

Properly Cowed: An Answer to Keri Davies

BY WAYNE C. RIPLEY

WAYNE C. RIPLEY (wripley@winona.edu) is a professor of English at Winona State University in Minnesota. He is working on a project regarding Blake's Broad Street family, friends, and neighbors.

"Like cream from London cows translated"¹

- 1 I first would like to thank Keri Davies for his detailed response to my note. I admit to considering neither the importance of eighteenth-century privacy nor the conventions of advertisements and their typical reliance on third parties to preserve anonymity. I think these and other points are important caveats to my too eager claim that the advertisements provided a direct and clear window into the family life of the Blakes. Acknowledging this, I still believe that many of my assumptions were less wrongheaded than as characterized by Davies, and I hope to provide sufficient evidence of that below.
- 2 I certainly agree with Davies that it is most probable that the "Middle aged Person" aspiring "to be with a Lady of Quality as Milliner" would have been apprenticed. Indeed, this is why I referred to professional milliners whose locale or last name suggests some possibility of a connection to James Blake. I am persuaded by Davies's argument regarding the importance of privacy, but, at the same time, there must have been a reason the Blake shop was chosen. That reason need not have been proximity or kinship, but as both are more traceable than other forms of human connection, I thought it worthwhile to consider those specific milliners, since they might have had a reason to approach James Blake. I did not claim that any of the women was definitively the milliner in question, and it is just as likely that she was recommended to James Blake by a professional colleague, friend, or customer. Accepting that these latter pos-

1. George Huddesford, *Bubble and Squeak, a Galli-Maufry of British Beef* (London, 1799) 8.

sibilities may be even more likely given Davies's arguments regarding custom and privacy, I still think it justifiable to have considered milliners neighboring James Blake or those possibly related to the family in the event that subsequent research uncovers something about these women and their relationship to the Blake family.

- 3 When I considered Catherine Blake as a possible candidate, I did not mean to dismiss millinery as mere "froufrou" (Davies par. 13). Millinery was not among the great or minor livery companies of the eighteenth century. Amy Louise Erickson defines millinery as "an entrepreneurial trade which had no company of its own"² The implications of this are made clear by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall: millinery "lacked a monopoly; apprenticeship might be an advantage but was by no means compulsory. Rather 'judgement of changing fashions, a genteel manner and a network of local contacts and credit' was more significant."³ Given this, it was not outlandish to have at least considered Blake's mother as a possible candidate, especially given her age when the advertisement was posted. While she was "a country girl from the little village of Walkeringham" (Davies par. 13), she had spent nearly thirty years at this point of her life as a London haberdasher's wife, and her place in the business was established enough that James Blake, Jr., wrote his letter to the board of St. James's Parish Workhouse and School of Industry "for Mother & Self."⁴ By terming my discussion a "possibility" (Ripley par. 7), my intention was to distance myself from the idea that I was making a definitive, proven assertion of fact. Still, at the forefront of my mind was the important feminist work (Ripley note 23) regarding Catherine Sophia Boucher Blake, which, when confronted with the lack of concrete evidence, has sometimes been forced to be speculative and even consciously fictitious in its most constructive sense.⁵ I also never claimed that Blake's mother picked up French from the Moravians; I instead pointed to the idea that James Blake had some relations who may have been French. I realized at the time they were speculations, and,

2. Amy Louise Erickson, "Eleanor Mosley and Other Milliners in the City of London Companies 1700–1750," *History Workshop Journal* 71 (spring 2011): 150.

3. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002) 303. They cite S. D'Cruze's unpublished paper "... To Acquaint the Ladies: Women Proprietors in the Female Clothing Trades, Colchester c. 1750–1800."

4. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 38.

5. See also Barbara Lachman, *Voices for Catherine Blake: A Gathering* (Lexington: Schola Antiqua Press, 2000); Janet Warner, *Other Sorrows, Other Joys: The Marriage of Catherine Sophia Boucher and William Blake* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003); and David Park, *The Poets' Wives: A Novel* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

as I state directly, the strongest argument against associating Catherine with the unknown woman is “the lack of evidence documenting [Catherine’s] skill as a milliner” (Ripley par. 8). Finally, I close the note by saying that the identity of the woman is ultimately unknown other than her relationship (however tenuous) to James Blake, as demonstrated in the advertisement.

4 Regarding the advertisement for a maid, I think Davies’s strongest point is his reading of the phrase “within a few Miles of London.” I concede, then, that this may have been simply a third-party advertisement for a suburban or country home whose residents and their relationship to the Blakes we will never know. Where Davies does not convince me is in his argument regarding the presence of cows and other animals in the Blake neighborhood. I agree completely with Davies that the Blakes did not live in a slum, but his sense of what constitutes a slum has been conditioned, I think, by modern practices of health and hygiene that simply did not exist in Blake’s London. In this, I believe that he was misled by Atkins’s work, which is skewed toward the nineteenth century; Davies may not appreciate enough the role that Blake’s Broad Street neighborhood and its relationship to cows ultimately played in this urban revolution. While suburban farms, like Thomas Willan’s, were crucial to the dairy market of London, I want to show that they were far from Blake’s only experience with cattle or the only possible source of milk available to residents of Broad Street.

5 Despite the claim of the preamble to a letter published in 1794 that “keeping cows in the house is more profitable husbandry than pasturing them in the fields,”⁶ I had not assumed that the Blakes kept the cow at or in 28 Broad Street, though there is evidence suggesting that livestock animals were indeed kept at, and probably in, nearby residences, which I will provide below. Instead, my sense was that the Blakes either owned, or at least had access to, a cow located nearby, and I admit that I should have qualified my bald assertion that they had a cow and addressed more explicitly where a cow could have been kept. In contrast to Davies’s picture of Blake’s neighborhood, I had in mind the words of Stanley Gardner: “Round the corner from Blake’s house was Carnaby Market, ‘built on a piece of ground called the Pest-field.’ The market included a slaughter-house, with women among its butchers, and the voice of the cattle he heard brought in for slaughter stayed with Blake all his life.”⁷ Gardner’s phrase “round the corner” is somewhat

misleading, since the Blakes lived practically kitty-corner to the slaughterhouse. According to William Rhodes’s 1770 map, *A Correct Plan of the Parish of St. James’s, Westminster*, it was located about halfway down the west side of Marshall Street and, according to this map and the parish rate books, it occupied the bottom half of this side of the street down to Silver Street.⁸ In 1773, Richard Holmes paid the rates for the slaughterhouse.⁹ Parish rate books often recorded the Blakes’ house as being on Marshall Street into the nineteenth century, despite the tendency of the Blake family to describe their shop and home as being on Broad Street. The practical upshot of this is that the Blake family lived between a major West-End market known for selling meat and the slaughterhouse necessary for it. As I hope to show, this slaughterhouse and the market required cowsheds and other buildings and practices that Davies’s portrait of the neighborhood does not incorporate.

6 Since Carnaby Market has received relatively little attention, its place in the neighborhood deserves to be underscored. In the 1730s, Carnaby, or (as it was sometimes known through much of the eighteenth century) Marlborough Market, was still new. Its position among the streets of the area was described by Thomas Salmon in 1732:

These Streets in a manner surround the *Pest-House-Fields*, and before they were built might be reckon’d a Part of them: In these Fields has lately been erected a handsome Market-House, where the Nobility and Gentry in this Part of the Town are furnish’d with all manner of Provisions.¹⁰

While I have not been able to date precisely when the slaughterhouse mentioned by Gardner was erected, it was likely in place by the early 1730s. As Gardner indicates, the market had many butchers, and the St. James’s Parish Vestry was quite aware of their activities. In 1735, thirty-five of the butchers were called before Justices of the Peace at the vestry itself “for exercising their Trades on the Lord’s Day.”¹¹ This number alone emphasizes how active the market was and how many animals it must have housed and processed. By the 1748 edition of Defoe’s *A Tour thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Carnaby Market was added to its list of other “Flesh-markets.”¹² The market was still considered new through the early 1760s, and its focus on “flesh” was emphasized: “CARNABY, or MARLBOROUGH Market, by Carnaby street, has Marlborough street on the north, and

6. *Whitehall Evening Post* 19 July 1794.

7. Stanley Gardner, *Blake* (New York: Arco, 1969) 20, partially quoted in David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, 3rd ed. (1977; New York: Dover, 1991) 4.

8. Rhodes’s map is available online from the British Library at <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/crace/a/zoomify88706.html>>.

9. Westminster Rate Books 1634–1900, at <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>>.

10. Thomas Salmon, *Modern History*, vol. 15 (London, 1732) 133.

11. *Read’s Weekly Journal* 6 Sept. 1735.

12. Daniel Defoe, *A Tour*, vol. 2 (London, 1748) 139. Carnaby Market was not listed in the 1742 edition.

Broad street on the south west. This is lately become a very plentiful market for flesh and other provisions.”¹³

- 7 One can glean something of the workings of the market’s slaughterhouse in newspaper accounts and other sources, usually when accidents occurred. In 1747 “a Man belonging to Mr. Phillips, a Butcher, in Carnaby Market, had the Misfortune to fall down in the Slaughter House with a large Knife in his Hand, which run into his Belly and ripp’d it up.”¹⁴ In 1770 “as the Wife of a Butcher in Carnaby-Market was coming down a Ladder into the Slaughter-house-yard, she fell, and a Hook catching hold of her Thigh, tore away a large Piece of Flesh, and she now lies in a dangerous Condition.”¹⁵ Note that this provides evidence of not only a slaughterhouse but also a “yard.” The slaughterhouse supported related enterprises, such as the removal of tripe and other animal-based products that had commercial value, as evidenced when a tripeman committed suicide: “Yesterday Morning Edward Hicks, a Tripeman in Marlborough-Row [which paralleled Marshall Street], was found hanging in his Bed-chamber.”¹⁶ While it may not accord with our modern sense of urbanity, this slaughterhouse coexisted alongside what would be considered more refined commercial practices. In the 1750s, for example, an auction was held in a house right across the street from the slaughterhouse: “To be Sold by AUCTION, / By MILES NIGHTINGALL / ... At a large House opposite the Slaughter-house in Marshall-street, near Carnaby Market, by Order of the Assignees of Mr. GEORGE GREEN ...”¹⁷
- 8 Not surprisingly, many of the cows coming to Carnaby Market came from Smithfield Market. This trade is evidenced in a notice of robbery in the 1780s: “Yesterday morning, a little after six o’clock, as Mr. Gurney, butcher in Carnaby-market, was going to Smithfield market, a fellow seized him by the collar in Little Windmill-street ...”¹⁸ Lest one think such butchers were simply going to buy pre-slaughtered cows, another news notice, from 1797, offers evidence that cattle were driven from Smithfield to Carnaby Market: “Thomas Mumford, a Drover, said, he was employed yesterday to drive several cattle from Smithfield to Carnaby-market ...”¹⁹ Another account specifies the number of cattle driven by Mumford at “25, or 26,” though some of these would have been delivered to other markets along the way.²⁰ Regardless, this traffic between Smithfield and

Carnaby Market was well enough established that by 1809 it was regulated, along with other cattle routes emanating from Smithfield:

The routes by which the cattle are *now* driven from Smithfield to the markets westward, are as follows:

All the cattle going westward (except a few trifling droves) are first driven from Smithfield into Hatton Garden, being a wide, quiet street, where they are divided; and those going ...

To Carnaby Market, they pass up Holborn, through St. Giles’s, and Compton Street.²¹

Compton Street was to the southwest of Broad Street. To avoid passing 28 Broad Street, the drovers would have had to have taken a very circuitous route. It must have been, then, a common sight to see *many* cows being driven onto Marshall Street, even during Blake’s exhibition, and these cows must have been housed somewhere before their slaughter.

- 9 Cows must have been a common sight south of Piccadilly as well, where a few blocks to the east of St. James’s Church was another active slaughterhouse at St. James’s Market, which had its own accidents: “Yesterday morning as one of the slaughter-men belonging to St. James’s market, was attempting to knock down an ox, he missed the blow, and the ox suddenly raising his head, caught [*sic*] the hatchet with his horns ...”²² Cows and other animals continued to graze at Green Park, Hyde Park, and St. James’s Park well into the nineteenth century.²³ In July 1771, the *Middlesex Journal* reported an increase in grazing fees for cattle: “The Earl of Orford, as Ranger of St. James’s and Hyde-Park, have given orders to the Deputy Rangers and Park-keepers, that persons keeping cows at grazing in the Parks, are to pay an additional sixpence a week, which makes it three shillings, it being before but half a crown.”²⁴ These cows were sometimes lost or stolen, and advertisements directed those who found missing animals where to return them. Many of these advertisements reveal that small cowkeepers of St. James’s Parish lived on Park Lane, near Hyde Park, or on Hyde Corner, where they would have had easy access to the grazing land of the nearby parks. At least one of the cowkeepers was closer: “STRAYED out of St. James’s Park, A BLACK COW, with a white streak down her back, wide horns, and a long tail. Whoever has found her, and will bring her to Mr. John Shortland, the Old Dairy in Little Jermyn-street, shall receive five shillings reward, and all ex-

13. *London and Its Environs Described*, vol. 2 (London, 1761) 68.

14. *General Evening Post* 14 May 1747.

15. *Public Advertiser* 1 Sept. 1770.

16. *General Evening Post* 1 Jan. 1751.

17. *Public Advertiser* 29 Nov. 1755.

18. *Whitehall Evening Post* 1 Jan. 1785.

19. *Morning Herald* 25 July 1797.

20. *True Briton* 23 Sept. 1797.

21. David Hughson, *London; Being an Accurate History*, vol. 6 (London, 1809) 598-99.

22. *Morning Post* 13 Aug. 1776.

23. Sheep were grazing in Hyde Park through at least 1830: *Morning Chronicle* 16 June 1830.

24. *Middlesex Journal* 16 July 1771.

pences [*sic*]. She has been missing about eleven days.²⁵ Connected to Jermyn Street, Little Jermyn Street ran parallel to Piccadilly, as Jermyn Street does today. While I could not find further references to the “Old Dairy,” it shows evidence of the existence of urban cows and a dairy just down the road from St. James’s Church, and when the milk of these cows ran dry, it is likely that Shortland or his drover took them to St. James’s Market to be butchered, going right past the church itself.

- 10 There were accusations that many smaller London cow-keepers were slowly being driven out of business by the increase in grazing fees and the enclosure of land bought up by suburban cowkeepers. In 1767, someone complained:

Mention having been lately made, that Milk was soon to increase in Price, as well as the other Necessaries of Life, to the great Hardship of the poorer Sort, we are told one Reason given for this Advance is the engrossing of Grass Fields and Inclosures, about this Metropolis, by some of the most eminent Cow-feeders, one of whom has leased and taken no less than twenty of these Fields within these twelve Months, from two Guineas and a Half to three Guineas the Acre²⁶

This tension between larger and smaller cowkeepers continued, and when the price of milk rose again at the end of the century, a letter writer in 1800 argued that the suburban cowkeepers were forming a monopoly against the smaller cowkeepers:

What opinion must be entertained of [the large cowkeepers’] audacity, when it is known that three of the smaller Cow keepers, satisfied with their present profits, have agreed to sell their milk at the usual rate, and are *threatened* by the more opulent of their fraternity, for having yielded to the dictates of their conscience and the voice of public opinion? ...

The great *Monopolists* are very well aware that all the Milk these two or three persons could furnish would go but a very little way indeed in the supply of the Metropolis; and they also know that it is in their power to crush the small fair dealers.²⁷

The larger dealers, then, overshadowed accounts of the trade. In 1794, Peter Foot described how cows from outlying counties were brought to London cowkeepers, not even mentioning the interior London cattle trade that brought cattle from Smithfield to smaller markets:

The cows kept for the purpose of furnishing the metropolis with milk, are, in general, bred in Yorkshire, Lancashire,

and Staffordshire. The London dealers buy them of the country breeders when they are three years old, and in calf. The prices given for them are from eight guineas to fourteen pounds a cow. The different fairs and markets, which are held at Barnet, Islington, and other places around the metropolis, furnish the London Cow-keepers with the means of keeping up their several stocks. Many cows likewise are bought in Yorkshire in small lots, from ten to twenty, by private commission, and forwarded to the cow-keepers in and about London.²⁸

Even Foot recognized the presence of cow-keepers “in ... London,” and, as I’ll show, they continued to exist through the middle of the nineteenth century.

- 11 Certainly not all agreed that London was a proper place to conduct such activities. John Gwynn’s 1766 call for reform, *London and Westminster Improved*, exclaimed, “The intolerable practice of holding a market for the sale of live cattle in the center of the metropolis has been loudly and justly complained of for many years past.”²⁹ A letter from 1775 made similar complaints, and also provides evidence of how cows and other animals from the Marylebone area made it down to both the Oxford Market and Carnaby Market:

NOTWITHstanding the numberless Complaints of the cruel Treatment of Cattle about this Metropolis, by Drovers and their infamous, brutal Attendants, scarce a Day passes but these Savages exhibit their Barbarity to public View with Impunity, in open Defiance of all Law, Authority and good Order, to the shameful Disgrace of our Police. ...

In my Morning Walk [*sic*] to Paddington (in the Purlieu of which I am an Inhabitant) I am frequently shocked by the barbarous Usage of Cattle penned up in a Place in Marybone-Fields, the Bottom of Portland-Street for or after Sale. Here you will see Wretches with large Sticks, terminating with a great Knob pointed with Iron, with which they strike the Bullocks on the Joints of their Legs till they lame them, putting them to the most excruciating Torture; and upon these Occasions there are generally about Half a Dozen blackguard, vagrant Boys who assist; and the unfeeling Monster exults most, and does the greatest Feat, who with the fewest Blows can make a Bullock go upon three Legs, or knock off the Horn of an in-offensive Sheep. From this Theatre of detestable Cruelty, the poor Creatures are dragged by the merciless Banditti, bleeding and half dead, to Oxford and Carnaby Markets for Slaughter.³⁰

28. Peter Foot, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Middlesex* (London, 1794) 82.

29. John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved* (London, 1766) 18.

30. *Public Advertiser* 1 Dec. 1775.

25. *Gazetteer* 24 Jan. 1767.

26. *St. James’s Chronicle* 16 April 1767.

27. *Oracle* 24 Oct. 1800.

Despite such calls, it would not be until the nineteenth century that these practices were finally changed.

- 12 This letter reveals that cattle were brought south from Marylebone as well as from Smithfield in the east. These cattle would have the company of many other animals, some of which were to be slaughtered and others of which were beasts of burden. In September 1751, the *Whitehall Evening Post* reported an ox goring near both Carnaby Market and Golden Square.³¹ In 1754, “an Ox broke loose from a Butcher’s in Carnaby-Market, which (by cruel Usage) was drove mad, and did considerable Damage about St. James’s.”³² In 1757, an ox goring occurred on Broad Street while Catherine was pregnant with Blake: “On Monday an Ox toss’d a Woman in Broad-Street, Golden-Square, and one, [*sic*] of his Horns running into one of her Eyes, pushed both out of their Sockets, and she is since dead. A Man was also gored, near the same Place, in such a Manner that ’tis thought he cannot live.”³³ In 1769, a record-breaking ox was slaughtered: “A few days ago, a Butcher in Carnaby-Market killed an ox, which, exclusive of the hide, head, and other offal, weighed 209 stone, and was reckoned the largest ox ever killed in England.”³⁴ In 1774, another goring occurred near Golden Square: “An overdrove ox forced his way twice into St. James’s Park, where he tossed one man, and threw the loiterers into the utmost confusion. Before he could be got out, an Irish Rapparee saying, the same ox has tossed a man on horseback near Golden Square ...”³⁵ Sheep were probably also a common sight on Marshall Street: “Thomas Bath, a poor Boy, was thrown down near Carnaby Market by a Butcher’s Dog running after some Sheep, whereby he was dangerously wounded in the Head ...”³⁶ There were also pork shops at Carnaby Market, suggesting the presence of pigs: “A woman was detected stealing pork from a shop in Carnaby market: The woman’s mother kept a shop in the same business, which makes it appear it was not done through necessity.”³⁷ This is confirmed by an account in the *Morning Post* from 18 November 1783:

A few days since a man in the neighbourhood of Broadstreet, Carnaby market, had a sow with pigs; the sow a few days after pigging, had every appearance of madness, which induced the man to shoot her, and destroy all her young ones, and afterwards gave a porter, near to the place, a gratuity to bury the dam and her young ones; the scoundrel took the money, but instead of burying the sow

31. *Whitehall Evening Post* 26 Sept. 1751.
32. *Whitehall Evening Post* 27 June 1754.
33. *British Spy* 23 April 1757.
34. *Lloyd’s Evening Post* 26 April 1769.
35. *Morning Chronicle* 30 April 1774.
36. *Public Advertiser* 30 Sept. 1761.
37. *Morning Chronicle* 11 Jan. 1779.

and her pigs, brought them to Carnaby market, where she was bought by as great a rascal, dressed in full form, and carried to Leadenhall market for sale.

The report suggests that there was nothing remarkable about raising a sow with piglets on Broad Street itself and that the problem was what was ultimately done with the diseased meat. The impact of these supposedly rural activities on the neighborhood is also seen in the active hay market in the area, which was beginning to be questioned by urban reformers. As Gwynn wrote, “If the proposal of Windmill-Street, &c. should take place, the market for hay, now a nuisance to the neighbourhood, should be removed to some more convenient spot for the purpose, as it would become a much greater thoroughfare than it is at present.”³⁸

- 13 All of this is to demonstrate the vast number of cattle and other animals populating the Blake family neighborhood and St. James’s Parish in general. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the slaughterhouse on Marshall Street, as well as others in the parish, received a lot of attention from urban reformers, including, famously, John Snow in his investigation of the Broad Street or Golden Square cholera outbreak.³⁹ Many of these detailed accounts also describe cowsheds, which were used not only to store cattle until they were slaughtered but also to house them for milking. (It is important to remember on this point that the modern distinction between beef and dairy cows was still emerging.)⁴⁰ While I accept that the socioeconomic status of the area had declined since the late eighteenth century, I believe the descriptions of how slaughterhouses and cowsheds existed alongside residential housing and businesses accord with eighteenth-century norms and document residual practices. It should also be noted that these practices surrounding cattle and other livestock continued even after 1820–21, “when Carnaby Market was closed and its buildings demolished” to make way for the Craven Chapel.⁴¹
- 14 If, as Davies maintains (relying on Atkins), the parish of St. James “was one of the first areas of London ‘to rid itself of the unpleasant environmental consequences of urban cowkeeping’” (Davies par. 7), there would have been no

38. Gwynn 132.

39. See, for example, Pamela K. Gilbert’s discussion in *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004) 55–79.

40. “There was as yet no clear-cut distinction between milch and beef stock, although some types were recognized as being more suitable for the butcher” (Robert Trow-Smith, *A History of British Livestock Husbandry, 1700–1900* [London: Routledge, 1959] 19).

41. *Survey of London*, vol. 31, The Parish of St. James Westminster: Part Two: North of Piccadilly, general ed. F. H. W. Sheppard (London: Athlone Press, 1963) 198.

reason for a detailed report issued in 1847 by a retired churchwarden that addresses “certain nuisances existing in the parish.” Among these nuisances are “14 Cowsheds” and “2 Slaughter-houses.” The cowsheds around Marshall and Broad Streets are described in detail, and I think the report is worth citing at length. It also documents how milking and butchering coexisted (I have emphasized the references to milk and dairy):

Cowsheds.—The following particulars gleaned from the report of Mr. Aulsebrook, a competent medical gentleman, will convince every one that these cowsheds are highly injurious to the health of those who dwell in their vicinity. The condition of the animals, as there shewn, and the effect of it on *the quality of the milk drawn from them*, are also matters which merit the gravest consideration.

“Two of these sheds are situated at the angle of Hopkins and New Streets, Golden Square, and range one above the other, within a yard of the back of the houses in New Street. Forty cows are kept in them, two in each seven feet of space. There is no ventilation, save by the unceiled [*sic*] tile roof, through which the ammoniacal vapours escape into the houses, to the destruction of the health of the inmates. Besides the animals, there is at one end a large tank for grains, a storeplace [*sic*] for turnips and hay, and between them a receptacle into which the liquid manure drains, and the solid is heaped. At the other end is a capacious vault, with a brick partition, one division of which contains mangel-wurzel, turnips, and potatoes, and the other, a dirty, yellow, sour-smelling liquid, called brewers’ wash; a portion of which is pumped up, and mixed with the food of the cows. The neighbours are subject also to the annoyance of manure carts which frequently stand some time in front of their houses

“At the opposite side of the houses in the same street is another shed, ‘with even less possibility of ventilation than in those just described.’ Thirty-two cows stand side by side, two in each space of seven feet, as above. In Marshall Street there is a third establishment, containing 28 cows. In a wall on one side, overlooking a yard in which is a slaughter-house, are several grated openings, but they are carefully covered with pieces of sacking, as if to prevent all possible admission of air. In this shed are receptacles for vegetables and grains, as before; the manure tank holds 12 tons; and that for brewers’ wash, 600 gallons.” ...

In this atmosphere, reeking with all these pestiferous effluvia, *the poor creatures are kept close shut up, night and day, till, their milk failing, they are consigned to the butcher.* ...

“It is obvious, that *much of the milk sold at the West end of the metropolis, is elaborated in the udders of animals unnaturally treated*”

Slaughter-houses.—A century hence, perhaps, the fact will almost be doubted, that a people so eminently practical as the English, so alive to all questions of public decency and public utility,—should have tolerated the existence of slaughter-houses with all the disgusting accompaniments, in the crowded streets of their metropolis. Surely the time cannot be far distant, when, following

the laudable example of the continental states, *Abattoirs*, will be established in proper places, and regulations enforced by which cleanliness and order shall take the place of disorder and filth, and the minimum of suffering be substituted for the maximum of cruelty.

The slaughter-houses alluded to are in the vicinity of the cow sheds; and there is in this contiguity a most striking propriety! ...

In Jermyn Street, and within a few doors of the Haymarket, animals may be seen in the area of one of the houses, waiting to be killed, amidst blood and offal and a most sickening fever-engendering stench. When St. James’s Market was destroyed, to make way for certain improvements, the Commissioners of Woods and Forests pretty well neutralized any good effected by the strange oversight of allowing the offensive nuisance of the slaughter-house to continue, by re-leasing the ground to a pork butcher. Pigs were at one time actually fed upon the offal. Every source of disgust usually attending such scenes, [*sic*] is in this case aggravated by the slaughtering-place being not less than ten steps below the level of the street: a circumstance which further gives occasion to one of the most cruel and brutalizing exhibitions conceivable. The sheep are forced to descend the stairs, and the recoiling cattle are dragged down into this den of blood and pollution, by means of a windlass and a rope attached to their horns.⁴²

The exclamation regarding how people in the future would doubt the existence of these activities in “practical” London is important to note, since it frames how these cultural practices were excavated from history and are only now being slowly recovered.⁴³ The report describes only three of the fourteen cowsheds in the parish, and in these alone there were one hundred cows. Moreover, these cowsheds surrounded what was once the Blake family home—besides the one on Marshall Street, the others mentioned were on Hopkins Street and New Street, which intersect with Broad Street from the south to the immediate east of Poland Street. As the report indicates, the cows in all of these cowsheds were there to be milked “till, their milk failing, they are consigned to the butcher.” The shed on Marshall Street must have existed in the eighteenth century, and even if one argues that those on Hopkins and New Streets were built later, they and the other cowsheds that existed in 1847 must have been an extension of eighteenth-century practices and customs. Keeping in mind the existence of Shortland’s “Old Dairy” at the west end of Jermyn Street in 1767, we see clear continuities in supposedly rural activities in the urban parish of St. James.

42. A Retired Churchwarden, *An Address to the Inhabitants of St. James’s Westminster* (London: James Ridgway, 1847) 7-12.

43. See, for example, Peter Atkins, ed., *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), and Hannah Velten, *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).

- 15 In 1855, the sessional papers for the House of Lords published a detailed report on the Marshall Street slaughterhouse and the practices of livestock slaughter by smaller-scale butchers. The report illustrates how the practices endured in private homes into the nineteenth century:

There is one wholesale slaughter-house in the district, of which great complaints are made in the neighbourhood; it is situated at the back of Marshall Street, and belongs to Mr. Holmes, a butcher, in Silver Street. Here, on an average, five oxen and seven sheep are slaughtered daily. ...

The whole of the blood, entrails, &c. are bought by contractors, who remove them daily

Notwithstanding the apparent cleanliness of this slaughter-house, great complaints are made in the neighbourhood of the smells which come from it, and especially the smell of sour grains, on which the beasts in an adjoining cow-shed are fed, and which is represented as being worse than that created by the removal of the refuse. We have taken this slaughter-house as a favorable example of such places, but for an average specimen of the smaller slaughter-houses, we mention one at 19, Silver Street, much complained of by the neighbours; for detailed information as to which, we beg to refer you to the special report upon it made to the Board of Health by one of us, from which it will be seen that in this as in most of the other small slaughter-houses, part of the basement, commonly the kitchen, dark and ill ventilated, is the place in which they kill.

We think that this, and consequently all other slaughter-houses in the district, must exercise a serious influence on the health of their respective neighbourhoods, and ought not to be allowed to exist in so crowded a part of London. The smaller butchers, particularly those in Berwick Street, who kill only a few sheep weekly, almost invariably allow the whole of the blood and part of the offal to run into the sewer, as it is not worth contractors' while to take such small quantities.⁴⁴

By describing the Marshall Street slaughterhouse as having “an adjoining cow-shed,” the report echoes the churchwarden’s account of how the cowshed and slaughterhouse co-existed. According with the evidence of the tripeman on Marlborough Row (see par. 7 above), the “contractors” removing “blood, entrails, &c.” represent, once again, a continuity with eighteenth-century practices. As the last two paragraphs suggest, in addition to slaughterhouses, like the one on Marshall Street, butchers in the neighborhood would slaughter their animals in their homes. This again implies that they had to have a place to store them.

- 16 There is also evidence that the more genteel kept dairy cows in stables. A 1788 advertisement for a dairy cow that directs

44. *The Sessional Papers Printed by Order of the House of Lords*, vol. 37 (London: George E. Eyre, 1855) 140-41.

customers to a Carnaby Market butcher even documents that such practices were performed in the Blake neighborhood:

TO be Sold, a very Good Alderney COW, Calved last Sunday; the Price Twelve Guineas, with her Calf, or Ten without; the Cow has been used to a stable, is very gentle, and would supply a family in town with milk and very fine cream; the reason of her being parted with is, the Owner having at present too many of the same kind. Enquire of Mr. Siney, Butcher, Carnaby Market.⁴⁵

While the location of the stable is not indicated, Marshall Street itself had at least one stable, as evidenced in an advertisement from 1737: “Some back Buildings behind the said Houses in Marshall-street aforesaid, consisting of a Stable and Warehouse.”⁴⁶ In addition, in the area south of Oxford Street and north of Golden Square alone, there were multiple stables near the Blakes that were either shown on Rocque’s 1746 map or recorded in newspapers: three off Marlborough Mews, one off Blenheim Street, one off Silver Street,⁴⁷ a large stableyard off Queen Street,⁴⁸ two off Leicester Street,⁴⁹ a livery stable at Nailor’s Yard,⁵⁰ one on King Street,⁵¹ and several near Golden Square at locations sometimes not specified.⁵² The stableyard off Queen Street even leased stables in the mid-1770s: “TO be lett, in one of the most commodious Stable-Yards, at St. James’s End of the Town, some very good Stables and Coach-Houses, with every other Convenience that can be required.”⁵³ Cows and horses can easily coexist in the same stables, especially if the cow is, as emphasized by the 13 March 1788 advertisement, “gentle.”

- 17 The prevalence—and, indeed, ordinariness—of cows and other livestock kept and slaughtered in Blake’s neighborhood do not prove that the advertisement for the maid was for Blake’s family, but both add a fundamental layer to our understanding of Blake’s and his family’s material existence. To close with another dangerous speculation, if there was anyone in the family who would have wanted a cow, it probably would have been that “country girl from the little village of Walkeringham” (Davies par. 13).

45. *World* 13 March 1788.

46. *London Gazette* 15 Jan. 1737.

47. *Daily Advertiser* 27 Sept. 1743; *Public Advertiser* 13 April 1775.

48. *Daily Advertiser* 7 Jan. 1777.

49. *Daily Advertiser* 20 Aug. 1778.

50. *Public Advertiser* 7 June 1765.

51. *Daily Advertiser* 3 June 1776.

52. *Daily Advertiser* 8 July 1772, 27 Jan. 1773, 7 Jan. 1794; *World* 25 Aug. 1788.

53. *Daily Advertiser* 9 Dec. 1774.