

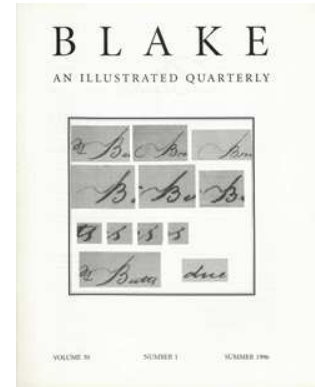
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

A R T I C L E

## A “Green House” for Butts? New Information on Thomas Butts, His Residences, and Family

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# A "Green House" for Butts? New Information on Thomas Butts, His Residences, and Family

BY JOSEPH VISCOMI

... the time I trust is not distant, and that because I truly regard you, when you will be a more valorous Champion of Revelation & Humiliation than any of those who now wield the Sword of the Spirit; with your natural & acquired Powers nothing is wanting but a proper direction of them, & altho' the way is both straight & narrow I know you too well to fear your want of resolution to persevere & to pursue it—you have the Plough & the Harrow in full view & the Gate you have been prophetically told is Open; can you then hesitate joyfully to enter into it? ... [I] must assure you that I shall always sincerely devote myself to your service when humble endeavours may be useful.

Thomas Butts, to William Blake, September 1800 (Keynes, *Letters from William Blake to Thomas Butts*)

In "Blake in the Marketplace 1852: Thomas Butts, Jr. and Other Unknown Nineteenth-Century Blake Collectors," I examined the history and significance of an unrecorded auction catalogue that included 23 biblical watercolors and six *Paradise Lost* designs of 1808 by William Blake. It has been widely assumed that these works, sold at Sotheby's on 26 June 1852, once belonged to Blake's first patron, Thomas Butts. But the vendor, curiously, was Charles Ford of Bath, a miniature painter. Nine of the watercolors, including three illustrations from *Paradise Lost*, were acquired by "Fuller," and 19, including three from *Paradise Lost*, were acquired by Butts Jr. I shared this information with Martin Butlin, who suspected that I had found the Butts auction that he had been seeking since 1968 (see his "William Rossetti" 39). He had inferred the existence of such an auction from William Michael Rossetti, who, in his catalogue raisonné of Blake's works, identifies Fuller's acquisitions as being "from Mr. Butts" and quotes descriptions of the works "from the sale-catalogue" (Rossetti's lists are in Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* 2: 199-264). Rossetti's "sale catalogue" and Butts Jr.'s selling 18 of his 19 works the following year, on 29 June 1853 at Foster and Son, support Butlin's suspicion: the Blakes in Ford's auction appeared to have been works that Butts Jr. put up for sale anonymously but *bought in* when they failed to meet their reserve, and not works that he acquired from a third party.

But I had doubts. Admittedly, the sale raises the possibility that Butts Jr. owned the Blakes sold because, according to the catalogue's title page, the auction included a few works by an "Amateur," perhaps Butts Jr. But the structure of the

auction clearly included the Blakes among Ford's lots and not the Amateur's, which were tacked on at the end of the sale. Moreover, why would Butts Jr. buy in 19 of 29 paintings, two-thirds of what he put up? Did Blake fail to sell in June when he had sold well at the Foster auction only 12 months later and, more significantly, very well just three months earlier (with no Blakes bought in), in what was the first major auction of Blake works, the anonymous sale at Sotheby's on 26-27 March 1852? The vendor of the March 1852 sale has also been assumed to have been Butts Jr., because it too included Blakes that once belonged to Butts. Hence, by questioning the basic rationale of attributing Ford's auction to Butts Jr. because it included works once belonging to Butts, I was also questioning the attribution of the March 1852 sale.

Was it possible that Butts Jr. actually bought works from Ford that had once belonged to his father but which had left his father's collection through avenues unknown to us? This, it seemed, was my primary question, which led in turn to questioning the firmly held assumption that Thomas Butts Jr., upon the death of his father in 1845, inherited the Blake collection in its entirety and was solely responsible for its dispersal at Sotheby's on 26-27 March 1852 and at Foster's on 29 June 1853 (see Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* p. 336, hereafter referred to as Butlin; numbers are catalogue entries unless preceded by a "p"). The assumption seems reasonable, since Butts Jr. was Butts's only living son in 1845, and he inherited Butts's house on 17 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, which presumably housed the Blake collection. The problem is that the Blakes are not mentioned in Butts's very detailed 15-page will, nor is there mention of an art collection or library. The will does mention, however, numerous other relatives, friends, and houses.

In "Blake in the Marketplace 1852," by examining and comparing the three auctions of 1852 and 1853, I cast doubt on the assumption that Butts Jr. inherited and dispersed all of his father's Blake collection. All three auctions contained watercolors matted in a style that I was able to date and associate exclusively with Butts, which means that the Blake watercolors in the Ford auction did indeed belong to Butts and not to an unknown Blake patron collecting at the same time as Butts. With the latter possibility eliminated, I examined the tastes and behavior of the sales' three vendors as reflected in their collections and in the number and type of items bought in. I found that the differences strongly suggested three different vendors. This approach to the problem yielded a detailed article on, among other things, Blake's and Butts's different matting styles, Blake's value in the marketplace in 1852, the provenance of Blake's late Milton designs, and a few newly discovered Blake collectors. Its major conclusions, though, were that the vendor of the March and June 1852 auctions was not Butts Jr., but an unknown Blake collector and Charles Ford, respectively, and that the auctions were traces of an even earlier dispersal of Blake material by one or more unknown members of Butts's family.



To support these conclusions, and to discover who these other members might be and when they might have had access to—or interest in—the Blake collection, I began researching Butts's genealogy, particularly his father's family, his own, and his son's. (Each of the three paterfamilias was named Thomas, who, for clarity's sake, will be referred to as Mr. Butts, Butts, and Butts Jr. respectively.) I discovered quickly that Butts remains relatively unknown: when and why artist and patron met are unclear, and the few facts that we do have, such as where he lived while collecting Blake and what happened to his collection when he died, are suspect.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Butts's family was far more extended and diverse than Blake scholars realize, and there were many opportunities for removing Blakes from the collection without the assistance of Butts Jr. Discussed here are the two most promising moments, in 1808 and 1845, when Butts moved to Fitzroy Square and when he died. The former event requires examining the London residence from which he moved and a residence in Hackney, one of the "green suburbs" outside of London, which may have been his while he was collecting Blake. The latter event requires examining Butts's will and its arrangements for his second wife, Elizabeth Delauney Butts.<sup>2</sup>

The following information about Butts's family is based on an examination of various trade, court, and street directories, Burke's *Landed Gentry of Great Britain* (12th edition, 1914), Butts's will, the International Genealogy Index (IGI), and the rate books, tax records, and baptism, marriage, and burial registers of the parishes of St. John the Evangelist, Hackney, St. Luke, Finsbury, St. Leonard, Shoreditch, St. Andrew, Enfield, and a few others.<sup>3</sup> I have also consulted a genealogy of the Butts's family that was given many years

ago to G. E. Bentley, Jr. by R. G. Robertson, a great grandson of Edward Herrington Butts, who was a disinherited grandson of Thomas Butts. Bentley kindly showed it to me with the warning that it is "interesting but not reliable." The unreliability became quickly evident; the compiler depended heavily but not exclusively on Burke, which is itself incomplete, excluded much information that is included in the IGI, while including information that is not always possible to verify, because it is either unrecorded in IGI or Burke, or is missing from the other records that I have consulted. I refer to this document as the *genealogy* and mention it only when it varies from Burke.

# I

Blake's patron was the child of Thomas Butts and Hannah Witham.<sup>4</sup> His father, according to the IGI, was baptized on 14 August 1719 in the parish of St. Dustan, Stepney, as were a brother Francis and a sister Sarah in 1721 and 1723 respectively. According to the *genealogy*, which does not record his syblings, he worked at the Customs House; according to Burke, he was once in the Cornet 10th Hussars regiment. He married Hannah on 19 May 1746, in the parish of St. Andrew by the Wardrobe, London (IGI). The couple's first child was baptized Thomas on 13 March 1746, in the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, London (IGI). This child must have died by the middle of 1756, because another child, born on 16 June and baptized on 12 July 1756 in the parish of St. Luke, Old Street, Finsbury, was also named Thomas (parish baptism register). This son must have died very young, for Blake's patron, the son of "Thomas Butts, Gent. and Hannah," was born on 15 December 1759 and baptized in the same parish on 9 January 1760 (parish baptism register; Burke gives the date of birth, while the IGI records the date of baptism). Hence, he was not the same age as Blake (pace Bentley "Thomas Butts" 1052), but two years younger.

Butts had brothers and sisters. According to the baptism register of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, Mr. Butts and Hannah "of Queen Street, Hoglane," had a son named John (born 7 June and baptized on 17 June 1748). After John's birth, the couple appears to have moved from Shoreditch to the neighboring parish of St. Luke, Old Street, Finsbury, where, according to the parish's baptism register and the IGI, they had seven children baptized, including two of the Thomases. Elizabeth was baptized on 14 January 1750, Samuel on 1 August 1751, Hannah on 1 January 1753, Sarah on 30 Janu-

I am grateful to G. E. Bentley, Jr. for reading an early draft of this article and for generously sharing with me information about the Butts family, and to Keri Davies and Lilian Gibbens for their helpful suggestions regarding the IGI and other genealogical tools.

<sup>1</sup>Before Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, Butts's patronage was almost completely unknown. In published accounts of Blake before 1863, he is briefly mentioned only in J. T. Smith's *Nollekens and His Times* (Bentley, *Blake Records* 465).

<sup>2</sup>Butts's will was proved 23 June 1845 and is housed in the Public Records Office, Chancery Lane. The 15 unnumbered pages of the will are here numbered.

<sup>3</sup>The most recent edition of the International Genealogy Index (IGI) is now on CD-ROM and is known as the CD-ROM Family Program. It is available in the Family History Centers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It is preferable to the microfiche version not only because it is easier and faster to use, but also because it identifies the original sources for its entries, which can (and should) be checked for verification. All the sources in the IGI, along with many other kinds of records, such as rate books, censuses, and parish registers, are on microfilm or fiche, which are listed in the Church's enormous Library catalogue (also on CD-ROM) and can be ordered through any Family History Center. Most of the original records relevant to my research are located in the Greater London Records Office, Hackney's Rose Lipman Library, London's Public Record Office, and the Guildhall Library.

<sup>4</sup>In his will, Butts mentions inheriting £740 16s. from his Uncle Thomas Witham (2-3), who was inadvertently recorded as Uncle Thomas Butts in Bentley's "Thomas Butts" (1053). This amount was divided between Butts and Thomas Hardwick, the co-executor of his uncle Thomas Witham's estate (5). Hardwick was presumably a cousin, the son of Sarah Witham and Thomas Hardwick, who married in 1748, two years after Mr. Butts and Hannah Witham. Butts does not date the bequest or his uncle's death.



ary 1754, and Elizabeth on 21 September 1757. Butts was the last and youngest of the brood.

Hannah Witham Butts is recorded in the IGI as having given birth nine times, but apparently only Thomas and Sarah (who is named in Butts's will and married a William Harris) lived long lives.<sup>5</sup> The possibility that most of the children died in childhood corresponds with family lore as passed down by Ada Briggs, the sister-in-law of Butts's grandson, Captain Frederick John Butts. She states that Blake's patron and his wife had many children but most "died young" (93). This is probably not true of Blake's patron (see below), but it appears to describe the family he was born into, that of Hannah and Mr. Butts.

According to Burke, Hannah died in 1762; the *genealogy* adds that Mr. Butts remarried and had a son named Thomas, though it fails to record when and whom he married. I have not been able to confirm the year of Hannah's death in a burial register (see n5), but the fact that Mr. Butts remarried and had a son is confirmed by Butts himself. In his will, Butts bequeaths "to each of the children of my late half sister Mrs. Matilda Floyd (who resided at the time of her death . . . on the Woolwich Road) who shall be living at the time of my death the sum of nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and six pence. I give and bequeath to Mr. Thomas Butts grandson of my deceased father and who is now Master of the Kentish Town National School and Wardour at the said school house the sum of three hundred pounds free of legacy duty" (will 8).<sup>6</sup> From this passage we can safely infer that Butts had a half-sister named Matilda and either a brother or, more likely, a half-brother, whose son Thomas was Butts's nephew and his father's grandson. The fact that Butts recorded Matilda's children as her children and not his nephews and nieces, and a grandson of Mr. Butts as such instead of as a nephew, supports the hypothesis that Mr. Thomas Butts was the son of a half-brother.

The IGI strongly supports both inferences. It records the baptism of a Matilda Butts on 3 January 1776 in the parish of St. John, Hackney; she was the daughter of a Thomas Butts and an unnamed woman. The IGI also records the baptism of a John Butts on 9 December 1776 in the same parish; he is recorded as the son of Thomas Butts and an unnamed woman. The mother of Matilda and John is named Ann in the parish's baptism register. This John Butts, then, is almost certainly Butts's half-brother and the person the

<sup>5</sup> The only children of Mr. Butts and Hannah listed in Burke and the *genealogy* are Hannah (1753-59), Sarah (b. 1754), and Thomas (b. 1759). Burke adds that Sarah was born on 17 January 1754, the date given in the parish's baptism register. I have not been able to confirm the deaths of any of Mr. Butts's children, because the burial registers for the parishes of St. Leonard and St. Luke are in very poor condition and in many places illegible.

<sup>6</sup> The National School had 300 students of both sexes from Kentish Town and Camden Town and was in the parish of St. Pancras. Thomas Butts is listed as master in *Robson's London Commercial Directory* for 1836.

IGI records as having sired a son named Thomas, who was baptized on 23 January 1803 in St. Mary Le Bow, London, and who, presumably, became a school teacher.<sup>7</sup> The Thomas Butts who sired John and Matilda Butts appears to have been Butts's father, and he appears to have married a woman named Ann and to have lived for a while in Hackney.

Hackney is an area of London just north of Shoreditch, with Kingsland Road bordering it on the west. In the eighteenth century, it belonged to the parish of St. John the Evangelist and, according to the parish's church and poor rate books, was divided into 10 districts: Church Street, Mare Street, Well Street, Grove Street, Kingsland, Homerton, Clapton, Newington, Shacklewell, and Dalston (also spelled Dorleston). Mr. Butts is recorded in the parish's poor rate books in 1775, but not before, which corresponds with the births of Matilda and John, and as living in Homerton in a house ("late Rowlands") assessed at £46 (tax collector's rate book), which was higher than most of his neighbors. According to the parish's burial register, he died on 19 April 1778 (Burke gives the date of death as 7 April 1778 but not the place). The parish's poor rate books reflect his death, in that the 1778 book for the summer quarter listed him as being deficient in payment, and the book for the first quarter of 1779 listed his house as "empty."<sup>8</sup>

But when did he remarry? The IGI records a marriage, five years after Hannah Witham died, between a Thomas Butts and an Ann Cook on 16 May 1767 in the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch. According to the marriage license, Ann Cook was a "spinster" of the parish of St. Leonard and Thomas Butts was a "widower" of the parish of St. Luke, a description which appears to fit Mr. Butts exactly. Though the burial registers of the parish of St. Luke are in poor condition, I have not found an entry for a Butts to suggest that there may have been another widowed Thomas Butts in the parish.<sup>9</sup>

This couple is recorded in the IGI as having had five children between 1769 and 1773, at least one of whom was married in Hackney. According to the IGI, they had a daughter Ann, baptized 29 August 1769 in St. Marylebone, Marylebone Road. In the parish of St. Andrew, Enfield, the

<sup>7</sup> John Butts's marriage is not recorded in the IGI, but the mother of his child is recorded as Ann. This couple is recorded in the IGI as having two other children, Mary Ann Butts and William Henry Butts, baptized on 14 May 1799 in the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, and on 28 October 1804 in the parish of St. Mary Le Bow, London. Neither person was mentioned in Butts's will.

<sup>8</sup> By the second quarter, the entry for Mr. Butts reads: "Thomas Davis late Butts &c." Ann Butts does not show up in the church or poor rate books, but an Elizabeth Butts, possibly Butts's sister born in 1757, was buried in Hackney on 4 September 1782 (burial register of St. John, Hackney), which suggests that Ann Butts and/or her children and step-children were still in the parish.

<sup>9</sup> The couple was married by Michael Marlow, rector of Larkford, who is not recorded in the register as performing any other marriages. He may have been a friend of the bride or groom, since one of the witnesses was Sarah Marlow. The other witness was Thomas Cheek.



1 Signature of Thomas Butts as witness on marriage license of Lucy Butts and Joseph Wartnaby, 12 September 1798.

couple had a son named John Timothy, baptized 5 August 1770, a daughter named Caroline, baptized 25 August 1771, a son named John, baptized 13 September 1772, and a daughter named Lucy, baptized 24 October 1773. According to the parish's burial register, John Timothy died on 5 October 1770. The second John would seem to eliminate the possibility that the Thomas Butts and Ann Cook who lived for a while in Enfield—or at least had children baptized in that parish—are the same as the Thomas Butts and Ann who lived in Hackney, since both have sons named John. But the burial register for St. Andrew records that John died on 13 November 1772. Moreover, Lucy Butts, who was baptized in Enfield, was married in Hackney. The marriage register for St. John, Hackney, records her marrying Joseph Wartnaby on 12 September 1798. According to their marriage license, they were both of the parish, he a "bachelor" and she a "spinster," and the witnesses were John Laverne(?) and Thomas Butts.

According to the Hackney poor rate books for 1786 through 1808, this Thomas Butts lived in Shacklewell and then in Dalston, where he was Wartnaby's neighbor. Another woman with the surname Butts was also married in Hackney: Diana Butts, "spinster" of the parish, married the "bachelor" Daniel Fearon of 11 Ely Place, Holborn, on 22 July 1802. She was probably a daughter of Thomas Butts and Ann Cook, since the witnesses to her marriage were Lucy and Joseph Wartnaby. The birth of Diana is not recorded in the IGI. If she was a child of Thomas Butts and Ann Cook, as seems likely, she might have been mistakenly recorded as "Ann" in the parish register of St. Marylebone (the source for the IGI entry, where she is recorded as "Ann," born 4 July 1769). Or she may have been born in 1774-75, after Lucy, or in 1777-78, after Matilda and John.<sup>10</sup>

Though only one Thomas Butts is recorded in the rate books, there is another Thomas Butts possibly living at this

time in one of Hackney's 10 districts. According to the IGI, he married Sarah Roberts in Ticehurst, Sussex, on 28 March 1785, and they had seven children baptized in the parish of St. John, Hackney, between 1786 and 1798. According to their marriage license, she was of the Ticehurst parish and he was of St. Botolph parish, Bishopsgate Street. There is, however, no apparent connection between him and Lucy and Diana Butts. Moreover, two men with the same name could be living in Hackney at the same time but not both be recorded in the rate books. If living just outside the parish or paying rent inclusive of rates to a landlord, then his name would not appear in the church or poor rate books. The parish's book of land tax assessments lists owners and occupiers of properties, but the latter category often listed "house" or "cottage" instead of a name. No Thomas Butts is recorded in the Hackney 1811 census.

The differences in the signatures on Lucy Butts's and Sarah Roberts's marriage licenses neither prove nor disprove the hypothesis that the Dalston Butts was Blake's patron. Though only five letters long, the surname as signed on Lucy's license (illus. 1) and on Sarah's license (illus. 2) reveals significant differences in the *B*, *u*, and *s*. In the former signature, the *B*s stem is slightly curved and firmly connected to the top loop, which sits on a larger oval to form a 3, the *u* is round, and the *s* extends rightward, and both lower case letters are smaller than the *B*s bottom loop. In the latter signature, the *B*s stem is sharp and straight, the top loop is completely free of the stem and forms with its bottom loop an 8 rather than a 3. The *u* is formed like a *w*, cut very sharp and consists of five distinct strokes instead of three overlapping ones. The tip of the *s* shares in the sharp left-to-right slant as the other letters, and like the *u* is larger than the *B*s bottom loop. The way the two *ts* are crossed appears similar, but this style was quite conventional, as is evinced by the "Butts" and "Ditto" in the Hackney 1797 tax collector's record book (illus. 3) and many other such entries through the rate books. Closer still is the minister's hand on Butts's 1826 marriage license (illus. 4). But on closer inspection, even the crossed *ts* differ. In the Ticehurst signature (illus. 2), the pen moves half way up the stem of the second *t* and curves over and down in a

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Fearon may have grown up in Hackney. He was the son of Daniel Fearon and baptized on 4 June 1772 in the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn. Samuel, another son of Daniel Fearon, was baptized on 22 July 1781 in the parish of St. John, Hackney, and the father is recorded in the Hackney rate books in Kingsland between 1781 and 1789.



2 Signature of T. Butts on his and Sarah Robert's marriage license, 28 March 1785.

Thos Butts	20	1	
Gifts Land etc	64	3	4
Thos Walker	10		10
Ditto Coh	2		2

3 Tax collectors rate book, Hackney, 1797.

loop to connect with the *s*. In the signature on Lucy Butts's license (illus. 1), the loop begins from the top of the second *t* and two-thirds down curves under and over through the first *t* and down the second stem to form another small loop that goes over to the *s*. The *T*'s in the two signatures also reveal subtle differences. In the Ticehurst signature, the cross bar begins low, with a large loop that forms an S-like curve and meets and extends the stem; the bar's loop rests on the bottom loop, which crosses the stem almost two-thirds up. The *T* in the signature on Lucy Butts's marriage license is more conventional, with the cross bar, starting from a tight curl, more horizontal and concave, forming more of an angle with the stem, while the bottom loop crosses at the midway point.

Of all these letters, the *B* is clearly the most distinct, different in each hand. The *B* on Lucy Butts's license is closest

to the way Butts made his *B*, and so too are the *u* and *s*. Although no letters from Butts to Blake are extant, save for the unsigned draft of one sent apparently in September 1800 (see this article's epigraph), 28 receipts in Butts's hand between 1805 and 1810 are extant. None has a full signature, all are written in the fine round hand of the professional clerk, and only one is more than several words long. That exception, though, from December 1805 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 573-74), provides a few examples of the letters in question (illus. 5). Butts consistently made his capital *B*s in the number 3 style, with a small top loop connected to a curved stem (illus. 6), and made round *us* (illus. 6) and *ss* whose top line hangs far to the right, over the downward stroke (illus. 6). His ornamental flourish on the *B*s stem is missing in the 1798 signature, but it is also missing in *B*s in other receipts; more troubling is the absence of the straight



Thomas Butts

4 "Thomas Butts" in the hand of the minister on Thomas Butts's second marriage, 12 April 1826.

Dr. W. Blake  
 Brought over £22.15-  
 Drawings & a sentry } 14.14-  
 from Telford  
 Wagon, Hanger &c.  
 & Song of Experience }  
 for balance } 10.6  
 3 Haywards Ballad stanzas } 7.6  
 3 Ditties - all in French } 7.6  
 4 Ditties } 10-  
 History of John Malin } 10.6  
 Dec<sup>r</sup> 25. 1805  
 On account of teaching your son  
 at 25 Guinea per Annum } 26.5-0  
 to commence on this Day }  
 £66.0.0  
 Balance due from me }  
 previous to my going }  
 to Telford } 14.10.8  
 By Cash to 5. Oct<sup>r</sup> } 12.19-  
 1805 }  
 Balance paid }  
 to W. Blake } 16.7.4  
 £66.0.0

5 Verso of 1805 receipt written in Butts's and Blake's hands, with the former signing "Mr. Butts."

6 A selection of Bs, s, and us from the 1805 receipt.

line that crosses his double ts and capital Ts whose cross bars are similar but whose bottom loops do not cross the stem. If signatures are to play a part as evidence—or if the possibility that the style of the 1785 signature somehow evolved into that recorded on the 1798 document is to be ruled out—then Thomas Butts's full signature from 1798 in letters or documents written in something other than his professional business hand must be found.

At this point in my research, it is the evidence culled from rate books, marriage licenses, and parish registers that suggests that the Dalston Butts may have been Blake's patron, for it suggests that the Enfield Thomas Butts and Ann Cook are the same Thomas Butts and Ann who lived in Hackney. The presence of a Thomas Butts in Enfield during the years Mr. Butts is known to have been in Hackney (1775-78) would indicate otherwise, but no Butts is listed in the poor

B B B  
 B B B  
 s s s s  
 Butts due



rate books for the parish of St. Andrew for the years 1777-79, which are the earliest rate books I have been able to locate for that parish, nor is a Butts listed in the parish's burial registers after 1772. It appears, then, that Butts's father had started a second family in 1767, which included Lucy Butts, moved to Enfield by 1770 and to Hackney by 1775, where he died in 1778. If so, the Thomas Butts who witnessed Lucy Butts's marriage and was living in Hackney between 1786 and 1808 may have been Blake's patron, who presumably had lived in Hackney with his father and stepmother by 1775. As we will see, circumstantial evidence, combined with new information about Mr. Butts, Butts's wife, and Butts's London residence raises this possibility—or, at the very least, that Butts had a residence other than 9 Great Marlborough Street while collecting Blake's works. The assumption that the Dalston Blake was not Blake's patron requires numerous highly improbable coincidences. If, however, that should be the case, the pursuit, I believe, has been worth the effort, for it has uncovered a few new facts about Butts and his family while underscoring how little we know about the man behind so much of Blake's artistic productions.

## II

Butts's mother Hannah Witham died when he was young, apparently when he was two (1762). He was her youngest child, and he had at least one older sister who survived childhood. If the "Ann" with whom his father had two children in Hackney was Ann Cook, then Butts was seven years old when his father remarried (1767) and was presumably raised by his stepmother. Ann Cook appears to have given birth seven or eight times, though only three or four of her children are known to have survived into adulthood. In this new extended family, Butts may have been the oldest boy, the older half-brother to Lucy, Matilda, John, and possibly Ann (?Diana). And it appears that when he was around 15 years of age the family lived in Hackney, in the parish of St. John, where Matilda and John were baptized in 1776 and where his father was buried two years later.

Butts died relatively well off, but he appears to have begun his life in more humble circumstances. In 1783, he "entered the office of the Commissary General of Musters as assistant clerk" (Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1053). According to Burke, he married Elizabeth Cooper and had three boys, Joseph Edward, Thomas (i.e., Butts Jr.), and George, born 4 February 1784, 27 September 1788, and 22 September 1792, respectively.<sup>11</sup> The year of his marriage and the parish in which he was married—traditionally that of the bride—are not recorded in Burke, the *genealogy*, or the IGI, nor is the parish in which his children were baptized. The

<sup>11</sup> He also had a son, William Hardwick, born 2 July 1791, who, according to Burke, died an infant; the *genealogy* dates his death as 1800. Hardwick was a surname of an uncle and cousins (see n4).

absence in the IGI indicates that these events may have occurred in one of over 40 parishes not yet included in the IGI. On the other hand, their absence may be due to Butts's having been a nonconformist, as his great granddaughter Mary Butts implies in her memoir, *The Crystal Cabinet* (164), in which case there may not be any official or surviving records of his marriage or of the births and baptisms of his children.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Butts's familial connection with Hackney may have extended into his adulthood, possibly as late as 1808. The Thomas Butts who was Wartnaby's neighbor is first listed in the parish's church and poor rate books in 1786 in Shacklewell, at number 3 Godfrey Row, where he paid the taxes on a house assessed at £18 1s.7d.<sup>13</sup> He moved from there in 1790 to another dwelling in Shacklewell and from there to Dalston in 1793, where he remained till 1808.<sup>14</sup> Dalston, the smallest of Hackney's districts, is at the southwest corner of Hackney and adjacent to the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch. Like Lambeth, it was a village or "green suburb" on the outskirts of London. Butts paid the tax on a house assessed at £20; the tax collector's books list him as the occupier and the Tyson heirs as owner.<sup>15</sup> In 1808, the house was assessed at £40, an increase suggesting improvements made to the house. The person recorded as occupying the residence by June of that year, however, is Robert Butts.<sup>16</sup> Who Robert may have been will be discussed momentarily; for now we need to recognize that his replacing Thomas in 1808 corresponds exactly to Butts's move to 17

<sup>12</sup> Before 1837, the principal means for recording births, marriages, and deaths were parish registers kept by the clergy of the Church of England. These registers are housed in the parishes where the ceremony took place. The registers kept by religious denominations other than the Church of England are in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, but they are incomplete.

<sup>13</sup> Butts may have been living in Hackney earlier, but there are no church or poor rate books covering all of Hackney between 1780 and 1785. This is the only Butts listed in the rate books and the moves are clearly sequential.

<sup>14</sup> The church rate book for 1793 records a "Thomas Bulls," which appears to be "Butts" without the *ts* crossed (the land assessment book for 1796 also records "Thomas Bulls"). In any event, the entry was corrected to "Thomas Butts" the following year. The first entry of a name in a parish rate book was often incorrect; last entries were also often incorrectly recorded. Blake, for example, moved from Broad Street to Poland Street at "the end of 1785, but his name still appears as joint rate-payer . . . in 1786 in the books for the Parish Poor Rates" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 558n).

<sup>15</sup> In 1796, Butts paid the poor rates of 72 shillings (18s. quarterly) on "land of Scott late Bellis." The land is listed with the residence in 1797 and 1798. In 1798, Butts paid the poor rates of 16 shillings on land "late Deane," which was rated at 25 shillings the following year. In 1800, there is no mention of land and the residence is still assessed in the tax books at £20, while Wartnaby paid the poor rates of 25 shillings "for land late Butts." In 1805, the poor rate decreased to 22 shillings "for Land late Butts."

When a Wartnaby is listed in a commercial directory, it is always J. or Joseph and he is always the only one listed. He is listed as a Ship Insurance Broker at 3 Birchin Lane, Cornhill, in the *Post Office Annual*



Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square. Butts is first recorded at the Fitzroy Square address in *Boyle's Court Directory* for 1808. Before that date, the residence was inhabited by a Mrs. Curtis.<sup>17</sup>

The combined court and commercial directories published by William Holden support the hypothesis that the Thomas Butts in Shacklewell and Dalston was Blake's patron. The directories of the day, such as those published by Kent, Lowndes, and the post office, alphabetically listed merchants, laborers, professionals et al. at their business addresses; some commercial directories, such as the *Universal Director* (1763), also organized these addresses by occupation to create classified directories, and others, such as *Boyle's General London Guide* (1792), organized them alphabetically and by street. All of them excluded London's "environs," i.e., the surrounding villages and towns. The Holden triennial directories, however, included both commercial lists and "House-keepers Resident in London, and Ten Miles Circular, in Private Life." There was, of course, much overlap between the commercial and private sections, with merchants and other professionals listing both their business and private addresses.<sup>18</sup>

In the commercial section of the 1805-07 edition of Holden's and its 1808 supplement we find:

Butts, Tho, Commissioner of Musters, Whitehall  
Butts, Jn, Gunpowder Office 74 Lombard St  
Butts J, Engineer, Tottenham Str, Fitzroy Sq  
Butts James, Smith, etc. Croydon  
Butts, Mrs. School 9 Great Marlborough St

In the "Private Residence" section of the same directory

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*Directory* for 1802, and as a Merchant over the Royal Exchange in the same directory for the years 1805-10. In the 1811 edition of the directory, he is listed as an Insurance Broker at 3 St. Helen's Place and as a Merchant over the Royal Exchange. In *Holden's Annual London and Country Directory* for 1811, he is listed three times: over the Exchange, at St. Helen's, and as "Wine Merchant, Dalston." By 1817, he is listed as Merchant, 2 Adams Court, Broad Street, and remains at that address until at least 1831.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Butts is still listed in the poor rate books for 1808 and 1809, but it seems clear in light of the tax records that Robert was mistakenly recorded as "Thomas" and began paying the rates in 1808 (see n14).

<sup>17</sup> George Cumberland records Butts's new address in an 1808 notebook, as well as "Mr Malkin[,] Hackney" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 562). Gilchrist notes that "Fitzroy Square . . . [.] built in great part by Adelphi Adams, was fashionable in those days. Noblemen were contented to live in its spacious mansions; among other celebrities, General Miranda, the South American hero, abode there" (1: 115). In 1810, the tax assessment for houses on the square was £200, while those on Grafton Street ranged between £50 and £60.

<sup>18</sup> In 1799, the total number of addresses Holden "listed was 40,000, rising to 71,000 in 1805 (circa 44,900 commercial and 26,200 private addresses). This compares favourably with 11,000 names in *Kent's Directory* and 13,000 in the *Post Office Annual Directory*, although the price was greater *pro rata*" (Atkins 63-64).

and its supplement, we find:

Butts John, esq 6 Chatham-pl Blackfriars  
Butts John, esq Kensington Terrace  
Butts, Mr. 6 Paragon, Kent Road  
Butts Mr. Tho. Dalston

The Thomas Butts in the commercial section is, of course, Blake's patron, listed at his office. The second Butts listed is John Butts, who lived at 6 Chatham-place; he is listed as "Gunpowder Merchant" at both addresses in the *Post Office Annual Directories* for 1804-09. He appears to have first entered the London commercial directories in 1797, in *Boyle's City Guide*, where he is listed at the Chatham-place address, and the location of his office was first given in the 1801 *Holden's Supplement of Names* as 1 Savage Gardens. He moved to Lombard street by 1803, where he is listed in the Kent directories for that and subsequent years till at least 1820. This John Butts is, I believe, Butts's half-brother John. His profession is interestingly aligned with that of the Commissary General's Office of Musters, where Butts made sure that the army's "equipment was in order" (Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1053).<sup>19</sup> The third Butts, who is recorded as "engineer," is probably the John Butts of Kensington Terrace, who is listed earlier in the *Universal British Directory* (vol. 3) for 1794 in the Kensington section, under the heading "The following are the principal inhabitants, Gentry, etc." There he is listed as "Butts, John, Gent.," but without a profession. James Butts is a misspelling of James Butt, as he is listed in other directories, including the subsequent edition of Holden's. And Mrs. Butts is Butts's wife, listed at her business address, the address heretofore assumed to have been the Butts's residence and which, as we will see, was a boarding school for girls, though it may also have been used as a city apartment for the Buttses.

In the commercial section, then, there are just four Butts listed. In the private residence section, there are actually only three Butts listed, for the Mr. Butts of Paragon, Kent Road, is a misspelling for Butt, as he is listed in the earlier and subsequent editions of Holden's and earlier editions of Boyle's. These three Butts appear to correspond with the four Butts in the commercial section, that is, they do if the Dalston residence of Mr. Thomas Butts is that of Butts and Mrs. Butts.

"Butts Mr. Thomas, Dalston" is first listed in the private section of *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1802-04. (Most houses in London's outlying villages did not have numbers, and most streets were not given names until the nineteenth century.) The possibility that the Dalston Butts is Blake's

<sup>19</sup> John Butts was also listed in *Holden's Annual Directory* for 1811 in both business and private sections; the latter section also included Butts at Fitzroy Square, Mr. J. E. Butts at Whitehall, which is Joseph Edward Butts, Butts's eldest son, and Mrs. Butts at 5 Kensington Terrace, who was presumably the widow of the John Butts previously recorded at this address. In Boyle's directory for 1800, the addresses of the two John Butts were given to one name, but this was a unique exception and almost certainly a mistake.



patron is also suggested by the relative rarity of the surname (Butt was common, Butts very much less so, according to private and commercial listings in the directories and the IGI), and by the company he keeps. The only other Butts listed in the 1802-04 edition are his half-brother John at Chatham-place and the other John Butts at Kensington Terrace, and no Butts are listed in the commercial section. The similar manner in which John and Thomas Butts entered the Holden directory also suggests that the Dalston Butts is Blake's patron. They both enter in the private section of the 1802-04 edition. They stay in that section in the 1805-07 edition and its 1808 supplement, and add their commercial addresses, along with Mrs. Butts's, who, as we will see, was listed at this address in an earlier edition of Holden's and earlier than that in other directories.<sup>20</sup> John Butts, as noted, was also listed in Boyle's and Kent's directories, and starting in 1803 in the *Post Office Annual Directories* as well. Thomas Butts regularly listed his business address in this directory starting in 1806, after he was dual listed in Holden's, which may explain why he did not list it in the 1809-11 edition of Holden's. He continued to list his private residence, however. In Holden's 1809-11 edition, he is listed as "Butts T. Esq. 17 Grafton st. Fitzroy square," where he moved in 1808. No other Thomas Butts is listed at Dalston after this date. For two men with the same name to exit and enter the same directory at the same time would be a remarkable coincidence; it seems more likely that Butts gave Holden's a change of address for the new edition. Joining him in the private section of the directory's 1809-11 edition were two other Butts, John of Kensington Terrace and "Butts Rob. Esq., Dalston."

### III

The 9 Great Marlborough Street address, which is about four miles from Dalston, is much closer to where Butts worked in Whitehall. This is where Blake sent his letters from Felpham, between 1800 and 1803.<sup>21</sup> Butts is recorded in the Westminster rate books as paying the taxes on a house "rated at 44 pounds" in 1789. From this, Bentley reasonably infers that the Buttses lived "in a fine large house" (*Blake Records* 560 and n1) and that Butts and Blake may have met in 1789,

<sup>20</sup> Another possible relation who was listed in the private but not the commercial section in Holden's 1802-04 edition was Daniel Fearon, who married Diana Butts. In the 1805-07 edition and its supplement, he is listed in the private and commercial sections at 11 Ely Place and as a coal merchant, Beaufort Wharf, Strand. He is also dual listed in *Holden's Annual Directory* for 1811. By 1826, in Kent's directory, he is listed as Fearon and Sons and is located at Milford-Lane, Strand, but the following year he is listed without sons at 19 Villiers Street, Strand, and is no longer listed by 1831. It is interesting to note that Butts paid Blake in coals on 5 October 1805, valued at £12 19s. (Bentley, *Blake Records* 573).

<sup>21</sup> Blake returned to London in 1803 and lived at 17 Molton Street, just a few blocks from Great Marlborough Street and not far from 17 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square. Between 1803 and 1810, there are no

because the house was just down the street from Blake, who, between 1785 and 1790, lived at 28 Poland Street. But were Blake and patron really neighbors—or neighbors who knew one another this early? And did Butts have two residences?

The first account of Thomas Butts was written in 1907 by Ada Briggs, whose sister was the second and much younger wife of Captain Frederick John Butts, the grandson of Thomas Butts and son of Butts Jr. The article appeared two years after the Captain died, and perhaps too many years after the events in question for her to have distinguished fact from family lore. Like Gilchrist (1: 115), she states without proof that Butts and Blake first met "about the year 1793" (93) and is silent about how and why. Mary Butts, the Captain's novelist daughter, suggests in her memoir that her great grandfather "was an early follower of Swedenborg" (164), raising the possibility that he and Blake met in 1789, the year Blake attended meetings of Swedenborgians hoping to establish a New Jerusalem Church (Bentley, *Blake Records* 34-35). But there is no evidence to prove this association. Unlike the Blakes, Butts's name does not appear in the register of the 1789 meeting or of any subsequent meeting.

Given the makeup of his Blake collection, Butts seems unlikely to have patronized Blake as early as 1789—or 1793. His copies of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America*, *Europe*, and *The Song of Los* were acquired from the Cumberland auction of 1835 and not directly from Blake, and his copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was acquired in 1806 (Bentley, *Blake Books* 657, 414). Unless Butts's patronage emerged slowly from a friendship with Blake, it appears likely that the two had met after Blake's most creative book-making period, 1789-95. The earliest Blake works traceable to Butts are the biblical temperas (Butlin 379-432), to which Blake appears to be referring in his 1799 letter to Cumberland: "My Work pleases my employer, & I have an order for Fifty small Pictures at One Guinea each, which is Something better than mere copying after another artist" (Keynes, *The Letters* 11).

letters but there are 29 receipts co-signed by Blake and Butts (all but one untraced receipt are between 1805 and 1810), which indicates that the transactions took place in person and presumably explains the absence of letters.

If the Dalston residence was his patron's, then it is very likely that Blake visited there. Coaches to Dalston left on the hour between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. from within Bishopsgate at a rate of one shilling a mile or an hour. But Blake was reputed to have been a great walker. Between 1824 and 1827, Blake often walked to Hampstead, which is north of Hackney, to visit Linnell and his family (Bentley, *Blake Records* 286, 292). In a late letter to Linnell, he remembers walking regularly when "young" to villages north of Hackney, including "Hampstead Highgate Hornsea Muswell Hill" (Keynes, *The Letters* 158). Tatham, exaggerating some, no doubt, states that Blake and Catherine, in their youth, "would start in the Morning early, & walk out 20 miles & dine at some pretty & sequestered Inn & would return the same day home having travelled 40 miles. Mrs Blake would do this without excessive fatigue" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 527).



The building at 9 Great Marlborough Street was listed in the 1801 Westminster census as having 22 people, 19 of whom were female.<sup>22</sup> From this Bentley infers that Mrs. Butts may have run a boarding school for girls ("Daughters" 116). The inference is correct, as is evinced by entries for Mrs. Butts in *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1805-07 and its 1808 supplement. As noted, she is recorded under the commercial section but not the private residence section as "Butts Mrs. School, 9 Great Marlborough Street." Her school appears to have been in operation from at least 1790, since she is recorded in the *Universal British Directory* for 1790-92 as "Butts Mrs. 9 Great Marlborough Street." She is listed the same way in the 1793 *Directory to the Nobility, Gentry, and Families of Distinction*, in *The New Patent London Directory* for 1795 (a reprint of the *Universal British Directory* for 1790-92), and in the *Universal British Directory* (vol. 5) for 1798. Thomas Butts may be paying the taxes on the place, but he is not listed in any directory that I have examined as living there.<sup>23</sup>

The entry for Mrs. Butts not only confirms Bentley's suspicions, but it may also explain Blake's choice of metaphor in his letter to Butts, 22 November 1802. Blake states that he has "now given two years to the intense study of those parts of the art which relate to light & shade & colour" and asserts that he understands them completely, "or Else I am Blind, Stupid, Ignorant and Incapable in two years' Study to understand those things which a Boarding School Miss can comprehend in a fortnight" (Keynes, *The Letters* 40-41).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Subsequent tenants of 9 Great Marlborough Street give an idea of the building's size. By 1828, J. Lea and Sons, carpet and rug manufacturers, were at that address; by 1833, they were joined by the coal merchants, Smith, Turl, and Co.. The building appears certainly to have been more than a single family apartment.

<sup>23</sup> In *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1799 (corrected to 24 January 1800), a "J. Butts" is listed at 9 Great Marlborough Street, whose profession is listed as "Private." But this Butts may be Mrs. Butts, for this directory, unlike later editions of itself and all other directories that I have examined, excluded "Mrs." and all female first names. Women are listed, but their first names are recorded as an initial. On the other hand, given that the initial is J and not E (for Elizabeth), it might refer to their son, Joseph Edward Butts, who was born in 1784 and began working for his father at the Office of Commissary of Musters, Whitehall, in 1799 (Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1057). Joseph was to live in the parish of St. Martin in the Fields, Westminster, the parish in which his four children were baptized between 1808 and 1818 (IGI). It appears that Butts was preceded in the Holden directories either by his son or wife.

In the early 1790s, the school appears to have been across from another: Henry Martyn's Academy for Illustrating Natural History was at 10 Great Marlborough Street (information supplied by G. E. Bentley, Jr.). Thomas Martin (also spelled Martyn), a painter, is listed at 12 Great Marlborough Street in *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1799. Mrs. Butts is the only Butts listed in the street directory in the 1798 *Universal British Directory* (vol. 5).

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that Mrs. Elizabeth Butts, nee Cooper, may have had relatives in the same line of business. In *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1805-07, Sam and Thomas Cooper are listed as schoolmasters, and Sarah, Mrs., and Elizabeth Cooper are listed as "Ladies'

More significantly, of course, the identification of 9 Great Marlborough Street as a school indicates that it was not solely a private residence, which in turn suggests that it might not have been a family residence at all, or at least not the family's only or primary residence. The possibility that the location was only a boarding school and not a family residence is supported by the absence in court directories of a Westminster address for the Buttses, that is, for Thomas and Mrs. Butts, as well as the absence of number 9 among the private house residences in Boyle's street directories in the 1800s (listed are . . . 7, 8, 10, 11 . . .).<sup>25</sup> And, as noted, the baptismal records for the Butts children, two of whom (William and George) were born in 1791 and 1792 according to Burke, are not listed in the IGI, and thus the hypothesis that they were born in Westminster, or that the family belonged to a parish in Westminster, cannot be proved or disproved at this time.

The 1801 Westminster Census records the presence of three males, who may have been servants but may also have been Thomas Butts and his sons Tommy and George, who were 13 and 9 respectively. The problem here is that Butts's eldest son, Joseph Edward, born in 1784, was 17 years old at the time of the census and a bit young to be living on his own. Perhaps Joseph lived primarily in the Dalston residence, or the three sons lived with their mother and Butts stayed—or for legal reason was listed—in Dalston. At any rate, the presence of three males raises the possibility that Butts used the school as a city apartment and the Dalston residence as a country cottage. The idea that the Butts family lived in town, at least during the week, is suggested by a letter of Blake's and an entry in Tommy's diary. On Tuesday 23 September 1800, the day after arriving in Felpham, Blake writes Butts: "God bless you! I shall wish for you on Tuesday Evening as usual" (Keynes, *The Letters* 24), suggesting that the Blakes and Buttses had met regularly on Tuesdays, though apparently not always in the evening. Bentley states that one of these meetings was briefly "recorded by twelve-year-old Tommy Butts in his diary for Tuesday, May 13th [1800]: 'Mr. and Mrs. Blake and Mr. T. Jones drank tea with mama'" (Blake Records 67). Tommy's diary is untraced, but Briggs quotes two more entries from 1800. On "September 10th, Mr. and Mrs. Blake, his brother, and Mr. Birch came

school, Chigwell," "boarding school, Woodford," and "preparatory school, 20 Vineyard Garden, Clerkenwell," respectively.

<sup>25</sup> According to the street directories in Boyle's directories for the early 1800s, these are the addresses of the "American Commissioner Office," "Wm. Young Knight, Attorney," "Mrs. Derville," and "Dow. Lady Onslow." In the *Universal British Directory* for 1798, Young Knight is listed at number 5.

The Butts's are not listed in the *London and Westminster Directory* (Fenwick) for 1796, or in any of the other London directories that I have examined from this time. Fenwick's directory and Wakefield's directory for 1794 have lists of "Academies and Boarding Schools," but Butts is not listed (nor is Martin).





7 Map of Dalston, showing Bath Place, detail from a map of Hackney, 1831.

to tea," and on "September 16th, Mr. Blake had breakfast with mama" (96).<sup>26</sup> The latter entry would have been on the Tuesday before Blake left for Felpham. Where they met is not indicated. They could have met at Dalston (see n21), but the presence of the 12 year-old with his mother on a school day and the apparent absence of Butts suggests that they met at the school, which supports the hypothesis that the school doubled as a city apartment.

#### IV

The Commissary of Musters Office closed as a separate entity in 1818, when it was absorbed into the War Office, and Butts appears to have retired that year.<sup>27</sup> Years of complaints about the office being ineffectual and overstaffed had led to an official inquiry in 1812, which terminated in a recommendation that the office be abolished (Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1064). Perhaps the news of such an inquiry or fears of imminent closing curtailed Butts's Blake acquisitions, c. 1811. The historical record does not dispute the

possible connection: after December 1810, there are no receipts or documentary evidence to prove that Butts continued his patronage of Blake.<sup>28</sup> Another possible reason for the cessation of commissions is the closing of Mrs. Butts's school (see below). Gilchrist states that Butts eventually "grew cool" to Blake and that he "employed him but little now, and during the few remaining years of Blake's life they seldom met" (1: 282). The absence of receipts by a professional clerk, whose other receipts from Blake appear to have been meticulously kept, supports Gilchrist's latter claim. Blake makes only one reference to Butts after 1811, noting in April of 1826 that Butts had paid him a visit (Erdman 777) and was to receive a proof copy of the Job engravings (Bentley, *Blake Records* 274, 599). They must have also met in September 1821, when Blake borrowed the Job watercolor illustrations for Linnell to trace, and again in May 1822, when he borrowed three of the *Paradise Lost* designs (Bentley, *Blake Records Supplement* 105-06). Though there are no records, Butts must have lent Blake *The Wise and Foolish Virgins* and *The Vision of Queen Katherine* (Butlin 478, 548) as well, because the late versions executed for Thomas Lawrence and John Linnell (Butlin 479, 549), c. 1822 and c. 1825, are based on tracings from them. The most one can say, perhaps, is that after 1820 Butts and Blake were on good terms but Butts seems not to have been actively add-

<sup>26</sup> "Birch" is almost certainly John Birch (1745-1815), a surgeon who treated Catherine Blake with electricity (Keynes, *The Letters* 35, 54, and 105).

<sup>27</sup> Bentley states that Butts retired in 1817 and that the office was abolished that year ("Thomas Butts" 1064 and n51). In private correspondence, he corrects this to 1818. It appears that Butts may have stayed on, in some capacity, past retirement, for he is listed in the *Post Office Annual Directory* for 1819 at the Commissary of Musters, 11 Duke Street, Westminster. The office moved from Whitehall to 53 Parliament Street by 1816 and to Duke Street (Westminster) by 1819 (see *Post Office Annual Directories* for these years). Underhill's *Triennial*

*Directory* for 1822-24 lists him at the Commissary of Musters, 53 Parliament Street, but this information is not reliable because it merely repeats that supplied in the earlier Holden directories, which Underhill took over in 1816.

<sup>28</sup> For Butts's receipts, see Bentley, *Blake Records* 578.



ing to his collection or trying to support Blake financially.<sup>29</sup>

Butts collected the lion's share of his Blakes between 1799 and 1810. Between 1811 and 1820, contact between the two men probably never ceased altogether, if, as Bentley argues, Butts had assisted Blake's brother James in obtaining work as a clerk in "the office of the Commissary General of Must-ers in 1814, 1815, and 1816" ("Thomas Butts" 1058). But there is no hard evidence that Butts commissioned Blake during this time, the c. 1816 series of Milton illustrations notwithstanding (see Viscomi "Marketplace" 58 passim).

If Butts maintained a second residence in Dalston between 1793 and 1808, then the main period of his collecting coincides with his residency in Dalston. His having more than one location for displaying his Blakes, Dalston and Great Marlborough Street, may explain why there are duplicates in the Butts collection, like the tempera and watercolor of the *Baptism of Christ* (Butlin 415, 475) or watercolors of *St. Paul and the Viper* (Butlin 509, 510). Perhaps Blake's audience even then was heavily academic, with Mrs. Butts displaying Blakes in her school as well as in the Butts's own rooms. Blake finished his biblical watercolors in a style suitable for display, and they were afterwards matted for display. In this latter style, the watercolors were trimmed of their wide margins, laid in windows cut out of large sheets of crayon board, and had inscriptions written on the board below them in copperplate hand. When this style was first employed is in question, because the crayon board, which was manufactured by "Turnbull," could have been made as early as 1802 or as late as 1819 (Viscomi, "Marketplace" 48 passim). But whatever the date of their rematting, the watercolors, as received from Blake, were perfectly displayable. They had wide margins with three or more colored bands framing the image. Works in such "washline mounts" (48) could be stored in portfolios, but they could also be placed in wooden frames without front mats. Could the desire to decorate Mrs. Butts's school have motivated the commission for 50 biblical temperas? Could it have motivated Blake's washline mounts or Butts's in-laid mounts that were used in the subsequent series of biblical watercolors?

The hypothesis that the biblical watercolors may have been painted for the school is worth pursuing, but even if true it does not mean that the walls and study of the Dalston house were Blakeless. Countering Butts's reference to his house as a "dung hill," Blake described it as a "Green House." In a letter of 10 January 1803, Blake states: "But whatever becomes of my labours, I would rather that they should be

preserv'd in your Green House (not, as you mistakenly call it, dung hill) than in the cold gallery of fashion.—The Sun may yet shine, & then they will be brought into open air" (Keynes, *The Letters* 47-48). Through mixed metaphors, Blake complains about being an ignored artist, about his work having to remain indoors and thus private during the miserable weather in which he finds himself. But while they are indoors, in the privacy of Butts's collection, they are safe and preserved—and are even sure to grow—till he obtains a genuinely appreciative audience as opposed to the fashionable crowd and exhibition halls of his day. Blake informs his patron that he prefers his work to remain outside London's indifferent eye, to be preserved in a living environment rather than to be shown in a fickle one. Blake's description of Butts's house as "Green," the color of living vegetation and the place where vegetation grows indoors all year long in spite of the weather, appears to have generated the explicit and even more positive weather metaphors of sun and open air, as well as their opposition in the adjective "cold," connoting both the indifference of fashion and the marble characteristic of the "galleries" of connoisseurs and amateurs, or as Blake referred to them, "Cunning sures & the Aim at yours" (Erdman 510).

"Green House" suggests the open space of a free-standing country home or cottage—one with or without extra land—and not a London row house (see n35). Nor does Butts's description of his house as a "dung hill" bring to mind a "fine large [London] house." It does, however, suggest both country living and his dissatisfaction with it, which perhaps prompted his move to the more fashionable Fitzroy Square. Blake's description, on the other hand, supports the hypothesis that the house was located in Dalston, for it appears to play on Dalston's reputation for having "several extensive nursery grounds."<sup>30</sup> At the very least, Blake's description, combined with the fact that the London residence was a boarding school, suggests that Butts had a second residence in the early 1800s. By the time he died, in 1845, he appears to have owned 16 properties (will), an interest in real estate that was already present by 1808.<sup>31</sup>

The year Butts moved to Fitzroy Square, Thomas Butts drops out of the Hackney St. John tax books and his resi-

<sup>29</sup> Copy A of *The Ghost of Abel*, presumably bound with copies of *On Homers Poetry* [6] *On Virgil and Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour*, sold in the 26-27 March 1852 auction (Bentley, *Blake Books* 209). Because they were sold at this auction, with other items from the Butts collection, they are generally assumed to have been Butts's copies. Blake had completed all three works c. 1822 and may have given them to Butts (there are no receipts for the purchase) in appreciation for his lending the *Job* or *Paradise Lost* watercolors in 1821 or 1822.

<sup>30</sup> Pigot's & Co.'s *London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1826-27* (464). The 1822-23 edition of this directory identifies the "nursery grounds" as those of "Mr. James Lamb," but at the time of Blake's letter, there were other nurserymen in the area as well, including John Allport, Thomas Bassington, George and William Ross, and Edward and Samuel Smith (see Boyle 1795, Holden 1802-04, and Holden 1805-07).

<sup>31</sup> According to Wilson, "Butts had a cottage at Epsom and another at Hadley. It is believed that the Blakes stayed with them at both places" (96n). The former claim is based on Butts Jr.'s letter to his mother on 14 August 1809, which informs her that he "breakfasted with George before I went to South Molton Street; you wished me to do so while you and my Father are out of Town. Mr. and Mrs. Blake are very well . . . they intend shortly to pay the promised visit at Epsom" (quoted in Wilson 96n). Wilson does not cite her sources, but a residence in



dence is occupied by Robert Butts, who could be one of two people recorded in the *genealogy*. The first Robert is listed as Butts's third cousin, who was about his age, and the second is listed as a fourth cousin closer in age to his children.<sup>32</sup> A Robert Butts was listed in *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1799-1800 at 16 Field-gate Street, Whitechapel, along with "J. Butts" at 9 Great Marlborough Street. These were the only two Buttses listed. His profession, like hers (or his, see n23) is listed as "Private." Robert Butts is missing from the directories until *Holden's Triennial Directory* for 1809-11, which lists a "Butts Rob. Esq. Dalston." As noted, this edition of the directory is the first to list Butts as "Butts T. Esq. 17, Grafton st. Fitzroy square." Dalston has no extant poor rate books for 1810-12, 1815-26, and 1833-42, but the Hackney Census of 1811 lists Robert Butts in Thomas Butts's house (identified by its proximity to Joseph Wartnaby's house and place in the record books). The house was inhabited by one male and two females, presumably a wife and daughter. According to their marriage license, Robert Butts, "bachelor," married Mary Hill, "spinster," both of the parish of St. John, Hackney, on 1 July 1806; the witnesses were Joseph and Lucy Butts Wartnaby.<sup>33</sup> Robert and Mary had a daughter named Mary and a son named Robert, baptized in the parish of St. John, Hackney, on 15 December 1807 and 14 December 1809 (IGI). Presumably, baby Robert died before the 1811 Census, though I have not been able to find a record of the baby's death in the

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Hadley, which is just north of Hackney, in Middlesex, is listed in Butts's will, though one in Epsom is not, nor is he listed in the Epsom tax and rate books for 1809-15.

<sup>32</sup> As noted, the *genealogy* is incomplete and not always reliable. It does not, for instance, record Mr. Butts's brother Francis and sister Sarah, or that he had a son named Samuel with Hannah Witham and a second family with Ann Cook. Whether Francis or Samuel had progeny, who would have been Butts's first cousins or nephews and nieces, is unknown. The *genealogy* gives no information about the first Robert Butts other than that he was one of the numerous grandsons of Robert Butts, bishop of Ely, and brother of William Butts, who was baptized in the parish of St. Andrew, Holborn, in 1752 and married Amy Drury, whose last name was used by descendants of this family as well as Butts's (Anthony Bacon Drury Butts, for example, was Butts's great grandson).

<sup>33</sup> Lucy and Robert are presumably related, though the Enfield Butts are not recorded in the IGI as having had a son Robert. If they had, then his occupying the Dalston residence after Thomas would suggest the death of the father and inheritance of the son, and that would be evidence to prove the Enfield Thomas and Ann Butts are distinct from the Hackney Butts, that they moved to Dalston by 1793, and that the Thomas Butts who witnessed Lucy's marriage is Lucy's father, and not, as I am speculating here, her half-brother Thomas and Blake's patron. So far, however, I have not found such evidence, and no Thomas Butts is recorded in the Hackney burial registers for these years. I can only guess that Lucy and Robert, like Butts and Robert, are third or fourth cousins, though I do not dismiss the possibility of a closer connection (see n32).

burial register for St. John, Hackney.<sup>34</sup>

By 1811, the street was called "Bath Place," which was along Dalston Lane, where the present Graham Road begins. Under "Landholders" in the 1814 rate book, the residence is described as: "Butts Brick ground and Cottage opposite Cat. and Mutton."<sup>35</sup> Robert Butts is listed in the 1828 rate books, still next to Wartnaby, whose house is recorded as "empty"; the location is now called Graham Place (probably the origin of the present Graham Road), probably because, as indicated in the 1831 "Plan of the Parish of St. John at Hackney" (illus. 7), the land was adjacent to that once belonging to Baron Graham. Robert Butts is still listed at Graham Place in the 1832 rate books, but is listed as being in "Kingsland Ward Dalston."<sup>36</sup>

Robert Butts is probably the same person listed in the *London Post Office Directory* for 1835 to 1842 as an auctioneer, appraiser, and house agent, with an office at "Church Street, Hackney," the name of the north end of what is now Mare Street. At least for three years (1835-38) his business was listed as Butts & Owen; according to the *genealogy*, Butts had third cousins named Owen, who were Robert's first cousins or first cousins once removed.<sup>37</sup> After 1843, he is no longer listed in the LPOD or any of the other directory.<sup>38</sup> If the Dalston Robert is the person listed in Holden's 1799

<sup>34</sup> By 1827, a Mary Butts, possibly Robert's wife or daughter, ran an "academy" for girls at 7 Bartholomew Square, St. Luke's. The same year, a Miss Fearon, possibly the daughter of Diana Butts and Daniel Fearon, was running an academy at 22 Walcot Place, Lambeth. In the parish of St. John, Hackney, a Mary Butts, "spinster" of the parish, married Benjamin Perkins, "bachelor" of the parish of St. Marylebone, on 7 April 1836. Further research is needed to see whether he is a relation of Oliver Henry Perkins, the first recorded owner of the colored *Night Thoughts*, copy K (Bentley, *Blake Books* 644).

<sup>35</sup> Under "Taverns and Public Houses" in the Hackney section of Pigot's *Directory* for 1836 is "Cat and Mutton, William Bull, London Fields." This tavern is shown on the 1831 "Plan of the Parish of St. John at Hackney." The "Cat. and Mutton" recorded in the Rate Book, though, is not the tavern but what gave the tavern its name, the fields that were in the shape of a cat and sheep (suggested by Peter Foy, of the Rose Lipman Library, Hackney). If so, this would place the cottage on the southeast side of Bath Place. The description suggests a detached residence, though this is difficult to ascertain on the 1831 map (illus. 7), a legend on which states that Hackney had 2,137 houses and a population of 12,730 in 1801 and 5,834 houses and population of 31,132 in 1831.

<sup>36</sup> This is probably not a change of address but a change in administering the parish poor rates. In Clayton's [1830] *Court Guide to the Environs of London*, he is listed at "Dalston (Kingsland)," and "The population of Kingsland, Shacklewell, and Dalston [was] included in the returns for Hackney" (Pigot's & Co.'s *London and Provincial New Commercial Directory* for 1826-27, 464).

<sup>37</sup> The Owen in question was almost certainly Thomas Owen, an auctioneer also located at 122 Fore Street. *Robson's Commercial Directory* for 1838 lists Robert Butts at Church Street in business by himself and Owen as having been replaced at Fore street by G. Pettit, auctioneer.

<sup>38</sup> In 1851, a Robert Butts is listed in *Kelley's London Directory* as "Auctioneer" at 86 Queen Street, Cheapside. This Robert is not listed in any directories before or after this date and may not be related to the Hackney Butts.



directory, married in Hackney in 1806, as well as the appraiser and auctioneer (no other Robert is listed in the directories), then he would have been born c. 1780, about 20 years younger than Butts and eight years older than Thomas Butts, Jr.

Butts was 48 years old when he moved to Fitzroy Square in 1808, the last year that Mrs. Butts is listed in the directories. While the school might have been vacated, the Dalston residence was not. If the Dalston residence was Butts's "Green House," then it follows that the house almost certainly displayed or "preserv'd" works by Blake. And since the house was inhabited immediately after Butts by a member of his extended family, the question of how much of the Blake collection Butts moved to Fitzroy Square must be asked. If in the Dalston residence some of the watercolors were displayed, as the original and subsequent matting styles encouraged, and not stored in portfolios, then possibly some of the collection-as-furniture remained in Dalston, and quite possibly remained in Robert Butts's or his descendant's possession, not a difficult thing to imagine if Robert was an "Appraiser" of art.

## V

The idea that the Blake watercolors might have been furniture is not as demeaning as it sounds. As noted, the works were finished and then mounted in styles that encouraged display. More important, "furniture" is apparently how Blake's art works are referred to in Butts's will. Butts makes no mention of an art collection, let alone a Blake collection, but he mentions the house in which the collection was kept and gave it to Butts Jr., along with all its "fixtures and furniture."<sup>39</sup> Butts bequeathed to his son the "leasehold dwellinghouse situate No 17 Grafton Street Fitzroy Square and my Coach house and stable in Grafton Mews in the parish of Saint Pancras in the County of Middlesex with their respective appurtenances and also my leasehold dwellinghouse with the appurtenances situate No 5 Upper Fitzroy Street Fitzroy Square aforesaid wherein my said son now resides, together with all the fixtures and furniture therein which belong to me" (will, 6). Seymour Kirkup, a childhood school friend of Thomas Butts Jr. and frequent guest at his parent's Fitzroy house between 1810 to 1816, records that he "neglected sadly the opportunities the Buttses threw in [his] way" to study Blake, adding, though, that "They (Butts) did not seem to value him as we do now" (Bentley, *Blake Records* 220n2).

<sup>39</sup> The only book (or work of art) singled out is a folio bible given to Butts by Mrs. Rain, which he bequeathed to his grandson Henry Wellington Halse Butts (will 6). The complete silence on the subject of an art collection in a will that catalogues stocks, houses, and property supports the hypothesis that Butts collected Blake in order to assist him, as opposed to assisting him as a means of building an art collection. The will appears not to reflect the mind of a collector, which, again, tends to indicate that the print and drawing collection sold in March 1852 was created by someone other than Butts (see "Marketplace 1852").

The categorization of Blake's paintings as furniture and the move to Fitzroy Square from both Dalston and Great Marlborough Street in 1808 create the first potential rupture in the Blake collection's line of descent from Butts to Butts Jr. As noted, it seems possible that a few Blakes from this collection remained in the Dalston house after 1808 and/or were purchased by Robert Butts. If so, is it possible that the works left behind or purchased are those that sold at Sotheby's on 26-27 March 1852, whose anonymous vendor is, I believe, mistakenly assumed to have been Butts Jr., or on 26 June 1852, as part of Charles Ford's auction?

Of these two sales, the latter is more likely, because all 29 of the Blake watercolors in the Ford auction were executed by or in 1808. The 23 biblical watercolors and six *Paradise Lost* designs are in the same medium and period, about the same size, and were probably all uniformly matted (see "Marketplace 1852"). The technical, thematic, and historical coherence of these 29 works strongly suggests that Ford acquired the works together, as a small collection, and not one at a time, which is to say, it seems more likely that they were once together, pared early on from the larger Butts collection, rather than randomly chosen from the larger collection by Butts Jr. for the June 1852 auction. Put another way, if chosen in 1852 by Butts Jr., then it is fair to ask why these works and not others, why this kind of coherence when the Butts collection was so technically and historically diverse? And why an even split of the 12 *Paradise Lost* designs? Ford, of course, may have acquired the Blake watercolors as a group from someone other than Robert Butts (two other possible sources are Butts's sons Joseph Edward and George, who died, according to Burke, in 1827 and 1837; see below), but the possibility of the group's leaving the collection in 1808 and remaining for years in Robert Butts's possession cannot be ruled out. Nor can the possibility that they were sold by the auctioneer Robert Butts, either at his Church Street office or by private contract.

The 39 Blakes in the March 1852 sale (including six designs to Milton's "Nativity Ode," watercolors, engravings, illustrated books, and illuminated books) were more representative of the Butts collection as a whole than those sold in the Ford auction. As a group, however, they could not have exited the Butts collection in 1808 and are not likely to have any connection with Robert Butts. Seven of the 10 illuminated books could not have been left in Dalston, since *America*, *Europe*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and *The Song of Los* were acquired by a "Butts" (presumably Thomas) in 1835 from the George Cumberland sale at Christie's (Bentley, *Blake Books* 657), *Milton* was not finished until c. 1811, *The Ghost of Abel* was printed in 1822, and the copy of *Jerusalem* in the sale was posthumous.

In "Marketplace 1852," I argue that most of the Blakes in the March 1852 sale came from the Butts collection but that the vendor of the sale was not Butts Jr. The collection that sold consisted of over 1500 prints and drawings and was apparently built by a connoisseur whose tastes do not co-



incide with what we know of Butts, or what is revealed by his will, or with the tastes of Butts Jr., as revealed by his June 1853 auctions and his 1862 will. It seems likely that the collector may already have had a few works by Blake, such as *Night Thoughts*, *The Grave*, and the *Job* engravings, the most accessible of Blake's works and in numerous libraries and art collections of the day. But from whom could have come the watercolors and illuminated books that were unquestionably from the Butts collection? The primary candidate is Mrs. Butts, Butts's second wife.

As a 66-year-old widower, Butts married Elizabeth Delauney, a 56-year-old widow, on 15 June 1826 in St. Pancras, Old Church (IGI).<sup>40</sup> They lived at 17 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, from 1826 to 1845, when Butts died. According to Butts's will, she was required to vacate the premises after three months. Butts began his will by

bequeath[ing] to my beloved wife Elizabeth Butts the sum of one thousand pounds of lawful money of the United Kingdom and also all articles of plate jewelry trinkets and furniture whether useful or ornamental whatsoever which belonged to her at the time of our marriage or which I may have since presented her with. . . . And I do declare it to be my will and desire that my said wife shall be allowed to retain possession of and reside in the house I may occupy at the time of my decease and to have the use of the furniture and all other things that may be there therein for three calendar [sic] months from the time of my death and that the usual establishment be kept up and paid and maintained out of my personal estate during the said period of three calendar months and that none of such furniture or other things shall be removed from the said premises until the expiration of that period without the previous consent of my said wife. (will 1-2)

As noted, the Blakes owned by Butts appear certainly to have been among the "furniture" and "other things" in his house. The will raises the possibility that some of these household items, including watercolors and/or books by Blake, were among the "trinkets and furniture" that he presented to Mrs. Butts. Perhaps the four illuminated books and *The Grave* purchased from the Cumberland sale of 1835 were just such presents, purchases motivated by his wife's fancy for these kinds of Blake works. It is interesting to note that the illuminated books from the Butts collection remained together, selling only in the March 1852 auction and

<sup>40</sup> The discovery of Butts's second marriage in the IGI and the examination of the parish marriage register for St. Pancras, Old Church, were made by Keri Davies and Ted Ryan. The importance of this discovery to the provenance of Blake's manuscript poem "The Phoenix" is discussed in my "Blake's 'The Phoenix' / to Mrs. Butts' Redux."

I have not been able to locate the place and date for the death of Mrs. Cooper Butts. Unfortunately, the burial records for St. Pancras, Old Church, are not available for consultation and the microfilm of them in the Greater London Public Records Office is over-exposed and much of it I was unable to read. Discovering the date of death is

not in Ford's, Butts Jr.'s, or Captain Butts's auctions. The idea that they stayed together because Butts gave them to his wife does not seem unreasonable. He did give her—or she inadvertently inherited—Blake's poem "The Phoenix to Mrs. Butts," even though it was probably addressed to the first Mrs. Butts. The manuscript poem, which resembles a page from *Innocence*, passed through her side of the family, surfacing in 1981 (see Viscomi "Phoenix").

The will also raises the possibility of Mrs. Butts's taking Blakes and furniture while they were still under her supervision, within the first three months after Butts's death (i.e., the summer of 1845). In other words, the stipulation that nothing was to leave the Grafton residence without Mrs. Butts's permission created a window of opportunity. After that, the house and everything in it became the sole property of Butts Jr. This change of title required that Butts Jr., his wife Mary Ann, and their three children (Frederick John, Aubrey, and Mary Ann Blanch) vacate their house at 5 Upper Fitzroy Street and that Mrs. Butts vacate her house of the past 19 years. Whether she and her stepson, Butts Jr., came to some living arrangement is unknown, but it seems unlikely, since she had two daughters, one living a few doors away.

Mary Ann and Caroline Matilda Delauney are mentioned in Butts's will as "daughters of his wife" and by their married names, Mary Ann Long and Caroline M. Baker. Mary Ann Delauney married Charles Long on 24 November 1827, and Caroline Matilda Delauney married Henry Baker, an architect, on 24 June 1837.<sup>41</sup> Both daughters were married in St. Pancras, Old Church. In the 1840s, according to the postal directories, the Bakers lived at 25 Grafton Street, a few doors down from the Buttses. Mrs. Butts apparently moved in with the Bakers; she died in their residence at 11 Upper Gower Street on 24 December 1851 at the age of 81.<sup>42</sup>

The need to move often motivates the sale of household goods; Butts Jr.'s 1853 sale at Forster and Son appears to have been motivated by his "Removal from his Residence" (title page of sale catalogue). Soon after the death of Thomas Butts in April 1845, Butts Jr. moved in and Mrs. Butts apparently vacated the house. These events are wrought with

worth pursuing to see if there is a connection between it and Butts's cessations of commissions (i.e., c. 1810-11), a connection which would support the theory that Butts initially commissioned Blake on behalf of his wife and her school. There are no letters after 1803, only receipts, the last extant one in December 1810. Blake mentions in an undated letter to Linnell, c. April 1826, that Butts visited him and purchased a copy of the *Job* engravings (Erdman 777). Blake makes no mention of the forthcoming second marriage.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that Boyle's directory for 1818 lists a Charles Long at 9 Ely Place, Holborn, which would have made him Daniel Fearon's next-door neighbor.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Delauney's maiden name was Davis; she married Peter Delauney in the Church of St. George, Hanover Square, Westminster, on 25 October 1791. Her obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1852 records her as having died on 24 December 1851 at 81 years, implying a birth year of 1770.



opportunities for Blake material given to or claimed by Mrs. Butts to have exited the Butts collection. Butts Jr. may not have minded Mrs. Butts taking "furniture," "whether ornamental or useful," that she had been given or wanted, either out of generosity, to keep the peace, or to help make room for his furniture. He may not have had strong emotional or aesthetic ties to the works, which were not, as the 1852 and 1853 auction prices of around one pound per watercolor indicate, financially lucrative possessions. At any rate, it seems reasonable to suspect that Mrs. Butts had her own small collection of Blakes when she vacated the Grafton Street residence and began living with her daughter, Caroline Baker.

The titles of the illustrated books in the March 1852 auction add to the likelihood that most of the Blakes in that sale came from Mrs. Butts—and lessen the likelihood that Butts Jr. was the vendor at that auction. The sale included two copies of *Night Thoughts*, a copy of *The Grave*, and a copy of the *Illustrations to the Book of Job*. If we assume that these works came from the Butts collection, then we must also assume that Butts collected multiple copies of them, for copies of *Night Thoughts* and *The Grave* sold at Butts Jr.'s June 1853 auction (lot 143), and a copy of the *Job* engravings sold at Captain Butts's 1903 auction.

Duplicates may be characteristic of a connoisseur—or to a person with more than one residence—but would be very surprising for a man who does not even mention his art collection in his will. The duplicate most troubling is *The Grave*, because Butts Jr. bought a copy at E. V. Utterson's 5 July 1852 auction for 18 shillings (see "Marketplace" 53 passim). This is the copy he apparently sold at his June 1853 auction, along with the material he acquired from the Ford sale. But the assumption that Butts Jr. was the vendor of the March 1852 auction requires us to believe that he had just sold a copy of *The Grave* in that auction for five shillings only to buy one a few months later for 18 shillings. If, however, Butts Jr. was not the vendor of the March sale, then *The Grave* that sold for five shillings may have been the one Butts acquired in 1835 from Cumberland and presumably gave to his wife. Butts Jr. acquired Utterson's copy of *The Grave* for 18 shillings because he did not have a copy of his own.

The March 1852 sale had an uncolored copy and a colored copy of *Night Thoughts* (lots 58, 59), but it is doubtful that both came from the Butts collection, since that would have given Butts at least three copies of this book, because Butts Jr. sold an uncolored copy in June 1853.<sup>43</sup> It seems more likely that Butts owned two copies, giving Mrs. Butts

the colored copy that sold in the March 1852 sale and his son the copy he sold the following year. That Butts Jr. had a copy would explain why he passed up two (presumably monochrome) copies at the Utterson sale. Utterson was a collector who owned duplicates of many items, but it seems unlikely that Butts would have acquired two uncolored copies of the same book. Butts Jr. also passed up copies of *The Book of Ahania* and *America*, the only two illuminated books in that sale. Perhaps he was outbid (£1 13s. and £2 7s. respectively; see "Marketplace" 54, 66)—or perhaps, as suggested above, he was interested in Blake's watercolors and not his books.

Butts acquired a proof copy of the *Job* engravings from Linnell in April 1826 (Bentley, *Blake Records* 591, 599). This copy was almost certainly the one that stayed in the family, selling in Captain Butts's 1903 auction as "the superb india proof copy (no. 1), morocco" (lot 21). The copy that sold in March 1852 was "Choice India Proofs" (lot 60); it was either a duplicate in the Butts collection, or it was one of the works that already belonged to the anonymous collector of the March 1852 sale. The latter seems more likely; Butts is not recorded as acquiring two copies in the Linnell receipts, and the "Amateur" who acquired Butts's Blakes was apparently devoted to engravings and proofs (see lots 62-88, 187-337 of the March 1852 sale).

## VI

The small collection of Blake's illuminated books, illustrated books, and biblical watercolors that sold in the March 1852 auction came from the Butts collection. Could Butts Jr. have sold them to the vendor of that auction when he moved in 1845, taking them either from the Grafton residence or from his own residence at Upper Fitzroy Street? Possibly, but given Butts's will, Mrs. Butts seems unlikely to have left Grafton Street empty-handed when she departed in 1845 for her daughter's house. She may have sold the collection privately between 1845 and 1851 to an unknown print and drawing connoisseur or dealer. Or, possibly, the collection was sold by her daughter or son-in-law, who presumably inherited the Blakes upon Mrs. Butts's death in December 1851. It is interesting to note that the "Phoenix" manuscript was passed down through her other daughter's family—and perhaps for that reason never made it to the auction halls.

Nearly all the Blakes that sold at Charles Ford's Sotheby auction on 26 June 1852 came from the Butts collection. Butts Jr., however, seems very unlikely to have been behind

<sup>43</sup> Mary Butts, recalling what was in Captain Butts collection, states that "there were sold also portfolios of sketches and engravings, the superb copy of Young's *Night Thoughts*, Blair's *Grave*, and many others. Even his engraving cabinet, which Brother Aubrey had taken for his own" (164). But what sold at her father's auction in 1903 were "20 pages of proofs [of *Night Thoughts*] in various states, some written on by W. Blake" (lot 22), and in a 1910 auction of items from the Butts family,

including the engraving cabinet, "a number of Engravings and Drawings, by W. Blake, and some by T. Butts . . . including a tinted study by the former for the Angel on the title-page of Blair's *Grave*, a small water-colour drawing of a nude woman, and several proofs from the copper-plates sold in the last lot (a portfolio)." Mary Butts appears mistaken about there being complete copies of these books in her family.



this sale, since he was there as a buyer. If the Dalston Butts was Blake's patron, then it is possible that the collection of Blake watercolors, all executed in or before 1808, was formed when Butts left Dalston for Fitzroy Square in 1808, when the Dalston residence was inhabited by Robert Butts.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Ford may have acquired his Blakes from one of Butts's other sons, either his eldest Joseph, who died in 1827, or youngest, George, who died in Toulouse in 1837 (Burke).<sup>45</sup> This possibility is raised by Ford's having acquired exactly half of the 1808 *Paradise Lost* illustrations, a division that suggests two brothers sharing the series. Butts Jr. did own six of the illustrations, and two of the three designs that Linnell borrowed in 1822 (Bentley, 275) were eventually in Ford's collection, which suggests that the series was still intact in 1822.

There were many other opportunities for Blakes to have exited Butts's collection before Butts died and by hands other than Butts Jr. (For a list of Blakes that did exit by private sale at unknown dates, see "Marketplace" 52-53) Joseph's four children were adults by the time of their grandfather's death in 1845: Edward Herringham Butts, Henry Wellington Halse Butts, William George Butts, and Elizabeth Butts, born in 1810, 1813, and 1818 respectively.<sup>46</sup> He also had stepdaughters, Mary Ann and Caroline Delauney, and possibly a stepson, Cornelius Delaney (see Viscomi, "Phoenix" 13-14). He had a nephew Thomas, the son of his half-brother John, and unnamed nephews and nieces, the children of his half-

sister Matilda. His sister Sarah and her husband William Harris lived in a house that Butts owned in Stoke Newington (will 5) and were bequeathed an annuity of £85, to be paid out of the rent from another of his properties, "No 7 Argyll place (formerly known as No 39 Argyll Street)" (will 2). The possibility cannot be dismissed of a Cooper, Delauney, Long, Baker, Harris, Floyd, or other members of the Butts family, including possibly a Fearon or Wartnaby, having acquired Blakes from Butts's collection. They, or a son other than Thomas Butts Jr., may have acquired Blakes as gifts or by sale, before Butts died, and sold them to Ford or to another party from whom Ford purchased them.

As we can see, Butts's family was larger than Rossetti and Briggs realized, and the provenance of the collection more complicated. Yet, with 16 houses and many relatives, and moments like weddings and births for gift giving, it is surprising that so much of the Butts Blake collection stayed intact. Perhaps it did so because Blake had little economic or aesthetic value to other members of the family. But we cannot assume that Butts's other sons or grandchildren other than Captain Butts were not given Blakes. We mistakenly make that assumption about Butts Jr.'s daughter, Mary Ann Blanch, who probably owned at least 13 temperas that Rossetti recorded as belonging to her brother, Captain Butts, and which appear to have been lost in a fire (see "Marketplace" 45). If either of Butts's sons who died before him had owned Blakes, that fact would not necessarily have been known to Rossetti, who used the 1852 and 1853 sale catalogues and Butts Jr.'s Blake collection as constituted in January 1863, after Butts Jr.'s death, as his base.

My intention here is to challenge the assumption that Butts Jr. was behind the 26-27 March and 26 June 1852 auctions at Sotheby's, and that he alone was responsible for bringing into the "open air" over 160 works by Blake that had long been "preserved" in his father's "house," and thereby almost single-handedly providing the grounds for a reevaluation of Blake in mid-nineteenth-century England. There were more collectors interested in Blake and interested earlier than previously recognized, including E. V. Utterson, Charles Ford, the anonymous vendor of the March 1852 sale, probably Mrs. Butts, and possibly Robert Butts. The case for Mrs. Butts seems stronger than that of Robert Butts, which is based primarily on new information about Butts's father, 9 Great Marlborough Street, and circumstantial evidence linking Butts to Hackney. Engaging in such speculation, though it is sure to be extended, corrected, or proved by biographers and professional genealogists to be merely "numerous highly improbable coincidences," is a necessary first step to clarifying the relation between patron and artist and eventually locating Butts's "Green House."

Two copies of *Job* engravings sold in the 1910 auction, but it is not clear whether these were the first or second (1874) printing, or whether they were part of the Butts collection.

<sup>44</sup> In his will, Butts lists a total of 16 houses that he owned, at least 13 of which generated semi-annual or quarterly rents or annuities. Most if not all of these properties appear to have been acquired before his marriage to Elizabeth Delauney.

<sup>45</sup> According to the *genealogy*, Joseph married Sarah Hoskins and died in 1827 (but see also Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1058 and n24). According to Burke, George died in 1837 in Toulouse. Butts bequeathed monies to Joseph's widow (75 pounds annuity) and children and to George's executors in Toulouse (will 8). Of Joseph very little is known, other than that he went to work with his father in 1799 in the office of the Commissary General of Musters and remained there till at least 1810. Briggs states that he "ran through a very considerable fortune during his father's lifetime, and was disinherited. He died before his father and his family migrated to America" (93). The will mentions the disinheritance of two grandsons (see n46) but not of Joseph.

There is an 1809 letter from Butts Jr. to his mother mentioning George (Bentley, "Thomas Butts" 1063-64). In *Boyle's Court Directory* for 1818, but not before or after, and in *Johnstone's London Commercial Guide and Street Directory* for 1817, a George Butts is listed as a "solicitor" working at 9 Symond's Inn, in Chancery Lane, which he shared with three other lawyers, two of whom (John and George Shaddick) worked in 1819 in Six Clerks Office, Chancery Lane, the office of the Blake collector, E. V. Utterson (*Robson's* 1819).

<sup>46</sup> Henry and William may have been twins, or the parents decided to have the children baptized together, for they were both baptized on 30 December 1813. Both men migrated to Ohio, in America, and were bequeathed £100 by their uncle Thomas Butts Jr. in 1862. In a codicil to his will, 1 April 1845, Butts revoked the £650 he had bequeathed to Henry and the £24 annuity to Edward (14).



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