Thomas Armitage, was born in 1722. Walkeringham stands on the west bank of the Trent, about one mile from where the ferry

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Moravian Archive: MS. C/36/2/159. The letter bears no date, but is probably written at the same time as her husband’s, 14 November 1750.

No. 79 of the 1754 hymn-book. The hymn is also cited in Daniel Benham, Memoirs of James Hutton (London, 1856), 596.

Ordnance Survey Grid Ref: SK766927.

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crossed to Walkerith, in Lincolnshire. In 1801, the earliest date for which census information is available, the population of the village was 419. It has remained a small community, the population being 859 in 1991. Epworth, where John Wesley was born in 1703, and where John Varley's father, Richard, originated, is six miles away.

The Wrights of Walkeringham were yeoman farmers and maltsters. The Archdeaconry wills, now in Nottinghamshire County Archives, include those of several members of the family. Benjamin Wright, yeoman, in his will, proven 12 February 1685/6, left £5 to the poor of the parish, with a number of legacies and bequests of sheep. Gervase Wright, maltster and yeoman, perhaps Catherine's grandfather, was comfortably off; the inventory of his estate, 7 October 1700, includes malt worth £120 out of a total value of the estate of £384.

According to the parish register, Catherine, daughter of Gervase Wright and his wife Mary, was christened 21 November 1725 in Walkeringham.678 (The entries in FamilySearch for Walkeringham parish through a dating error put Catherine’s birth into 1726. Hence she did not show up in the trawl for a Catherine Wright born before 1725 that I record in Chapter 1.) Gervase and Mary Wright had eight children:

Richard, christened 29 April 1715;

Katharin, christened 15 October 1718, died young;

Robert, christened 6 February 1717;

John, christened 1 January 1720;

Elizabeth, christened 30 January, died October 1722;

Elizabeth, christened 6 April 1724;

678 Nottinghamshire Record Office: Parish Register of Walkeringham, Notts.

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Catherine, christened 21 November 1725; [Plate 27]

and Benjamin, christened 23 September 1729.

William Blake now has uncles and an aunt. Most of their names recur for the Blake children. But none of the Blake children are named after their maternal grandfather, Gervase. Had Catherine quarrelled with her father? Or is it just that “Gervase” is too much of a “country-bumpkin” name for an upwardly-mobile London family? Her mother Mary’s name is also conspicuously absent. Catherine’s brother Benjamin, who married Elizabeth Whitehead in 1754, has children Richard (born 1759), Elizabeth (1763), Catherine (1766), Thomas (1769), and Mary (1772). Again, none of the sons are given their paternal grandfather’s name.

Nothing has been more commented on, or more criticised, about the Moravian discipline than the provision that marriages should be determined by the elders of the Congregation, or even settled by lot. Henry Rimius, a hostile witness, wrote in 1753:

The Elders have the sole Right of making Matches. No promise of Marriage is of any Validity without their consent. The Maids devote themselves to the Saviour, not that their Intent is never to marry, but to marry only such a Person, with Respect to whom God shall have made known to them with Certainty, that he is regenerated, instructed in the Importance of the Conjugal State, and appointed by the divine Direction to enter into that State.679

“Falling” in love could only be regarded as a relic of corrupt nature; the regenerate must have a higher sense of their responsibilities. The husband in every marriage was simply the

679 Henry Rimius, A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters, commonly called the Moravians, or Unitas Fratrum; with a Short Account of their Doctrines, Drawn from their Own Writings, to Which are Added, Observations on their Politics in General, and Particularly of their Conduct whilst in the County of Büdingen in the Circle of the Upper-Rhine in Germany. 2nd ed. (London, 1753), 20.
viceregent of Christ, deputed by the Church to act in his name. Catherine left the congregation and married James Blake. The two events may be connected. Even if James Blake were himself a Moravian, marriage without the agreement of the elders would have led to dismissal from the congregation.

Moravian theories of education and the possible adherence of Blake’s parents to them could likewise account for William having had no formal schooling. As far as it is known, none of the children in the Blake family went to school, and Blake’s feelings about his own case are preserved in the well known epigram: “Thank God I never was sent to school | To be Flogd into following the Style of a Fool” (E 510). The Moravians expressed a belief in the “moral innocence” of children and in the “free development of the individual life from within.” Also, they considered “petty rules and negative discipline” harmful and a “noble example” more effective as far as the teaching of children was concerned.

The Congregational Diary of the Fetter Lane Chapel recorded a preacher as saying in 1753: “He also wished, that all Parents had solidity & Grace for educating their own Children, because this is the more natural way than to send them in to Nurseries, & this Charge & Employment wd. be a Blessing to the Parents own Hands”. And three years later, the Diary recorded a meeting of parents of young Children, “wherein the Educ. of the Children was more practically treated of & more to the purpose, than ever before”. The following month, at another parents’ meeting: “a simple & blessed spirit of Openheartedness reigned, and the important matter of the Education of Children was anew so laid upon the

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681 Moravian Archive: Congregation Diary VII (1753), 102 (“Sat., 8 July”).
Hearts of all the Brs. & Srs that many tears were shed".683 A child’s education, according to their way of thinking, could be carried on to more advantage in the home rather than in an institution.684

Blake famously wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, “The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion” (E 37). The genitals, in theology as in life, can be a source of consternation and anxiety. In the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem, a golden sculpture of male and female cherubim guarded the Ark of the Covenant. The Kabbalists claimed that the cherubim were entwined in the act of marital intercourse, thus forming an emblem of God’s joyful marriage with his female emanation, the Shekhinah. When the Temple was sacked by pagans, the erotic statuary was paraded through the streets in order to ridicule the Jews.685 That Blake was aware of this tradition is suggested by his reference to the defilement of Jerusalem, “The Tabernacle taken down, thy secret Cherubim disclosed” (E 166).

There is a particular taboo on the topic of the sexuality of Jesus, but it has sometimes been defied. By the sixteenth century painters were depicting the crucified and the dead Christ with a prominent erection beneath His loincloth.686 The erect penis may have been

683 Moravian Archive: Congregation Diary IX (1756-July ’57), 91-92.
686 A relatively restrained example would be Andrea Mantegna’s “Man of Sorrows” in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. The linen cloth (*sindōn*) that shrouded the corpse is given an elaborate and over-large knot over the genitals.
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intended to symbolise the Resurrection. The purpose of this ostentatio genitalium was to
celebrate the Incarnation or rather the "humanation" of Christ. God became an entire man,
and therefore a sexual being. Evidence of His sexuality is offered as a pledge of that full
humanity. Blake refers to the humanation of Christ in the memorable lines from Auguries
of Innocence:

God Appears & God is Light
To those poor Souls who dwell in Night
But does a Human Form Display
To those who Dwell in Realms of day (E 493).

Leo Steinberg regards the insistent display of the penis, its potentially generative
function and its wounds, as a silent counter to heresy, notably to Arianism, but also to various
forms of Docetism, which denied the humanity of Christ. We can find confirmation of this
in Moravian Circumcision sermons. The penis is proof of total humanation — as evidence
that Jesus was born "complete in all the parts of a man". The Moravians also emphasised the
goodness of sexuality to a degree unusual in Christian history. Their appreciation of the full
humanity of Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, included sexuality. One of the most
important annual religious festivals for the Moravians centred on the circumcision of Christ,
during which they spoke quite openly about Jesus’ penis. Christ’s sexual member is an
image of God’s condescension, an image not of virility but of a voluntary divine abasement
to humanity. The Moravians were equally frank in singing about the breasts and uterus of
Mary at Christmas.

According to Zinzendorf, whoever does not find a blessing in the conception, birth,

687 Leo Steinberg, The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion. 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1996). Steinberg illustrates (figs. 96, 97, 98, 292) several paintings by Maerten van Heemskerck, 1498-1574, where the erection motif is most obvious and insistent.

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and circumcision of Jesus belongs to the devil's religion because the devil always tries to deny the reality of the incarnation and turn it into mere mythology. The Moravians preached that the sexual act itself is the highest expression of spirituality. The union of a man and woman embodies God's love for his people. Sexual intercourse is a sacramental activity, a physical means of grace. This exaltation of sexuality went far beyond the typical Protestant view that sexual pleasure is permissible within marriage. The eighteenth-century Moravians surprise us both by the degree of their control of sexuality and by their stress on the holiness of sexuality for Christians.688

Zinzendorf criticises the common view that marriage is primarily for procreation. Childless couples are still married in the eyes of the Saviour, no matter what civil or canon law may say. Children are a gift, not the goal of marriage. The only true purpose for marriage is to make Christ's love visible. There is a major problem with Zinzendorf's explanation of sexuality, as he freely admitted. Salvation is the experience of being united with the Creator; therefore, each person should become a bride of Christ. In short, men must also be brides of Christ in order to be saved. Zinzendorf gets round the difficulty of human maleness by pronouncing that all souls are essentially feminine. Henry Rimius noted that the Moravians believed that

All souls are of the feminine sex. ... To think that there are male souls, would be, according to [Zinzendorf], the greatest folly, a chimera, which ought not to enter the thoughts of a Christian, were he even in the midst of a high fever. All that is of the male quality, and was adapted to our body, is detached from it as soon as it is interred. It belongs not to its natural and primitive state; it is an addition made to it afterwards; it is the seal of the office, which the male sex is entrusted with. For our sex is an employment, an office. Jesus is the spouse of all the sisters, and the

husbands, in the most proper sense are his procurators, his agents.\footnote{Hurd, \textit{A New Universal History of the Religious Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of the Whole World} (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1811), 732-33. Hurd is quoting directly from the anti-Moravian Rimius.}

Therefore, it is not only women who enjoy the mystical marriage. A man acts as "a consort, as a playmate for the marriage bed of the blessed Creator and eternal Husband of the human soul". Ultimately, Christ is the only true male, and men will be married to him just as women are. This view of the soul's relationship to Christ has interesting implications for Zinzendorf's anthropology. It appears that Zinzendorf was seeking a theory of androgyny, at least for men. He does say that in the future there will be only one gender, the female.\footnote{Atwood, "Sleeping in the Arms of Christ", \textit{Journal of the History of Sexuality}, vol. 8 (1977), 35-36.} Moravian ideas about souls and about Jesus as the universal husband, the one true male, could well have stirred Blake's imagination in a number of ways.\footnote{Lindsay, \textit{William Blake} (London, 1978), 276.} Perhaps a Moravian spirituality lies behind Blake's ideas concerning the sexual union of man and woman as a means to restore the originally androgynous state of the human being in the fallen world.\footnote{Blake and Zinzendorf are responding to the verses:
\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
\textbf{Genesis 1: 27}: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
\textbf{Genesis 5: 2}: Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.
\end{center}
\end{quote}
On Blake's sexual theology, see J. G. Davies, \textit{The Theology of William Blake} (Oxford, 1948), 146-50.}

What is distinctive about the Moravians is not their theology, not a body of doctrine, which their opponents sought to traduce as heretical and antinomian, but their spirituality, a search...
for transcendence. A lived spirituality is a dynamic activity in which meaning and joy are created from whatever is to hand in a happenstance conglomeration of the quotidian, historical accident, and established tradition. Was it the Moravian ecumenical ideals that led Blake, in *Jerusalem*, to write of

Fenelon, Guion, Teresa,
Whitefield & Hervey, ... with all the gentle Souls
Who guide the great Wine-press of Love (*E* 227)?

Catholic and Protestant, Methodist and Calvinist, all rely on the spontaneous impulses of the heart, without regard for rank, sect, or liturgy.

Towards the end of the 1740s and in the early 1750s the spirituality became increasingly focused on the Communion, in which one male applicant hoped to “eat and drink ... the crucified, bleeding Corpse of my Creator and Spouse”. In the 1750s the Fulneck Congregation Diary recorded how the congregation “corporally enjoyed” the “reall Corpse and Blood of our only Lover and Bridegroom”. Communion was the embrace of the husband, “a conjugal penetration of our bloody husband”; and “Our dearest husband ... himself penetrated us with his Corpse and Blood, in such an unutterable manner, that the Words are wanting to express it”.

Another frequently used image was that of Elisha, who when reviving a dead boy put his mouth upon the boy’s mouth and stretched himself upon him so that the child’s flesh became warm. The Fulneck congregation was “known by” its “bleeding lover” and he “stretched his Corpse” over them and “did as Elisha did unto the Child”. In the Moravian sacrament “both Corpses died in one another”, and as late as 1759 a hundred Yorkshire

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sisters were “sacramentally pervaded and died into his Virginal corpse”. Death was the “last Kiss” of the “eternal Bridegroom”.

John Cennick wrote of the wounds in 1746: “I am often too big and too great to get in yet ... and pray the Lord to make me like a dear little Bee that can go in and out and suck the honey from all his wounds which are like so many pretty Roses about his lovely Body”. As this suggests that, for the Moravians, Christ was the bleeding lover. The nineteenth century saw this as a time of “pathological deformation” in Zinzendorf’s teaching. Now, however, it is recognised as being not an aberration but his most creative period, continuous with his previous development and not rejected in its essentials in the settled maturity of his last decade.

The Moravians were quite aware that such Sifting Time spirituality might be unpopular or perceived as ridiculous. In 1745 it was ordered that the Litany of the Wounds should not be allowed to fall into anyone’s hands, and in 1748 the Fetter Lane Letter Day had to be given up because there were no longer any letters suitable for reading in public. Many were repelled by this constant harping on the blood and the wounds, but others were attracted, as to judge by their letters were Thomas and Catherine Armitage. People left Whitefield’s society in Bristol because the blood and wounds were not preached in it, and many application letters were couched in terms of Moravian spirituality, of longing to get into the wounds and find rest and refuge there. Most important of all, as Colin Podmore notes, it is surely no mere coincidence that the Sifting Time of 1743-50 was precisely the period of the Moravian Church’s massive expansion in England, and that stagnation and decline did not set in until after it finally ended around 1752. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Moravian spirituality was deeply appealing to many Englishmen and women in the 1740s,
and that the Moravian accounts both contemporary and retrospective of people wishing to join because of the spirituality and the hymns are correct. Colin Podmore shows how the excitement waned, devotion to the Crucified Christ’s wounds (“the warm hot jowcy soft wounds of the Lamb”) became tasteless, the communal life and the elders’ authoritarian discipline unacceptable, especially their control of marriage. Growing public criticism and ridicule, first on the Continent and later, especially from 1753 onwards, in England, left the Moravians chastened and repentant. Collapse finally came when it was found that Moravian unworldiness, topped by Zinzendorf’s extravagance, had led to the running up of enormous debts. Zinzendorf just escaped prison, but left the country. Five years later he was dead. The Moravian dream was over.
Conclusion.

The contextual past of Blake’s work (the *mentalités* out of which it arose) may be securely reconstructed only upon a foundation of sources. These sources will include a wide range of material that happens to have survived — the testimony of contemporaries, artifacts (including Blake’s own works), buildings (such as his surviving residences), maps, public records, and the diverse kinds of evidence that must be drawn together to illuminate and explain the past. At debate are the inferences and probabilistic statements that might feasibly be drawn from the evidence. Inferences are contestable, evidence is provisional and subject

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(This is how one pictures the angel of history. He turns his face toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees a single catastrophe which keeps piling rubble on rubble and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But there is a storm blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings and is so strong the angel cannot close them any longer. This storm drives him inexorably into the future to which his back is turned, while the heap of rubble before him grows skyward. And this storm is called Progress.)
to the discovery of new and better sources. As the English literary historian, James R. Sutherland, once commented: “The price of biographical truth appears, indeed, to be eternal vigilance, and eternal skepticism”.

In my Introduction, I set the scene for this dissertation — to expose the easy but unverified assumptions made by earlier writers — and to show briefly how the biographical discoveries that I present have clear implications for critical studies of Blake. The dissertation is shaped by a concentration on the individuals indicated in the chapter titles: Rebekah Bliss, William Muir, Alexander Tilloch, Richard Twiss, Samuel Varley, and Catherine Wright. All placed in a context of the everyday life of Blake’s London, of “clandestine” marriages, election fever, industrialisation, and the hidden world of alchemists, astrologers, and Rosicrucians.

There is, in my work, an implicit method — and one I think capable of further extension. Blake himself enjoined us

To see a World in a Grain of Sand (E 493).

The method consists in scaling down the research focus to the individual level (Alexander Tilloch, say), turning to local contexts (such as Rosicrucianism), rather than to big concepts (like the Enlightenment). In this, I follow the instigators of microhistory, Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi, in the emphasis on small units and how people conduct their lives within them, believing that wider generalisations can distort the actual reality at the base.

To study the contexts in which works of art and literature are produced is to attempt the pursuit of their author’s intentions, to say that meaning is not fully found in a text but derives in part from the environment in which the text was written. Some of the most

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successful writing about Blake has been concerned not with explaining what is happening in the poems but with finding out what Blake needed to know in order to write those poems.\textsuperscript{696} I am tempted to call this a "Pierre Menard" project, from Borges's fable.\textsuperscript{697} In "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote", Jorge Luis Borges tells the story of a man who sets out to write \textit{Don Quixote}, creating a time and a world not his own. What, indeed, would you need to know to write \textit{The Four Zoas}? In their recent book, Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker hint at a similar approach. They comment that "whereas the recreation of Blake's production method started [by Viscomi] in the Manchester Etching Workshop of 1983 helps us to know how the works were created, no one thought (what a feat of imagining!) to recreate Peterloo, to suggest, perhaps, why the works were created in a particular way at a particular time".\textsuperscript{698}

This contextualised approach to the study of an artist has certain benefits. Robert Essick stresses the importance of exploring

the ways different cultural and institutional contexts create different perspectives on Blake which in turn produce not just different interpretations, but different conceptions of the grounds and constituents of meaning — or at least what constitutes meaning's next-of-kin, significance.\textsuperscript{699}

A work of art is always a historical document; the more we know about the contexts in which


\textsuperscript{697}"Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" in his \textit{Obras completas, 1923-1972}; ed. Carlos V. Frias (Buenos Aires, 1974), 446-47.

"Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", was translated by James E. Irby and published in \textit{Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings} (New York, 1964), 36-44.

\textsuperscript{698}Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker, \textit{Radical Blake: Influence and Afterlife from 1827} (Basingstoke, 2002), 9.

\textsuperscript{699}Robert N. Essick, "Blake and the Production of Meaning", in Steve Clark and David Worrall, eds., \textit{Blake in the Nineties} (London, 1999), 7.
it was created, and its first and intended audience, the better able, too, are we to guard against anachronism and relativism. I have in mind here the view that “only now” can we appreciate Blake’s genius, as though Rebekah Bliss didn’t know what she was buying, as though Thomas Butts’s long commitment as patron involved no understanding of what Blake was up to. The risks and costs of this method are that the intrinsic interest of the various contexts I examine leads away from and overwhelms my expressed intention of seeing Blake’s work freshly and freed from the assumptions of earlier critics.

Recent developments in information technology have made an important contribution to this dissertation. The biographical discoveries which feature in it could not have been achieved without the enhanced access to genealogical data provided by FamilySearch and other on-line sources. The Blake Archive, the on-line Blake Concordance, the Blake Digital Text Project, have accelerated and simplified access to Blake’s writing. The accessibility of major bibliographic datafiles such as ESTC has meant that the output of authors and publishers can be tracked with greater assurance than previously. E-mail has fostered communication between researchers and built a virtual Blakean community.

The risks associated with the new media are largely interpretive — the Blake Archive continues the Erdman approach of privileging the works in Illuminated Printing above any of Blake’s other productions and adds a new distortion of its own — resolving Blake’s output into a succession of isolated individual pages. The Concordance creates a distortion in the

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701 Blake Archive, http://www.blakearchive.org
opposite direction — encouraging one to regard all Blake’s writing as one single continuous text.

Future developments that will impact on Blake studies include new sources such as *Biography Database* — tracking down persons as subscribers to books or as entries in trades directories. Even a brief examination suggests that it provides data that will transform our view of James Blake.702

❖

In Chapter I, I established the date of first marriage and the true maiden name of Blake’s mother. I demonstrated that Catherine Blake’s maiden name was Wright, not Harmitage/Hermitage as previously claimed, and therefore she is not related to the Muggletonian sect through a (hypothetical) relative named George Harmitage or Hermitage, as E. P. Thompson and others have suggested.703 (“Harmitage” was always a red herring; her first husband’s name was Thomas Armitage, though it was occasionally mistranscribed by others as “Harmitage”.) Additionally, the chapter established that both Armitage (Catherine Wright’s first husband) and Blake (her second) voted for the Tory candidate in the 1749 Westminster byelection.

James Blake could have voted Tory for half-a-dozen possible reasons. His politics may have been genuinely Tory. He may even have been a Jacobite. (There is a well-attested Jacobite component to the Tory campaign in the 1749 by-election. Indeed, could his being christened James reflect the Jacobite sympathies of his parents?) Or perhaps his Tory vote reflected class solidarity over the death of Bosavern Penlez, the peruke-maker of St. Giles.


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(Lord Trentham, the Whig candidate, was much criticised for not intervening when Penlez was hanged as a rioter.) James Blake’s politics could have been anti-Gallican. (The byelection had been preceded by anti-Gallican groups attacking a French theatrical company. Again, Trentham was criticised for the role he was supposed to have played in putting down these disturbances.) Or maybe, James Blake just voted as his customers expected him to. But Thompson suppresses all these possibilities in recording James Blake and Thomas Armitage as voting for the “anti-court” candidate. It seems to me that this description is intended to conceal a prime embarrassing fact: that the father of a great radical poet voted Tory.\(^{704}\) Claims that William Blake was born into a politically “radical” family have to be treated with a great deal of caution.

Having located Blake’s mother, a similar process of genealogical search is required to locate Blake’s father. Stephen Blake kept the shop in 1783, and this fact is an important clue that needs to be followed up. The data from contemporary trade directories now becoming available through the Biography Database will make it much easier to reconstruct the history of the “Blake & Son” hosiery business.\(^{705}\)

Joseph Viscomi has commented on the “tenuousness of our assumptions regarding

\(^{704}\)Of course, the substitution “anti-court” for Tory is usually well-intentioned; it’s a standard, and innocuous move in translating contemporary terms for a modern readership. But, in this case, the effect isn’t innocuous. I remain convinced that Thompson’s usage was intended to disguise the nature of a vote for Vandeput. In my original publication (Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Fall 1999) and again in Chapter I, I describe Thompson as “fudging” the issue of James Blake’s politics. I stand by that assertion. James Blake and Thomas Armitage, if asked in 1750 how they had voted in 1749, could not conceivably have said that they cast their vote for the “anti-court” candidate. If they recognised a party or ideological allegiance behind the candidature of Sir George Vandeput they might well have admitted voting “Tory”.

\(^{705}\)The data from trade directories included in Biography Database suggest that James Blake continued the Glasshouse Street business for some years after his marriage (and presumed move to Broad Street). Could the Blakes have been successful hosiers with a chain of shops?
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patronage and the earliest modes by which illuminated books were produced and disseminated.\textsuperscript{706} Every person who bought Blake’s work in his lifetime is of significance to Blake scholarship. Furthermore, each collector provides Blake with a new critical context for his work which can suggest differing possibilities for Blake studies. Thus the collector (Francis Douce) who puts Blake into a context of popular literature, popular prints and emblem books suggests one critical approach, while the collector (Rebekah Bliss) who adds Blake to her collection of contemporary illustrated books and medieval illuminated manuscripts suggests another. There have been individual studies of some of Blake’s collectors, but little attempt has been made to view them as forming a network or set of networks — linked by friendship, shared religious sympathies or geographical proximity.

I have identified Blake’s first known collector and uncovered evidence of the commercial availability of Blake’s work in illuminated printing in the 1790s.

I showed in Chapter II that the Mrs. Bliss who owned \textit{Bibliotheca splendidissima} with its copies of the \textit{Songs} and the \textit{Gates of Paradise} is to be identified as Rebekah Bliss, of Kensington and Loughton. In so doing, I produced evidence of an overlooked component of Blake’s early audience. Richard Twiss’s letters from Bush Hill, Edmonton, to Francis Douce contain the earliest known reference to any books by Blake. Thanks to her friendship with the Walkers at Arnos Grove in Edmonton parish, Mrs. Bliss had reason to visit Bush Hill and must be the “Lady here” who showed her Blake books to Twiss in 1794. Bliss thus owned books by Blake as early as September 1794; and she may have acquired these works directly from Blake himself. She is the earliest collector known to have owned anything by

Blake and, as I intimated in my Introduction, of signal importance.707

As a bibliophile contemporary of Wollstonecraft and Austen, Rebekah Bliss’s collection of sumptuous printed books and illuminated manuscripts provides an extraordinary example of a dissenting, woman-centred, female connoisseur. She poses interesting questions as to the female role in purchasing and reading Blake’s works, about how and why such work entered the private space of women’s reading. Other early women collectors such as Elizabeth Aders and Elizabeth Iremonger themselves merit fuller investigation. Feminist assessment of Blake has grown increasingly sceptical over the past two decades, but attention to Mrs. Bliss and her milieu obliges us to reassess the particular appeal of his works to a contemporary female audience.

I cite Rebekah Bliss’s ownership of a proof copy of *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* as evidence that she dealt directly with Blake himself, speculating that since the two travelled in the same dissenting circles, they could have met socially, if not commercially through Joseph Johnson. But regardless of whether they knew each other, her presence indicates the existence of different kind of dissenting community from that customarily associated with Blake. In addition, these new pieces of evidence should compel a revision of the traditional assumption that Blake lacked any significant contemporary audience.

My Chapter III continues this theme of how Blake’s contemporary collectors established a market — how Blake’s books were sought as rare works of art even in his lifetime. This chapter demonstrates the social face of book-collecting in the circle of Richard

707 Though George Cumberland, for example, had been a friend of Blake almost certainly since the 1780s, the evidence of Bentley’s *Blake Books* (1977), *Blake Books Supplement* (1995), and Viscomi’s *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, particularly for when copies were printed, suggests that he did not acquire any of Blake’s work in Illuminated Printing until much later.
Twiss, and explores the way in which a group of book-collecting friends provide a context in which knowledge of Blake’s work could be disseminated.

The discoveries in the Twiss-Douce letters that form the basis of my Chapter III also have far-reaching implications for our knowledge of the marketing of Blake’s work in the 1790s. The implication of Twiss’s letter to Douce of 29 September 1794 is that Johnson is selling (or at least displaying for interested purchasers) Blake’s work in illuminated printing. This discovery establishes precise points of mediation with the contemporary radical intelligentsia and enriches our understanding of the economics of Blake’s life as an artist and poet; it poses further questions about the role of Joseph Johnson in relation to Blake and his work, and the place of Blake in the London book-trade in the early 1790s.

Chapter III also incorporates an aside on papermaking — a topic of considerable relevance to any discussion of the material aspect of Blake’s work, but still largely unexplored. The Robert C. Williams American Museum of Papermaking holds papers concerning the Koops Straw Paper Manufactory which have been little examined since they were first acquired by Dard Hunter. Blake was insistent on the quality of paper he used for his works in Illuminated Printing, and Blake’s paper has yet to be given detailed study.

In Chapter IV, I suggested that Blake had a friendship with Alexander Tilloch dating back for many years from Tilloch’s first arrival in London in 1787. Tilloch’s public image as inventor and editor of both a London evening paper (The Star) and a major scientific

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708Recent evidence shown in the Blake Archive suggests that Blake may have approached Dodsley to distribute the Gates before finding a compatible publisher and bookseller in Johnson.

709Part of the Institute of Paper Science and Technology (500 100th Street NW, Atlanta GA 30318), http://www.ipst.edu.
journal (The Philosophical Magazine) contrasts surprisingly with his private life as astrologer, Rosicrucian and practising alchemist. The Varleys, Tatham, and Lowry feature in both men’s life-stories — there is significant overlap between the social worlds of Blake and Tilloch.

Still unexamined are the Galt family papers in the Canadian National Archives in Ontario — perhaps these can throw further light on Alexander Tilloch and his wide circle. I have not had the opportunity to examine the papers of the Askesian Society in the Wellcome Institute.\textsuperscript{710} The Getty Research Institute\textsuperscript{711} holds a substantial set of Bacstrom papers as again does the Wellcome Institute. In 1881, Tilloch’s grandson, Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt was Canadian High Commissioner in London. Could some family get-together have put him in touch with William Muir? The Transatlantic connections of the Muir family have still to be clarified.\textsuperscript{712}

We do not know the extent of Blake’s reading; he presumably had access to William Hayley’s library from 1797; could he have had access to the remarkable libraries of those who met with Blake as friends and as collectors of his work? The Bliss and Tilloch libraries are important indications of the intellectual and cultural context of Blake’s circles of friendship. Did Blake have access to the medieval manuscripts and Oriental books in the Bliss collection? Did friendship with Tilloch provide access to Tilloch’s alchemical books,

\textsuperscript{710}Askesian Society (London), minutes: 1801-08 (Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, Archives and Manuscripts Section, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE).

\textsuperscript{711}The Getty Center, 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90049-1679.

\textsuperscript{712}The \textit{Oban Times} obituary states that Muir was related to the American feminist Mary Edwards Walker (1832-1919), and accompanied her on a tour of Scotland in 1866.
theology, texts and editions of the Bible, and Greek and Hebrew dictionaries? Whether or not he had direct access to these libraries, acquaintanceship with their owners could well have influenced him.

In Chapter V, I used the resources of Tilloch’s library to show how this wealth of recondite materials could illuminate Blake’s works of the 1790s. Further study using the resources of Tilloch’s library might usefully explore the fifty works on the Apocalypse that he owned. My exegesis of “Newton” points to emblematics as an approach of general import that could be applied to the other colour prints. If Tilloch’s library could have compelling consequences for the interpretation of Blake’s work, then this approach is capable of much further extension in contextualising Blake — the contents of the libraries of Cosway, Cumberland, Hayley, and other friends or customers of Blake, are all identifiable and can provide multiple points of access in explicating Blake’s work.

In Chapter IV, I identified Tilloch with “Tilly Lally” in An Island in the Moon. Blake’s friendship with Alexander Tilloch requires a new later date for that work. In Chapter VI, I made further suggestions for the real-life counterparts of other persons caricatured in An Island in the Moon. The Varley family are now seen as facilitating the link between Blake and Tilloch, and Tilloch seen as the agent whereby alchemical imagery became available as a resource for Blake.

Again, in Chapter VI, I quoted an advertisement in the London Gazette that radically challenges Bentley’s statements about James Parker. It appears that there were two James Parkers, one a law stationer, in partnership with William Cookesley in Chancery Lane, and
the other, an engraver, in partnership with William Blake in Broad Street.\footnote{713} We know less about James Parker than Bentley alleges. Further work on James Parker is needed now that I have cleared away some of the misunderstandings.

In Chapter VII, William Muir was shown to perform a dual role as a late representative of family friendships with Blake, and as the harbinger of the most recent developments of the material approach in Blake studies. I demonstrated how Blake’s posthumous reputation was fostered by the facsimiles produced by Tilloch’s great-great-nephew William Muir, and how Blake then influenced art and design in the late nineteenth century. It fed into the early development of *Art nouveau* through the example of Mackmurdo and Horne. Dent and Whittaker note that

Muir’s facsimiles are index points in the changing technology of the text. Blake’s illuminated work *The Book of Thel*, is not simply reproduced as a simulacrum of originality. In Muir’s reproduction, the book becomes an index of historical change. ... Muir is clearly part of the Blake industry that preceded the academic reception of Blake in the twentieth century. But he manages to keep at bay the ‘maw of commerce’ while at the same time distinguishing his methods of book production from the conventions of print technology and literary institutions.\footnote{714}

Can we learn from Muir’s documented processes for the facsimiles anything that feeds back into our understanding of Blake’s production processes? My biographical study of Muir began as steps towards a bibliography of his facsimiles and other publications — this bibliography is still to be completed.

The latest discovery of Blake’s mother’s Moravian connection establishes Muir as someone with important information or intuitions about Blake’s work. Without Muir’s

\footnote{713} *London Gazette* (14 April 1798), records that the Parker-Cookesley partnership was dissolved 29 September 1797.

\footnote{714} Dent and Whittaker, *Radical Blake* (Basingstoke, 2002), 180.
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assertions, the Moravian archive would have been left unexplored.

Finally, in Chapter VIII, I have amended and extended my paper on Blake’s mother published in *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* in 1999. In that paper I identified for the first time William Blake’s mother, produced evidence that contradicted E. P. Thompson’s Muggletonian hypothesis, and speculated upon the identity of Blake’s maternal grandparents. That speculation is now shown to be wrong. I now link Blake’s mother to a very different religious community, provide further evidence about her first marriage, and correct the assumptions I made in identifying Blake’s grandparents. These latest discoveries about Blake’s mother disclose her place of birth (Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire), the names of her parents and siblings, and her association with the Moravian sect. Documentary and autographic records in the archive of the distinctive and exceptional eighteenth-century Moravian church, dating from many years before the poet was born, are a vivid indicator of how much might need to be revised and rewritten in the future. The village origins of Blake’s mother suggest the possibility of linking Blake with a surviving peasant culture and not the emerging urban proletarian one so often assumed.

By establishing Catherine Blake’s early religious affiliation, I reveal new possibilities for exploration. The intuitions of Muir, of Lowery, and of Bogen as to the influence on Blake of Moravian hymnody are shown to have some basis. Accepting that Moravian hymns may have influenced the *Songs*, we can now extend the search for Moravian influence and ask if Moravian art influenced Blake’s production of Biblical illustrations. (The Moravian

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enthusiasm for all the arts, for music, poetry and painting, is in marked contradistinction to most other Protestant sects.)

To what extent is Blake influenced by the distinctive Moravian spirituality and does this link him with other artists and poets of Moravian background: with James Gillray, James Montgomery, Novalis and H.D. (Hilda Doolittle)? It is striking that the anonymous author of “The Inventions of William Blake, Painter and Poet,” which appeared in 1830, in the *London University Magazine*, commented that Blake’s figure Albion

seems the embodying of Blake’s ideas on the present state of England; he viewed it, not with the eyes of ordinary men, but contemplated it rather as a province of one grand man, in which diseases and crimes are continually engendered, and on this account he poured forth his poetical effusions somewhat in the style of Novalis, mourning over the crimes and errors of his dear country: and it is more extraordinary still that, like Novalis, he contemplated the natural world as the mere outbirth of thought, and lived and existed in that world for which we are created.\textsuperscript{717}

Was this just a happy shot, or was the author aware that Blake and Novalis both came from Moravian backgrounds, from families given to prayer, hymn-singing and simplicity of life?

Further work on Catherine Wright could explore the Archdeaconry Wills in the Nottinghamshire Archives to learn more about her father’s family and the rural milieu in which she grew up.

In this dissertation, I have challenged and refuted several key assumptions about Blake. I have presented factual evidence important for an understanding of Blake’s life and cultural contexts. Research into Blake’s family history has led me to his contemporaries who have

\textsuperscript{717}“The Inventions of William Blake, Painter and Poet”, *London University Magazine*, vol. 2 (March 1830), 318-23. It has been suggested that the anonymous but perceptive and well-informed author was C. A. Tulk. The text cited is reprinted by G. E. Bentley, Jr., ed., *William Blake: the Critical Heritage* (London, 1975), 202.
in turn led to consideration of his followers, and the reception of Blake’s work in the later
nineteenth century. These new biographical and other discoveries challenge some long-
established *topoi*. My findings support the conceptual thrust of the thesis, that “local
knowledge” alters the bigger picture. Microhistory can well include an awareness of the
bigger picture, even a sense of the progress of history, but the testimony of the past,
Benjamin’s *Trümmer* (“rubble”), has to be examined fragment by fragment.

This study has indicated the need for a re-examination of practically every assumption
that has been made about Blake’s biography, his parents, his early influences, his politics, and
his sources. I should hope that the question of Blake’s maternal ancestry is at last made clear
and the speculation about his alleged dissenting background is laid to rest. There is much to
be discovered which can impact on the future direction of Blake scholarship. Even though,
as Altick asserts: “There is not a single figure in the history of English or American literature
whose biography may be sealed up and labeled ‘Completed’,”718 it still remains for us to
locate yet undiscovered data in archival sources that will give William Blake as full and
detailed a biography as that of other major English poets.

718Richard D. Altick, *The Scholar Adventurers* (Columbus, 1987), 86.
Archives and Manuscript Collections Consulted.
ARCHIVES

Aylesbury

Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies.
(County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury HP20 1UU)
http://www.buckscn.gov.uk/archives
  • Thomas Wright collection
  [Includes some documents of the Blake Society founded by Thomas Wright in 1912.]

Cambridge

United Reformed Church History Society.
(Westminster College, 7 Sherlock Road, Cambridge CB3 0HR)
http://lib.cam.ac.uk/university/libraries/westminstercollege.html
  • Papers of Ilford Presbyterian Church.
  [Archive consulted while the Society was still based in London. The library and archive
   moved to Westminster College in 1998.]

Chelmsford

Essex Record Office.
(Wharf Road, Chelmsford CM2 6YT)
http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/heritage/ero
  • Maitland family of Loughton & Woodford, Essex, deeds and family papers, 17th-20th
    centuries.

Edinburgh

National Library of Scotland, Manuscripts Division.
(George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EW)
http://www.nls.uk/collections/manuscripts
  • Adv. MS.29.5.6.1 (Letter of Richard Gough to George Paton).
  [The Advocates MSS. include the entire correspondence of Gough and Paton, 1771-1804. Adv. Ms. 29.5.6 contains letters of Richard Gough to George Paton. Adv. MS. 29.5.7. contains the letters of Paton to Gough, and drafts of some of Gough’s replies. The topics range through all aspects of antiquities, topography, local history, and especially books.]
  [George Paton, 1762-1804, was originally a bookseller and later, in his leisure from his occupation in the Customs House at Edinburgh, he continued to cultivate his bibliographic and antiquarian interests. He corresponded with many of the leading antiquaries of his time.]

See Ronald P. Doig, George Paton: a Study of his Life and Correspondence (St. Andrews University thesis, 1956); “George Paton, an Eighteenth-Century Book Collector”, P.L.A. Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 4 (1957); and Index to the Correspondence of George Paton (typescript in National Library of Scotland). The Mitchell Library (Glasgow) manuscript S.R. 167 is a transcript of the Gough-Paton correspondence collected together by William Turnbull
• Iona Press (Photocopies of items printed at the Iona Press, 1887-1893, from the collection of Angus Johnston.)
• MSS. 19771-19965 “Rennie Papers”.
[John Rennie (1761-1821) was one of the distinguished group of Scottish engineers whose work contributed so much to the industrial and commercial development of the UK in the early nineteenth century. With the exception of roads, in which he appears not to have been interested, and steam engines, which he promised Watt not to build, there was very little in the field of engineering that lay outside the range of his activity.]
• MSS. 19831-19929 “Notebooks”.
[Throughout his career, particularly during the 1790s, Rennie filled many notebooks with information about the works he himself was involved with, and about others which he visited out of professional curiosity. The notebooks are narrow octavos, interleaved with blotting paper. The notebooks also contain addresses, booklists (especially of the early technological books and medical chronicles in which he was interested), and notes of expenses for his travels which often make it clear where he went and when.]
• MS 19989, fol. 36 (Letter of Alexander Tilloch to Davies Giddy, 16 August 1815).
[The Library holds other letters of Tilloch not cited here.]

National Archives of Scotland.
(General Register House, Princes Street, Edinburgh EH1 3YY)
http://www.nas.gov.uk
• C. 3/20 (no.266) “Specification of the Invention of Andrew Foulis and Alex’ Tilloch”, 19 April 1784.
[Scottish Patents and Specifications, 1712-1812.]

Enfield

Enfield Public Libraries, Local History Collection.
(Southgate Town Hall, Green Lanes, London N13 4EY)
http://www.enfield.gov.uk/library/lochist.htm
• D.1624 (Gough Manuscripts).
[Miscellaneous papers of Richard Gough (1735-1809), including verse by Gough and by John Sherwen, and letters from Isaac d’Israeli and other correspondents.]
• Enfield Rate Book 1794.
• M61765/1/2 (Rate book for South Street ward, Edmonton parish, 1765).
• MS. Zc1 (Commonplace Book of John Walker of Arnos Grove, 1794-1822).
[The book contains notes of Royal Society lectures, copies of letters and notes on the New River Co. of which Walker was a director. 312 pages of the book were used by John Walker:
(a) 155 pages of letters to John Walker transcribed by his grandson
(b) 181 pages of accounts of scientific experiments (includes those of Humphrey Davy)
(c) 72 pages of essays on the state of Europe, each written on Jan 1st of 1798-1820
(d) 48 pages (482-434) of a full account of legal case involving the New River Company, with a history of the company, the dividends year by year from 1633-1822, and

and prepared for the press. Apparently never published.
ARCHIVES

statements of the receipts and disbursements yearly from 1783-1817
(e) circa 15 pages of journal of journeys
(f) in back of volume mixture of miscellaneous information i.e. enumeration of papers read at Royal Society.]
• Microfilm ref. ED4 Edmonton schedule 242 (Census 1881, enumerators’ returns for Middlesex, Edmonton).
• William Muir’s letters to Bernard Quaritch (photocopies).

Glasgow

Glasgow University Library, Special Collections.
(Hillhead Street, Glasgow G12 8QE)
http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk
• Ferguson Collection
[Volumes from the library of John Ferguson (1837-1916), bibliographer and Regius Professor of Chemistry at Glasgow University from 1874 to 1915. The main strengths of the collection lie in alchemy, chemistry and related topics such as books of secrets, with important offshoots into the occult sciences and witchcraft, Cabbalism, Rosicrucianism, Free Masonry and gypsy literature. The collection includes 317 manuscripts. Almost all are of alchemical interest and several date back to the 15th century. Ferguson’s own extensive bibliographical notes and papers accompany his alchemical and related books.]
[Unlike some other collections of alchemical manuscripts, only a small percentage of the Ferguson collection is taken up with obscure volumes of recipes. By far the bulk of the collection consists of unique works, transcriptions and translations of key texts, and a significant focus of the collection is upon manuscripts reflecting the spiritual or philosophical side of alchemy, especially those incorporating symbolic illustrations. The Collection is especially distinguished by its including some 35 manuscripts which contain series of coloured illustrations. Thus all the main series are represented —the “Buch der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit”, “Aurora consurgens”, “Petrus Bonus”, “Rosarium Philosophorum”, “Splendor Solis”, Flamel’s “Livre des Figures hiéroglyphiques”, “Pretiosissimum Donum Dei”, Solidonius, and the “Crowning of Nature”.
[The “Crowning of Nature” series of 67 coloured illustrations depicting an elaborate alchemical process mostly taking place in flasks, is represented by no fewer than 8 manuscripts, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mostly in Latin but two manuscripts have English translations of the text.]
• MS. Ferguson 8 (Angelorum opus [Coronatio naturae]. Possible Tilloch provenance.)
• MS. Ferguson 22 (Initiation of Alexander Tilloch into Societas Roseae+Cruacis by Sigismund Baestrom).
• MS. Ferguson 245 (Coronatio naturae. Notes by Alexander Tilloch).
• MS. Ferguson 253 (Emblemata sue hieroglyphica chymica enigmatica [Coronatio naturae]. Notes by Alexander Tilloch).
[Other Ferguson Collection manuscript provenances include Sigismund Baestrom (MSS. 2, 22, 46, 93, 311, 314, 320), Richard Cosway (MS. 125), and Ebenezar Sibly (MSS. 25, 59, 99, 305, 310).]
Mitchell Library.
(201 North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN)
http://www.glasgowlibraries.org/asc.htm
• Glasgow City Archives (Mitchell Library) provides computerised access to entries in the Glasgow Burgh Register of Sasines
• Manuscripts and other material relating to the life and work of the Foulis brothers, the Foulis Press, and the Foulis Academy.
• Microfilm ref. 644²-47 (Census 1841, enumerators’ returns for Glasgow, Gorbals).
• Microfilm ref. 613-9 (Census 1851, enumerators’ returns for Glasgow, Gorbals).
• Old Parish Registers: Gorbals Parish.

Kew
Public Record Office.
(Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond-upon-Thames TW9 4DU)
http://www.pro.gov.uk
• H.O. 42/17 (1790 Sep/Dec), fols. 68-75 (Letters from Alexander Tilloch).

London
(Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH)
http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/archive.htm
• Committee of Treasury Minute Book, 1797 (Tilloch’s proposals).
• Freshfields Papers F8/51 (Tilloch petition, 1820).

British Library, Department of Manuscripts.
(96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB)
http://molcat.bl.uk
• Add. 17,059 (Spanish patent of nobility. Bliss provenance).
• Add. 18,850 (The “Bedford Hours”).
• Add. 34,569, fols. 221-22 (Verses by Mrs. Anne Bliss).
• Add. 38,286, fol. 136 (Tilloch letter to the Earl of Liverpool).
• Add. 60,168-60,256 (Muggletonian Archives).
[Archives of the London Church of the sect founded by John Reeve (1608-1658) and Lodowick Muggleton (1609-1698); 17th-20th cent. The records comprise correspondence, treatises, religious verse and accounts. Letters, treatises and verse were frequently copied in manuscript by members of the sect for their personal use, and many copies bear the names of individual owners. Many also bear annotations indicating the existence of a centralised collection by 1772, part of which came from John Nicholls. The collection was enlarged in]
the first half of the 19th century mainly through the brothers Joseph and Isaac Frost, who also examined many of the volumes for unpublished works in February and March 1831.]

[Eighty-nine volumes. Arranged as follows:
(a) Letters: 60,168-61,0183
(b) Treatises: 60,184-60,206
(c) Verse: 60,207-60,230
(d) Accounts: 60,231-60,245
(e) Printed works: 60,246-60,256.]

[Further Muggletonian treatises are preserved in Add. 42,505, 61,950.]

• Egerton 1,149 (Horae Beatae Virginis. Bliss provenance.)
• P.R.2.c.14(3). (Printed sale catalogue of Samuel Roffey Maitland, London, 1842, with manuscript annotations by Sir Frederic Madden).
• Sloane 3,645, fols. 51-104: The Flying Atalanta | Or, | Philosophical Emblems | of the [Secrets of Nature | By | Michael Maierus | Count of the Imperial Consistory | M. D. Eq: ex: &c.).

[Alchemical tracts.]

City of Westminster Archives Centre.
(10 St. Ann’s Street, London SW1P 2XR)
http://www.westminster.gov.uk/libraries/archives

• Parish of Saint Mary-le-Bone. “Rates for the relief of the Poor, Paving, Repairing, Cleaning, Lighting, Watching and Highways 1797.”
• Registers of St. James’s Church, Piccadilly (christenings, marriages, burials). .
• Registers of St. George’s Chapel, Mayfair (chiefly marriages, a few baptisms).
• St James’s Parish, Piccadilly. Golden Square ward. Watch Rate. [D451 (1740), D453 (1741), D458 (1742), D466 (1744), D474 (1745), D481 (1746), D482 (1746), D488 (1747) D489 (1747), D501 (1748), D502 (1748), D58 (1752), D61 (1753), D63 (1754)].
• William Muir’s letters to Kerrison Preston.

The collector Kerrison Preston was born in 1884 and practised as a solicitor in Bournemouth from 1909 to 1949. Until October 1953 he lived at St. Julian’s, 22 Knyveton Road, Bournemouth, and then moved to The Georgian House, Rockshaw Road, Merstham, Surrey. He issued a catalogue of his collection in 1960. Kerrison Preston, Notes for a Catalogue of the Blake Library at The Georgian House Merstham (Cambridge, 1960).

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• PROB 11/790 (includes Will of Thomas Armitage).
• PROB 11/893 (for Will of William Bliss).
• PROB 11/1361 (Will of John Gorham).
• PROB 11/1433 (Will of James Parker).
• PROB 11/1614 (Will of Rebekah Bliss).
• PROB 11/1657 (Will of Samuel Varley).
• PROB 11/1709 (Will of Ann Whitaker).

[Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, before 1858.]
• RG 4/4228 (Baptisms, 1707-1757, Independent Chapel, Carey-Street New Court).
[Records of Non-conformist churches, before 1837.]
• RG 4/4633 (for burial of Sarah Bliss).
• RG 4/4695 (for burial of Catherine Blake).


Guildhall Library, Manuscripts Section.
(Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ)
http://www.ihrinfo.ac.uk/gh
• MS. 10823/Sc (Journal, 1815-1843, of Samuel Boddington).

Kensington and Chelsea Local Studies Centre.
(Kensington Central Library, Phillimore Walk, London W8 7RX)
http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/libraries/local studies
• Rate Books: Kensington Parish.

[Records of Non-conformist churches, before 1837.]
• RG 4/4633 (for burial of Sarah Bliss).


London Metropolitan Archives.
(40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB)
http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries
• Poll books for Westminster elections.

[Too fragile to examine.]
• St. Andrew’s Enfield. Parish Register (christenings, marriages, burials).

Moravian Church Archive and Library.
(Moravian Church House, 5-7 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TJ)
http://www.moravian.org.uk
• Congregation Diary, vols. I-IX (11 November 1741-July 1757).
• MS. C/36/5/1 (Church Book of the Brethren: Congregation in London).
• MS. C/36/2/158 (Letter from Thomas Armitage “For Bro: West” to apply to Congregation of the Lamb).
• MS. C/36/2/159 (Letter from Catherine Armitage to apply to Congregation of the Lamb).
• MS. C/36/2/168 (Petition for membership in Congregation addressed by John Blake "For Brother Beoler" [Peter Boehler, 1712-75]).
• Pilgrim House Diary (27 July 1743-30 October 1748).
[Deals largely with the London Congregation during the period February 1744 to December 1748 for which the Congregational Diary is wanting.]

The Probate Department, Probate Search Room.
(First Avenue House, 42-49 High Holborn, London WC1V 6NP)
http://www.courtservice.gov.uk/wills_probate
Probate register, England and Wales, 1943 (for Will of Sophia Muir).
[Wills from 1858.]

University of London Library, Palaeography Room.
(Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU)
http://www.ull.ac.uk
• Seymour De Ricci, Bibliographia manuscripta britannica
[Card indexes of manuscript collectors and manuscript locations compiled in 1934-1939 by Seymour De Ricci.]

William Morris Gallery, Library.
(Water House, Lloyd Park, Forest Road, London E17 4PP)
http://www.lbwf.gov.uk/wmg
• A. H. Mackmurdo, "Autobiographical notes" (typescript).
[The Gallery has an important Mackmurdo and Century Guild collection.]

Nottingham

Nottinghamshire Archives.
(Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham NG2 1AG)
http://www.nottscc.gov.uk
• Archdeaconry Wills
[Includes Walkeringham listings.]
• Parish Register of Walkeringham, Notts. (christenings, marriages, burials).
[Microfiche and originals.]
[The rectory of Walkeringham and the advowson of the vicarage were granted by the Crown to Trinity College, Cambridge, on 24 December 1546. That College transferred the advowson to the Bishop of Southwell by Order in Council 28 June 1926. In 1969 the benefices of Walkeringham and Beckingham were united under the alternate patronage of the Lord Chancellor and the Bishop of Southwell. Nottinghamshire was transferred from the diocese of York to the diocese of Lincoln in 1837. Retford deanery was divided into three parts in 1856 but the old title was retained. In 1877, the three parts were renamed the Retford, Tuxford and Worksop deaneries. The diocese of Southwell consisting of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire was founded by Order in Council 2 February 1884, and in 1887 the new

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deanery of Bawtry was formed, and the parishes reallocated amongst the four deaneries so today, Walkeringham is in the Province of York; Diocese of Southwell; and Deanery of Bawtry.]
• Wills, Peculiar and General  
[ Includes Walkeringham listings.]

Oxford

Bodleian Library, Department of Western Manuscripts.  
(Broad Street, Oxford  OX1 3BG)  
http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss
• MS Douce d.33 (Letters of Isaac d’Israeli to Francis Douce)  
• MS Douce d.39 (Letters of Richard Twiss to Francis Douce from Bush Hill, Edmonton, and other addresses, 1779-1807)  
[Douce had begun in 1779 a correspondence with Richard Twiss, a wealthy older man, a fellow antiquary, traveller and miscellaneous writer. Topics covered include the history of chess, botany, entomology, music, the tuning of harpsichords, mathematical recreations.]  
• MS Douce e.29-37 (Francis Douce. Commonplace collection ).  
• MS Douce e.36 (“Miscellanies I”).  
• MS Douce e.37 (“Miscellanies II”).  
• MS Montagu d.10 (includes Tillock letter to H. Colburn Esq’ Conduit St’).  
• MS Top gen e.6 (Richard Gough. Antiquarian diary).  
[August 1747-January 1773, with gap 1751-1755; a few notes each year; sermons, gardening, births, marriages and deaths; public events; also a weather journal; mostly relating to Enfield; cryptic entries.]  

Sheffield

Sheffield Archives.  
(52 Shoreham Street, Sheffield  S1 4SP)  
http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/services/del/libraries/pages/sheffield_archives
• Bishop’s transcripts of Registers of Royston, West Yorkshire (christenings, marriages, burials)..  
[The records are on microfilm, the originals being in the Diocesan Record Office at Wakefield.]
I have made the Quotations, not to prove things well known, to be true; as one (and he too deservedly esteemed for his great Diligence and Curiosity) who very formally quotes Aristotle, to prove a Sheep to be amongst the Bisulca ... as if Aristotle, must be brought to prove a Man hath ten Toes. But partly, To be my Warrant, in matters less credible. Partly, to give the Authors, that which is their due: not at all liking the Malignant-way of some, who never mention any, but to confute him. Yet withall, to rectifie his Mistakes where I found them. And to mind the Reader, Not to peruse the most Honest, or Learned Author, without some caution.

— NEHEMIAH GREW. 721


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Mrs. Bliss, deceased, removed from her residence at Kensington. Which will be sold by auction ... on Wednesday, April 26th, 1826, & three following days (London: Saunders & Hodgson, 1826).


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The British songster, being a select collection of favourite Scots and English songs, catches, &c. (Glasgow: printed for A. Tilloch, J. Duncan, Dunlop & Wilson, J. & W. Shaws, J. Gillies, J. & M. Robertson, and J. Macnair, 1786). ESTC T166801


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ISBN 0859677540

A copy of the poll for a citizen for the City and Liberty of Westminster; begun to be taken at COVENT-GARDEN, upon Wednesday the twenty-second day of November; and ending on Friday the eighth day of December 1749. Peter Leigh, Esq; High-Bailiff Candidates, the Right Hon. GRANVILLE LEVISON GOWER, Esq.; commonly called Lord TRENTHAM and Sir GEORGE VANDEPUT, Bart. (London: printed for J. OSBORN, at the Golden-Ball, in Pater-Noster Row; and sold by the Booksellers of London & Westminster, 1749).

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ISBN 00312746

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ISBN 0712304959
CD-ROM.
Contains records for works printed in any language in England or its dependencies from the beginnings of printing through the end of the eighteenth century, as well as works printed in English anywhere else in the world during that period.
Includes the former *Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue* (ESTC) and the two print short-title catalogues covering 1475-1640 (Pollard & Redgrave) and 1641-1700 (Wing).
Also available online.

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ISSN 15341224
Primary sponsor: College of Arts and Letters, Michigan State University.
“A peer-reviewed academic journal devoted to the transdisciplinary study of Western esotericism: Western esoteric traditions including alchemy, astrology, Gnosticism, gnosis, magic, mysticism, Rosicrucianism, and secret societies, and their ramifications in art history, history, literature, and politics.”

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Editors: Morris Eaves, Robert Essick, Joseph Viscomi.

"... the Archive contains fully searchable and scalable electronic editions of 48 copies of 18 of Blake’s 19 illuminated works in the context of full, up-to-date bibliographic information about each image, scrupulous ‘diplomatic’ transcriptions of all texts, detailed descriptions of all images, and extensive bibliographies."

722The Mormon church cites I Peter 3:18-20, 4:6, and I Corinthians 15:29 as biblical evidence respectively for its elaborate doctrine of salvation for the dead and for the related practice of vicarious baptism for the dead. Mormons are baptised as proxy for their dead non-Mormon ancestors in the belief that those ancestors will have the opportunity to accept the gospel in the spirit world, but also need this rite performed on their behalf to seal their salvation. Thus it becomes a religious duty on Latter-day Saints to carry out genealogical research in order to perform this solemn “work for the dead”. A detailed description of LDS teaching on salvation for the dead is offered in Doctrine and Covenants 138:1-37, part of the canon of Latter-day scripture.
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Also provides access to *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, edited by David V. Erdman.
Genealogical tables.

Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are here
In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
— WILLIAM BLAKE.\textsuperscript{718}

\textsuperscript{718}Jerusalem 16 (E 161).
Descendants of Richard Armitage (father of Thomas)

30 Dec 2002

1. Richard Armitage (b. Abt 1682-Cudworth, Yorkshire)
   sp: Mrs. Armitage (b. Abt 1686; m. Abt 1707)
     └ 2. Elizabeth Armitage (b. Abt 1708)
         sp: John Fox (b. Abt 1724; m. 15 Jan 1729)
     └ 2. William Armitage (b. 1712)
         sp: UNKNOWN
           └ 3. Sarah Armitage (c. 22 Dec 1742-Royston, Yorkshire)
           └ 3. John Armitage (c. 28 Dec 1743-Royston, Yorkshire)
           └ 3. Anne Armitage (c. 18 Jun 1747-Royston, Yorkshire)
           └ 3. Thomas Armitage (b. 1748)
               sp: Elizabeth (m. Abt 1777)
               └ 4. Elizabeth Fox Armitage (c. 1 Jan 1778-Southwark, Surrey)
     └ 2. Richard Armitage
     └ 2. Grace Armitage (b. 1719)
         sp: Joshua Hattersley (m. 11 Aug 1743)
     └ 2. Joseph Armitage
     └ 2. THOMAS ARMITAGE (b. May 1722-Royston, Yorkshire; d. 19 Nov 1751-London)
         sp: CATHERINE WRIGHT (c. 21 Nov 1725-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire; m. 14 Dec 1746; d. 1792)
Descendants of Thomas Gorham (including Rebekah Bliss & William Fuller Maitland)

30 Dec 2002

1. Thomas Gorham
   sp: Mary Miles (m.20 Sep 1705)
   —  2. Mary Gorham (c.4 Apr 1708-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex)
      sp: William Harrison (m.24 Dec 1730)
   —  2. John Gorham (c.12 Mar 1709-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex; d.1801)
   —  2. Thomas Gorham (c.13 Mar 1711-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex)
   —  2. Sarah Gorham (c.26 Jul 1716-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex; d. Bef 1726)
   —  2. Ann Gorham (c.5 Mar 1717-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex)
      sp: Richard Shrapnell (m.20 Sep 1737)
   —  2. Ursula Gorham (c.5 Apr 1720-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex; d.16 Oct 1800)
      sp: Robert Maitland (c.2 Feb 1710-Dumfriesshire; m.16 Dec 1740; d.4 Dec 1789-Coleman Street, London)
         —  3. Robert Maitland (b.About 1744; d.1810-Coleman Street, London)
            sp: Elizabeth Ridge
            —  4. John Maitland (b.12 Dec 1767)
            —  4. Robert Maitland (b.10 Jun 1773)
            —  4. Alexander Maitland (b.27 Jun 1774)
            —  4. Thomas Maitland (b.About 1766; d.11 Nov 1788)
            —  4. Henry Maitland (b.About 1778; d.14 Feb 1841)
            —  4. Mary Anne Maitland (b.28 Jul 1772)
               sp: Joseph Wilson (m.10 Jul 1792)
            —  4. Elizabeth Maitland (d. died young)
            —  4. Frances Maitland (b.12 Apr 1780)
               sp: Rev. John Savill
   —  3. Henry Maitland (b.About 1745; d.1811)
   —  3. Ann Maitland (c.13 Jun 1751-Independent Chapel, New Court, Carey Street, Westminster)
   —  3. Ebenezer Maitland (c.24 Oct 1752-Independent Chapel, New Court, CS, Westminster; d.18 Sep 1834)
      sp: Mary Winter (b.1752; m.About 1779; d.23 May 1835-Clapham, Surrey)
         —  4. Ebenezer Fuller Maitland (b.23 Apr 1780; d.1 Nov 1858)
            sp: Bethia Ellis (b.6 Aug 1781; m.9 Jan 1800; d.21 Aug 1865)
            —  5. William Maitland (b.19 Apr 1806; d.24 Jan 1808)
            —  5. Mary Maitland
            —  5. Esther Maitland
               sp: Rev. Ridley Herschell
            —  5. Bethia Maitland
            —  5. Frances Sara Fuller Maitland (b.20 Jun 1809-SP, Reading, Berkshire; d.27 May 1877)
               sp: John Colquhoun (b.6 Mar 1805; m.29 Jan 1834)
            —  5. Anne Maitland (b.1811)
            —  5. WILLIAM FULLER MAITLAND (b.1813; d.1876)
            —  5. John Fuller Maitland (b.1814)
               sp: Marianne Noble
                  —  6. John Alexander Fuller Maitland (b.1856; d.1936)
                     sp: Charlotte Elizabeth Squire
            —  5. Thomas Maitland (b.1817)
   —  3. John Maitland M.P. (c.24 Dec 1754; d.22 Mar 1831)
      sp: Mary Anne Reavely (b.About 1761; m.2 Feb 1790; d.31 Dec 1830)
         —  4. Isabella Reavely Maitland (b.1792; d.1873)
         —  4. William Whitaker Maitland (b.1794; d.1861-Loughton, Essex)
            sp: Anne Gott (b.About 1801; m.About 1822)
               —  5. John Maitland (b.24 Nov 1823; d.24 Nov 1823)
               —  5. William Maitland
               —  5. Rev. John Whitaker Maitland (b.1831; d.1909)
                  sp: Venetia Neave (b.About 1835; m.About 1856)
   —  3. Alexander Maitland (c.12 Nov 1760)
      sp: Caroline Busby (b.About 1769; m.About 1790)
Descendants of Thomas Gorham (including Rebekah Bliss & William Fuller Maitland)

30 Dec 2002

2. William Gorham (c.14 Mar 1721-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex)
   - 2. Sarah Gorham (c.16 Aug 1726-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex; d. Dec 1768)
     sp: William Bliss (b. Abt 1723; m. 10 Feb 1747; d. 1763)
     - 3. REBEKAH BLISS (c.9 Mar 1749-Independent Chapel, New Court, Carey Street, Westminster; d. 1819)
     - 3. Anne Bliss (c.8 Aug 1750-Independent Chapel, New Court, Carey Street, Westminster; d. Bef 1801)
     - 3. John Bliss (c.21 Aug 1751-Independent Chapel, New Court, Carey Street, Westminster; d. Bef 1801)
     - 3. William Bliss (c.25 Mar 1753-Independent Chapel, New Court, Carey Street, Westminster; d. Bef 1801)

3. Ursula Maitland
   sp: Ware
   - 4. Elizabeth Ware
     sp: Chambers
   - 4. Ursula Ware
   - 4. Martin Ware
   - 4. Robert Ware
   - 4. James Ware
   - 4. John Ware
   - 4. Ebenezer Ware

4. Samuel Roffey Maitland (b. 1792; d. 1866)
   sp: Selina Stephenson
   - 5. John Gorham Maitland (b. 1818; d. 1863)
   - 4. Mary Roffey Maitland
   - 4. Caroline Stovin Maitland

2. William Gorham (c.14 Mar 1721-Saint Andrew, Holborn, Middlesex)
1. William Muir (b.About 1768-Of Kilmarnock)
   sp: Jean Marton (b.About 1772;m.19 Oct 1793)
     — 2. William Muir (b.30 Aug 1794-Paisley,Renfrew;d.1 Dec 1864-Dysart,Fife)
       sp: Christian Bain (b.6 Dec 1807;m.About 1828;d.10 Jan 1846)
         — 3. Christian Muir (b.1 Jan 1829;d.4 Apr 1829)
         — 3. William Muir (b.28 Feb 1830;d.22 Jul 1849)
         — 3. Margaret Muir (b.16 Jan 1832;d.15 Oct 1832)
         — 3. James Muir (b.24 Sep 1833;d.20 Dec 1836)
         — 3. Jean Muir (b.20 Mar 1836;d.12 Mar 1837)
         — 3. Margaret Muir (b.18 Jan 1838)
         — 3. Jean Muir (b.9 Jul 1839)
         — 3. James Muir (b.20 Aug 1841)
       sp: Margaret Robertson (m.25 Dec 1850;d.25 Jan 1889)
     — 2. George Walker Muir (b.1817-Kilmarnock,Ayrshire;d.1890-Blantyre,Lanark)
       sp: Christian Penman (b.4 Sep 1818;m.8 Jul 1844;d.14 Nov 1869)
         — 3. WILLIAM MUIR (b.7 May 1845-Gorbals,Lanark;d.2 Jan 1938)
           sp: Sophia Elizabeth Druitt (b.1858;m.1886;d.30 Jan 1953-Helston,Cornwall)
           — 3. Andrew Penman Muir (b.4 Sep 1846-Glasgow,Lanark;d.16 Jul 1860-Ascog,Bute)
           — 3. Christina Muir (b.1848;d.After 1851)
           — 3. Hannah Tilloch Muir (b.8 Feb 1850-Gorbals,Lanark;d.After 1852-Iona,Argyll)
           — 3. George Walker Muir (b.23 Nov 1851-Glasgow,Lanark;d.After 1851)
Descendants of John Tilloch (including Alexander Tilloch & William Muir)

30 Dec 2002

1. John Tilloch (b.About 1696)
   sp: Janet Greenlees (b.About 1700;m.16 Aug 1721)
     —  2. William Tilloch (c.15 Nov 1722-Glasgow,Lanark)
     —  2. Elizabeth Tilloch (c.21 May 1724-Glasgow,Lanark)
       sp: John Stevenson (b.About 1722;m.26 Nov 1747)
     —  2. Janet Tilloch (c.27 Mar 1726-Glasgow,Lanark)
     —  2. John Tilloch (c.4 Feb 1728-Glasgow,Lanark;d.Bef 1782)
       sp: Elizabeth Stevenson (b.About 1722;m.26 Nov 1747)
         —  3. Robert Tilloch (c.6 Jan 1751-Glasgow,Lanark;d.Bef 1764)
         —  3. John Tilloch (c.31 May 1752-Glasgow,Lanark;d.Aft 1773)
         —  3. Elizabeth Tilloch (c.21 Mar 1755-Glasgow,Lanark;d.1782)
         —  3. Janet Tilloch (c.26 Mar 1755-Glasgow,Lanark)
         —  3. Hanna Tilloch (c.2 Jul 1757-Glasgow,Lanark)
           sp: William Urie (b.About 1756;m.2 Jun 1781)
         —  3. ALEXANDER TILLOCH (b.28 Feb 1759-Glasgow,Lanark;d.26 Jan 1825-Islington,Middlesex)
           sp: Margaret Simson (b.About 1759;m.29 Jul 1780;d.1783)
             —  4. Elizabeth Tilloch (b.8 Sep 1781-Glasgow,Lanark)
               sp: John Galt (b.2 May 1779-Irvine,Ayrshire;m.23 Apr 1813;d.1839)
                 —  5. John Galt (b.13 Aug 1814-London;d.1843)
                   sp: Helen H. Galt (b.About 1820-Scotland;d.Aft 1881)
                     —  6. Helen D. Galt (b.About 1858-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                     —  6. John Galt (b.About 1861-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                 —  5. Thomas Galt (b.12 Aug 1815-London;d.1843)
                   sp: Frances L. Galt (b.About 1825-Quebec,Canada;d.1881)
                     —  6. Clarence C. Galt (b.About 1861-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                     —  6. Hubert Galt (b.About 1866-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                     —  6. Edith F. Galt (b.About 1867-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                 —  5. Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt (b.6 Sep 1817-Chelsea,Middlesex;d.19 Sep 1893)
                   sp: Elliott Torrance (b.About 1820-Montreal,Lle de Montreal,Quebec;m.1848)
                     sp: Amy G. Galt (b.About 1834-Montreal,Canada)
                       —  6. Kate Galt (b.About 1861-Quebec,Canada;d.1881)
                       —  6. Evelyn C. Galt (b.About 1866-Sherbourne,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                       —  6. Alexander T. Galt (b.About 1868-Quebec,Province of Sherbrooke;d.Aft 1881)
                       —  6. Mary O. Galt (b.About 1870-Quebec,Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                       —  6. Annie P. Galt (b.About 1876-Canada;d.Aft 1881)
                 —  4. Tilloch (b.13 Mar 1783-Glasgow,Lanark)d.1783)
                   —  3. George Tilloch (c.1 Mar 1760-Glasgow,Lanark;d.Aft 1773)
                   —  3. Margaret Tilloch (b.9 Dec 1761;d.Aft 1841)
                   —  3. Rabina Tilloch (b.27 May 1763;d.1844)
                     sp: John Penman (b.About 1769;m.22 Aug 1780;d.1803)
                       —  4. Christian Penman (b.19 Sep 1785)
                         sp: Andrew Penman (b.About 1784;m.5 Jun 1809)
                           —  5. Robina Penman (b.1814)
                           —  5. Christian Penman (b.4 Sep 1818;d.14 Nov 1869)
                             sp: George Walker Muir (b.About 1817-Kilmarnock,Ayrshire;m.8 Jul 1844;d.1890)
                               —  6. WILLIAM MUIR (b.7 May 1845-Gorbals,Lanark;d.2 Jan 1938)
                                 sp: Sophia Elizabeth Druitt (b.1858;m.1886;d.30 Jan 1953-Quebec,Canada)
                                 —  6. Andrew Penman Muir (b.4 Sep 1846-Glasgow,Lanark;d.6 Jul 1860)
                                 —  6. Christina Muir (b.1848;d.Aft 1881)
Descendants of John Tilloch (including Alexander Tilloch & William Muir)

6. Hannah Tilloch Muir (b. 8 Feb 1850-Gorbals, Lanark; d. Sep 1920-Iona, Argyll)
   6. George Walker Muir (b. 23 Nov 1851-Glasgow, Lanark; d. Aft 1851)
   5. Andrew Penman (b. Abt 1820)
   5. John Penman (b. Abt 1820)
      sp: David Niven (m. 12 Sep 1803)
   3. Jean Tilloch (c. 12 Jan 1765-Glasgow, Lanark)
      sp: Daniel McLachlan (b. Abt 1761; m. 15 Jan 1786)
   3. Robert Tilloch (b. 18 Dec 1767-Glasgow, Lanark)
2. James Tilloch (c. 8 Mar 1730-Glasgow, Lanark)
Descendants of – Twiss (grandfather of Richard)

1. – Twiss
   sp: Mrs. Twiss (m.About 1718)
   2. Francis Twiss (b. About 1719)
      sp: Ann Hussy (b. 1723; m. 22 April 1744)
         3. RICHARD TWISS (b. 26 April 1747-Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands; d. 5 March 1821-ST, Middlesex)
            sp: UNKNOWN
               4. Mary Twiss
         2. Francis Twiss (c. 27 February 1754-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands; d. Before 1761)
         3. Francis Twiss (c. 25 September 1755-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands; d. Before 1758)
         3. Ann Twiss (c. 21 November 1756-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands; d. Before 1788)
         4. Mary Twiss
         5. Ann Twiss (b. 1798; d. 1866)
         6. Mary Twiss
         7. Mary Twiss
         8. Mary Twiss
         9. Mary Twiss
      3. Sarah Twiss (c. 10 April 1760-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, Zuid Holland, Netherlands)
         sp: Mary Scott (b. About 1764; m. 27 March 1785)
            4. John Twiss (c. 13 May 1786-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, Zuid Holland, Netherlands)
               sp: Johanna Jacoba Sucomond (b. About 1789; m. About 1810)
                  5. Robert Twiss (c. 28 April 1811-English Presbyterian, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands)
         4. Francis Twiss (c. 28 March 1789-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands)
            sp: Anne (b. About 1792; m. About 1813)
               5. Francis Henry Twiss (c. 20 February 1814-Old Church, Saint Pancras, Middlesex)
                  6. Daniel Twiss (c. 20 March 1790-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, Zuid Holland, Netherlands)
                  7. Henry Twiss (c. 9 March 1791-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, Zuid Holland, Netherlands)
                  8. Mary Twiss (c. 19 May 1792-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, Z, Netherlands; d. Before 1794)
                  9. Mary Twiss (c. 12 February 1795-All Hallows Staining, London)
         5. Caroline Twiss (c. 26 May 1799-English Presbyterian, Rotterdam, Zuid Holland, Netherlands)
            3. Sarah Twiss (c. 26 August 1762-English Episcopal Church, Rotterdam, ZH, Netherlands; d. Before 1788)
               sp: Mary Partridge (m. 19 August 1771)
   2. Christopher Twiss (d. About 1779)
      sp: UNKNOWN
      3. Christopher Twiss
         sp: UNKNOWN
            4. Christopher Twiss (b. About 1794)
               sp: Delia (b. About 1824; m. About 1825)
                  5. Christopher Twiss (c. 7 August 1826-Saint Peter Mancroft, Norwich, Norfolk)
                  6. Caroline Matilda Twiss (c. 19 September 1827-Saint Peter Mancroft, Norwich, Norfolk)
                  7. George Joseph Twiss (c. 25 September 1842-Dunwich, Suffolk)
Descendants of John Varley (father of Samuel, grandfather of John)

1. John Varley (b. Abt 1718; b. 27 Aug 1776-Saint Andrew, Epworth, Lincolnshire)
   sp: Elizabeth (b. Abt 1722; m. Abt 1743)
   ├── 2. SAMUEL VARLEY (c. 1 Oct 1744-Epworth, Lincolnshire; d. 1822)
   │   sp: Mrs. Varley (b. Abt 1748; m. Abt 1769)
   │   │   └ 3. L. Varley
   │   │   │   └ 3. Jane Varley (d. Bef 1822)
   │   │   │   │   sp: UNKNOWN
   │   │   │   │   ├── 4. Samuel
   │   │   │   │   │   └ 4. Elizabeth
   │   │   │   │   │   └ 4. Julia
   │   │   │   │   │   └ 4. Lucretia
   │   │   │   └ 2. Elizabeth Varley (c. 28 Dec 1746-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
   │   │   └ 2. William Varley (c. 21 Nov 1750-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
   │   └ 2. Richard Varley (c. 29 Aug 1751-Epworth, Lincolnshire; d. Nov 1791-Hackney, Middlesex)
   │       sp: Hannah Fleetwood (b. Abt 1756; m. 1777)
   │       └ 3. JOHN VARLEY (b. 17 Aug 1778-Mare Street, Hackney, Middlesex; d. 17 Nov 1842)
   │           sp: Esther Gisborne (c. 19 Jan 1780-Saint Mary Abchurch, London; m. Abt 1803; d. 1824)
   │           │   └ 4. Albert Fleetwood Varley (b. 1804; d. 1876)
   │           │       sp: Elizabeth Bauce Leckie (m. 23 Jun 1835)
   │           │           └ 5. John Varley Jnr (b. 1850; d. 1933)
   │           │       │   sp: Isabella Pollexfen (b. 1849; d. 1938)
   │           │           └ 4. Charles Smith Varley (b. 1811-Saint James, Middlesex; d. 1887)
   │           │       sp: Elizabeth (b. Abt 1818-Paddington, Middlesex)
   │           │           └ 5. Edgar John Varley (b. 1839-Bayswater, Middlesex; d. 1888)
   │           │       │   sp: Fanny Fay Fraser (b. Abt 1851-Lambeth, Surrey; m. 16 Jun 1877)
   │           │       │   └ 6. Harold F. F. Varley (b. Abt 1879-Guernsey, Channel Islands)
   │           │       │       sp: Isabella (b. 1849; d. 1938)
   │           │       │           └ 6. Victor C. C. Varley (b. Abt 1880-Guernsey, Channel Islands)
   │           │       └ 4. Henry Gisborne Varley
   │           │           sp: Louisa Lemmen (m. 19 May 1826)
   │           │           └ 5. Henry Gisborne Varley (c. 7 Jun 1827-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │   └ 5. Esther Gisborne Varley (c. 27 Aug 1828-Saint Mary, SMR, St. Marylebone, Middlesex)
   │           │           │       └ 5. William Gisborne Waterloo Varley (c. 15 Nov 1829-Saint Mary, SMR, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │           sp: Ann Daston (m. 22 Apr 1850)
   │           │           │           └ 5. Albert Gisborne Varley (c. 23 Jan 1831-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │       └ 5. Emma Gisborne Varley (c. 2 Jun 1832-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │           └ 5. Sarah Gisborne Varley (c. 22 Nov 1833-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │           └ 5. Lemmen Gisborne Varley (c. 27 Nov 1839-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │       └ 5. Peter Gisborne Varley (c. 27 Nov 1839-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │           └ 5. John Gisborne Varley (c. 27 Nov 1839-Saint Mary, St. Marylebone Road, SM, Middlesex)
   │           │           │           └ 5. Lucy Varley
   │           │           sp: Delvalle Eliza Reba. Lowry (c. 24 Aug 1801-Saint Mary, SMR, SM, Middlesex; m. 1825)
   │           │           └ 4. Octavius Varley
   │           │           │       └ 4. John Varley (b. 1850; d. 1933)
   │           │           │           └ 3. Elizabeth Varley (b. 1878; d. 1883)
   │           │           └ 3. Cornelius Varley (b. 1878; d. 1893)
   │           │       sp: Elizabeth Livermore Straper (b. Abt 1800; m. 12 Apr 1821)
   │           │           └ 4. John Varley (b. 1822)
   │           │           └ 3. Elizabeth Varley (b. 1873)
   │           │       └ 4. Cromwell Fleetwood Varley (b. 1828; d. 1883)
   │           │       └ 4. Emma M. Varley (b. Abt 1831-Saint Pancras, Middlesex)
   │           │       └ 4. Samuel Alfred Varley (b. 1832; d. 1921)
   │           │           sp: Emily Andrews (b. Abt 1839; m. 27 Dec 1860)
   │           │           └ 5. Lucy Varley
   │           │           └ 4. Octavius Varley
   │           │               └ 3. Elizabeth Varley (b. 1873)
Descendants of John Varley (father of Samuel, grandfather of John)

30 Dec 2002

1. sp: William Mulready (b.1768-Ennis,Clare, Ireland; m.1803; d.1863)
   3. William Fleetwood Varley (b.1785; d.1856)
2. Cornelius Varley (c.28 Dec 1753-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
   3. William Fleetwood Varley (b.1785; d.1856)

2. John Varley (c.20 Dec 1755-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
   sp: Sarah (b. Abt 1759; m. Abt 1780)
   3. Elizabeth Varley (c.13 May 1781-Saint Botolph Without Aldersgate, London)
   3. Thomas Varley (c.2 Nov 1783-Saint Botolph Without Aldersgate, London)

2. Ann Scot Varley (c.5 May 1758-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
2. Robert Varley (c.3 Oct 1760-Epworth, Lincolnshire)
Descendants of Gervase Wright (grandfather of William Blake)

30 Dec 2002

1. Gervase Wright (b. Abt 1687)
   sp: Mary Dawson (b. Abt 1691; m. 23 Apr 1712)
   — 2. Richard Wright (c. 29 Apr 1715-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire)
   — 2. Robert Wright (c. 6 Feb 1717-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire)
   — 2. Katharin Wright (c. 15 Oct 1718-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire; d. Bef 1725)
   — 2. John Wright (c. 1 Jan 1720-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire)
   — 2. Elizabeth Wright (c. 30 Jan 1722-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire; b. 8 Oct 1722-W, Nottinghamshire)
   — 2. Elizabeth Wright (c. 6 Apr 1724-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire)
   — 2. CATHERINE WRIGHT (c. 21 Nov 1725-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire; d. 1792)
     sp: THOMAS ARMITAGE (b. May 1722-Royston, Yorkshire; m. 14 Dec 1746; d. 19 Nov 1751-London)
     sp: James Blake (b. Abt 1723; m. 15 Oct 1752; d. 1784)
       — 3. James Blake (b. 10 Jul 1753-Broad Street, GS, Westminster; d. 22 Mar 1827-London)
       — 3. John Blake (b. 12 May 1755-Broad Street, Golden Square, Westminster; d. Bef 1759)
       — 3. WILLIAM BLAKE (b. 28 Nov 1757-BS, GS, Westminster; d. 12 Aug 1827-London)
       sp: Catherine Sophia Boucher (b. 1762; m. 18 Aug 1782; d. 1831)
       — 3. John Blake (b. 20 Mar 1760-Broad Street, Golden Square, Westminster)
       — 3. Robert Blake (b. 19 Jun 1762-Broad Street, Golden Square, Westminster; d. 1787)
       — 3. Catherine Elizabeth Blake (b. 7 Jan 1764-Broad Street, Golden Square, Westminster; d. 1841)
   — 2. Benjamin Wright (c. 23 Sep 1729-Walkeringham, Nottinghamshire)
     sp: Elizabeth Whitehead (c. 2 Dec 1732-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire; m. 4 Jul 1754)
     — 3. Richard Wright (c. 5 Jul 1759-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire)
     — 3. Elizabeth Wright (c. 3 Nov 1763-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire)
     — 3. Catherine Wright (c. 22 Jun 1766-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire)
     — 3. Thomas Wright (c. 23 Nov 1769-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire)
     — 3. Mary Wright (c. 19 Feb 1772-Sutton Cum Lound, Nottinghamshire)
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