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“How Dye Do Neighbour”: William and Catherine Blake in Their Immediate Social Context, South Molton Street, Mayfair, c. 1803–21

BY ANGUS WHITEHEAD

ANGUS WHITEHEAD (richard.whitehead@nie.edu.sg) is a lecturer in English literature at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His most recent publication pertaining to William and Catherine Blake is “My Fingers Emit Sparks of Fire: William Blake, Letter Writer” in *William Blake’s Manuscripts: Praxis, Puzzles, and Palimpsests*, edited by Mark Crosby and Josephine A. McQuail (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). He is currently increasingly anxious about the fate of William Blake’s sole surviving London residence, 17 South Molton Street, as the whole street undergoes a swath of aggressive gentrification and development.

1 **I**N the autumn of 1803, William and Catherine Blake returned to London from their three-year sojourn in a cottage in the coastal village of Felpham, Sussex. After an initial stay with Blake’s brother James at 28 Broad Street, and certainly by November, they had moved into a studio-residence at 17 South Molton Street, a street branching diagonally off the southern side of the northern end of Oxford Street (BR[2] 748). The new lodgings set them at the heart of art and art patronage in Regency London. From South Molton Street they were within easy walking distance of numerous galleries, as well as artists’ studios, shops, and collections. While Alexander Gilchrist describes the street during this period as “dingy, gardenless” (291), the Blakes had chosen a residence at the very center of London.

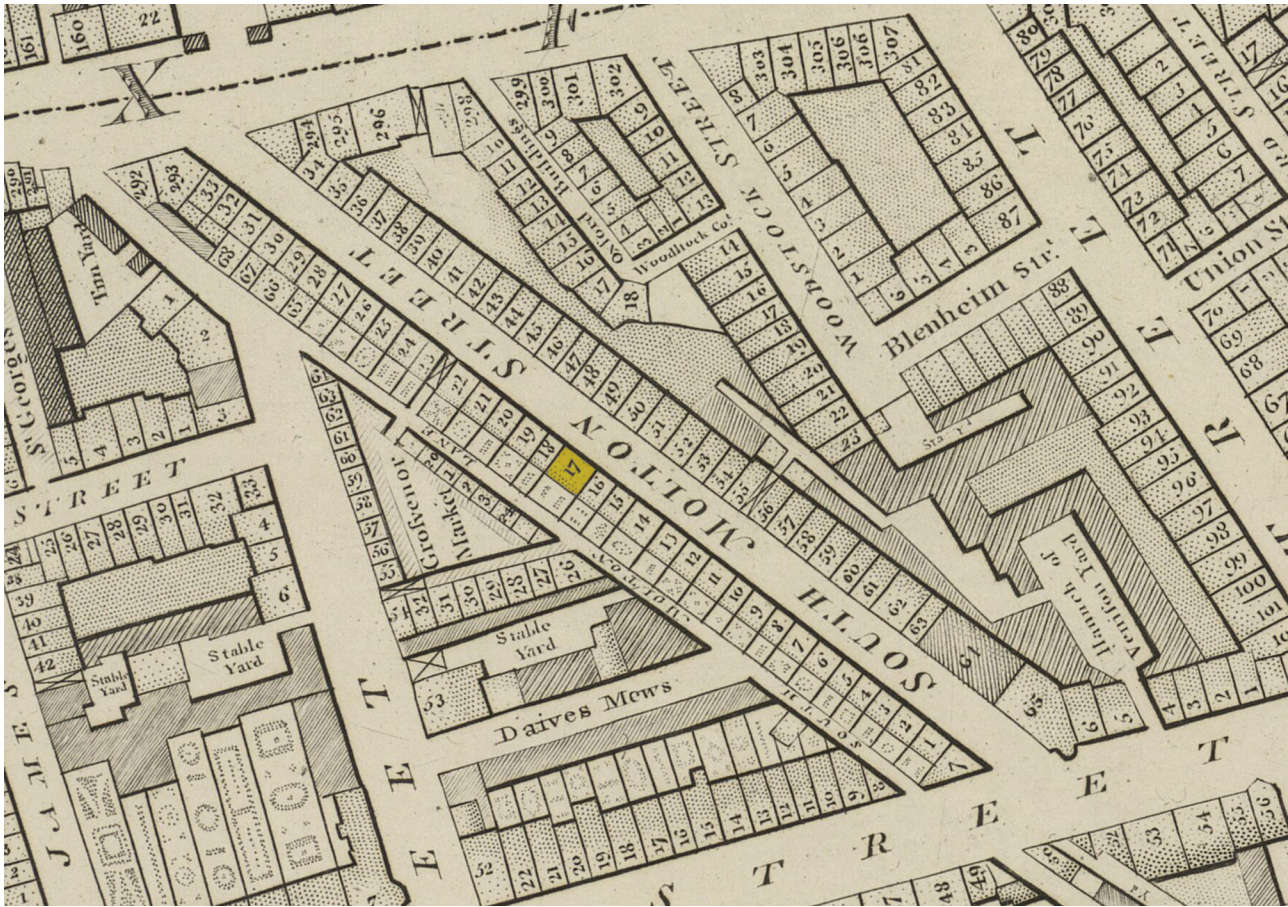
My great thanks to Catherine Kelly, Keri Davies, and Stephen Gamble for their vital help with this article, and my profound gratitude to Sarah Jones, who for the last twenty-two years or more has consistently helped make my *Blake* contributions miles better in both content and form.

- 2 To the north of South Molton Street, Oxford Street, the main thoroughfare across London, included such fashionable spaces as the Argyll Rooms in nearby Argyll Street and on Oxford Street itself the Pantheon, a major exhibition space. Immediately to the east were Hanover Square, Hanover Music Rooms, and the preeminent promenade and shopping center of New Bond Street; to the west was Grosvenor Square, the location of connoisseur Sir George Beaumont’s painting room (Owen and Blayney Brown; BR[2] 703). Nonetheless, poverty was also in evidence, contrasting with otherwise affluent Mayfair: there was a large workhouse nearby at Mount Street, capable of accommodating seven hundred inhabitants.
- 3 Lower Brook Street was to the south of South Molton Street. Here the painter and pioneer lithographer Thomas Barker had his large exhibition rooms (Sloman, “Barker”). 20 Lower Brook Street was the former home of the miniaturist Alexander Day, who had exhibited and sold twenty-nine masterpieces by Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, and other artists here in 1801 (Ingamells). Four years later, from February 1805, the landscape painter Francis Towne held his one-man exhibition of watercolors at the same address (Wilcox; Towne).
- 4 On the northern side of Oxford Street, directly opposite the northern opening of South Molton Street, was Stratford Place, a gated cul-de-sac in Blake’s time. The miniaturist Richard Cosway, Blake’s friend and supporter, lived here from 1794 until shortly before his death in July 1821 (Lloyd). At the center of Stratford Place stood the Earl of Aldborough’s naval pillar, celebrating Britain’s military triumphs. Erected in 1800, it was over twenty feet high and surmounted by a statue of George III. In 1805, however, the foundations of Aldborough’s ill-favored and apparently unpopular monument gave way; the column was removed and seemingly not replaced. Nevertheless, during their first eighteen months in South Molton Street, the Blakes would have regularly encountered this imposing but increasingly shabby and graffiti-covered structure, such as when Blake set out on errands of biographical research for William Hayley’s biography of the painter George Romney. Despite its defacement, he may have been able to make out the following:

Sacred to British glory and the heroes / of its empire: / who, aided by the Almighty, / have carried their victorious arms / throughout every region / of the earth; / liberating mankind from the Atheistical principles, / unjust usurpations, / and tyrannical subjugation, / of rapacious France; / restoring due subordination, felicity and, / civilization, throughout / Europe.... In memory of the achievements of Admirals / Lords Hawke, Rodney, Howe, Hood, / Brid-



Image of 17 South Molton Street, taken March 2026.
 © Catherine Kelly, William Blake Fellowship.



Detail of South Molton Street, with no. 17 highlighted, from Richard Horwood's *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster*, published by William Faden, 1819. Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Cartes et plans, GE DD-5907.

port, St. Vincent, Nelson, Duncan, / Sir John Borlase Warren, / Sir Sidney Smith, and Mitchell, / who in different actions with the / Spanish, French and Dutch, / took the Admirals of each nation; / captured, sunk and destroyed, / above one thousand of their ships; / annihilating their fleets and Commerce, / and ascertained and maintained, / under the Divine Providence, / the empire of Great Britain over the / Globe. (Malcolm)

Aldborough's short-lived monument and the sentiments presumably penned by his lordship and carved on its base may also have suggested themselves to Blake as he painted his not uncritical representations of war and Britain governing the nations in *The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan* (c. 1805–09)—where an aroused, enraptured, and (but for sheepswool briefs) near-naked Nelson poses on conquered peoples of color while seemingly admiring, caressing, and guiding the destructive sea serpent—and in *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth* (1805?).

- 5 Half a mile from the northern end of South Molton Street as it meets Oxford Street, formerly Tyburn Road, was the site of the old Tyburn gallows, the principal place of execution in London from 1388. Blake may have recalled witnessing one of the last public executions enacted here before hangings were removed to Newgate in 1783, that of William Wynn Ryland, the engraving master Blake rejected in favor of James Basire in 1772, hanged for forgery on 29 August 1783 (Gilchrist 13).¹

2. The Street

- 6 South Molton Street is in the parish of St. George, Hanover Square, Westminster. The name derives from its former title of South Moulton Row, which in turn has its origin in

1. The day of the execution of Ryland and four other convicts would have been a public holiday.

the Devonshire borough and market town of South Molton. The town experienced great economic prosperity through the wool trade in the mid-eighteenth century, the period of the street's construction. South Molton Street was built at an oblique angle between Oxford and Brook Streets, following the course of a section of a tributary of the Westbourne River, Tyburn Brook. Culverted fifty years before the Blakes' arrival, this part of the brook flows under South Molton Lane (formerly Poverty Lane), directly behind the southwestern side of South Molton Street (to the rear of no. 17), and continues south under Brook Street and Avery Row. This section of the Tyburn forms the western perimeter of the Corporation of London's Conduit Mead Estate.² It has previously been assumed that Blake's seven mentions of "Tyburns brook" in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* refer to the stream near the site of execution at Tyburn. By alluding specifically to Tyburn Brook, however, he appears to be referencing the fact that the stream flows from Tyburn gallows and west to Hyde Park, via the rear of the western side of South Molton Street, underground beneath the rear windows of the Blakes' residence. Thus these repeated references to Tyburn seem to have an immediate domestic biographical and topographical context.³ South Molton Street could be entered and exited on the southwestern side through a narrow passageway between nos. 22 and 23 that led to South Molton Lane. On the opposite side of the street was a passageway between nos. 55 and 56 that ran into Haunch of Venison Yard, a long yard leading south to Brook Street.

- 7 Evidence suggests that the original houses of which South Molton Street is composed were constructed between 1720 and 1760. A fireplate installed in the back of the fireplace of the front room on the second floor of no. 17 bears the date 1724.⁴ The street must have actually been built around 1750, however (*London Encyclopaedia* 821). John Rocque's *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster*, published in 1746, indicates that the northern half was formerly known as South Moulton Row. The southern half was called Paradise Row. Close examination of the map shows that be-

2. For a map of the Conduit Mead Estate in 1794, see upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/84/Conduit_Mead_Estate_1794.png.

3. Blake's occasional indulgence in superstitious practices is documented in his Notebook, in which it is recounted that he and Catherine practiced fortune-telling in August 1807. Catherine "was told by a Spirit to look for her fortune by opening by chance a book which she had in her hand it was [Edward] Bysses Art of [English] Poetry" (E 696). Blake may also have recollected an ancient superstition concerning ghosts living by or in running water, which they cannot actually cross. According to this belief, the spirits of those sacrificed or executed at Tyburn would haunt stretches of Tyburn Brook.

4. The fireplace and other details of the residence were examined with the assistance of Tim Heath, 15 June 2005.

tween 1738 and 1745 houses appear to have been built on both sides of Paradise Row and on the northeastern side of South Moulton Row. The site on which no. 17 is now built, originally the southern end of the southwestern side of South Moulton Row, reveals no houses but a line of trees. Rate book records provide evidence of South Moulton Row (first rated in 1741) comprising ten properties in 1750.⁵ 1750 is also the date of the act of parliament that allowed for the section of Tyburn Brook that flowed near the southwestern side of South Moulton Row to be covered by a culvert.⁶ This enabled the building of houses on the southwestern side to take place, as well as the consequent development of what would become South Molton Street. We may therefore posit a date for the building of the section of South Molton Street of which no. 17 is part as between 1751 and the earliest traced reference to South Molton Street in a rate book, c. 1755.⁷

- 8 By 1803 there were sixty-four residences surrounding the Blakes in South Molton Street. On their side, the houses were numbered 1 at the southern end to 33 in the north. On the eastern side, the numbers ran from 34 at the northern end to 65 in the south. An examination of poll books, trade directories, rate books, and the court records of the Old Bailey of the period have provided material for a comprehensive and systematic reconstruction of who lived in the street at the same time as the Blakes. The sources reveal forty-six private households and over fifty different trades (see table 1). These establishments included a private ladies' school, a merchant, five coal merchants, possibly as many as three public houses, a watch and clockmaker, a surgeon, apothecary, and man midwife, a turnery warehouse and sieve maker, a brushmaker, a hotelier, two plumbers, an engine manufacturer, an ironmonger, five bakers, three tea dealers and grocers, two greengrocers, three fruiterers, two cheesemongers, a hatter, a straw-hat manufacturer, three saddlers, a hosier and glover, a music teacher, a cabinet maker, a calenderer and muslin cleaner, a wine cooper, two carpenters, a boot and shoemaker, a habit maker, a carriage-lamp manufacturer, an embroiderer, a broker and upholsterer, three conveyancers and attorneys, a confectioner, a plasterer, a tax officer, two breeches and gaiter makers, a hardwareman and cutler, an attorney and notary public, a wax and tallow chandler and soap manufacturer, a muslin cleaner, two carvers and gilders, two staymakers, four painters and glaziers, a builder, three upholsterers and un-

5. See the 31 May and 12 December 1750 rate books for St. George, Hanover Square, Brook Street Ward (City of Westminster Archives Centre [hereafter COWAC] C 285, 286).

6. The culverting of this section of the Tyburn also formed South Molton Lane. See Barton 31.

7. See St. George, Hanover Square, Poor, Highway, and Scavenger Rates, 1755, COWAC C 326.

dertakers, one china and Staffordshire warehouse, a hat manufacturer, a ladies' shoemaker, several wine and brandy merchants, seven perfumers and hairdressers, and eighteen tailors.

- 9 Less is known of the members of the gentry who lived there. Former residents included "William Green of South Molton Street," who in 1778 had published *Description and Use of the Improved Reflecting and Refracting Telescopes, and Scale for Surveying, etc.*, and Samuel Martin, MP for Camelford (1747–68) and Hastings (1768–74), who fought a duel with John Wilkes in 1763 (Schaw 259; Martin). During the period of the Blakes' residence there was the family of William Delane (1793–1857), future barrister and treasurer of *The Times* (Hamilton), and the ratepayers and residents who are listed with the title of "Gentleman" in the Westminster Poll Book for 1818: John Perret [*sic*], owner-manager of Perott's Hotel; Charles Mence, conveyancer of the firm C. and W. Mence at no. 19; Stephen Stubbs at no. 47; and James Ruth at no. 53. Edward Jackson, who described himself as "R[oyal]. Artillery" and was presumably an army officer, was at no. 50. Radical MP for the City of London, former mayor of London, campaigner for Catholic emancipation, and chief supporter of Queen Caroline,⁸ Alderman Matthew Wood, occupied a house in South Molton Street.⁹

Near Neighbors

- 10 Between 1804 and 1808 the ratepayer and principal occupant at no. 16 was the attorney John Griffin. A merchant, John Johnson, occupied the property with Griffin; Johnson became the ratepayer when Griffin left in 1809 and continued until 1813. He and his wife, Ann, kept a coal warehouse at the property (POB, ref. t17991030-79), one of five such establishments in the street during this period.¹⁰ When the Johnsons departed, Archibald Newland, tailor, occupied and ran his business from the property between 1814 and 1821. The history of no. 16 at this time is typical of a number of South Molton Street residences in which occupants and tradesmen arrived and departed with relative rapidity.

8. Blake's engraving of "Mrs. Q," George IV's former mistress, was published (1 June 1820) on the eve of Caroline's return from exile.

9. At the trial of Edward Felton for theft on 21 April 1819, Wood testified that he lived there (Proceedings of the Old Bailey [hereafter POB], ref. t18190421-33).

For crime in the street during the Blakes' time, see Whitehead, "Reconstructing" 66, 75n148. At least in the autumn of 1811, the street appears to have had its own watchman, Joseph Wakeman, on patrol at 4:00 a.m. and presumably through the night (see POB, ref. t18111030-83).

10. From 1812 John Wilson ran a coal merchant's from no. 14; George Parvin, coal merchant, conducted business at no. 21.

- 11 In contrast, the Blakes' other immediate neighbor stayed for the duration of their residence and remained long afterwards. No. 18 was the premises of Francis Tucker, wax and tallow chandler and soap merchant. Although Tucker himself died in 1850, his family business, which employed a number of staff, remained at this address from almost a decade before the Blakes' arrival until nearly a century after their departure. The shop must have been a useful source of candles for illuminating the Blakes' rooms and also for soap for washing their clothes and persons. According to a reminiscence attributed to George Richmond, "Once Mrs Blake, in excuse for the general lack of soap and water, remarked to me: 'You see, Mr. Blake's skin don't dirt!'"¹¹ but Tucker's presence may indicate that soap and water were present, even if not necessarily in evidence to those who visited the Blakes. Tucker, a devout Catholic, enjoyed royal patronage for his soap and candles, perhaps suggesting more of a luxury goods establishment.¹²
- 12 No. 50, opposite no. 17, was the residence of William and Isabella Spratt and their lodger, a dissenting clergyman, Rev. Thomas Nicholas (1805–08). Marsha Keith Schuchard claims that Richard Cosway kept a house at no. 51 "for the study of magic,"¹³ but local rate books and directories reveal a different owner and business, Charles King's turnery warehouse, where King and his staff produced ornamental objects on pedal-powered lathes.¹⁴
- 13 One hundred yards from the back of no. 17 was the small, triangular Grosvenor Market, still operating though slowly failing and increasingly deserted owing to the larger, more central St. George's Market. From their back room where they relaxed and slept William and Catherine Blake could

11. *BR*(2) 404. Bentley notes that "the chain of evidence for this story is ... long and fragile" (*BR*[2] 868n59).

Between 1813 and 1815 George Cumberland and George Cumberland, Jr., both made reference to the Blakes' appearing dirty (*BR*[2] 316, 320). On one occasion, however, Cumberland wrote that his old friend Thomas Stothard was dirtier than the Blakes (*BR*[2] 316). Perhaps the "dirt" could be attributed to the painting media and printer's ink that both artists utilized.

12. According to his will, Tucker died a wealthy man, leaving several properties, including no. 18, to his children, and significant sums to numerous London Catholic charities and foundations (*PRO PROB* 11/2109).

13. Schuchard 318. Schuchard cites Gerald Barnett's *Richard and Maria Cosway: A Biography* (1995), but may be referring to George Cumberland's copy books. She gives little sense of when Cosway may have utilized no. 51; as mentioned above, his actual residence was across Oxford Street, at Stratford Place.

14. In 1813 this was the residence of George Cumberland's friend Dayley (see *BR*[2] 316).

Cumberland appears to have regularly visited and lodged with the barrister and art collector George Townley, who had chambers at no. 61 (see Whitehead, "Pocketbooks").

have seen and heard butchers, poulterers, fishmongers, butter men, cheesemongers, and other traders plying their respective trades out of doors and on their stalls to neighborhood customers. Did the now middle-aged couple empathize with this obscure and—in Blake’s words from *The Four Zoas*—“desolate market” (E 325) where steadily fewer customers than expected came to buy?

Prostitutes

- 14 In the 1794 edition of rake and poet Samuel Derrick’s directory of middle-class prostitutes, *Harris’s List of Covent-Garden Ladies*, three are listed in houses near the southeastern corner of the street. The 1793 edition also includes “Mifs Gronmof—d” at no. 59; “Mifs Wa—s” at no. 60, who “drives a chariot, has several city friends, both bankers and Ifraelites”; and “Mifs Br—ley” at no. 61 (30-31, 43-44, 22-23). None of the ratepayers of these properties in 1793 appears to have remained in South Molton Street in 1803. Some of Blake’s neighbors, however, such as James Mivart, Margaret Vaynall, William Goodchild, John Pool, George Parvin, William Thackray, Archibald Hay, William Thorogood, William Heron, and William Sloper, would probably have remembered these former residents. In the 1788 edition of *Harris* there is an entry for “Miss G—rge, at a Grocer’s Shop, South-Molton Street” (41-42). In the 1793 edition a Miss G—rge, living at no. 13, “drives a very handsome curricule, and is in keeping by a Mr. C—ns” (49-50). However, the “Grocer’s” may have been no. 32, the premises of John Richardson, tea dealer and grocer, who was still in business at this address when the Blakes arrived. The 1790 edition of *Harris* contains an entry for “Miss Williams, 32 South Molton Street, Grosvenor Square” (113). To my query concerning the likelihood of prostitutes still residing in South Molton Street in 1803, Hallie Rubenhold, an authority on *Harris’s List*, replied:

The chances of prostitutes still living on South Molton Street by the early 19th century was certainly very high ... prostitutes were integrated into ordinary (or so called respectable) areas. There were no red light districts and this continued to be the case into the early 19th century.... But one caveat must be added; the women listed in the later *Harris’s Lists* ... were outwardly quite respectable ... and wouldn’t have solicited on the street. On South Molton Street they would not have been “top end” prostitutes either—rather, just middle class girls. (Private correspondence, 27 February 2006)

The fact that several prostitutes, advertised in an apparently widely circulated publication, lived in the street may explain a reference in playwright and poet Hannah Cowley’s popular play of 1781, *The Belle’s Stratagem*. In act 3, scene 1, the heroine, Letitia Hardy, informs Mrs. Racket:

You may tell the gentleman what a genius I have; how I can cut watch-papers, work cat-gut, make quadril baskets with pins, and take profiles in shades; ay, as well as the lady at No. 62, South Molton-street, Grosvenor-square.¹⁵

Printers and Booksellers

- 15 At no. 7, the premises of Brown and Scripps, newsmen and stationers, Blake could have read and acquired books, as well as paper for printing, pencils, brushes, and other art materials.¹⁶ William Armiger Scripps was publisher (1801–20) of a prominent London newspaper, the *London Daily Sun*, then of the *Literary Gazette*, which was the first to print a sustained obituary of the poet-artist (BR[2] 465-67). The shop may therefore have been a conduit through which Blake learned of current events, from heightened fears of Napoleonic invasion in 1803 to the discovery of the Cato Street Conspiracy in February 1820.
- 16 Significant for Blake in the months leading up to his 1809–10 exhibition at 28 Broad Street was the printing and book-selling firm of Ann Watts and Edward Bridgewater, based at no. 31, which “printed the advertisements for Blake’s Descriptive Catalogue (1809) and ‘Blake’s Chaucer: The Canterbury Pilgrims’ (1809), while Watts & Co. printed his ‘Exhibition of Paintings in Fresco’ (1809)” (Bentley, *Stranger* 260n). These advertisements were perhaps displayed in the bookshop on the same premises. According to Ian Maxted, *The London Book Trades, 1775–1800*, Clement Watts had begun trading at 9 Queen Street, Grosvenor Square, c. 1774; the firm continued under the name Ann Watts in 1785 and Watts and Bridgewater in 1799. Watts and Bridgewater relocated to 31 South Molton Street c. 1807, approximately three years after the arrival of the Blakes. From 1817 it did business under the name Edward Bridgewater.¹⁷ In 1807 it registered its presses.¹⁸ I have traced one publication that involved art prints: *Drawings from Original Pictures of Philip Reinagle—by an Amateur—Folio—8 Lithographic Plates* (c. 1826). If one of the presses registered at no. 31 in 1807 was a new lithographic press, perhaps Blake’s “Enoch” was printed there.
- 17 The business published a number of works for the evangelical hymn-writer Basil Woodd, minister of Bentick Chapel, Marylebone, including:

15. It is of course also possible that Cowley is referring to a female profligate residing at this address c. 1780.

16. See Pigot’s *London and Provincial New Commercial Directory, 1823–4* (1823) 45, 47.

17. Bridgewater may have been the author of a children’s book, E. B. [Edward Bridgewater?], *New and Instructive Moral Tales* (1802).

18. See Maxted 240.

- *The Psalms of David and Other Portions of the Sacred Scriptures, Arranged according to the Order of the Church of England* (1795);
- *Memoirs of Mrs. Hannah Woodd*, 3rd ed. (1799), an account of his late mother in the form of a letter addressed to the prominent evangelical minister Richard Conyers, an associate of William Cowper and Mary Unwin, George Whitefield and John Wesley (see Cowie);
- *A Brief Exploration of the Church Catechism*, 11th ed. (c. 1805);
- *Advice to Youth Principally Designed for Young People Leaving School* (1806);
- *The Excellence of the Liturgy: A Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Aylesbury, at the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Bucks. on Wednesday, June 27, 1810* (1810). G. W. O. Addleshaw has described the sermon as “of some importance as it reinterpreted the principles of the classical liturgists for the Evangelical party” (145);
- *A Memoir of Bowyer Smith, a Pious Child* (1812), which may have shared similarities with Benjamin Heath Malkin’s *A Father’s Memoirs of His Child*, another work of infant hagiography;
- *The Two Grand Instruments for the Propagation of the Gospel, and the Duty of Christians to Uphold Them with Zeal and Energy* (1816); and
- *A New Metrical Version of the Psalms of David* (1821).¹⁹

18 Other books and pamphlets produced by the firm were:

- E. Warren, *The Poet’s Day, or Imagination’s Ramble. A Poem in Four Books, with Some Smaller Pieces* (1803);
- *Select Psalmody for the Use of the Free Chapel in West-Street, St. Giles’s* (1805);
- F[rederick]. A[lbert]. Winsor, *A National Light and Heat Company* [based at 97 Pall Mall], *for Providing Our Streets and Houses with Hydrocarbon Gas-Lights, on Similar Principles, as They Are Now Supplied with Water* (1805);²⁰
- Richard Du Bourg, *Descriptive Catalogue of Du Bourg’s Museum, No. 68, Lower Grosvenor-Street ... Large Models Made of Cork, Done by Scale, Representing Some of the*

19. See Whitehead, *New Discoveries* 2: 258–59.

The tension between religious enthusiasm and a desire to revive traditional liturgy in some quarters of early nineteenth-century evangelical Christianity, evident in Woodd’s publications and ministry, can also be traced in the early history of the Catholic Apostolic (“Irvingite”) Church, which Blake’s disciple Frederick Tatham became fervently involved with from sometime between c. 1824 and 1831 and his death in 1878. The same tension might also be evident in Blake’s decision to be buried at Bunhill Fields, a dissenter’s burial ground, “but as to service, he should wish for that of the Church of England” (BR[2] 625–26).

20. Although publicly ridiculed by such well-known public figures as Walter Scott and Humphry Davy, Winsor’s prospectus led to widespread gas lighting in the metropolis by 1815 (Williams).

Most Superb Remains of Roman Magnificence, in and near Rome, Naples, Verona and the South of France (1810);

- William Howard, *A Letter to Joanna Southcott, the Pretended Prophetess, with a Fac-simile of Her Handwriting as Connected with Her Blasphemous Seal* (1810); and
- The biography by James Forbes (author, traveler, and pioneering collector of Hindu scriptures and representations of deities) of his sister, *Ricordanza: Memoir of Elizabeth Dalton* (1813).

Further Residents and Establishments of Note

- 19 At no. 54 was Mrs. Kelly’s ladies’ school. As Mrs. Kelly is not listed as a ratepayer, she probably lodged and ran her school from one or two floors of the house. It seems unlikely that any pupils would have boarded with her. She may have given lessons on Saturday mornings, as Sarah Malin did at her school at 54 Newgate Street in 1802 (POB, ref. t18021027-10).²¹ Also on the other side from no. 17, but in the opposite direction, the Bricklayer’s Arms at no. 46 was run by a series of landlords during the Blakes’ period of residence (COWAC C 606-09; Westminster Poll Book for 1818, p. 52). The name of this pub must be connected with those workmen carrying out plans for the rapid expansion of London in this area, c. 1750–1830. It may also provide a possible context for lines in *Jerusalem*: “What are those golden Builders doing / Near mournful ever-weeping Paddington” (E 172). The Proceedings of the Old Bailey for 1811 suggest that this popular pub was used by local thieves to share out loot and fence items (POB, ref. t18111030-74). According to Gilchrist, when Blake later lodged in Fountain Court, he “fetched the porter for dinner himself, from the house at the corner of the Strand” (313).²² It seems likely that a few years earlier Blake would have started the habit of regularly visiting the Bricklayer’s Arms for similar reasons. From 1812, William Goslett ran a carving and gilding and presumably picture-framing business at no. 32. Goslett may have been one of several carvers and gilders who supplied Blake with small amounts of gold leaf at a period in which he regularly incorporated metals into the creation of his temperas, watercolors, and illuminated books.²³

21. The Blakes’ friend Elizabeth Butts, wife of Blake’s patron Thomas Butts, ran a girls’ school at nearby 9 Great Marlborough Street, which Blake’s numerous biblical paintings commissioned by Thomas Butts appear to have decorated. Blake may even have taught at Mrs. Butts’s school. See Viscomi; BR[2] 90.

22. Gilchrist continues, “It was only in later years [that Blake] took porter regularly. He then fancied it soothed him, and would sit and muse over his pint after a one o’clock dinner.” The house at the corner of the Strand was almost certainly the Coal Hole tavern, the rear of which was almost opposite the Blakes’ lodgings at no. 3 Fountain Court.

23. Whitehead, “Gold and Silver” 92.

- 20 At no. 11 was the Land and Assessed Taxes office for the parish of St. George, Hanover Square, managed by Edmund Treherne, clerk, resident, and ratepayer for the property. Treherne had been appointed head clerk in 1801.²⁴ Contemporary rate books and trade directories indicate that a Thomas Hattersley, fruiterer and greengrocer, resided and conducted his business at no. 4 between 1803 and 1816. By 1821 Robert Hattersley, presumably Thomas's son, had succeeded him as ratepayer. Thomas and Robert Hattersley may have been related to Joshua Hattersley, who married Grace Armitage, sister of Thomas Armitage, the first husband of Blake's mother, Catherine Wright.²⁵
- 21 It may be significant that members of at least one household in South Molton Street had, like the Blakes, previously associated with the Swedenborgian Church. On 14 June 1795 Joseph and Sarah Evans's fourth daughter, Mary, was baptised at the New Jerusalemite Church, Friar Street, Blackfriars.²⁶ In 1803 Joseph and Sarah (née Hearl) resided at no. 45 (COWAC C 596). Joseph appears to have been a partner in the firm Evans and Cutler, tailors and drapers, who traded at no. 56, the residence of Edward Cutler. Between 1809 and 1821 Evans's widow remained at no. 45.

Artists

- 22 Despite a popular misconception that the Blakes lived in relative isolation during the first fourteen years they resided in South Molton Street,²⁷ there is clear evidence, even among the relatively few surviving accounts of the period, that they encountered and conversed with numerous friends and acquaintances. Among them were several artists. As we have seen, Richard Cosway, whom Blake had first met in the 1780s, lived in Stratford Place. Formerly, South Molton Street had been home to other artists. John Claude Nattes, topographical draftsman, watercolor artist, and cofounder of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, had resided at no. 49 in the 1790s (Flood; Graves 5: 344). Elizabeth Sarah Villa-Real Gooch, courtesan, poet, and novelist, had written her sensational autobiography *The Life of Mrs. Gooch* (1792) from her rooms at no. 13 (Gooch 2:

139), and may still have been resident when the Blakes arrived.

- 23 Blake's letter to Hayley dated 28 September 1804 suggests more than a passing acquaintance with "M^r Spilsbury" (E 755), almost certainly Jonathan Spilsbury (1737–1812), painter, engraver, printmaker, and member of the Moravian Church.²⁸ Between 1791 and his death, Spilsbury lived in St. George's Row, off Oxford Street.²⁹ At least one younger artist, Martin Cregan, the student of Martin Archer Shee, visited the Blakes at South Molton Street.³⁰ In addition, around 1812 Blake is likely to have met and conversed with fellow members of the Associated Painters in Water Colours (BR[2] 311–12).
- 24 Several other artists appear to have been close neighbors. As Bentley has observed, the Bristol artist and academician Edward Bird lived at no. 29 in 1818.³¹ The Royal Academy exhibition catalogues indicate that between 1811 and 1813 the miniature painter and engraver William Haines (1778–1848) resided and had his studio at no. 10 (Graves 3: 349). Haines, like Blake, engraved one of the twelve plates in Hayley's *The Life of George Romney*, finally published in 1809 (Haines). From 1806 to 1814, the landscape and portrait painter J. E. H. Robinson lived and worked at no. 14, and in 1820 the landscape painter B. Rotch lived two doors from the Blakes.³² The exhibition catalogues also record that from 1812 to 1816 William Fleetwood Varley (1785–1856), the landscape painter and brother of John and Cornelius Varley, lived at no. 45, next door to the Bricklayer's Arms.³³

3. William Fleetwood Varley

- 25 Blake was an intimate friend of the watercolorist and astrologer John Varley. From 1818 until 1825, and probably up until Blake's death in August 1827, the two regularly met. On at least one occasion Varley also assisted in pro-

24. See the suicide notice for his son, also Edmund, in *The Times* of 31 March 1863, p. 12.

25. See BR(2) xxxii. I am grateful to Keri Davies for this suggestion.

26. See *FamilySearch*, www.familysearch.org. The fact that the Evanses had their daughter baptised there suggests that they had previously joined the church. Their connection with the church seems, again like the Blakes', to have been comparatively brief. Their eldest son, Joseph, was baptised at the parish church, St. George's, Hanover Square, on 26 October 1794, and their last child, Sarah, was baptised at the same church on 7 April 1799. The Blakes appear never to have actually joined the New Church (BR[2] 53).

27. That is, before Blake's meeting with John Linnell, c. June 1818.

28. An identification first suggested by Archibald Russell, who also notes that Spilsbury exhibited portraits at the Royal Academy from 1776 to 1807 (Blake, *Letters* 166n3).

29. See Sloman, "Spilsbury," and also Spilsbury's will (PRO PROB 11/1543).

30. BR(2) 281. Cregan's visit suggests parallels with the Ancients' later visits to Fountain Court (see BR[2] 340–464).

31. BR(2) 748. Bird is listed at this address in the Royal Academy exhibition catalogue for 1818 (Graves 1: 200). Ten years earlier, an E. Bird of Bristol was a subscriber to Robert Blair's *The Grave*, with designs by Blake (see Blair).

32. Graves 6: 338, 375. Rotch appears to have been succeeded by the portrait painter Edward Daniel Leahy, who was at no. 15 in 1821–22 (Graves 5: 12).

33. Graves 8: 76. The rates for this property were paid by Joseph Evans's widow, Sarah. William Varley, like the Blakes and other artists living in the street in this period, must therefore have been a lodger.

moting his friend's work (BR[2] 385). Of particular significance are the Visionary Heads, the numerous portraits of historical or imaginary figures that Blake sketched with Varley's encouragement and in his presence between c. 1819 and 1825.³⁴ In his manuscript "Autobiography," written in the 1850s and partially revised and expanded in the 1860s, John Linnell—Varley's former pupil—claims to have introduced his new friend Blake to Varley: "John Varley[,] to whom I had introduced Blake & who readily devoured all the marvellous in Blake's most extravagant utterances" (BR[2] 341). Most Blake biographers and scholars have accepted this account; for instance, Morton D. Paley asserts that "John Linnell had been a pupil of Varley's and no doubt introduced him to Blake" (300). Yet Linnell's version was written over forty years after the event that it purports to describe. Entries in his journal for 1818 refer to being together with Blake and Varley on three separate occasions in mid-September: "Sat 12 ... M^r Blake Brought a proof of M^r Upton's | Plate | ... | M^r Varley—& M^r Constable stay'd with Blake"; "Friday 18 ... to M^r Blake with M^r Varley—Ev^g—"; "Sat 19 ... D^r Thornton called & M^r Blake | went with M^r Blake to M^r Varley's Ev^g—" (BR[2] 343).

- 26 While establishing that the three artists regularly met at that time, these entries do not confirm Linnell's later claim that he introduced Blake to Varley. Varley was fourteen years Linnell's senior and had been exhibiting at the Royal Academy since 1798 (Graves 8: 75) and at the Society of Painters in Water Colours, which he cofounded in November 1804, since its first exhibition in 1805.³⁵ Both Blake and Varley contributed watercolors to Rev. Joseph Thomas's second folio edition of Shakespeare.³⁶ It is therefore curious that in what Bentley describes as "the tight little artistic world of [the] time" (BR[2] 227fn) it should have been the twenty-six-year-old Linnell who introduced Blake to the established painter Varley. Although there is no conclusive evidence, there were plentiful opportunities for the two to have crossed paths before 1818. Bentley has suggested that Linnell was the first member of the Ancients to meet Blake,³⁷ but a passage in Gilchrist intimates that Varley

knew Blake before Linnell's "introduction" and also that Francis Oliver Finch, another of Varley's pupils and a future Ancient, knew of Blake and had probably met him before then:

As a boy, [Finch] had heard again and again of Blake from John Varley, whose pupil he was for five years, and his imagination had been much excited by what he had heard. For once expectation was fulfilled. In Mr. Finch's own felicitous words, Blake "struck him as *a new kind of man*, wholly original, and in all things."³⁸

According to one of his fellow students, Finch was a pupil of Varley's between 1814 and 1819 (Sharpe 323). It is therefore likely that the young Finch, sitting alongside John Sharpe and Henry Bryan Ziegler, first heard of Blake at Varley's studio at 15 Broad Street, Carnaby Market, and it is possible that he met Blake before Linnell did.³⁹ Varley himself may have encountered Blake sometime before 1814. It is therefore worth considering other avenues through which John Varley and William Blake could have known each other.

- 27 Keri Davies has proposed that Blake was acquainted with Varley's paternal uncle, Samuel Varley (1744–1822)—lecturer on "Natural and Experimental Philosophy," founder of the Chemical and Philosophical Society (forerunner of the Royal Institution), and scientific associate of Charles, third Earl Stanhope—as early as the 1780s. As he observes, "In the current biographical account John Varley comes from nowhere into William Blake's life—bringing William Blake and Samuel Varley together in the 1780s makes Blake's later friendship with John Varley more understandable."⁴⁰ Three decades later, Blake may also have made the acquaintance of another member of the Varley family, prior to meeting either John Varley or Linnell.
- 28 John and Cornelius Varley are familiar names to scholars of art history and Blake, but their younger brother William is a largely forgotten figure. However, C. M. Kauffmann and Stephen Gamble have demonstrated that, until he was badly injured in a fire in Oxford sometime after 1825,⁴¹ William

34. See Butlin p. 495. The Visionary Heads were drawn in three books: the Small Blake-Varley Sketchbook (discovered in 1967), the Large Blake-Varley Sketchbook (discovered in 1989), and the Folio Blake-Varley Sketchbook (untraced) (BR[2] 346–63).

35. The first exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water Colours in April 1805 was held, not in Pall Mall as asserted by Gilchrist (260), but at 20 Lower Brook Street, just around the corner from the Blakes' apartment (see Kauffmann, *John Varley* 30).

36. See Butlin #547. Other artists included John Flaxman and William Mulready.

37. BR(2) 340. However, in his biography of Blake, Bentley states: "Probably the first of the Ancients to meet Blake was Frederick Tatham, for his father, the architect and Baptist Charles Heathcote Tatham, had been a friend of Blake's for many years" (*Stranger* 401).

38. Gilchrist 300. In a letter to Anne Gilchrist written several months after Finch's death on 27 August 1862, Samuel Palmer describes him as a "very old friend of Blake" (Palmer 2: 674). Although Palmer was exaggerating, his comment suggests that Finch was one of the first Ancients to meet Blake.

39. At the time of Blake's one-man exhibition at 28 Broad Street, Varley resided thirteen doors away (see Kauffmann, *John Varley* 71).

40. See Davies 225–26, 232–33. He also argues that Samuel Varley is a likely model for Inflammable Gass the Wind Finder in *An Island in the Moon*.

41. Gamble (private correspondence, 20 October 2026) suggests that the fire could have been as late as 1841.

Fleetwood Varley was an accomplished painter and teacher (Kauffmann, "Varley, John"; Gamble 180-84). He introduced Linnell to his brother John; as Linnell recalls, "I became acquainted [*sic*] with John Varley through his brother William who saw me at Christie's Auction Room sketching from a drawing by [Thomas?] Girtton [*sic*]" ("Autobiography," f. 4).⁴² Linnell continues, "William had no talent and was the butt of the family."⁴³ Biographical evidence suggests that from the 1850s Linnell became both less charitable and less reliable as a historical source.⁴⁴ When he received the following letter from William at some point prior to August 1849—when William's wife, Maria, died of cholera—Linnell was probably less sympathetic than he had been to William's debt-plagued brother John twenty years earlier.⁴⁵

45 Upper Rathbone Place
Oxford Street—

Sir/

I have the honour to address you once more and I trust you will excuse it. I am with my wife and 7 children without Bread & are in the height of distress have been so for along [*sic*] time And my children are almost starving I have no business and not a drawing by me and this last 3 weeks I have been obliged to go round to collect in a husle [haste?] to send for them & now we are all in 1 Room and not 1 Farthing to help us Mrs Varley⁴⁶ cannot assist me or Cornelius and now you are a great Painter I venture to appeal to your Benevolence trusting in Providence to send me this year some Immediate Relief from our destitute and indigent state.

I have the honor to remain
In with the highest respect
Your most Obedt Sevt
Wllm Fleetwood Varley

To John Linnell Esq.⁴⁷

- 29 Kauffmann, citing as evidence a manuscript artist's manual entitled "Principles of Art by William Varley 1819," disputes Linnell's recollection of William's lack of talent and asserts that he was "one of the more important [watercolor] teachers of his day."⁴⁸ While residing in South Molton

Street, William would almost certainly have advertised for and taught numerous students.⁴⁹ Blake had also been employed as a teacher (Bentley, *Stranger* 288; *BR*[2] 222-23). As well as composing *Jerusalem* and engraving illustrations to Hesiod for John Flaxman and illustrations for Wedgwood's catalogue at this time, Blake continued work on his watercolor illustrations to Milton. The fact that these two artists lived in such close proximity to one another for half a decade suggests a plausible avenue through which they may have become acquainted (Kauffmann, *John Varley* 63). Blake, then in his mid-fifties, and William Varley, in his late twenties, could have met as early as 1812, the year of the latter's arrival in South Molton Street and six years before George Cumberland, Jr., introduced Blake to Linnell (*BR*[2] 340). In the opening months of 1812, both were preparing watercolors to be shown in forthcoming exhibitions (*BR*[2] 311-14; Graves 8: 76). It is also conceivable that John Varley, perhaps during a visit to his younger brother and family at no. 45, could have first encountered Blake sometime between 1812 and 1816. Such a possibility throws further doubt on the widely held assumption that Linnell was responsible for introducing Blake to John Varley, Finch, Palmer, and Tatham.⁵⁰ It also suggests that during the period of so-called "Independence and Obscurity," 1806-18 (*BR*[2] 220), Blake may have established an important and productive relationship with a fellow artist and neighbor, William Varley.

- 30 There may be further links between Blake and William Varley. Raymond Lister states that

Blake ... was fond of experimenting, and it would not be uncharacteristic if he had experimented with varnish. The practice of varnishing water-colours, although never a common practice, arose in the eighteenth century, when they were often exhibited on the same wall as oil paintings, and were not always covered with glass. Among water-colourists who varnished their work was John Varley, who became a friend of Blake in his latter years. Blake might have seen examples so treated by Varley, and perhaps liking the immediate effect, used it himself. On the other hand, it does not, so far as we know, occur on water-

42. The account is retold in Story 1: 19 and David Linnell 8. Firestone (7) dates this encounter to 1804.

43. Cited in Kauffmann, *John Varley* 63.

44. See Firestone 47, 98, 188. On 23 August 1860 the art dealer L. V. Platow wrote to Linnell, "It is well that you know that you stand alone in the artistic world in your unprincipled mode of doing business" (Firestone 147n19).

45. See Firestone 69; David Linnell 100-01.

46. Delvalle, widow of John Varley and daughter of Wilson Lowry.

47. Linnell Papers, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 2754-2000. A copy of this unpublished letter was kindly shown to me by Stephen Gamble.

48. Kauffmann, *John Varley* 64. Three years earlier, William had published a fifteen-page pamphlet entitled *A Few Observations on Art with*

Notices Relevant to the Various Exhibitions, Repositories of Art, etc. (1816). Adrian Bury (66) erroneously ascribes the pamphlet to John Varley.

49. In the frontispiece to *A Few Observations on Art*, he describes himself as a

DRAWING MASTER ... who instructs Ladies and Gentlemen to Draw with Taste, Accuracy, and Expedition, on the most approved Principles, and liberal Terms. Such Pupils as are intrusted [*sic*] to his care, are taught to Sketch from Nature, and every attention paid to accelerate their progress in Theory and Practice. ... PATRONISED BY THE NOBILITY AND GENTRY.

50. See, for example, Story 1: 170-71; Vaughan 78; Lister, "Finch"; *BR*(2) 403.

colours painted after he had met Varley; so he might have applied varnish to earlier works by way of experiment and, not after all liking the effect, carried it no further. Or he might merely have adopted the practice from what was a general custom at the time. (*Infernal Methods* 45)

Nonetheless, as Lister points out, “Blake also used varnish on some of his temperas” (46n26), including later works. On 1 and 4 August 1829, Catherine Blake wrote to her late husband’s patron George O’Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont, about applying a third coat of “white hard Varnish” to a watercolor, *The Characters in Spenser’s Faerie Queene*, that he had recently purchased from her (BR[2] 498). In 1816, shortly after leaving South Molton Street, William Varley advertised for sale to the public “W.V.’s preparation for preserving Pencil Drawings, in bottles 3s. each.”⁵¹ Could Blake’s, and consequently Catherine’s, method of creating and applying varnish to watercolors have been influenced by conversations with William Varley, or indeed by their use or emulation of “W.V.’s preparation”?

- 31 William Mason, the printer of the second edition of William Varley’s impressive treatise on painting, *Observations on Colouring and Sketching from Nature ... Considerably Enlarged and Corrected* (1820), would have been familiar with at least one of Blake’s commercial engravings: his print for Hayley’s *Life of Romney*. Mason became Hayley’s printer after the death of Joseph Seagrave in 1808, taking over Seagrave’s premises in East Street, Chichester.⁵² In late August 1808, Mason proposed to Hayley’s friend W. Walker that “Mr Blakes departure from the Soul” be used as the frontispiece for a posthumous collection of poems by Thomas Bradford (BR[2] 263–64). This suggests that half a decade after Blake had left Felpham, Mason was familiar with and impressed enough by Blake’s skill as an engraver to recommend his work for inclusion in a new publication. Blake, in turn, may have suggested Mason to William Varley as printer of the second edition of his treatise.
- 32 Finally, Stephen Gamble has observed similarities between Blake’s and William Varley’s techniques of watercolor painting during this period: “There is a hint of the influence of Blake’s sweeping passages of colour in his [Blake’s] visionary paintings. This influence may have derived from his [William Varley’s] brother John’s association with Blake about 1818” (180). In response to my query about possible examples of Blake’s influence on Varley, Gamble cited the last full-page watercolor from Varley’s manuscript “Principles of Art.” He pointed to the “sweeping scalloped washes”

that echo the style evident in Blake’s *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* (Butlin #478), *Jacques and the Wounded Stag* (Butlin #547.1), and the watercolor additions to the color print *The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a Child* (Butlin #323–24).⁵³ Varley may have seen similar works in Blake’s studio and observed his painting of watercolor works. The possibility that William Blake influenced William Varley’s watercolor technique merits further investigation.

51. See the title page of *A Few Observations*.

52. Mason is described as “Bookseller, Stationer & Printer” in *Pigot’s London and Provincial New Commercial Directory, 1823–4* (1823) 306.

53. Private correspondence, 12 March 2006.

**Table 1: Shopkeepers and residents of South Molton Street, 1803–21
(attempting to replicate the positioning of each house)**

33 Thomas Vogler, fruiterer and greengrocer (1803–05), Elizabeth Vogler, greengrocer (1811–21), Richard Gould, hardwareman and cutler (1817–21)	
32 Mary and John Richardson, tea dealer and grocer (1799–1803), J. Melvin, grocer and tea dealer (1808), William Goslett, carver and gilder (1812–23)	
31 Matthew Wilson, saddler (1803–05), Ann Watts and Edward Bridgewater, printers and stationers (1807–17), Edward Bridgewater, printer and stationer (1817–23)	
30 John Maddox, attorney (1803–08), William Thack[e]ray, broker and upholsterer (1803–05), Robert Thackray, attorney (1805), John [and Kitty] Ewern, turnery and toy warehouse (1812–23)	
29 Jonathan Barber, private resident and ratepayer (1803), Francis Perico, surgeon, apothecary, and man midwife (1805–12), Edward Bird, artist (1818), Thomas Hovenden, private resident (1821), Lieutenant George Hetzler, Bengal Native Infantry, private resident (1828)	
28 Frederick Fladong, wine merchant (1803–09), Jane Wheeler, private resident (1812), Thomas Davies, private resident (1821)	
27 Mary Francis, private resident (1803–05), Catherine Cooper, private resident (1812–21)	
26 Eleanor Conyers, private resident (1803–21), James Groom, private resident (1824)	
	34 Jasper Sanders, greengrocer (1803–05), Timothy Noble, private resident (1812)
	35 John Taylor, baker (1803–05), John Forté, baker (1812–21)
	36 John Waters, salesman (1803–12)
	37 Richard Warner, cheesemonger (1799–1803), John and Mary Urwin, private residents (1806–10), Thomas Waters, private resident (1812–21), James Moore, confectioner (1818–21)
	38 Archibald Hay, boot and shoemaker (1799–1812)
	39 Samuel Logan, tailor (1803–05), Peter Ramsey, private resident (1812), William Wright, private resident (1821)

25 Robert Cotterrell, glazier (1803–12), Cotterrell and Son, painters and glaziers (1817), Dorothy Cotterrell, private resident (1821)
24 James Purcell, private resident (1803), Mrs. Welch, private resident (1805), Mary Foster, private resident (1812), Thomas Allason, private resident (1820)
23 John Gamble, wine and liquor merchant (1803–05), James Padgett and Co., wine and brandy merchant (1812–17), Benjamin Brayfield, wine and brandy merchant (1821–23), Racheal Wilde, John Broadbank Rose, Bunch of Grapes public house (c. 1822–31)
22 John Keeling, private resident (1803), Rasmus Lund, wine merchant (1811), Mr. Cole, grocer (1811), James Lay, hatter, hosier, and glover (1812–21), I. and J. Hunt, hatters (1823)
21 George Parvin, coal merchant (1799–1817), Elizabeth Parvin, coal merchant (1821–23)
20 James Simpson, tailor and habit maker (1803–05), Ronald Patterson, private resident (1812), Grace Weightman, straw-hat manufacturer (1821–23)
19 John Watson, private resident (1803), Charles and William Mence, conveyancers and attorneys (1808–18), Robert Hancock, attorney and notary public (1811), Joseph Ward, private resident (1821)
18 Francis Tucker, wax and tallow Chandler and soap manufacturer (1803–21)
17 Captain John Lytrott, private resident (1790–1803), William Enoch, tailor (with wife Mary and son William) (1803–05), William and Catherine Blake, artists and printmakers (1803–21), Marc Joseph Martin, staymaker (with wife Elizabeth Foillet Martin and daughters Maria Theresa, Paulina, Sophy, Elizabeth) (1805–21, 1825–31)

40 William Barber, painter and glazier (1803–05), Leonard Huntingdon, tailor (1821–23)
41 John Feary, carpenter and undertaker (1803–23), Robert Sabine, haircutter and perfumer (1821–23)
42 Joseph Keene, carpenter and undertaker (1803–08), Thomas Wright, upholsterer and undertaker (1817), John Thomas Fayrer, private resident (1821)
43 John Pickering, plumber (1799–1803), Francis Taylor, carpenter (1821–23)
44 William Keith, china and Staffordshire warehouse (1805–08), James Stephens, plumber and engine manufacturer (1812–21)
45 William Smith, tea dealer and grocer (1803–05), Joseph Evans, private resident (1803), Sarah Evans, private resident (1809–21), William Doubleday, private resident (1812), William Fleetwood Varley, watercolorist, landscape painter, teacher (1812–16)
46 Bricklayer's Arms public house, Charles Buckland, victualler (1818), Mary Bevean, landlady, Bricklayer's Arms (1823)
47 Stephen Stubbs, private resident (1803–21), Edward Rawlings, private resident (1803), William Rowe, tailor (1812)
48 Mary Foster, private resident (1803), Edward Kettle, private resident (1812), Joseph Moore, tailor (1821–23)
49 Benjamin Black, carriage lamp manufacturer (1817–21)
50 William Spratt, private resident (1803), Isabella Spratt, private resident (1812), Rev. Thomas Nicholas,

16 John Griffin, attorney (1804–08), William Sault, calenderer and muslin cleaner (1807), John Johnson, coal warehouse (1809–13), Archibald Newland, tailor (1814–21)	private resident (1805–08), Miss MacDonald, dress designer (1818), Edward Jackson, Royal Artillery, private resident (1818–21)
15 Anne Connor, private resident (1803), Mr. Sheppard, money lender (1819), B. Rotch, landscape painter (1820), Robert Morgan, private resident (1820–21), Edward Daniel Leahy, portrait painter (1821–22)	51 Charles King and Son, turnery warehouse, turner and sieve maker (1803–12), Dayl[e]y (George Cumberland's friend) (1811–14), John Thoro[w]good, plasterer (1817–21) [house claimed to have been utilized by Richard Cosway]
14 John Pool, wine merchant (1799–1803), Pool and Wilcocks, wine merchants (1805), J. E. H. Robinson, landscape and portrait painter (1806–13), John Wilson, coal merchant (1812–21)	52 John Bruckner, ladies' shoemaker (1803–08), E. Blondeel, embroiderer (1817), W. King, brushmaker and turner (1817), Mary King, private resident (1821)
13 Bynon Wilkinson, saddler (with wife Elizabeth) (1803–21), William Armiger Scripps (with wife Mary and children Mary, William, Virginia, and James Mogg) (c. 1820–40)	53 Lucy Springhall, private resident (1803), M. Swinden, private resident (1805), Thomas Anstey, tailor (c. 1812–21), James Ruth, private resident (1812–21)
12 William Goodchild, private resident, 1799–1805), Thomas Hugh Jones, grocer and cheesemonger (1812–23)	54 James Naylor, upholsterer, journeyman (1794), William Griffiths, tinman and brazier (1799–1812), William Harrison, hairdresser (1803–05), Mrs. Kelly, ladies' school (1805–08)
11 Edmund Treherne, Land and Assessed Taxes office clerk (1803–21)	55 William Thorogood and Son, plasterers (1803–12), Abraham Day, painter, plumber, and glazier (1817–21)
10 Claude Olivier, merchant (1803–05), Charles Spriggs, baker (1803–05), William Haines, miniature painter and engraver (1811–13), Richard May, tailor (1812–23)	
9 James Radcliffe, private resident (1812), Maria Radcliffe, private resident (1821)	56 John White, private resident (1803), Evans and Cutler, tailors and drapers (1805–21), Thomas Saunders, private resident (1812)
8 Margaret Vaynall, private resident (1803), Peter	57 Globe Masonic Lodge (1803–21), John Hoffman, habit maker (1803–12), James McCoy, landlord, Globe public house (1809), A. R. Oakden, landlord, Globe (1811), John Stevens, private resident (1812–21), Lawrence Saffron, landlord, Globe (1827)
	58 William Heron, Heron and Jones, tailors (1803–05), Robert Oakden, private resident (1812), Lawrence Saffon, private resident (1821)
	59 William Sloper, carver and gilder (1799–1803),

Cowder, builder (1805), Edward Parish, private resident (1812–21)
7 James Brown and William Armiger Scripps, newsmen and stationers (1799–1821)
6 Thomas Hade, private resident (1803), William Small, painter and glazier (1812–21)
5 James Mivart, Mivart and Son, hairdresser and perfumer (1803–12), William Spicer, tailor (1821–23)
4 Thomas Hattersley, fruiterer and greengrocer (1803–21), Robert Hattersley, private resident (1821)
3 Louis Augarde, hairdresser (with wife Anne Francis and son Henry Arthur, born c. 1797) (1803–21)
2 John Draycott, auctioneer and appraiser (1795–1808), Richard Knibbs, saddler (1805–08), Catherine Draycott, private resident (1805–12), Catherine Tower, private resident (1814), [John] Perott's Hotel (1816–21), William Gibley, butcher (1821)
1 John Morris, private resident (1803), James Gould, breeches maker (1805–08), [John] Perott's Hotel (1812) [in 1805 hotel at 7 Lower Brook Street], William Payne, watch and clock maker (1821)

James Mivart, Jr., hair cutter (1812–23), Michael Saul, cabinet maker (1821)
60 Robert James, private resident (1803), Mivart and Son, perfumers (1812–21)
61 Joshua Tyrell, muslin cleaner (1803–05), James Radcliffe, baker (1812), George Townley (George Cumberland's friend), private resident (c. 1812–15), Mary James, private resident (1821)
62 William Sault, calenderer and muslin cleaner (1802–05), Mary Warden, private resident (1812), William Payne, watch and clock maker (1817–21)
63 George Saffery, music teacher (1803–05), Thomas Williams, private resident (1812), Peter Stanislaus, coal merchant (1817), Samuel Summers, ironmonger (1818), Richard Cramp, private resident (1821)
64 John Seacole, wine cooper (1805), Samuel Slythe, private resident (1812), M. Jenkins, breeches and gaiter maker (1817), George Wilkinson, private resident (1821)
65 Benjamin Cole and John Henry Tribe, wine and brandy merchants (1812–23)

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William Blake: The Rossetti Manuscript. SP Books–Éditions des Saints Pères, 2024. 193 pp. 89 black-and-white illus. €220.00/\$240.00, hardcover.

Reviewed by Colin Trodd

COLIN TRODD is an independent scholar. His publications include *Visions of Blake: William Blake in the Art World, 1830–1930* (2012) and *Ford Madox Brown: The Manchester Murals and the Matter of History* (2022). He curated *Blake's Shadow* (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 2008) and devised *Burning Bright: William Blake and the Art of the Book* (John Rylands Library, Manchester, 2013).

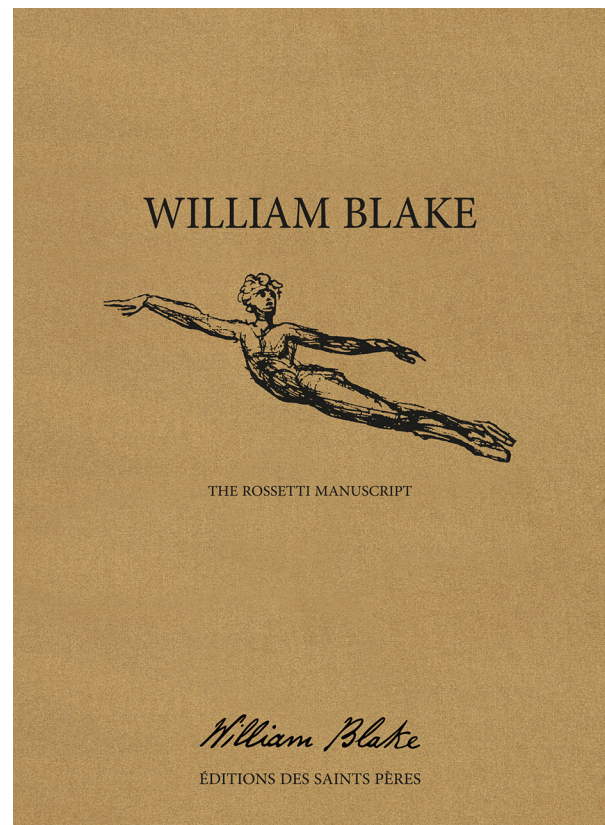
1 **B**LAKE'S Notebook (19.6 x 15.7 cm.), sometimes known as the Rossetti Manuscript, consists of 116 pages of autograph drafts of poems, prose fragments, and epigrams, plus over 80 sketches, designs, and picture emblems in a combination of pencil and ink and wash. Robert Blake, the original owner, made a few sketches in ink and wash; the text and all other images, produced after Robert's death in 1787, are by William. The final work in the Notebook, the unfinished *Everlasting Gospel*, was composed around 1818.¹

2 Although Dante Gabriel Rossetti acquired the Notebook in April 1847 for ten shillings, the first mention in his surviving correspondence does not occur until July 1851, when his fellow poet William Allingham is instructed not to make use of "any of those extracts which you took from my book at the time I lent them to you."² Rossetti's acquisition is noted in his comments on the flyleaf: "I purchased this original M. S. of Palmer, an attendant in the Antique Gallery at the British Museum on the 30th April 1847.... Among the sketches there are one or two profiles of Blake himself. D. G. C. R."³

1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti added a partial and unreliable transcript of some of Blake's poems when he had the Notebook bound in half calf.

2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham, Monday [July 1851], in D. G. Rossetti 173. For further details, see W. M. Rossetti 1: 302-03 and Dorfman 59-64, 80-82, 102-06, 134-46.

3. D. G. Rossetti 174. Palmer was the brother of Samuel Palmer, the most distinguished member of the Ancients.



3 The significance of Blake's Notebook is universally recognized, yet the last major scholarly intervention took place in 1977, in the form of David V. Erdman's revised edition of the facsimile entitled *The Notebook of William Blake*, which superseded an earlier collotype facsimile by Geoffrey Keynes. Erdman's variorum edition combined systematic commentary on Blake's texts and images, a mixture of infrared photography and high-contrast prints, and a typographical facsimile of each page. One of Erdman's many critical accomplishments was to highlight how the emblems in the Notebook form a matrix from which Blake developed the imagery in *The Gates of Paradise* and *Songs of Experience*.

4 As implied above, Erdman supplied his reader with a clear impression of the layout, physical appearance, and conceptual organization of Blake's unusual production. Additionally, he kept an abundance of material under control and secured a sense of interrelation without reducing the Notebook to a one-dimensional object. All in all, he provided a commanding cross-disciplinary critical framework for understanding how Blake's production became a launchpad for subsequent discussions of the subjectivity of the creative individual.

- 5 Since then, there have been some general comments on the Notebook, but not enough about how it became a catalyst for debating and recording the creativity of mental acts for members of the Rossetti circle and other significant reading communities.⁴ If we want to understand the critical history of Blake's Notebook—to know how it was used as a platform for discussing the alleged sequestration of art—it would be sensible to pay more attention to why it exercised a profound influence on Rossetti and his associates. Alas, one gets no real sense of how the Notebook operated as a form of cultural contact in *William Blake: The Rossetti Manuscript*, which is in essence a luxury object, produced on Fedrigoni Avorio paper by SP Books—Éditions des Saints Pères, a French publishing house specializing in high-end facsimile editions of famous works.⁵ This gilded edition in 35 x 25 cm. format belongs to a virtual library where it sits alongside Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Gauguin's *Noa Noa*, Orwell's *1984*, Capote's *In Cold Blood*, and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, plus a galaxy of other landmark literary, scientific, and political productions. These facsimiles are issued in limited editions of 1,000 copies and are priced accordingly. The target audience for this type of venture would appear to be the well-heeled bibliophile with a vested interest in sumptuous facsimiles of important manuscripts with handmade slipcases, which may explain the absence of anything resembling an apparatus criticus and the restriction of the short introduction, titled "Publisher's Note," to generic pronouncements on Blake, plus a few formulaic comments on the history of the Notebook.
- 6 There are several additional difficulties with this lavish but frustrating production. The uncredited introductory essay offers no comments on previous facsimiles and shows no interest in the many crucial editorial and hermeneutic issues highlighted by Erdman, who is missing from the very short bibliography.⁶ There are problems with layout and organization. The introduction includes several misleading references about pagination in this facsimile. The illustrations lack the telluric and crystalline qualities of Erdman's

edition, which emphasized the raw plasticity of Blake's forms and reproduced the boundaries of the Notebook. Some reproductions resemble rough transfers without a proper sense of tonal contrast; others are wispy, with insufficient surface definition and detail; still others fail to detect the faint lines and partly erased figures in the original designs, distort the figure-ground relationship, smudge and darken bodies, or transfer them into blurred, blotted, and bulky forms.⁷ For instance, coarse lines eradicate the diaphanous quality of some of Blake's bodies; fuzzy definition fails to replicate the liquidity of his designs; heavy forms cannot convey the vitality and movement of his drawings.

- 7 It should be noted that the pages in *William Blake: The Rossetti Manuscript* do not reproduce Blake's workaday splodges, blotches, and glue spots with the same clarity as Erdman's facsimile. Furthermore, the oversized format provides no sense of Blake's day-to-day engagement with what was a pocketbook brimming with ideas about art, design, and poetry. At no point is the reader given an insight into how the Notebook should be categorized, classified, and contextualized; how it relates to the idea of the commonplace book; or how it was reimagined by Rossetti and his close friends, many of whom believed that Blake freed the modern artist from the specter of academicism by revealing that art was an extension of the normal conditions of living. In short, *William Blake: The Rossetti Manuscript* does not supply a meaningful apparatus of interpretation, includes reproductions of variable quality, and makes no attempt to bridge an existing historiographical divide by re-connecting the Notebook to formative reading communities.

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7. See, by contrast, the reproductions of the following pages at *The William Blake Archive*: 4, 5, 7, 13, 17, 28, 29, 47, 52, 56, 70, and 77, blakearchive.org/copy/bb122.1?descId=bb122.1.ms.01.

4. The Notebook, which provides an extraordinary insight into Blake's working methods as artist and poet, is largely overlooked in contributions to Crosby and McQuail.

5. The marketing people at Fedrigoni have an elevated view of their ability to harness creative mental activity: "A blank page is where ideas are conceived. Fedrigoni Special Papers are where they take shape. We make high-quality papers of every weight and colour that will transform your vision into something you can hold in your hand." See specialpapers.fedrigoni.com/nam/about-us.

6. Erdman, ever alert to the communicative possibilities of Blake's picture gallery of emblems, notes, "Any talk about the emblems requires a common denominator of validity, and I have tried to hold to readily verifiable or descriptive interpretations and to indicate patterns and salient motifs without closing doors" (Blake 15).

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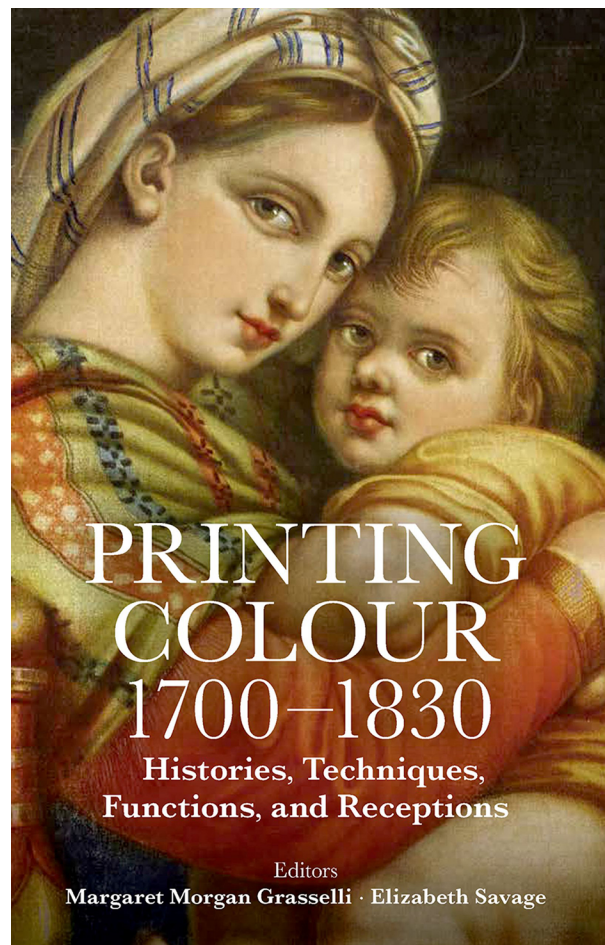
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Margaret Morgan Grasselli and Elizabeth Savage, editors. *Printing Colour, 1700–1830: Histories, Techniques, Functions, and Receptions*. Published for the British Academy by Oxford UP, 2025. xii + 439 pp. £150.00/\$185.00, hardcover.

Reviewed by Gill Saunders and Chris Bucklow

GILL SAUNDERS, formerly Senior Curator of Prints, is presently Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria & Albert Museum. She has curated numerous exhibitions in the V&A and beyond and has published on many print-related topics, including botanical illustration, posters, and the history of wallpaper. Her latest book is *Screenprints: A History* (V&A/Thames and Hudson, 2025).

CHRIS BUCKLOW is an artist and art historian. His work was featured in *VALA: The Journal of the Blake Society* (no. 5). His most recent publication is “The Lens Within the Heart: Bacon’s Memory Theatre,” which was published in *Bacon and the Mind: Art, Neuroscience and Psychology* (Thames and Hudson, 2019).



1 **A** magisterial, ambitious, and ground-breaking survey of its subject, this book is the sequel to *Printing Colour, 1400–1700*, edited by Ad Stijnman and Elizabeth Savage, published in 2015. The new volume has necessarily a wider scope, addressing the various advances in printmaking and print publishing in this later period but also examining the application of color printing to products such as wallpaper, calico, and ceramics, consumer products generally not otherwise considered in traditional print scholarship. The emphasis throughout is on the means of printing color, with less attention to aesthetics, but it is clear from the twenty-eight essays here that color was to prove transformative in many applications of printing—notably in science (botany, anatomy), in decoration (book wrappers, wallpaper, designs for the decorative arts), in the reproduction of drawings and paintings, in illustration, and in commercial and promotional material. With plentiful judiciously chosen plates, the book is sumptuously illustrated and includes a valuable selection of details and mag-

nifications to illuminate aspects of process, such as embossing, the fine dots of stipple engraving, the subtleties of *à la poupée* inking, or the physical character of pigment deposited by a wood block.

2 The editors are admirably clear in their introduction about their definition of “printed colour,” which includes color applied by hand to a printed outline and printing on colored papers; they also set out the factors underlying their chosen date span, ending at the point when the invention of mechanized chromolithography was beginning to supplant many of the preceding hand-press processes documented here, though several authors look beyond the terminal date of the title where appropriate for their subject. In their two opening chapters, the editors document in detail the tools, machines, and techniques of color printing and explore the science behind the formulation of printing inks (organic and synthetic) and the factors contributing to the character and durability of the coloring, as well as hazards such as toxicity. They also flag the continuity of practice, with many of the tools and techniques invented or refined in the long eighteenth century still in use today. These topics are refer-

enced and expanded upon in a number of the following chapters.

- 3 The essays vary in scope. Some are broad surveys taking in the entire period, as in Rob Banham's chapter on letterpress-printed ephemera, Julia Nurse's writing on medical treatises, and Phillippa Mapes's account of printed wallpaper in England; others are chapters tightly focused on the innovative contributions of individual artists and printers such as Elisha Kirkall, John Baptist Jackson, and William Blake. The origins of the essays are various: some derive from or expand on conference papers (including the conference organized by Elizabeth Savage in London in 2018) and exhibition projects; at least one appears to précis an author's PhD thesis; some are demonstrably the fruits of single-minded, decades-long research or draw on years of specialist study and curatorial experience.
- 4 In a review of such an ambitious book, it is impossible to analyze every topic, so we have chosen to examine selected chapters, corresponding to our own interests and areas of expertise. Color had value in many fields, from architecture to cartography, but was perhaps nowhere more important than in scientific publications, as Ad Stijnman sets out in his wide-ranging overview looking at color-printed illustrations in European books and periodicals over the period 1700 to 1850. In botany, entomology, ornithology, and other fields of natural history, accurate coloring is fundamental to identification and classification, and in botany and mycology, for example, color can be a vital clue in distinguishing edible species from their poisonous look-alikes. In medical treatises, color could communicate valuable information: for example, colors might be used as a key to identify different functions of the body's organs in a dissection view. A fine instance is J. C. Le Blon's "Preparation of Dissected Human Male Genitalia" (1719) which was the first documented anatomical print to show the arteries in red and the veins in blue, a practice which was to become standard in the nineteenth century and which continues today. Julia Nurse demonstrates how color contributed to medicine when deployed as a diagnostic tool with a plate showing diseases of the eye, where shades of red and pink indicate inflammation, swelling, and other impediments to healthy vision. She also establishes the importance, in the production of medical imagery, of a close collaboration between medical practitioners and the printers.
- 5 Geert-Jan Janse has made a close examination of the work of Anne Allen and Jean Pillement whose published designs, probably intended for embroidery, were instrumental in the development of *à la poupée* color printing in France. Several sets of the prints survive; Janse focuses on the so-called Doucet albums now in Paris and on several of the preparatory drawings which were auctioned at Christie's, London, in 1981. Janse also illuminates in some detail the complex execution of these prints. Despite diligent research, he has been unable to uncover any new information about the accomplished Allen, but his exhaustive account of the Doucet prints has been welcomed by the curators of other collections which hold impressions of these prints.
- 6 Rob Banham's account of letterpress-printed ephemera intended for a mass market, focused largely on playbills and lottery bills, is fascinating for the light it sheds on these precursors to the advertising posters which were to transform urban spaces from the late nineteenth century. As he points out, much printed matter—including tickets and souvenirs, as well as advertisements—was essentially transient and disposable, but it also needed to be eye-catching; these two factors encouraged the printers to experiment and innovate, adopting bold blocky lettering, and introducing color. Combinations of red and black were particularly effective and popular, but by the 1820s it was increasingly common for more colors to be used. What had been initiated largely by the lottery companies was taken up by those promoting London's theaters, circuses, and pleasure gardens, with certain printers producing color-printed letterpress posters of unrivaled sophistication, before their methods were superseded by chromolithography.
- 7 It is this shift to commercial color printing that Michael Twyman, renowned expert on the history of lithography, explores in the book's final chapters. Looking beyond the editors' 1830 terminus, he covers George Baxter's invention of the method of color printing, patented in 1835, which bears his name. Printed from metal relief blocks, these hugely popular pictorial prints were produced in many thousands of copies. Concurrently color lithography was advancing, with full-page illustrations in publications on travel and on architecture (including Owen Jones's magnificent record of the ornament of the Alhambra) printed from multiple stones or from zinc plates, though both methods required some additional hand-coloring. These were not surpassed until Godefroy Englemann's process of "*chromolithographie*," which was granted an English patent in 1837, enabled consistently high-quality full-color printing, though commercial development and mechanization were not fully realized until the 1860s.
- 8 In her chapter on the English wallpaper trade, Phillippa Mapes gives a serviceable summary of wallpaper production over the long eighteenth century, as well as rehearsing information on printing techniques and business practices well-documented in other sources, all of which will certainly be familiar to wallpaper historians and curators, if not to print scholars. Curiously, despite the book's title, Mapes has little to say about color per se. Beyond a reference to fashions in "patterned domestic goods moving to-

wards lighter and more colourful styles” by mid-century, we learn very little here about customers’ choices of color or about the variety of colors available at different dates (such as the arsenical green invented in 1775 and later applied to wallpapers to sometimes noxious effect), nor does she address changing tastes and fashions in color. However, her examples are well-chosen for their vivid unfaded pigments (a useful corrective to the pervasive idea that historic wallpapers were subtly colored), and it is good to see the essay illustrated largely by fresh and unfamiliar papers, most from private collections.

- 9 In a book exploring technical invention and experiment, William Blake is a particularly interesting case study. In his excellent chapter on Blake’s color printing, Michael Phillips surveys the evidence provided by both laboratory analysis and the trial-and-error investigations into Blake’s methods made by a number of printmakers. These include Phillips himself, Robert Essick, Joseph Viscomi, W. Graham Robertson, S. W. Hayter, and Joan Miró.
- 10 While he confines himself mainly to the technical aspect, Phillips does situate Blake’s process and use of materials in the wider context of the metaphor universe Blake employs to embody his mythic system. He contrasts, for example, the transparency of the pure watercolor washes Blake used to color the *Songs of Innocence* with the opaque color applied to the *Songs of Experience*, saying of the metaphor they afford Blake: “Befitting the fallen world of Experience, these opaque colours precluded light from passing through and reflecting off the paper support.” Blake’s use of this polarity can be found in many passages but notably in *Jerusalem*, plate 14, where he contrasts the “translucent Wonder” of Los’s sons and daughters with the impervious “rocky form” of fallen Albion.
- 11 Much of Phillips’s chapter is devoted to the question of whether Blake could have achieved his final image in a single pass through the press or not. “Not” is Phillips’s conclusion, though this has been much debated by other scholars over the years. What does emerge, however, is that during the printing process, Blake would have been confronted with image states in which color dominates over form. Indeed, on the evidence of the Fitzwilliam Museum’s unfinished copy of plate 23 of *The Book of Urizen*, during this intermediate stage bounded form was almost completely absent.
- 12 Blake’s usual preference was for precise forms, bounded by a firm outline. Indeed, he had a horror of vague generalizations and of the “General Nature” advocated by Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses*. Blake also insists, in opposition to the prevailing ideas of the Romantic Sublime, that spirits are not vague and formless but can be seen in minute par-

ticularity. We see this in his drawings in the Blake-Varley Sketchbook for example, where the visions are highly particularized. Phillips quotes Frederick Tatham, who may have actually witnessed Blake at work, describing how the inks for this intermediate stage were “blotted on.” Here the word “blot” is significant, for it had a very particular association at this time, and many artists would have been familiar with Alexander Cozens’s famous technique of suggesting landscapes from what we now might call Rorschach patterns: images hastily laid down without a willed plan. The same is true of the brilliant but, at that time, less well-known prints of the Dutchman Hercules Segers. Despite his opposition to vagueness, however, Blake seems to have accepted and appreciated these intermediate-stage “blots.” The reticulated “orange peel” textures they produced are very much still in evidence in many of the finished works and may have suggested details in the subsequent finishing process of overdrawing and outlining.

- 13 Blake’s overall metaphor for his printmaking technique was that the action of the etching acid, biting away the surfaces of his plates, mirrored the effects of his intellectual system, which had a similarly corrosive effect, turning all material events, historical and personal, into movements of the spirit. In general, Michael Phillips’s chapter serves to remind us that everything in Blake can be symbolic, even the printing and coloring methods he employed in transferring the work from out of his imagination and on to the paper during its birth into this world of generation.
- 14 *Printing Colour, 1700–1830* will be warmly welcomed by researchers, collectors, and curators well beyond a narrowly defined field of print studies and will materially aid the identification and enhance the documentation of materials in libraries, archives, and museum collections. Equally, as the editors rightly conclude, despite its unprecedented range and its innovative interdisciplinary approach to the subject, the book will serve as a springboard for further research that might usefully expand the field and, one hopes, reach beyond Europe.

Whose Feet?

By Robert N. Essick

ROBERT N. ESSICK has been collecting and writing about Blake for over fifty years.

- 1 JASON Whittaker's *Jerusalem: Blake, Parry, and the Fight for Englishness* is an important contribution to our understanding of Blake's afterlife in the arts. In his first chapter, titled "And Did Those Feet?," Whittaker considers the text of the lyric now known as "Jerusalem," although Blake never gave it that title. As part of his discussion of the opening two lines of the poem—"And did those feet in ancient time. / Walk upon Englands mountains green:"—he finds that there are no written sources prior to Blake's composition of the lyric to support the contention that the "feet" belong to Jesus. He does find ample textual precedent, however, for the belief that Jesus's disciple Joseph of Arimathea visited Britain (36-39). Further, the inscription that Blake engraved c. 1820-25 on the second state of his separate plate, "JOSEPH / of Arimathea / among The Rocks of Albion," clearly indicates knowledge of this legend. Whittaker concludes:

Turning to the stanzas themselves, as noted above the opening lines are usually interpreted as a reference to Christ in England, but, as we have already seen, it is improbable—if not impossible—that Blake knew of that legend, as it was a later invention. Instead, the feet referred to are those of Joseph of Arimathea (45).

I believe that this interpretation is wrong and that the usual reading of the opening lines is correct.

- 2 Let us turn to Blake's relief-etched text of the lyric in the preface, present in two of the four known copies of *Milton a Poem* (illus. 1). There is only one title to this preface. There is no separate title for the poem, nor even a horizontal rule between the prose and the lyric of the sort that separates the final three lines on the plate from those that precede them. Thus, I believe it is appropriate to consider the preface, composed of an opening prose statement and followed by a poem, as a united textual entity under a single title.
- 3 The third word in the poem's first line, "those," is usually a pronoun. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that

"those" can also be a demonstrative adjective, but Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, from the first edition of 1755 through the ninth of 1806, labels the word solely as a pronoun. Pronouns need antecedents; where might we find one for "those feet"? The concluding three words of the final sentence in the prose section of the preface—indeed, the three words immediately preceding the poem—offer a proximate and grammatically correct answer: "Jesus our Lord."

- 4 Where might we find confirmation that Blake knew of the legend that Jesus visited Britain? Once again, we have not far to seek. The third and fourth lines of the lyric read "And was the holy Lamb of God, / On Englands pleasant pastures seen!" "Lamb of God" could not possibly be a reference to Joseph of Arimathea, for the lamb is one of the more ancient and most frequently invoked metaphors for Christ in Christian art and literature, beginning with John the Baptist calling Jesus "the Lamb of God" in John 1.29. In the first quatrain, Blake is asking the same question twice, using different images (feet, lamb) for two consecutive references to the same figure.
- 5 Whittaker is probably correct in claiming that there are no *written* precedents for Blake's reference to Christ's visit to Britain; the editors of the Blake Trust volume devoted to *Milton a Poem* came to the same conclusion (214). This does not, however, preclude the possibility that the legend was part of *oral* tradition, an adjunct to the Joseph of Arimathea story circulating amongst dissenting Protestant groups in Blake's time. Failing that origin, we may have to credit Blake with inventing the notion that the feet of the "holy Lamb" walked upon "Englands green & pleasant Land."

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Whittaker, Jason. *Jerusalem: Blake, Parry, and the Fight for Englishness*. Oxford UP, 2022.

PREFACE.

The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid; of Plato & Cicero. which all Men ought to condemn; are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. but when the New Age is at leisure to pronounce; all will be set right; & those Grand Works of the more ancient & consciously & professedly Inspired Men. will hold their proper rank. & the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakspeare & Milton were both curbed by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword. Rouse up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Fictitious. For we have Fictitious in the Camp, the Court, & the University; who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fashionable Fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible Works, or the expensive advertising boasts that they make of such works; believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations. these Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; or Jesus our Lord.

And did those Feet in ancient time.
Walk upon Englands mountains green;
And was the Holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire;
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand;
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land

Would to God that all the Lords people
were Prophets Numbers XI. ch 26.

1. William Blake, *Milton a Poem* copy B (composed c. 1804–11, printed c. 1811), plate 2, "PREFACE." Relief etching, 16.0 x 11.2 cm., printed in black ink and hand tinted with watercolor washes. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, call number 54041. Image courtesy of The William Blake Archive.

